

**City of Beverly**  
**City Council Special Joint Meeting**  
**Public Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, April 26, 2021, 7pm**

**Joint Meeting with the Community Preservation Committee, Trustees of the Affordable Housing Trust, Beverly Golf and Tennis Commission, Historic District Commission, Open Space and Recreation Commission, and Parks and Recreation Commission**

This meeting was conducted under the ‘Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20’, signed on March 12, 2020. This remote meeting was held over Google Meet and live streamed by BevCam. Public access information for the hearings was provided on the meeting agenda.

Paul Guanci, City Council President, called the meeting to order at 7:00pm over Google Meet. City Clerk, Lisa Kent, took the attendance of the City Council by roll call.

City Council Members Present: Stacy Ames, Dominic Copeland, Timothy Flaherty, Kathleen Feldman, Scott Houseman, Todd Rotondo, Estelle Rand, Paul Guanci

City Council Members Absent: Julie Flowers

A representative from each committee called their committee’s roll for attendance.

Houseman led the councilors and committee members in the pledge of allegiance.

Guanci made a statement about the meeting being recorded by the City of Beverly and streamed by BevCam on channel 99 and BevCam’s YouTube channel. He confirmed that all members present could hear and noted the remote meeting format and process due to Covid-19.

**Public Discussion - Potential Projects that could be eligible for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding; Strategies for Funding**

Heather Richter, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), gave an overview of the committee’s work. The CPA was adopted in Beverly in 2012. The CPC administers funds accrued locally from a real estate tax surcharge and is matched by state funds. Round eight funding recommendations are with the City Council for their consideration, which will be reviewed at the May 3rd City Council meeting. There are statutory restrictions as to how CPA funds may be spent, and the City website has all the relevant information and documents. The allowable spending categories are open space, recreational land, community housing, and historic resources for the purposes of creation, acquisition, preservation, support, and rehabilitation. Richter noted that the CPC has only approved a bond payment once, for the Camp Paradise property, as committing against future years’ funding is a serious decision, in part because there’s no absolute guarantee that the CPA will be in effect years from now, and also because reducing available funds for future years’ budgets will consequently reduce available funds for CPA support for community projects.

Michael Cahill, Mayor, presented some of the potential projects for consideration. The list included Anchor Point family housing, Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Lynch Park Carriage House, Beverly Golf & Tennis Clubhouse, GAR Hall, City Hall, City cemeteries, Historic Beverly assets, historic resources surveys, National Register nominations, Green Hill parcel, land contiguous to protected properties, future opportunities for downtown pocket parks, and active recreation needs. He noted that some of the land opportunities can come up out of cycle and that this is not an exhaustive list.

Bryant Ayles, Finance Director, stated to date since its inception the fund has brought in, through the surcharge and state match, over \$7.2 million. More than \$6 million has been distributed to various projects. What remains is just about \$1.1 million in different categories. For FY22 we are expecting about \$1.1 million more.

Guanci opened the discussion, rotating through the committees and commissions present.

### Community Preservation Committee

Derek Beckwith, Planning Board Representative on the CPC, stated tonight is really about listening to the ideas others have. One of the things that is intriguing is the idea of bonding to pay for some of these big-ticket items. Bonding does come with a price and limits what the committee can spend money on, so historically we've really looked very carefully at how much we want to cut future projects. There are so many expensive items on the horizon. Every funding that comes before us, part of the decision-making process is to see how many others are contributing to the project and virtually every project that we do fund has multiple contributors, both to see community support and because we do have a limited amount of money. It's going to be a fine balance going forward. We have to be careful not to deplete all the money that's available for other community efforts along the way.

