



City of Lowell – Community Preservation Committee

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 10, 2021 6:30 p.m.

Conducted via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Adam Baacke, Chairman
Eric Slagle, Vice Chairman
Troy Depeiza, Member
Sinead Gallivan, Member
Sidney Liang, Member
Christine McCall, Member

Members Absent

John Linnehan, Member
Philip Shea, Member
Bradley Buitenhuis, Member

Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Assistant Planner

A quorum of the Committee was present. A. Baacke called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

5/27 Minutes

T. Depeiza motioned, and S. Gallivan seconded the motion to approve the May 27, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously, (6-0).

II. Continued Business

III. New Business

IV. Other Business

Discussion of Public Hearing and Survey Results

E. Slagle stated that it was good hearing the public's opinion on the CPA, and hopes that people understand they must apply for the programs and projects. E. Slagle added that the survey was helpful in understanding the areas of interest of the public.

S. Liang asked whether the survey results will be published, D. Ricker confirmed they would be published. C. McCall said that the results were incorporated into the CPA Plan.

A. Baacke stated that he was happy to see a strong interest in each of the 3 CPA categories, and expects many good ideas. A. Baacke said that he shared E. Slagle's concerns that people will need to be sure projects and programs apply for CPA funding. A. Baacke stated that he liked that the plan incorporated the opinions of Lowell residents effectively, and provided openness for the CPC to make decisions which address the goals.

Review Community Preservation Plan Draft

D. Ricker explained that the CPA Plan is meant to provide background, and provide a guide for CPC members when reviewing CPA applications.

S. Liang stated the CPA Plan is nicely done, and thanked staff for producing the plan. T. Depeiza agreed.

S. Gallivan agreed with A. Baacke and C. McCall that the survey effectively captured the results of the public hearing and survey. S. Gallivan added that the plan is open enough to allow the CPC to fund programs across each CPA category, and appreciated that the plan was clear that applications did not have to address each goal, and explained the CPA eligibility requirements.

E. Slagle said that he has no additional comments, and thanked DPD staff for putting together the City's first CPA Plan.

A. Baacke agreed that the CPA Plan is a strong document, and suggested some minor changes. A. Baacke said that under 'City Goals' it states "Housing Crisis", and is unsure whether such a strong statement should be included in this type of document. A. Baacke suggested changing the statement to, "addressing housing needs". A. Baacke added that based on public hearing comments there may be people in the community that feel there is a crisis surrounding Historic Preservation, or Open Space. A. Baacke said he is not sure the plan should define things as a crisis.

T. Depeiza agreed, and added that sometimes using that language can create backlash among some people in the community. S. Gallivan said she did not have a strong opinion, but appreciated that the plan stated that the City of Lowell currently exceeds the minimum statewide affordable housing requirement.

E. Slagle asked A. Baacke what the suggested language update would be. A. Baacke suggested saying "address housing needs" instead of "housing crisis".

A. Baacke asked about the housing goal stating "redevelopment vacant City land", A. Baacke asked if this is meant to state only City owned land, or vacant land in the city. D. Ricker stated that the intent is to focus on vacant land in the city not only city owned land.

A. Baacke said that in the 'Overall Goals' section where it states that Open Space and Community Housing were the two most important categories to the public, but A. Baacke came to the conclusion that Open Space was rated as the most important category, and Community Housing and Historic Preservation had virtually identical support. A. Baacke stated he is concerned that there is interest in Open Space and Historic Preservation is diminished based on the current statement. D. Ricker said that the reason it states that Community Housing was rated higher than Historic Preservation was due to the amount of 'Very Important' responses in support of Community Housing, and added that it makes sense to clarify the wording to state that Open Space and Recreation received the greatest amount of support.

A. Baacke suggested using language that more specifically explains the results rather than an interpretation of the results. D. Ricker stated that change will be made.

A. Baacke thanked staff for adding language surrounding leveraging funds from lenders. A. Baacke added that this should be expanded to "leveraging funds from investors, lenders, and other funders". The expanded definition will be useful as many applications may be leveraging CPA funds from a variety of sources including grant sources.

