



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on the Community Preservation Act

Michael F. Flaherty, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

April 13, 2022

Dear Councillors:

Docket #0313, Message and order for an appropriation order in the amount of Twenty Seven Million Two Hundred and Five Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Four Dollars (\$27,205,854.00) from Fiscal Year 2022 community preservation fund revenues for community preservation projects at the recommendation of the City of Boston Community Preservation Committee, was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu and referred to the Committee on March 2, 2022. In accordance with the General Laws Chapter 44B, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is recommending a total of 52 projects for consideration for the allowable uses of community housing, open space, and historic preservation. The Committee held a hearing on April 5, 2022 where public comment was taken.

Summary of legislation:

The Community Preservation fund was created upon the adoption of the Community Preservation Act, Massachusetts General Laws chapter 44B, in November 2016 and is funded by the 1% property tax-based surcharge on residential and business property tax bills. Lower income seniors and property owners are exempt and the average homeowner pays \$32.00 per year. The allowable uses of CPA funds are defined by statute and are limited for the following specific purposes: the acquisition, creation, and, preservation of community housing; the acquisition, creation, preservation, and, rehabilitation of open space; the acquisition, creation, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of land for recreational use; and, the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources. All of the recommended projects must meet the terms, definitions, and requirements of Chapter 44B to meet eligibility.

Docket #0313 is seeking the approval of the appropriation of 52 projects for affordable housing, historic preservation, and parks and open space. The total amount of the funding is \$27,205,854.00 with \$14,660,159 recommended for ten affordable housing projects; \$6,141,357 recommended for 25 historic preservation projects; and, \$6,404,338 recommended for 17 open space and recreation projects.

Information Gathered at the hearing:

The following individuals participated at the hearing:

- Maureen Garceau, First Assistant Collector-Treasurer, Administration and Finance;

- Chief Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing & Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing;
- Jessica Boatright, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Housing Development;
- Chief Reverend Mariama White-Hammond, Chief of Environment, Energy and Open Space;
- Ryan Woods, Commissioner Parks and Recreation.
- Thadine Brown, Deputy Director for Community Preservation;
- Courtney Whelan and Gillian Lang, Historic Preservation Consultants.

The City collects more than \$20 million annually to use for funding projects for affordable housing, historic preservation, open space and recreation projects. There is also a state-match distribution from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund which augments the funds available to the City to over \$25 million each year. Section 5 of the Act provides that the City Council shall take action and approve such appropriations from the Community Preservation Fund in order to implement the recommendations of the Community Preservation Committee.

The Committee heard testimony from the Administration about the process, available funding, and the specific projects. Ms. Brown provided an overview of the process including allowable uses and Ms. Garceau reviewed the funding allocations. The Administration provided an overview of the funding by neighborhood, an overview of the FY22 funding round, and a breakdown of the 52 projects by neighborhood. The Administration officials also described outreach and community engagement efforts, educational events and the ongoing community preservation strategic planning and program evaluation efforts scheduled to be complete by June 2022. The Administration described daily operation improvements which include an internal tracking system, improved funding process, timely payments of grant installments to applicants, rolling eligibility allowing applicants to apply early, and upfront legal review.

Chief Dillon and Ms. Boatright reviewed the affordable housing project slate which consists of ten projects, three of which are to assist with home ownership and seven which will provide rental opportunities. The recommended projects will provide extremely low income units, supportive affordable units and create affordable rental housing units for low to moderate income individuals as well as homeownership units.

Ms. Whelan and Ms. Lang reviewed the historic preservation projects. Funding for these projects include assistance with roof repairs and replacement; masonry, exterior restoration; and, window restoration.

Ryan Woods, Commissioner of the Parks Department provided an overview of the projects for open space and recreation. Commissioner Woods emphasized the importance of access to parks for City residents. Funding under this slate will go to planting trees; restoring play structures and outdoor play space; acquisition of real property interests in open space for recreational use; improvements to open space; and the creation of gardens, playscapes, and recreational space.

The Committee discussed the proposed projects, the intended uses and the benefits of the projects. The Committee discussed the selection of the projects under Docket #0313 and the allowable uses of CPA funding. The Committee also received written testimony and heard testimony at the hearing from members of the public supporting the projects.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

The 52 recommended projects in the areas of affordable housing, historic preservation, and parks and open space will benefit all residents of the City of Boston. The housing projects provide supportive and affordable units for our most vulnerable residents while also providing affordable rental units for low to moderate income residents and home ownership opportunities. The historic preservation projects will ensure that City buildings and structures are restored and maintained. The parks and open space projects will ensure equitable access to outdoor spaces and green space for all residents. These 52 projects support the objectives of the CPA.

By the Chair of the Committee on the Community Preservation Act, to which the following was referred:

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submits a report recommending that this docket ought to pass.

For the Chair:



Michael F. Flaherty, Chair
Committee on the Community Preservation Act