



Community Preservation Committee

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103

<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>

Regular

~ Minutes ~

Kevin Chaffee

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

6:00 PM

Utilizing Remote Collaboration Technology

I. Call to Order

6:00 PM Meeting called to order on December 1, 2020 at Utilizing Remote Collaboration Technology, (Online), Springfield, MA.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
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II. Public Portion

*Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order concerning the Open Meeting Law, the City of Springfield is providing public notice that this public meeting will be conducted utilizing remote collaboration technology. **To View/Listen to the public meeting:***

[<https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldCommunityPreservationCommittee/>](https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldCommunityPreservationCommittee/)

III. Minutes

Springfield Community Preservation Committee

December 1, 2020

Remote Meeting 6:00 p.m.

Recordings of remote meetings are available to view

<https://www.facebook.com/SpringfieldCommunityPreservationCommittee/videos>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlIYDZfz1Ylh5SiXJXppYWWJIVSmFt0X7>

Present: Juanita Martinez (Conservation) Gloria DeFillipo (Planning Board) David Finn (Historical Commission) Willie Thomas (Housing Authority) Ralph Slate (Neighborhood Representative) Lamar Cook (Neighborhood Representative) and Robert McCarroll, Chair, (Springfield Preservation Trust Inc.)

Absent: Terry Rodriguez (Park Commission) Terry Mitchell (Neighborhood Representative)

Agenda

1. Approve Minutes of November 10
2. Adopt Revised Community Preservation Plan
3. Review Application Cover Sheet and Instructions
4. Administrator's Update on FY18 and F19 Projects
5. Public Speak Out

Persons wishing to address the SCPC remotely should register at cpc@SpringfieldCityHall.com by November 9 at 5 pm. Log in information will then be sent

Written public comments may be mailed to

Community Preservation Committee, City Hall Room 412, 36 Court Street, Springfield 01103
or e-mailed to cpc@springfieldcityhall.com.

The Administrative Consultant, Karen Lee opened the meeting by reading the Governor's Order for remote meetings during the current Covid-19 pandemic and offered a brief overview of the CPA in Springfield. The Chair introduced the Committee and asked for a vote to approve last month's minutes.

1. November Minutes

Mr. Finn made the motion to approve the minutes from the November 10th meeting. Juanita second that motion. Robert asked for a roll call vote.

Roll call vote to approve Minutes:

Juanita Martinez: yes Gloria DeFillipo: yes David Finn: yes Willie Thomas: yes Ralph Slate: yes Lamar Cook: yes and Robert McCarroll, Chair: yes **Opposed** none

2. Adopt Revised Community Preservation Plan

At the last meeting we adopted the time table and didn't see the need to change any of our priorities. Karen sent out the most recent revised plan with yellow highlighted areas indicating edits to last year's plan in the Historic and Housing sections. Karen thanked Gloria for helping her with retrieving some of the new data to cite in the plan. The Plan was shared on the screen for the Committee to view.

Historic section. Without a paid staff city employee to maintain and protect the integrity of certain historic neighborhoods and landmark buildings, Springfield is at a disadvantage and the work is either outdated or done by volunteers. Additional sources for information was added to this section.

Housing section. Discussion Tenure of Occupied Housing Units: The US Census estimated the owner-occupied housing unit rate in Springfield was 45.8% in 2014-2018. The Committee had a general agreement to focus on owner occupancy and losing 2400 units provided the context to support owner occupancy in the Plan. At the time the Committee felt that this was an issue in the City of Springfield and it's what the neighborhoods are looking for. The neighborhoods want more owner-occupied homes rather than everybody renting.

Ralph then stated just from a data analysis and presentation concept that the actual number is an important thing for people to grasp. That's an important number that provides you with a piece of data. I think the percentages later on are important because that shows more trending. Karen then asked do we want to keep both and just add 2019 and have percentages in that case? Gloria stated that those percentages are in that plan I sent to you Karen, on page forty-five (released from the Planning Department). Ralph then stated that yes we would like to put an additional data point in the form of a column, that would make sense to put it on the right of that table by neighborhood figure. It shows you more points on the trend. Robert then stated that given that we didn't have CPA until 2016 and we didn't work on our plan until 2017-2018. We need to add a fourth column which is 2019.

Additional edits included revising the various types of rental assistance in Massachusetts. Denise Jordan from Springfield Housing Authority and Bobby Demusis from the Springfield Office of Housing provided information that was included in the draft and the committee reviewed tonight.

