



Mark Krackiewicz, Chair
Jon Bockian, Vice Chair
Bob DiRico
Dennis J. Duff
Allen Gallagher
Abigail Hammett
Jamie O'Connell
Elodia Thomas
Matthew Walter

CITY OF WATERTOWN

Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of CPC Public Hearing, Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 7 PM held in hybrid format in the Lower Hearing Room of City Hall.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Members Present: Mark Krackiewicz, Chair; Jon Bockian, Vice Chair; Bob DiRico; Dennis J. Duff; Allen Gallagher; Abigail Hammett, Jamie O'Connell, Elodia Thomas, and Matt Walter.

Others Present: Michelle Moon, Department of Community Development and Planning; Lisa Feltner, City Council; Cliff Cook, Affordable Housing Trust; Genie Johnson, and Libby Shaw.

Joined Remotely: Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator

Joining Remotely (before interruption at the beginning of the meeting): Linda Scott; Leo Martin; Joyce Kell; Nancy Hammett; Joan Gumbleton; Tony Palomba, City Council; Jacob Smith; Kevin Ryan; and Tim Kinnan.

1. Introductions

Mark Krackiewicz opened the hearing at 7:10 PM and noted it was being held in a hybrid format per the Governor's order, suspending certain provisions of Open Meeting Laws. He asked CPC members to introduce themselves.

2. Hearing Presentation

A. FY 2025 Draft CPA Annual Report and Overview

NOTE: Before the summary PowerPoint was displayed, the hearing was Zoom-bombed. The interruption prevented the public from joining online. The Committee briefly discussed whether to proceed and decided to continue on the chance that the public hearing was valid since all the CPC members were present.

Mark summarized the FY2025 CPA Annual Report attached to these minutes. The PowerPoint Presentation is also attached to these minutes.

B. Walker Pond and Saltonstall Park Update by Michelle Moon, Open Space Planner

Michelle gave an update on the two park improvement projects. The highlights for Walker Pond were:

- 30 species of trees observed (predominately black cherry, red maple and oaks)
- Most common invasive species are tree-of-heaven and glossy buckthorn
- Most common aquatic vegetation is native cupped watermoss
- Some cyanobacteria detected, but not a danger to humans and dogs
- Bullfrogs heard though none seen
- Black crown night heron sighted (not its normal habitat)
- 1-22 species of waterbugs found in several samples. They were pollution-tolerant species.

The first community engagement meet is scheduled on Thursday, August 14th with a 5pm site walk and 6pm indoor meeting. All the ecological reports will be available in a few weeks.

Jamie O'Connell asked if sediment in the pond was tested when the Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) was placed on the property or was it contained to the land. Libby Shaw asked who owned the minor pond to the east as it would be ecologically important as related to the whole area. Michelle would have to review the AUL and didn't have all the property lines, but informed Libby that the ecological counts included that property she referred to. Libby stated it would be a good idea for the city to acquire that property in the future to preserve the whole natural area.

After Michelle mentioned there would be three community meetings, Abigail Hammett asked if the meetings were going to have the same content. Michelle replied that the meetings would not be the same, with the first being to collect ideas, present initial concepts to obtain feedback and finally, to present a revised conceptual design based on community feedback.

Highlights of the Saltonstall Park update:

There were adjustments made for the Farmer's Market and the concert series will be starting shortly. The park should be completed in August.

Libby Shaw stated there were two trees lost, one failed and the other tree's transplant was mismanaged. Libby noted Mike Micieli had some beautiful substitutes, including an elm and a replacement red maple. Libby thought the contractor should be held to account to replace the tree at its full value.

Lanae asked if the grass would be roped off when the park is open to the public. Michelle confirmed there would be measures taken to allow the grass to become established. Councilor Feltner asked if there would be advertisements on the website or notifications of where to go for the concerts. Mark reminded everyone that one of the conditions of funding was a process be established for reserving the pavilion. Elodia asked about the skin for the pavilion roof. Michelle said after going through several vendors the fabric should be installed in July. Michelle Moon's presentation is attached to these minutes.

3. Open Public Comment

Cliff Cook's comments are summarized below and his written remarks are attached to these minutes.

My name is Cliff Cook. I'm the Chair of the Watertown Affordable Housing Trust. The Trust was formed in 2022.

Since the inception of the Trust the two boards have endeavored to develop a productive working relationship. The two chairs, along with assigned staff, have met when the Trust has had relevant information to share about its own activities, such as site search.

As an example, I will point to our joint session on the Willow Park replacement project undertaken by POAH and the Watertown Housing Authority. Both the CPC and the Trust have each provided their largest grant to date to Willow Street, \$4M from the CPC and \$400,000 from the Trust. This level of support will weigh heavily in favor of the project as it competes for limited state funding.

Recently, the Trust initiated the process to update the city's housing plan for the period 2026-2030. The CPC's chair joined us during our housing data discussion and made several suggestions that we will act upon.

Here are a few data highlights that the Trust has uncovered during our data analysis for the updated plan:

- The city's median income rose in the past five years to \$123,422 from \$101,103.
- Over the past 5 years the proportion of Watertown households earning less than 80% of area median income (AMI) rose from 32% to 39%. (Households earning 80% or less of median income qualify for one or more affordable housing programs.)
- In spite of our seemingly high income distribution, over 5,200 Watertown households are cost burdened. This figure includes 32% of all households and almost 40% of renter households. (A cost burdened household is one paying more than 30% of income toward housing costs.)
- Half of these 5,200 HHs are extremely cost burdened, paying over 50% of income toward housing. This includes 21% of all renter households.
- Cost burden is particularly acute for those earning less than 30% of area median income - 79% of such households are cost burdened and 68% are extremely cost burdened.

