

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

**Minutes of Meeting
March 19, 2025**

LOCATION: Hybrid Meeting – Charles River Room, 500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, and via Zoom

PRESENT: Dave Herer (Chair), Maureen Callahan (Vice Chair), Paul Dawson
Marshall Davis, Adam Block, Keith LaFace

REMOTE: Reginald Foster, Jim Rosenbaum

STAFF: Cecilia Simchak, Lauren Spinney

GUESTS: Emily Achtenberg (remote)

D. Herer called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Committee members, staff and guests were present as noted above.

CHAIR'S UPDATES

None.

EMILY ACHTENBERG DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY HOUSING PROJECTS

FY2026-03 Charles River Center: East Militia Heights Development
FY2026-04 Needham Housing Authority: Preservation of Seabeds Way

E. Achtenberg reviewed the NHA's revised application for Seabeds Way which raised the request for CPA funding by \$325,000 due to an increase in tenant services, a reduction in Linden Street Developer Fee due to an error in the original request (a cross-subsidy loan from Linden to Seabeds), and a decrease in cash flow during construction relating to NHA's intent to now increase the management fee below the line from 2% to 3%. Although the total cost of the project has actually decreased in uses, there was also a reduction in sources. E. Achtenberg is not comfortable with the increased management fee given that the project is so resource constrained and in general does not see much justification for the \$325,000 increase, particularly in light of the CPC's current funding constraints.

Overall, if the CPC does not have enough money to fully fund both Seabeds Way and East Militia Heights, it seems that there is more room in the East Militia Heights' proforma to imagine plausible alternative approaches to its funding structure, partly because it is in such an early stage. As explained in her previous analysis and at a previous meeting, reductions could be made to the East Militia Heights budget to feasibly reduce the need for CPA funding to \$2.2M.

It is more difficult to find alternative funding schemes for Seabeds Way. Additionally, the Seabeds project is tied to the Linden Street Redevelopment project, which the Town has already funded.

M. Davis asked if the Charles River Center responded to E. Achtenberg's strategies to reduce the East Militia Heights budget. E. Achtenberg shared that CRC acknowledged that both were reasonable ideas. With respect to income averaging, CRC said that it has not brought that up with EOHLC yet and does not want to do so until it is ready to make its submission, which will be next Fall. Similarly, with respect to the concession units, CRC acknowledged that the proposed alternate approach is a good idea, but it has not yet raised the approach with investors.

Although E. Achtenberg has not seen the concession unit issue before, she has seen developers assume income averaging in the early stages of new construction projects, so she knows it is a viable option. Additionally, there are other potential sources that CRC could pursue, such as HOME consortium funding.

D. Herer and the Committee thanked E. Achtenberg for her knowledge, advice and guidance. She offered to remain available for any questions regarding affordability restrictions and reminded the Committee that she strongly recommends the Town require restrictions in perpetuity in exchange for its large public investment. She also recommends that the grant agreement include a requirement that the applicants make best efforts to continue the project-based Section 8 contracts.

DISCUSSION OF FY2026 PROJECTS AND VOTE

D. Herer confirmed that all Committee members understood the amount of money available for appropriation and that all members agreed with appropriating FY2026 receipts directly to FY2026 projects. He further confirmed that all members wished to fund the historic and recreation projects in full, bringing the discussion to the community housing projects.

A Block shared that he spoke with E. Achtenberg and NHA's development partner, Cambridge Housing Authority, to get more clarity on the Seabeds Way project. There is greater urgency to Seabeds because of its connection to the Linden Street Project, as opposed to the East Militia Heights project which is at a much earlier stage. Both are very worthy and the Committee wants to fund both, but there is a limit to the available funds. A. Block proposes the Committee recommend appropriating \$3,200,000 to Seabeds Way and \$2,840,223 to East Militia Heights.

M. Callahan is in favor of funding both projects, recognizing the immense need for affordable housing and housing for people with disabilities. She would like to fund East Militia Heights to the greatest extent possible, but understands the Charles River Center has opportunities for cost savings and potential other funding sources that are not available to Needham Housing Authority.

M. Davis feels that both housing projects are extremely deserving, but believes that Seabeds Way is a priority due to its interconnectedness with the Linden Street Redevelopment project.

K. LaFace feels that both projects are fantastic and wishes the Committee could fund both fully, but there is more flexibility with East Militia Heights and the Committee's hands are really tied when it comes to the Needham Housing Authority's request.

P. Dawson agrees with the previous Committee members wanting to fund Seabeds Way. Although both housing projects are great, his inclination is to fund Seabeds Way fully and give East Militia Heights the balance.