Discussion Vacant Houses: Some neighborhoods are blighted by vacant, deteriorated houses. The Office of Code Enforcement provided a breakdown of vacant houses. The 2019 numbers are from the

chart we had last year and the 2020 figures are included in the new Plan so this is the data we have for vacancies by neighborhood. Robert then stated that vacancies in 2020 went up. Juanita noted that it went up considerably. Gloria asked Karen if she could reverse the two columns they should go numerically. Karen agreed to that.

Robert then stated that we have a few minor research changes that Karen has to make to the Plan. However, the basic thrust of the plan hasn't changed so I guess what I would like to do tonight is to have a motion made so that we adopt it with those minor research adjustments that we talked about. Gloria made the motion and David made the second motion.

All in Favor of Adoption of the Plan: Juanita, Gloria, David, Ralph, Lamar, Willie, Robert **Opposed:** None

3. Review Application Cover Sheet and Instructions

Karen confirmed the Cover Sheet is a PDF fillable form on the website. Robert asked those present if there is any feedback at this time. Hearing none, Robert asked the Committee's thoughts about adding a line to the cover sheet or the application that asks for the entity who will be carrying out the project.

[This is an issue on a current project. We thought the Boat House study was going to be carried out by the Riverfront Club but the Park Department believes, as a City property, the study should be done by the Department of Parks, Buildings & Recreation Management (DBRM). In the past when neighborhood groups propose a project, they partner with DBRM who will then carry out the project. We made an assumption of who was going to be responsible for the boathouse study and in the future, it should be clarified right up front, either on the cover page or somewhere in the verbiage of the application as to who is actually doing the project.]

Ralph stated he was concerned that we may confuse people who are proposing other types of projects. The question could be interpreted as asking the name of the contractor for the project, when the applicant may not know at the time of the application. After much discussion Robert stated that he is comfortable with Ralph's suggestion that we leave the cover sheet the same and perhaps at some point we need to ask the question during the interview process.

Application Instructions.

The application was shared on the screen. Other than minor changes [adding the SCPC logo and change of dates for 2021] it was agreed to leave as is with the exception to discuss the last page: **For Projects That Involve Property (land/buildings).**

An email was received from Liz Stevens who lives in McKnight and is present tonight. Her concern was that letters of support from a Neighborhood Council Association where the project is located should be a requirement. Robert stated that we do ask for letters of support in the application. Liz was invited to open her mic and started by thanking the Committee for allowing her to come to the meeting and the willingness to hear her suggestion. Liz stated there were several applications this cycle [in McKnight] that proposed projects on common property within the neighborhood and were not brought before the neighborhood council. These projects directly affect those who live in the area and she'd like to see a requirement that there be letters of support for an application from the people in the neighborhood. Robert thanked Liz and stated that applicants should be going to their neighborhood councils and we as a committee should be looking for those letters but are we suggesting to allow a Neighborhood Council to have an automatic veto over the project? Robert asked committee members for their thoughts.

Gloria (representing the Planning Board) responded by stating that it is a tricky situation. When an applicant comes before the Planning Board, we can't force them to go to the neighborhood council, we

recommend and then ask them at the interview. If it's a potentially sticky issue, we might suggest they go to the Neighborhood Council and meet with other folks in the neighborhood to see if a solution can be worked out.

Ralph offered the scenario that when a homeowner wants to do a project on their personal historic home, they certainly don't go to their neighborhood council before applying to the Historic Commission. Developments or even liquor licenses typically end up going to the Neighborhood Council first. Like Gloria said it's not required to go to the Neighborhood Council it's just sort of suggested very strongly. Gloria then stated that sometimes Neighborhood Councils did not notify us of what decision they might have offered. They wait to go to the liquor commission for instance.

Ralph then stated that at times Neighborhood Councils oppose things that maybe were a little bit short sighted. I would hate to give them a defacto veto. It becomes awfully powerful. Can you imagine someone coming in and saying I would like to fund affordable housing in the neighborhood and then the Neighborhood Council says we don't want any affordable housing in the neighborhood. It is sort of like a body that is blocking a potential City Council Project.