A. Baacke said that he support adding to the 'Evaluation Criteria' section a part which states that the CPC will be evaluating the applicants capability to complete the proposed project. A. Baacke stated that it would be bad for the City and CPC to tie up funding with an applicant that cannot effectively utilize the funding.

T. Depeiza and E. Slagle agreed. E. Slagle said that a line could be added stating that applicants will be evaluated on their capacity to complete the project. S. Gallivan said that a line could be added that applicants will be evaluated on the completeness of their application and feasibility as well. T. Depeiza and A. Baacke agreed.

A. Baacke said that similarly in the application materials section information about capacity could be included as well. A. Baacke said that the idea that some communities require applicants identify a sponsoring agency or City Department was interesting. Adding this requirement may ensure that proposed projects are feasible, and applicants will have a capable partner in the project.

C. McCall said that it may not need to be in the plan, but could be included in the plan. This will be important, especially for Open Space, because it will determine whether the City is able to maintain the proposed project. S. Gallivan said that in the application there is a section for applicants to include information regarding support from City Boards, Commissions, and Departments, but is not required. C. McCall stated it may be helpful to know if applicants have reached out to the City regarding their proposals.

E. Slagle suggested using the word "encourage" to encourage applicants to contact appropriate board while not requiring them to do so. E. Slagle said the question should be asked on the application and there should be a line in the CPA Plan as well. This could be used as a guideline when considering competing projects. S. Liang agreed that it would be beneficial if the City was approached about the proposals, and applicants which do this are likely to have a more feasible project.

C. McCall asked if staff will be circulating projects among departments for comments like what is done with Land Use Board applications, and asked whether there would be comment memos. D. Ricker stated that it has not been discussed yet, but it makes sense to send applications around for comments to relevant boards (comment memos will be provided with projects as well). A. Baacke agreed that that would be helpful, especially getting comments from DPD, Public Works, and the Parks Department.

E. Slagle said that that process is already in place and these steps could be made easily. C. McCall added that this takes the onus off the applicants, as applicants for CPA funds may not be as sophisticated as applicants that go in front of Land Use Boards. C. McCall stated that there is a section of the application which asks which other permits are required, and for some folks that may be difficult to answer. C. McCall stated that receiving comments from City Departments would be helpful, T. Depeiza and A. Baacke agreed.

A. Baacke stated that the CPA Plan proposes 2 funding rounds per year, and suggested that given the Community Preservation Coalition Director suggestion of 1 funding round per year initially this be changed to 1 round per year. A. Baacke said that a 2nd round could be added later on. E. Slagle and S. Gallivan said that there should be 1 funding round per year.

S. Gallivan said that if the CPC finds that 2 rounds per year makes more sense then the plan could be updated later on to add a funding round, and asked if there was a reason that 2 funding rounds was suggested.

C. McCall asked if pre-eligibility forms could be accepted on a rolling basis in advance of the deadline. A. Baacke agreed and said that the CPC will want to see a full list of proposals before a final vote. A. Baacke said that adding language stating the City reserves the right to hold an additional funding round if necessary.

E. Slagle said the idea for the initial 2 round proposal was based around the City's size and the thought that the City could support it financially. After hearing the Community Preservation Coalition comments it may make more sense to start with 1 round and change to 2 rounds if necessary.

S. Liang agreed, and said that based on the Community Preservation Coalition presentation it makes sense to have 1 round and have some flexibility with rolling applications. S. Liang said that after getting through the first year the CPC will have a better idea of how to handle the application rounds.

E. Slagle said he thought the Community Preservation Coalition training was very valuable and helpful. E. Slagle stated that he met with the Auditor and CFO, and the result was the funding memo emailed to members. E. Slagle said the CPA funds are earning interest and the buckets are set up correctly. The City is currently doing the administrative piece and the CPA funds are currently set up the appropriate way.

S. Liang asked what the final decision on funding rounds was. E. Slagle stated that he thinks the CPC should do 1 round, and asked if anyone thinks there should be 2. E. Slagle asked if the deadlines for the funding rounds should be changed since there will only be 1 funding round. C. McCall stated that there may not need to be a deadline for Pre-Eligibility forms since there will be agenda submittal deadlines. A. Baacke agreed and said that wording can be included that eligibility forms will be reviewed at any meeting as long as they are submitted by the submittal deadline.