Wendy Pearl, Historic District Commission Representative on the CPC, noted things that weren't on the list that the CPC has seen come back and that it would be nice to see plans and priorities around the work in the City Clerk's Office and recreation needs. Pearl also highlighted the Dane Street bathhouse, and noted it would be interesting to see how climate analysis that has been going on might lend itself to projects that combine preservation of open space, restoration of wetlands and improvements to some of the recreational facilities on the shorelines. Having reserves on hand for housing and open space projects is really important. For some of the historic projects, if some properties are prioritized for projects, the City should still make sure to maintain the others at least minimally, that way the project doesn't become more expensive or impossible.

Robert Buchsbaum, Conservation Commission Representative on the CPC, stated he is looking forward to open space projects.

### Affordable Housing Trust

Sue Gabriel stated that although the Housing Trust has not come before the CPC with requests, the housing projects that have been funded are so important to the community.

Ayles clarified that the City has bonded once through the CPC, and the way that works once the body and the City commit to a borrowing through the CPC, that funding cannot be removed, so the voters cannot choose to remove the surcharge if the body is still obligated to pay debt service; that revenue source must remain in place until the commitment is paid. With the Camp Paradise purchase, we decided we would take a 10-year note for the \$450,000 principle. Banks offer premiums up front, almost like a rebate; when looking to evaluate the true cost of borrowing, we look at it on a net interest cost. Ayles also noted that the interest rates are very low right now, so it could be a good time to begin to tackle some of these larger projects.

### Beverly Golf and Tennis Commission

Bill Lowd presented on several of the CPC projects in the past 10 years, mostly for the clubhouse. He said the building was built in 1911 and the commission is looking to preserve the features of the historic building. It was last estimated at three million dollars a few years ago, and there will hopefully be an updated estimate by this fall.

### Historic District Commission

Suzie LaMont, spoke to some of the historic preservation concerns, stating that affordable housing projects and preservation projects can go together, like the Briscoe project. LaMont also emphasized the value of inventory work and National Historic Register nominations. Part of the importance of getting those done a little ahead of time of some of the big projects is that if we can get those recognized and listed by the register, then it enables us to leverage more funding opportunities to pay for the big ticket projects.

Wendy Pearl stated the work of the commission is to start to recognize some of the unrecognized properties out there.

Caroline Mason underscored the importance of the National Register and extending the district, stating that there is very little protection in the City for many treasures including the Hale House and the Hale Farm; we're far behind in where we need to be to really protect resources, so any work that can be done in the way of recognizing and looking at these properties carefully is really important.

### Open Space and Recreation Commission

David Alden St. Pierre said there are lots of things out there that the commission would love to see happen to try to preserve some open space and increase usage opportunities for our citizens. Many of the projects are big ticket items, which has been one of the reasons not a lot have gone through yet.

Wayne Miller asked what can be done systematically to be able to move with alacrity when opportunities arise, for instance, in a position like right of first refusal.

Ayles stated that this revenue source is not significant enough to be able to have reserves in place to be able to pounce when the opportunity arises, but the committee has done a very good job maintaining the open space reserve balance, which would provide some flexibility. A lot of times these properties are already kind of highlighted through the Planning Department as properties to keep an eye on, and we also can explore grant opportunities that we might be able to leverage, as was the case with Camp Paradise. There's no one size fits all.

Cahill said if there's an opportunity that demands quick action, this goes to that conversation about if there is an appropriate role for bonding, and how the CPC and City Council should manage that. Right now the CPC is servicing debt on one bond issuance and certainly wouldn't want to take on a bunch of them and not have flexibility. Right now there's flexibility within the annual fund, but that flexibility would go away if there were three or four bond issuances with a

whole lot of debt service. To date, there's been one approval of a modest bond issuance, but that would seem to be a way to accomplish something that needed to happen quickly.

Gregory Sharp echoed what Mayor Cahill said, stating in order to capture open space and make it protected forever, we need to be flexible enough to bring a lot of money in a short time period.

Guanci stated he would really like to see some movement on 27x. He also thanked the commission for their work getting signage for Beverly's trails and woods, saying that many constituents have commented about how easy it is to find great places to take a hike in Beverly.