Lamar felt that the ownership of a neighborhood project falls on the Ward Councilor when it comes for a Council vote. I think the ward Councilor in the neighborhood should do their due diligence and vote yeah or nay on the project that benefits their neighborhood. The Ward Councilor should be the one to make the decision whether that benefits their neighborhood or not. Reaching out to the neighborhood council is a courtesy but they shouldn't be the one to veto the projects.

More discussion.

David asked "Elizabeth, you aren't suggesting that the neighborhood council has the right to veto. You are simply requesting that it should be a requirement that at least the project should be presented to the neighborhood council. Do I present that correctly?" Elizabeth responded by saying "yes" that she hadn't really thought I don't think it matters so much if they get a letter of support. Ideally it would be great if it was a wonderful project and the Council supported it but yes, I think that the idea that they are required to go before the Neighborhood Council not everything is going to fit in to a need for that. Affordable Housing benefits the city overall. Whereas, a rail trail within a neighborhood for common areas of the neighborhood, whatever that means that is specific to the neighborhood and they should go before the Council and talk to people in their neighborhood about it. I think that is a very good way to put what I was thinking about. David then stated that you would be okay if the neighborhood council were against something if CPC were still to approve it. At least your voice would be heard and would be comfortable with that? Elizabeth stated that she thought she would respect the committee's choice and their decision that was an important project that needed to be done. Ralph then stated to Liz that he knows a little bit about McKnight and I know that fifteen plus years ago there was a big sort of crisis on Forest Park Civic Association because basically everybody realized that everyone from the Civic Association was from one of ten different streets in Forest Park and it was not all represented in the neighborhood. I know McKnight is much represented but Forest Park wasn't fifteen years ago so that's why I respect the input. However, the neighborhood councils are typically not elected they are just organizations that people join and they sort of have a board of directors that guides the neighborhood. It's a good thing it's just not as democratic as a city where everyone votes for the entire city council. Like Lamar mentioned like the ward representative. Elizabeth then stated that in McKnight the councilors are elected.

Robert then stated that he is seeing two different issues here. 1) we want Neighborhood Councils to be aware of proposals that are occurring in their neighborhoods but 2) not prevent the SCPC from granting the application if a letter of support is not in the packet.

Ralph suggested we ask applicants to verify that they notified the Neighborhood Council.

Robert then stated that it might be the solution because it says that they have to reach out to the council. Let me tell you about my experience when Ralph and I were heading the citizen committee to try to get CPA adopted in Springfield I called one of the neighborhood association's head who was not in favor of CPA and he just couldn't fit me on the agenda to talk to his neighborhood group. I couldn't get on it. McKnight is probably one of the more active associations. I think there are some that are fairly dormant and if someone reaches out they may find that they only meet every three months. So once again I don't want to hold a project hostage because they can't get to the neighborhood. Gloria's suggestion that we need proof that they have reached out to the neighborhood and ask to make a presentation. Whether the council submits a letter of support or submits a letter of opposition that comes as part of the feedback that we were certainly happy to take because we are vetting projects. Willie stated that he was in agreement with Gloria's recommendation. It was agreed that as long as the applicant can document they reached out to the neighborhood council and can show the effort, it is up to the neighborhood council to respond or not. Elizabeth stated that she is satisfied with that solution.

More discussion.

Robert suggested we take the line item on the application for letters of support, and move it to the above section where it states letters of support are encouraged for the following: *In general letters of support are encouraged from neighborhood councils or associations where the project is located.* It becomes a bullet point for all projects: Neighborhood Council and All Projects /Association where the project is located. In item "C" we require proof that you notify the appropriate neighborhood council of your proposal and offer to meet with them. David then asked wouldn't we ask this of an applicant anyway? If something comes before us we have asked this many times. How does the neighborhood feel about this? Ralph stated that we have not turned down projects that have not brought in front of the neighborhood council, specifically for that reason. David stated that this is a question that all of us would ask anyway whether it's a requirement or not it would have a heavy bearing on how we view the project relative to its impact on the neighborhood. David felt that this is something we would ask regardless of whether it was a requirement or not. Ralph stated that the School Street School we did not ask them at all what the neighborhood felt as to the proposal to repair their windows. It felt like it wasn't even an issue.

Gloria made a motion that we change the wording for projects that involve a property, land, buildings to submit a verification that notice was sent to the local neighborhood council/association or the applicant met with the neighborhood council. Karen will add a link on the application for the City page that has a list of the neighborhood associations. Willie second that motion.

