



City of Lowell – Community Preservation Committee

Community Preservation Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 12, 2023, 6:30p.m.

Conducted in-person and via zoom

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

Members Present

Adam Baacke, Chair
David Fuller, Vice Chair
Sinead Gallivan, Member
Yovani Baez-Rose, Member
Troy Depeiza, Member
Brad Buitenhuys, Member
Philip Shea, Member
Ryan Rourke, Member

Members Absent

Sidney Liang, Member

Others Present

Dylan Ricker, Associate Planner

A quorum of the Committee was present. A. Baacke called the meeting to order, the time was 6:30 pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

December 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes

P. Shea motioned, and D. Fuller seconded the motion to approve the December 15th Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

II. Continued Business

III. New Business

Deliberations and Vote on 2022 CPA Applications

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) will deliberate on all CPA Applications submitted for the current application cycle. At the conclusion of deliberations the CPC will vote on funding recommendations which will be sent to the City Council for approval.

Discussion:

A. Baacke explained the purpose of the meeting and noted it is not a public hearing. A. Baacke explained the regulations surrounding CPC funding including how funding must be allocated.

O'Donnell Park:

A. Baacke explained the proposal, summarized the scope of work, and said work will be completed in phases with additional funding applied for in addition to CPA funding.

A. Baacke read S. Liang's comments into the record. S. Liang wrote that both the O'Donnell and Donahoe Park projects are good projects, and said the CPC should determine which project has a higher priority, if there is not priority he is in favor of Donahoe Park. A. Baacke said that the City noted that O'Donnell Park was the priority.

Y. Baez-Rose said the specific priority in O'Donnell Park is the playground, and funding that particular piece of the project would create a finished project. Y. Baez-Rose confirmed that O'Donnell Park was the City's priority.

S. Gallivan asked about the breakdown of playground funding needed. Y. Baez-Rose said this portion of the project is roughly \$600,000.

S. Gallivan said she is generally supportive of the \$600,000 for the playground for O'Donnell Park given the City's prioritization. S. Gallivan noted the outreach feedback stating the City's primary goal is improving open space.

R. Rourke agreed with O'Donnell Park being the priority and said it will likely be used more, and agreed that the playground would likely be the most important aspect of the application.

P. Shea asked if there was a recommended amount for the funding. A. Baacke explained the funding options for the project, A. Baacke noted the CPC should be cautious about bonding too many projects. A. Baacke said an amount could be allocated this year and the applicant could be encouraged to return. A. Baacke suggested waiting for motions until after discussing each project.

B. Buitenhuys cited the comments from DPD stating the playground cost was roughly \$400,000. J. Wilson (applicant) explained the reasoning for the larger request citing a contingency fund, and design and engineering services bringing the total request to \$600,000.

T. Depeiza said he is in favor of the park receiving funding.

Donahoe Park:

A. Baacke summarized the scope of work and proposal.

D. Fuller said given its proximity to Shedd Park he understands the City's prioritization of O'Donnell Park. Y. Baez-Rose said it is a neighborhood park that has not been updated recently. Y. Baez-Rose said due to its location and accessibility this is why the City prioritized O'Donnell Park.

Hadley House:

P. Shea recused himself.

A. Baacke explained the proposal and scope of work.

D. Fuller said from a code official's standpoint it would be great to see the rehab of the building due to the time spent trying to close off the building to prevent break-ins. D. Fuller noted the City needs housing and expressed support for allotting money for the proposal.

B. Buitenhuis said he had initial concerns since the project did not have permits. B. Buitenhuis noted the significant need for housing and given the lower request, and it being the only Community Housing application he is supportive.

S. Gallivan asked if there were any ownership updates. A. Baacke said the CPC has not received any updates.

R. Rourke said the area is a connector neighborhood and the revitalization would have a positive effect on that part of the City.

D. Fuller added that the Merrimack Valley Food Bank will be leaving the adjacent building and the building will be developed into a 50-unit affordable housing development.