### Parks and Recreation Commission

Mark Casey said it is no secret how much help is needed with parks and recreation, between the tennis and basketball courts, which are really in bad shape and the ball fields and playgrounds that need help. We have been fortunate that the CPC has helped in many ways and that a lot of grants have helped.

Nancy Marino stated that right now even basic maintenance on tennis and basketball courts cannot be kept up and thanked the CPC for their generosity over the years.

Jan Jefgood stated that parks and recreation probably touches more people in Beverly than any of the other commissions. A lot of parks need help.

Bill Lowd said the CPC has really come through a number of times. A survey is done every year of what the needs are, and tennis courts and basketball courts come up often. It's amazing how quickly they deteriorate.

Bruce Doig said parks and recreation has benefitted from about 17 projects since 2015 with the CPC. There's still a huge need with \$500,000 to a million dollars' worth of projects for parks alone and three tennis courts and a couple basketball courts that need to be replaced. There are 28 playgrounds in the city, so even if we do one or two a year by the time we complete the cycle, those playgrounds will be 25 years old, so we're constantly repairing and replacing equipment as needed, which adds up. The bath house at Dane Street beach was done a few years ago and all the fixtures and stalls were replaced. There was a much larger plan we were hoping to get some money for, but at the time there were some concerns about flooding, so we didn't push forward. We are happy to work with neighborhood groups and corporations to get donations. The carriage house at Lynch Park is a gorgeous building that we would love to turn into a community center that can be used by everybody, but it's a five million dollar project. The tennis courts at Cove playground and Cahill Park in Centerville definitely need to be replaced. The basketball courts at Holcroft and Bartlett Gardens need major work or to be replaced. There is the possibility of getting a state grant for about \$400,000 that will apply to some if not all of those repairs along with some CPC funding and some other opportunities.

Chris LaPointe from Essex County Greenbelt said that working on open space projects and conservation real estate requires flexibility. Greenbelt would love to see more open space projects and work in partnership with the City. Greenbelt works with cities and towns across the county, particularly with CPA towns, to try to work with landowners and structure projects in ways that allow the time that is needed to pull together contracts, grants, and fundraising, so no

one funding source has to shoulder all of the burden. LaPointe stated he was glad to hear the questions on and interest in bonding. Our experience is that many communities find particularly with real estate projects, where the timing is uncertain, the opportunity is sort of once in a lifetime, and the borrowing rates are attractive, bonding can be a useful tool for some of these open space projects. Greenbelt can be a potential partner and a resource going forward with open space projects.

David Santomenna from Trustees of Reservations stated that the Trustees are always looking for projects and trying to cultivate and nurture them; the ability to be on a grant schedule is finite at best. The Trustees have been working with communities across the state on acquisitions and stewardship work. The Moraine Farm property is front and center at the moment.

Susan Gogonian from Historic Beverly thanked CPC for help with projects. Last summer the world discovered Hale Farm due to the concerts the Cabot held there. Gogonian stated she wanted to support a couple things she heard previously this evening, first of all, the need for the National Register District nominations to be done. That alone won't protect anything, but it will help identify what is in need of protection and preservation. The second thing is the cemeteries. They are a hugely important historic and genealogical resource, and there are some really critical issues that need to be taken care of. Gogonian encouraged attention to that because the City could lose a lot of the stones in some of the most historic spots of Beverly cemeteries.

Andrew DeFranza from Harborlight Community Partners highlighted Suzie LaMont's point earlier about whenever there is an opportunity to do more than one thing at a time, that's a really big win. Briscoe is a great example of being historic, housing, and open space preservation at one time. The more both in Beverly and around the region we are able to integrate some of these important community priorities, the better that is and the more value we get as a community out of those dollars. DeFranza expressed gratitude to the Community Preservation Committee, the residents of Beverly who fund it, and the delegation at the State House who continues to advocate for the matching funds. The Anchor Point groundbreaking is coming up on June 4th for anyone who would like to attend.