All in Favor: Juanita, Gloria, David, Ralph, Lamar, Willie, Robert **Opposed:** None

Robert stated that it seems to be the only change that we have highlighted, am I correct on that? Gloria stated that she believed so. Robert asked those present; should we make a motion to adopt instructions for the 2020 applications? Gloria made the motion and Juanita second the motion.

All in Favor: Juanita, Gloria, David, Ralph, Lamar, Willie, Robert **Opposed:** None

4. Administrator's Update for Fiscal Year 18 and 19 Projects

Robert stated we received \$449,000 on November 15th as our portion of the state distribution. Earlier in the year the CPA coalition cautioned towns of the budget uncertainty with Covid-19. We anticipated a budget allowance of \$174,000 but received two and a half times the amount due to a real estate market that did not slow down.

Karen shared the screen so the Committee could follow along with the report.

(submitted for insertion into minutes)

Parsons Apartments and the French Row Houses [Facta non Verba]

Amendments to extend the contracts until November 30th, 2021 are in the signature process.

Riverwalk Signage and Regreen projects

A press release was sent to Mass Live

Discussion: No article yet. Karen left a message and will follow-up again with the reporter. In the meantime the Parks Department said that they were going to do a press release on the same projects. Robert stated that at our last meeting we voted that when a project was completed we would send out our own press release.

McKnight Rail Trail:

The City Engineer, Mr. Andrew Krar, sent a letter to provide a status update. At this time the engineering firm Beta Group is approximately 80% complete with the design. It is anticipated 25% of the work will be complete by April 2021 and the remaining 75% will begin in June 2021 and continue through 2022. CPA funds of \$200,000 contributed to the initial \$500,000 design cost. Since this project was initially placed into the Capital Improvement Account, there are \$83,528 funds left for design assistance. According to the financial reports, a \$7,557.22 balance remains in the CPA project account. In addition, the City applied for, and was granted an additional \$300,000 to assist with funding the design phase. An email was sent to Mr. Krars confirming receipt of his update. Do we want to respond in any way?

Discussion: Robert felt that this was fine, they need to from time to time touch base with us and they did. Ralph stated that he seems to remember that they had two phases or if they got more money for the first phase they would ship some money to the second phase or something like that. Karen then stated that in any case they are moving along and they have a small balance. Robert asked Karen to look at the original contract for the expiration date.

2020 projects

Contracts signed

Youth Social Educational Training program (School Street School)
Kilroy House
GW Smith Art Museum

Contracts waiting for additional input

Brookings Apt
Historic Homes
Rockrimmon Boathouse
Trinity House

Contracts scheduled for signatures this week

Duggan Park
Forest Park Aquatic Gazebo
Marshall Roy Walking Path
Springfield Bike Park
Spanish American War Monument
Regreen Springfield
Indian Orchard pond study
Thompson Triangle Fountain

Historic Homes: The Office of Planning & Economic Development, Pat Burns (Comptroller) Kathy Breck (Legal) met to discuss drafting a contract to be used for the historic homes program. The questions to resolve are who will sign the contract, vet the homeowners, inspect the work & authorize payment.

WARD 4 Committee for Equity [re: Historic Homes]

On 11/16, an acknowledgment of the Ward 4 letter was emailed to Messrs. Dillard and Holmes. In addition, the Committee agreed to send a letter to the City Council and ask for an outline of the distinction between a local Historic District and a National District and forward it to the Committee for Equity.

Discussion: letter will be sent by Ralph.

Rockrimmon Boat House

Since the property is city-owned, the Committee decided at our last meeting to ask Kathy Breck in the legal department to review the 20 year lease between the City and PVRC to determine who will be the responsible party on the contract. She will have guidance for us by our January 2021 meeting.

Discussion: Ralph stated that he read a copy of the lease and in his opinion, the lease is incredibly clear that all responsibility is on the Pioneer Valley Rowing Club, for the building, maintenance and everything. The only way the city can possibly claim that they are still sort of involved in this property is that they have to approve if they are going to knock down the building or something like that. I'm shocked that the city is trying to assert that this is their study since it seems really clear from that contract. Kathy is going to tell us it's their building and it's their study but I don't see how it could be supported by them. Gloria agreed with Ralph. Gloria suggested that we wait and see what she will say.

5. Public Speak Out There were not any signups tonight.

Robert made a motion to adjourn until New Year. Gloria seconded the motion.

Next Meeting: January 5th, 2021