Y. Baez-Rose agreed with the concerns about the lack of permits and said if there is a recommendation to fund there should be language requiring necessary permits. Y. Baez-Rose said creating new residential units is important for the community and having both buildings renovated is beneficial to the community. Y. Baez-Rose said given the lower funding request she is supportive.

S. Gallivan agreed and said she views the project both as a community housing project and historic preservation project. S. Gallivan expressed support.

T. Depeiza agreed given the need for housing and said the 5 units would be beneficial for the community and he would want to prioritize funding.

A. Baacke read S. Liang's comments into the record. S. Liang wrote that there is a major need for housing in the City, and this proposal is the only housing project. S. Liang expressed support.

A. Baacke said the presented site plan impact the canalway path and said he would want to be sure the path is maintained in a pattern that is compatible.

St. George's Church Dome:

A. Baacke explained the proposal and scope of work.

S. Gallivan expressed concern about the viability of the estimate and total cost for the dome. S. Gallivan said this may have the least community impact although the dome is historically and architecturally significant. S. Gallivan said she is less inclined to be in favor of the project.

P. Shea said he is unsure if the work can be completed due to the degree of difficulty. P. Shea said he is supportive of some amount of funding to help the church meet their fundraising goal. P. Shea said he felt strongly about the citizens speaking in favor of the proposal at the prior presentation. P. Shea said he is supportive of awarding a portion of the request tonight. P. She requested the Chairman provide some guidance on the proposal.

Y. Baez-Rose agreed with the concern that the estimate undervalued the total cost of the project. Y. Baez-Rose expressed concern about tying up funds on a project that may not move forward. Y. Baez-Rose asked if funding can go toward design and engineering.

A. Baacke noted the church has \$800,000 in insurance funding as well. A. Baacke said he believes it is an eligible expense for design and engineering work. A. Baacke said he was not sure this is the most effective use of the money. A. Baacke noted the Historic Board Administrator's comments that the dome is very historically significant.

T. Depeiza agreed and said the dome is very historically significant. T. Depeiza said the restoration costs are likely more than the estimate and he is concerned about the viability. T. Depeiza said he is in support from the historic perspective, but added there is concern around the total cost of the project.

D. Fuller asked if there is any active fundraising for the additional funding. C. Cambas (applicant) said there is no active fundraising efforts, but noted the church has insurance funding. C. Cambas said the estimate is roughly 1 year old and at that time the estimate was roughly \$1.2 million. C. Cambas agreed the estimate is old.

A. Baacke said he was 12%-15% price increases.

P. She asked about the total cost for the project. C. Cambas said in 2019-2020 the estimate was done by vertex and \$1.2 million was the estimate for the dome replacement, structural work, and asbestos mitigation. C. Cambas said they anticipate doing additional fundraising to meet the costs. P. Shea said the funding could help the church raise additional funds.

A. Baacke said the CPC could reserve an amount of funding for a specific project and if the project does not move forward in a certain timeframe the money would need to be returned to the CPC reserves.

D. Fuller asked if contingencies can be placed on the funding. A. Baacke confirmed this can be done, and said that some projects require conditions.

635 Middlesex Street

A. Baacke explained the proposal and scope of work. R. Hupper (applicant) said the amount requested was revised to \$180,000. R. Hupper said that since the last meeting the interior demo has been completed and this has been signed off by the Building Department, and they are awaiting architectural plans. R. Hupper explained the final proposed use for the building.

Y. Baez-Rose said the property is adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club of Lowell which is undergoing a significant renovation. Y. Baez-Rose said given the location of the property it is important. Y. Baez-Rose added that bringing a few new units into the City is beneficial in addition to the historic preservation portion. Y. Baez-Rose said it is an interesting project considering the lower funding request.

R. Rourke said the multiple functions of the proposal increase its impact on the City. R. Rourke said the improvement of this area is important to the City.