### City Council

Rotondo stated he was involved in a CPC process a few years ago with the Livingstone Park project, and he gave high accolades for how the CPC worked and the collaboration with city departments to get the project going. Rotondo asked for clarification on, since Camp Paradise has been bonded, if voters would be able to repeal the CPA and what the liability would be to continue paying that bond. Rotondo also asked if larger projects like the carriage house or clubhouse would be something that could be collaborative between the City and CPC funding.

Ayles stated the way he understands it to work is if the City continues to have the annual obligation of about \$50,000 a year in debt service, the voters cannot eliminate the surcharge completely. They would need to leave in place at least enough to cover the bond obligation that

is in place. So if, for example, the City borrowed for 30 years for the carriage house, the City would need to maintain that level of revenue coming through the CPA for the next 30 years. As for the second question, here is a sense of what the dollar cost would be. The City would be looking at around \$65,000 a year in debt service at a declining payment. In year one, it would be about \$65,000 per million on a 30-year note, so the quick math, if it's a five million dollar project, then multiply the \$65,000 by five; it can add up quickly.

Cahill stated that by now the CPA is such an understood and accepted part of the average homeowner's annual bills, and collectively everybody who has been part of this venture has brought quality projects forward, has had those projects vetted and improved upon and funded. Cahill said he believes the community overwhelmingly sees the value in what the CPA funds make possible, so, if we collectively keep managing our parts in this and keeping faith with the taxpayer, this fund is likely to continue to be a part of what we have available to the community to meet these needs going forward. If we keep managing our parts of this responsibly, hopefully the support for the CPA in Beverly is going to be strong for years and decades to come.

Rotondo asked if the CPC has a financial policy similar to that of the City or the City Council or if there was a document laying out how much the CPC wants to set aside for reserves or bonding purposes.

Ayles stated there is always value in having policies because, as long as it is thoughtfully done, it can be a tool to help support a longer range vision for resources.

Richter stated the CPC's policy financially is to be as flexible as possible by leaving as much money as available in the general reserve. That has been the goal because of out-of-cycle opportunities and being able to move monies more easily between categories. There has not been a conversation about a specific amount or percentage for a bond commitment, but there really hasn't been that magnitude of projects before the committee.

Flaherty stated he agreed with the mayor that collectively as a group we have been good stewards of this money and people seem to appreciate where we spend this money. It would be nice with the interest rates being low if collectively we can come together. There are a lot of competing interests. Flaherty mentioned the idea of open space, the carriage house project, fields and courts, and what Susan had talked about with the cemeteries, because once that history is gone, it's gone forever, as well as the idea of combining CPC funds, bonding, grant possibilities, and fundraising. It's not going to happen overnight, but we should take advantage of those opportunities.

Rand echoed Ms. Pearl's suggestion that recreation projects could use more of an attack plan on grouping those projects together and supported the sentiment of larger planned recreation projects. Rand stated she has been getting requests for some places in Ward 2 like Independence Park, Pleasant View Beach, and Gillis Park, and asked if the City has considered more of a redesign of the whole park. The civic association won a grant with the City to redo the stairs at Gillis Park, but there's a lot of interest in an overhaul. Rand asked the CPC members if they had seen any really innovative uses of CPC funding recently across the state.

Richter stated one of the things that the committee had hoped for when starting this journey was that we would see some very heroic projects for the City. CPC doesn't fund the whole project,

but we would like to see the development of the waterfront for the whole City with an overall plan. Things that really haven't come before us yet.

Wynne stated there has been some planning around the waterfront, so looking to advance that is a shared goal. One of the priorities has been getting access to the waterfront, but there are some legal hurdles to that in terms of public access and the way that CPC money can be granted. We are making slow progress there. There has been talk of re-doing some of the parks. The City of Beverly has an open space and recreation plan that must be updated every five years, and Chelsea and the Open Space and Recreation Commission are just getting underway on restarting that. It will be started this year for the public process and then finalized next year, so that may be another opportunity to think about some of these projects.