A. Baacke said funding round deadlines will likely be based on when in the annual fiscal cycle the CPC knows what funding is available, or it will be tied to making award decisions in a time that is beneficial to applicants. A. Baacke asked what timing makes the most sense to the City. E. Slagle said that in the typical year a funding recommendation will be made to the City Council in late May for the City Council to make an appropriation vote in June. E. Slagle said that the CPC will find out how much funding it has for the following year in June, and based on other CPCs there likely will not be a significant amount of funding left over year-to-year.

A. Baacke suggested that the determination of funding for a given year could be the opening of a funding round, and all eligibility forms could be collected at that point and provide a few additional months for applicants to submit eligibility forms. A. Baacke said that the round 2 period has deadlines which would work well. E. Slagle that if it is a non-public entity then January funding would work well.

A. Baacke asked if this makes sense to DPD Staff, and D. Ricker said the suggestions make sense.

C. McCall motioned to update the CPA Plan with the following CPC comments:

- 1) Change language to "addressing housing needs" instead of "housing crisis";
- 2) Change Community Housing Goal number 1 to lowercase "city" to reflect that the goal states the idea of focusing on land in the city not only City-owned land;
- 3) In the Overall Goals section be more specific about the survey results to ensure that interest in Open Space, Community Housing, and Historic Preservation are clearly represented;
- 4) Update language regarding "leveraging funds" to state "leveraging funds from investors, lenders, and other sources";
- 5) Add language to Evaluation Criteria section stating that applicants will be evaluated based on their capacity to complete the project, and language encouraging applicants to contact the appropriate City Department;
- 6) Add language stating that Pre-Eligibility Forms will be accepted on a rolling basis until the application deadline; and
- 7) Add language stating that the City reserves the right to hold an additional funding period if demand and funding permit.

E. Slagle seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously, (6-0).

Approve CPA Application and Recommendation Forms

A. Baacke stated that the application forms are the Pre-Eligibility Form, the Application Form, and the Recommendation Form.

C. McCall stated she thinks the Pre-Eligibility form is great and has no comments. A. Baacke asked whether the question about contacting City Departments is on the eligibility form or application form. C. McCall said it would make sense to be on both forms. E. Slagle agreed that if it is on both it will give applicants the time to ask. C. McCall added that some applicants may wait to ask until after the eligibility form process. C. McCall supported adding the question to both forms. T. Depeiza agreed.

S. Liang asked if there is a word limit to the responses in the application forms. A. Baacke stated there is no word limit.

C. McCall motioned, and T. Depeiza seconded the motion to approve the Pre-Eligibility Form. The motion passed unanimously, (6-0).

C. McCall stated that the capacity section of the application should be more specific, and in the feasibility section each Land Use Board and approval type should be listed out to make it clear the types of approval necessary. E. Slagle confirmed that C. McCall was referring to the Zoning Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Historic Board.

A. Baacke asked if there are other aspects of feasibility that may be important to include. A. Baacke stated that the capacity question was included in both the eligibility form and application form. C. McCall asked if the question should ask applicants for examples of their experience. E. Slagle said the question asked them to describe their experience.

A. Baacke said that in terms of feasibility it may make sense to ask about funding. E. Slagle stated that the application form asks for updated budget information. S. Gallivan added there is a funding question in the eligibility form as well.

C. McCall asked about the total number of copies needed to be submitted. D. Ricker stated it is supposed to state 10, 1 for each CPC member, and 1 city copy. C. McCall asked if the same applies to the Pre-Eligibility Form. D. Ricker said yes.

E. Slagle suggested that applicants only be required to submit the applications electronically to save paper, the forms can then be emailed to members. A. Baacke agreed. C. McCall asked if this was equitable, and whether all applicants are capable of submitting an electronic copy. A. Baacke said that is an important point, and asked if 1 copy of the application would be sufficient, and staff could scan in the applications to make an electronic version.

C. McCall asked if CPC members will have access to the City Council iPads, E. Slagle stated he is not sure. S. Liang stated that he prefers having a hard copy of applications, these make it easier to review the form. A. Baacke said that this is a good reason to have applicants submit the 10 copies.