P. Shea said the presentation was good, and he is supportive of funding being allocated to support the project.

D. Fuller said given the lower request he feels more comfortable with funding, and said it is a good project.

S. Gallivan agreed, and said she is in support of the project.

T. Depeiza said he is supportive of the project. T. Depeiza said adding housing and commercial space is beneficial as well.

A. Baacke said the visibility of this project sets it apart. A. Baacke said this is in the most prominent location of any of the Historic Preservation projects. A. Baacke said last year LDFC received funding for a Downtown Lowell Historic Preservation Loan Fund and asked if the applicant has been in contact with LDFC. . Hupper explained the private funding for the project. A. Baacke encouraged the applicant to contact LDFC to discuss the Historic Preservation Loan Fund.

Girls Inc.:

A. Baacke explained the project and scope of work.

S. Gallivan expressed support for the project and said it also has a programmatic impact. S. Gallivan said the project is also leveraging a significant amount of other funding for the project. S. Gallivan said the ratio of total funding and funding requested is good.

B. Buitenhuys said last year the project wasn't funded, but this year's application is stronger and more fitting of the projects the CPC will fund. B. Buitenhuys said the funding was granted to the Whistler House and granting funding would further improved this street and benefit the City.

P. Shea said he is supportive of the project.

R. Rourke said restoring this area is important, and said the area has historic importance. R. Rourke said rehabbing these historic buildings is important and the programs the building will offer area beneficial as well.

B. Buitenhuys said if granting money for the landscaping would create public open space. A. Baacke said the area is pretty small.

Y. Baez-Rose said given the available funding the landscaping portion may not be funded, but is supportive of funding the historic preservation portion of the project. Y. Baez-Rose said if Girls Inc. is interested in making the open space public they can do an additional application. B. Malone (applicant) said the budget for landscaping is \$115,000.

T. Depeiza said he is in favor of the project and is supportive of funding the project.

A. Baacke read S. Liang's comments into the record. S. Liang expressed support for reach historic preservation project, and asked about itemized budgets. S. Liang noted that inadequate funding may leave historic properties in disrepair.

Funding Deliberations:

A. Baacke said one way to approach funding is to look at each funding category first. A. Baacke asked if the CPC is supportive of allocating at least \$98,000 of Community Housing funding to the Hadley House project, \$98,000 of Open Space/Outdoor Recreation funding to the O'Donnell Park project, and \$98,000 of Historic Preservation funding to one of the proposed projects. The CPC agreed.

D. Fuller said he would like the church to start a fundraising campaign and return for funding. D. Fuller said their estimate is at least \$500,000 short and said if they can demonstrate they have raised money then the CPC can be more comfortable providing funding at that time.

B. Buitenhuys agreed and said the funding is significant and the real costs of the project is concerning.

S. Gallivan agreed and said the dome project is not leveraging funding in the same way as the other historic preservation projects.

A. Baacke suggested the church use their insurance money to clarify what they are looking for via a design and engineering. A. Baacke believes requesting they return is reasonable but noted the Church is a significant historic resource.

P. Shea said if an award is made with a stipulation that progress should be shown or the money must be returned. A. Baacke said if the money is spent it is challenging to get the money back. A. Baacke said the City would get a Historic Preservation Restriction. P. Shea said that by awarding the church funding it will assist the Church with their fundraising efforts as they can show the City supports the project.

B. Buitenhuys said given the total cost he would like to see the capital campaign started already. P. Shea said the capital campaign will be aided by the City allocating funding and showing support for the project. A. Baacke said he agreed with P. Shea. P. Shea said providing funding provides support for their fundraising efforts and sends a positive message. P. Shea noted the significant amount of people that showed up in support of the project. P. Shea expressed support for funding the dome project at some level.

A. Baacke agreed that an endorsement from the City via funding would be significant and assist with fundraising. A. Baacke said his concern is that their estimate is from over 2 years ago and a fundraising campaign has not been started yet.

P. Shea said the applicant's interest in repairing the property is significant and said he is in support of providing some funding.