Pearl said she went to a training in Somerville hosted in one of the schools that was being redone. They had a lot of capital investment in their school buildings, and in the courtyard of the school, which was a rehab of an old building, they created a community garden using CPA funds. In Beverly, the community garden plots are all reserved and there's a real need there for community gardens. There's a very expansive use of the open space category, where if we wanted to do a habitat project or something other than a recreational open space project, there are opportunities for those. Somerville is very innovative in the way they think about CPA and fitting into the small space of the projects they are doing.

Copeland stated from his perspective there are very few actual city parks. There are a lot of community parks, meaning parks that are situated within communities and right on top of houses. McPherson is more of a City park where there are the skating ramps, basketball, baseball, and lot of different things there, and it does not about other people's housing so people can go there, play and have fun. There aren't too many of those in the City, and as we grow and move forward, we are probably going to need to have at least one more of those or something of that stature within the City. With these little community parks, it's hard to really go there, outside of just the immediate people living in that area. As we think about these plans that might be something we want to put into effect as well. Looking through this from a business perspective, strategically in conjunction with or before we look at bonding, we should be looking into how we can increase revenues in categories that have private uses like the clubhouse, carriage house or fields. Copeland stated he liked the idea of having a community center at Lynch Park, so if the City is doing something like that it is a bit different. If we're going towards private functions though, or there is an event that is not open to the whole community, then like any business year over year, the City should look at how to increase the revenues that are being brought in. Even if we can grow the money we are bringing in for different fields, then that can pay into the cost of maintenance going forward. If we are moving towards bonding, there are a couple things we have to consider first. We have to look at maximizing, or at least increasing, the revenues that some of these historical structures are going to bring in, how we can go about that even from state and federal grants and we have to think about other bonding that we will need going forward in the future to help our community grow. We have to balance those.

Houseman stated Councilor Copeland raised an interesting point about balancing. However, we have the opportunity to take advantage of historically low interest rates. Trying to maximize the opportunities that are presented is a challenge as is trying to prioritize the best way to use the interest rates that are out there now. Houseman stated that one of the things that caught his attention this evening was making sure that we move as quickly as possible on getting historic

preservation designations in place because that does help leverage funding. He also said that he was astounded when Bruce Doig talked about the condition and the number of the parks and by the time the City has cycled through the whole series, those parks are now 25 years older. It presents a real challenge to try to figure out strategically a better way to address ways to manage the maintenance and repair of those. Houseman recognized and thanked the extraordinary volunteers, stating that it is what makes Beverly so incredibly special, that there are so many people so dedicated and so willing to devote their time and energies to helping others and helping make this City a better place to live.

Ames stated she represents some of the most economically-challenged and culturally diverse neighborhoods in the City and that she has been on a path to try to bring new life to Holcroft Park/the Gage Street playground in the middle of Gloucester Crossing. It's a beautiful, historical park with multi-generational use. Ames stated she has been going through this process and trying to bring stakeholders to the table and get locals invigorated to see a vision where they can make the park their own, a place to gather and be in community together. This is a neighborhood often with families and individuals who don't have open space or backyards. In the past year, we have endeavored to say that race is a health crisis, and when we look at pockets of the City where we can make significant impacts for people's physical and emotional health, especially coming out of this pandemic, all of us here feel that this is really important. As we move forward, this is a great first conversation and moving forward the concepts of maintenance for all these areas and buildings and parks is critical.

Cahill thanked the many volunteers and city staff.

Open Space and Recreation Commission adjourned their meeting.

Historic District Commission adjourned their meeting.

Beverly Golf and Tennis Commission adjourned their meeting.

Trustees of the Affordable Housing Trust adjourned their meeting.

Community Preservation Committee adjourned their meeting.

Parks and Recreations Commission adjourned their meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the City Council meeting. A roll call vote was taken, and the meeting adjourned at 9:02pm.