J. Rosenbaum agrees with the comments of previous Committee members. These are both very worthy projects.

R. Foster acknowledged his conflict as Chair of the Needham Housing Authority and recused himself from the discussion.

D. Herer pointed out that East Militia Heights' design is in its infancy. There is a rendering and a layout, but the design has yet to be developed which provides the project a lot of flexibility at this point. Conversely, Seabeds Way is a rehabilitation project that must satisfy a 20-year capital improvement analysis. Its scope is fixed and therefore does not have the same level of flexibility. He also pointed to cost saving strategies that E. Achtenberg highlighted for East Militia Heights.

ARTICLE 20: ONGOING COLLECTION STORAGE UPGRADES

A. Block moved to recommend funding the Needham History Center and Museum's request for \$46,712 for Ongoing Collections Storage Upgrades under the Historic Preservation designation, with the entirety transferred from CPA Historic Reserve.

K. LaFace seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 21: TRAIL SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS

A. Block moved to recommend funding the Needham Conservation Department and Conservation Commission's request for \$104,000 for Trail Signage Improvements under the Recreation designation, with the entirety transferred from CPA Free Cash.

K. LaFace seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 22: EAST MILITIA HEIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

A. Block moved to recommend funding the Charls River Center's request in the amount of \$2,840,223 for construction costs associated with the East Militia Heights Development under the Community Housing designation, with \$741,180 transferred from CPA Free Cash, and \$2,099,043 transferred from CPA FY2026 Receipts.

M. Davis seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 23: PRESERVATION OF SEABEDS WAY

A. Block moved to recommend the Needham Housing Authority's request in the amount of \$3,200,000 for construction costs associated with the Preservation of Seabeds Way under the Community Housing designation, with \$872,545 transferred from the CPA Housing Reserve, \$2,310,200 transferred from CPA Free Cash, and \$17,255 transferred from CPA FY2025 General Reserve.

R. Foster raised the issue of the NHA's request to use a portion of CPA funds for costs prior to closing. C. Simchak advised that this issue does not need to be included in the motion, but should be referenced in the article information. If it is not, because we are still working through eligibility, then it can be discussed during the presentation to Town Meeting.

M. Davis seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 24: ACTION PARK & PICKLEBALL COURTS (DESIGN)

A. Block moved to recommend the Needham Park and Recreation Department's request for \$300,000 for design of an Action Park and Pickleball Courts under the Recreation designation, with the entirety transferred from CPA Free Cash.

M. Callahan expressed concern regarding this project given that the Park and Recreation Department will definitely come back to the CPC to request additional funding for construction. She questioned if it makes sense to fund design when it is unlikely there will be enough money for construction.

_____ seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 25: ELIOTT SCHOOL GROUNDS RENOVATION (DESIGN)

A. Block moved to recommend the Needham Department of Public Works and Park and Recreation Department's request for \$69,960 for the Eliot Schol Grounds Renovation Design under the Recreation designation, with the entirety transferred from CPA FY2025 General Reserve.

K. LaFace seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

ARTICLE 26: CPA BUDGET AND RESERVES

A. Block moved to recommend that pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44B the estimated FY2026 Community Preservation Fund revenues be appropriated or set aside for future appropriation as follows: (A) Administrative and operating expenses of the Community Preservation Committee in the amount of \$82,000; and (E) CPA Open Space Reserve in the amount of \$438,000.

M. Davis seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

UPDATE ON LINDEN STREET REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

R. Foster shared that the Needham Housing Authority submitted its OneStop Application to EOHLC and does not expect to hear back until May or June when the Governor announces all of the winning projects. The CPA Grant Agreement was finalized and submitted with the OneStop application.

UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE & TOWN MEETING

Town meeting presentations will be given by the following:

- J. Rosenbaum – Article 20: Ongoing Collections Storage Upgrades
- M. Davis – Article 21: Trail Signage Improvements
- M. Callahan – Article 22: East Militia Heights Development
- A. Block – Article 23: Preservation of Seabeds Way
- K. LaFace – Article 24: Action Park and Pickleball Courts (Design)
- P. Dawson – Article 25: Eliot School Grounds Renovation (Design)
- D. Herer – Article 26: CPA Budget and Reserves

The next CPC meeting is scheduled for April 2.

League of Women Voters Warrant Night will be held on April 28.

ISSUES NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR WITHIN 48 HOURS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A Block moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m. M. Davis seconded the motion. The vote was as follows: D. Herer (aye); M. Callahan (aye); R. Foster (aye); P. Dawson (aye); A. Block (aye); M. Davis (aye); K. LaFace (aye); J. Rosenbaum (aye). Motion carries (8-0).

For more information, meeting materials are available at:

<https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=&Type=&ADID=13666>

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Spinney
Administrative Coordinator