

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting
December 11, 2024**

LOCATION: Hybrid Meeting - Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building, 500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, and via Zoom

PRESENT: Dave Herer (Chair), Maureen Callahan (Vice Chair), Paul Dawson, Adam Block, Marshall Davis, Jim Rosenbaum, Reginald Foster,

ABSENT: Keith LaFace, Betsy Millane, Cecilia Simchak

STAFF: Lauren Spinney

D. Herer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noted that all members were present, with the exception of Betsy Millane and Keith LaFace.

COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

None.

MEETING MINUTES

A. Block moved to approve minutes from the November 13, 2024 meeting with minor revisions. P. Dawson seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries 7-0.

UPDATES ON FY2026 PROJECT APPLICATIONS

FY2026-01 Needham History Center & Museum: Ongoing Collections Storage Upgrades. This application seeks \$65,000 for storage upgrades to ongoing collections under the CPA category of Historic Preservation. Gloria Greis notified the committee that the Historical Commission was going to revisit and reaffirm its determination that the NHC's collections are historically significant.

FY2026-02 Needham Conservation Department & Commission: Trail Signage Improvements. This application seeks \$104,000 for upgraded trail signage, markings and maps on Town-owned protected spaces and trails under the CPA category of Recreation. No updates.

FY2026-03 Charles River Center: East Militia Heights Development. This application seeks \$3,500,000 for construction costs associated with the development of 86 affordable housing units, including 43 units of special needs housing, under the CPA category of Community Housing. M. Callanan reported that she and B. Millane have an upcoming appointment with the applicant and its development partner to conduct a site visit.

FY2026-04 Needham Housing Authority: Preservation of Seabeds Way & Captain Robert Cook

Drive. This application seeks \$5,600,000 for construction costs associated with the preservation and redevelopment of affordable housing located on Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive under the CPA category of Community Housing. D. Herer reported that he and A. Block were coordinating a site visit with the NHA. He also noted that eligibility of this project was vetted previously when the Committee recommended funding for an earlier project also associated with these properties.

FY2026-05 Needham Housing Authority: High Rock Estates Affordable Housing Land Use Study. This application seeks \$150,000 for a land use study and community engagement process in connection with the redevelopment of affordable housing at High Rock Estates under the CPA category of Community Housing. D. Herer noted that Town Counsel has concerns regarding this project's eligibility for funding under the CPA.

FY2026-06 Needham Park & Recreation Department: Action Park & Pickleball Courts (Design). This application seeks \$300,000 for design costs associated with construction of an action sports park and pickleball courts under the CPA category of Recreation. No updates.

FY2026-07 Needham Park & Recreation Department & Department of Public Works: Eliot School Grounds Renovation (Design). This application seeks \$69,960 for design costs associated with the renovation of the Eliot School fields and playground under the CPA category of Recreation. No updates.

FY2026-08 Needham Department of Public Works, Parks & Forestry Division: Town of Needham Forestry Management Program. This application was withdrawn by the applicant.

FY2026-09 Needham Department of Public Works, Parks & Forestry Division: Bay Colony Rail Trail Rehabilitation. This application seeks \$75,000 for costs associated with resurfacing walking pathways and improving drainage under the CPA category of Recreation. M. Davis, R. Foster and D. Herer met with the applicant and conducted a site visit. The applicant proposes using the same contractor that installed the Needham portion of the trail in 2016 to add surface material, building the trail up by a couple of inches, improving drainage, and smoothing the surface.

TOWN COUNSEL'S OPINION REGARDING PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Town Counsel, Chris Heep, reviewed the FY2026 project applications and provided a memorandum outlining his initial opinions with respect to each project's eligibility for funding under the CPA. He determined that the High Rock Homes Land Use Study is not eligible for CPA funding. R. Foster disagreed with this determination and provided a copy of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership's CPA and Affordable Housing Guidebook in support of the project's eligibility. R. Foster also provided examples of similar CPA projects that were approved and funded in other towns.

The Committee agreed that the NHA can pause work on the High Rock Homes due diligence questions while it prepares a response for C. Heep regarding project eligibility. Town Staff will coordinate a meeting between the NHA and C. Heep to discuss further, if needed.

TOWN FINANCED COMMUNITY HOUSING OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (TCHOC)

D. Herer shared that he and M. Callahan attended a meeting with Katie King regarding TCHOC's work and its charge. The CPC has sole discretion over what projects move forward and are recommended to Town Meeting. TCHOC's role is primarily to monitor the expenditure of CPA funds after Town Meeting approves a grant. We invited TCHOC to submit questions for the pending housing applications, and they will do so by the end of the week.

HOUSING AND FINANCE CONSULTANT

In light of the two significant community housing projects before the committee this year, D. Herer and M. Callahan thought it appropriate to engage a housing and finance consultant to assist the Committee. C. Simchak prepared a request for proposals, which is pending.

FOLLOW-UP ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COALITION PRESENTATION

It is important for the Committee to remember that a conservation restriction is necessary for any Open Space project. Also, Recreation projects require that the land have a conservation restriction in place, is under the control of a parks department, or is dedicated by a legislative body for recreational use or transferred to the control of a parks department.

RETROACTIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF CPA FUNDING

The Committee would like to ensure that going forward there is some sort of signage or plaque acknowledging the contribution of CPA funds for approved projects. The Committee would also like to identify past projects that might be appropriate for such acknowledgements. It is important that the public is aware of the ways in which CPA funds are used in the community. L. Spinney will circulate a list of funded projects and the Committee will identify those projects that are most appropriate for acknowledgement.

MATTERS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE:

The Committee is waiting to receive a report from the Finance Department regarding the amount of money available in the CPA reserves for funding FY2026 projects. More information should be available early in the new year. D. Herer cautioned that it appears the CPC will not have sufficient funds to approve all eight of the FY2026 projects currently before the Committee and urged CPC liaisons to have frank discussions with the applicants regarding same.

UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE

The next two CPC meetings will be January 8 and January 22. The Committee will add a meeting on February 5 and will take February 19 off the schedule due to school vacation week.

ADJOURNMENT

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A. Block moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. P. Dawson seconded the motion. Motion carries unanimously (7-0).

For more information, the meeting materials are available at:

<https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=&Type=&ADID=13357>

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Spinney

Administrative Coordinator