S. Gallivan proposed providing the \$98,000 of Historic Preservation funding to the Girls Inc. project and \$37,000 from the General Reserve to fully fund the Historic Preservation portion. S. Gallivan said the applicant can return if they need additional funding for the landscaping portion. P. Shea and R. Rourke agreed.

B. Buitenhuys proposed funding the 635 Middlesex Street with the remainder of funds left after funding other projects. B. Buitenhuys proposed \$600,000 for O'Donnell Park, \$150,000 for Hadley House, the previously mentioned \$135,000 for Girls Inc., and the remaining \$100,000 for 635 Middlesex Street. D. Fuller agreed.

R. Rourke agreed and said with any remainder going to O'Donnell Park or the St. George's Church project.

B. Buitenhuys said the minimum amount for the playground should be met for the project so the phase can begin. A. Baacke said \$500,000 should be enough for a good project. S. Gallivan agreed. Y. Baez-Rose said if there is not a full \$600,000 for O'Donnell Park, some lesser amount will still result in a project as long as it is a reasonable amount.

Y. Baez-Rose agreed with granting the full \$135,000 to Girls Inc. and \$150,000 to Hadley House. Y. Baez-Rose said 635 Middlesex Street checks a lot of important boxes and she is supportive. Y. Baez-Rose asked the CPC what a reasonable contribution to the dome project would be. P. Shea suggested \$5,000.

A. Baacke suggested granting more than \$5,000 because the money comes with a significant Historic Preservation restriction. A. Baacke proposed funding the O'Donnell Park project at \$500,000 and allocating \$100,000 for the 635 Middlesex Street project with the LDFC Loan Fund program to assist with any additional funding.

A. Baacke said a larger funding amount for the church will send a better message of community support for the project.

A. Baacke summarized the funding discussions to this point.

S. Gallivan said she feels the church project is years down the road and she believes the applicant should return with plans and a timeline next year.

D. Fuller agreed, but for purposes of encourage fundraising he suggested providing \$50,000 of funding for the dome project. D. Fuller said \$100,000 may be too high, but \$50,000 seems more reasonable. S. Gallivan disagreed.

Restrictions:

Y. Baez proposed an affordability restriction on the Hadley House of no less than 20 years and no higher than 50% AMI. Y. Baez-Rose said the CPC can defer to a more restrictive restriction if one is required.

Motion:

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and D. Fuller seconded the motion to provide \$150,000 of CPA funding to the Hadley House project. The motion passed (7-0-1) with P. Shea recusing himself.

D. Fuller motioned, and Y. Baez-Rose seconded the motion to provide \$135,000 of CPA funding to the Girls Inc. project. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

S. Gallivan motion, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to not fund the St. George's Church Dome project. The motion failed (4-4) with A. Baacke, Y. Baez-Rose, R. Rourke, and P. Shea opposed.

D. Fuller motioned, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to provide \$50,000 of funding to the St. George's Church Dome project. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and P. Shea seconded the motion to provide \$100,000 of funding to the 635 Middlesex Street project. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and S. Gallivan seconded the motion to provide \$550,082 to the O'Donnell Park project. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

Y. Baez-Rose motioned, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to require an Affordability Restriction on the Hadley House project of no less than 20 years, and no higher than 50% AMI with deference to a stricter affordability restriction filed on the property. The motion passed (7-0-1) with P. Shea recusing himself.

Y. Baez-Rose motioned, and B. Buitenhuys seconded the motion to require permanent Preservation Restrictions on the Girls Inc., 635 Middlesex Street, and St. George's Church Dome projects. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

IV. Other Business

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Community Preservation Committee Members

A. Baacke proposed canceling the January 26th CPC meeting since the CPA deliberations had concluded.

B. Buitenhuys motioned, and Y. Baez-Rose seconded the motion to cancel the January 26th CPC Meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (8-0).

VII. Adjournment

B. Buitenhuis motioned, and D. Fuller seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously (8-0). The time was 8:10pm.