S. Gallivan asked applicants can be required to submit applications digitally in addition to the hard copies. D. Ricker said yes, and digital submissions are required for many Boards. E. Slagle suggested some CPC members can opt in to getting forms digital only.

A. Baacke asked if CPC applications will be posted on the website similar to other Land Use Board applications. E. Slagle said that uploading applications to the website is a useful tool for the public, and submitting documents are a public record. E. Slagle added that this is easier for staff since it will have the same process as other Land Use Board applications. C. McCall said that the CPC hearings are public hearings and the public can voice support or opposition, and the public would need access to application materials.

C. McCall motioned, and S. Gallivan seconded the motion to approve the Pre-Eligibility Form, and Application Form with the suggested edits. The motion passed unanimously, (6-0).

Approve Regular Meeting Schedule

DPD Proposed Schedule: Monthly meetings at 6:30pm on the 4th Thursday of the month

A. Baacke summarized that the suggested meeting schedule is to meet on the 4th Thursday of the month and cancel any meetings when there are no items for the agenda. T. Depeiza said that this schedule works for him.

S. Gallivan asked when meetings would return in person, and whether anything about virtual meetings should be added to the schedule. A. Baacke stated that the next meeting would be after the end of the Governor's Emergency Order. A. Baacke asked if there is a reason why the CPC cannot meet in person. S. Liang asked when the next meeting is. A. Baacke said the next scheduled meeting is June 24th.

E. Slagle that there is still a social distancing requirement at City Hall, and in person meetings will be delayed until the City Manager removes social distancing requirements that would prevent public from attending. The City Manager maintained the requirements because Lowell is not doing as well as the rest of the state in terms of vaccination rate.

E. Slagle stated that once meeting are in person the goal is to have the meetings in a hybrid format in which members attend in person and the public can attend in person or via zoom. E. Slagle stated the City has seen an increase in public participation with zoom meetings.

S. Liang added that he would not be able to attend the June 24th meeting. A. Baacke asked if there will be business on the June 24th meeting. E. Slagle stated that the CPA Plan needs to be approved and submitted to the City Council for their approval. C. McCall asked whether the CPA Plan can be approved tonight based on the edits. A. Baacke said that the agenda states that the CPC would be reviewing the CPA Plan draft, and asked whether that was sufficient notice to approve the plan.

T. Depeiza suggested doing another meeting to be safe. E. Slagle said that with a September 15th deadline, is there enough time for applicants to apply for CPA funds. E. Slagle suggested approving the plan at the June 24th meeting to more closely meet suggested deadlines.

S. Liang asked if members can vote to approve by proxy. E. Slagle said that cannot be done, but members can zoom or call in. E. Slagle added that this will provide members a chance to review the edits made to the CPA Plan.

C. McCall motioned, and T. Depeiza seconded the motion to approve the proposed schedule. The motion passed unanimously.

Finalizing Opening of Application Period

A. Baacke summarized the proposed application period, the eligibility form deadline August 1st, full applications due September 15th, and an estimated award date of December 16th. A. Baacke stated that these dates seem too early.

E. Slagle said pre-eligibility forms could be due by September 2nd, full applications due by October 15th, and the estimated award date pushed back to January.

S. Gallivan stated that the January 15th date was reflected in the plan, and this date makes sense. C. McCall said that this does not have to be included. A. Baacke agreed. C. McCall suggested changing the language from “estimated award date” to “estimated recommendation date”. A. Baacke stated this estimated date may not be necessary at all, and suggested that this does not have to be voted on at this point.

E. Slagle suggested setting the 2 proposed eligibility and application deadlines. The CPC can provide an estimated action date as well.

E. Slagle motioned to approve the following CPC deadlines:

- 1) Pre-Eligibility Form Deadline: September 2nd;
- 2) Full Application Deadline: October 15th; and
- 3) Estimated Action Date: January 15th.

C. McCall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, (6-0).

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Community Preservation Committee Members

VII. Adjournment

E. Slagle motioned, and C. McCall seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, (6-0). The time was 7:52.