The Trust expects that the updated housing plan will focus on deeper affordability.

The Trust will continue to keep the CPC chair informed of our activities. We think both boards would benefit from an even more collaborative relationship. Understanding that the CPC will always have its own process, one idea to consider is a joint application form for housing projects.

Matt Walter asked if the Trust was involved in the acquisition of the Sterritt Lumber site and Cliff responded the Trust was not.

Libby Shaw asked about the people who live in Willow Park having the right to return and inquired where those residents are now. Allen Gallagher answered that the project had not begun yet. He pointed out the residents will be relocated and all their rent will be paid and their children will be transported to school. The Housing Authority is competing against other communities for limited state funding for the Willow Park project. Cliff noted the level of community support from the Trust and Community Preservation Act funds is in the Willow Park project's favor.

Abigail said that as part of the Watertown Square Planning rezoning there was discussion about doing a study on affordable housing creation and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). She asked how that dovetails with the housing plan. Cliff said the Department of Community Development and Planning was hiring a consultant to conduct an incentives study, looking at private developers and "capital A" affordable housing developers. The city is drafting an ADU ordinance. Elodia asked about the cutbacks on Section 8 housing vouchers. Cliff said the Trust has not discussed that. Dennis Duff asked if the Trust would put funds into the voucher program. Cliff said the Trust was hesitant to get involved in putting the city on the line for vouchers for years.

Bob DiRico asked where Trust's funds come from other than the City Council. Cliff replied that some funding came from the federal funds of the Metro West HOME Consortium. There was also rehab loan program that as loans are paid off, the funds go to the Housing Authority account. He added that there was some money for "payment in lieu of" from smaller developments. The Trust is banking on Linkage payments from large developments.

Lanae read comments from the public sent by email. They are attached to these minutes.

Jamie brought up that there is a misconception that the CPC is holding funds in reserve when they are actually there and available for projects should applications come forward.

Cliff mentioned that Larry Field has had a number of conversations with affordable housing developers, hoping that over time some projects will develop. It is difficult because a minimum of 48 units are needed for the finances to be feasible.

Jamie asked about the CPC working with Trust so that applicants don't have to apply to both bodies. Elodia stated that a joint application process could easily be developed.

Mark raised that it made the Willow Park project application stronger because funds came from two different bodies and the CPA funds are approved by the City Council.

Abigail brought up that for land acquisition the CPA process may be an impediment to the Trust's ability to act quickly.

Mark will put the working relationship between the CPC and the AHT on the next agenda for further discussion.

4. Close Public Hearing

Mark closed the public hearing

5. Call to Order

Mark proceeded with the regular meeting on the chance it may be valid.

6. Acceptance of Minutes

A. 2025-4-17-Draft-CPC-Minutes

Motion: Allen Gallagher moved to accept the 2025-4-17 minutes with Jon's proposed changes and Matt Walter seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion carried by unanimous vote.

B. 2025-5-15-Draft-CPC-Minutes

Motion: Jon moved to accept the minutes with the addition of the list of questions posed to the Watertown Authority on the 103 Nichols Avenue project along with their answers.

Vote: The motion carried by a show of hands. Dennis J. Duff voted present.

7. Coordinator Update - CPA Projects

Lanae gave an update on phased projects and other projects in progress.

103 Nichols Avenue Group Home - Watertown Housing Authority had not gone to bid in May and doesn't have a refined request. The Housing Authority was planning to present in July after their last postponement. Lanae asked if it made sense for them to present after they had their bids as well as more information about the status of non-CPA sources of funds.

The 103 Nichols Avenue will be deferred until after the project goes to bid.

City Hall Paintings - The sign panels had been put on hold for a bit. Now that Elodia has been diligently working on panel content, there should be a draft for Joyce Kelly to review by the end of next week.

Willow Park - The project received a unanimous vote from the Zoning Board of Appeals for its Comprehensive Permit approval last month and they are waiting for the final issuance of the decision, which is expected early next week.

The financing landscape has shifted since the Council's approval of funds.

Preservation of Affordable Housing is navigating changes to HUD and green financing, They are looking to potential improvements in the broader financing environment ahead of re-applying to the state this fall.

Cemeteries - Michelle Moon is preparing an application in consultation with the

Parks Division and the Historical Society of Watertown as a co-applicant. Michelle expects to submit the application some time in July.

The Commander's Mansion landscape will be taken up some time during the next fiscal year by Michelle Moon.

8. Election of Committee Chairs

Mark described that the City Manager has submitted names to the City Council to replace him and Jon on the CPC. Next there are several more steps in the process. He proposed that he and Jon continue as chairs until the new CPC members are appointed.

Motion: Dennis made a motion that Mark and Jon continue as chairs until new members are appointed. Allen Gallagher seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion carried by unanimous vote.

5. Adjourn

Motion: Dennis J. Duff moved to adjourn, and Allen Gallagher seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Adjournment: 8:52 PM

Attachments:

1. [Draft FY2025 CPA Annual Report](#)
2. [2025 Public Hearing Presentation](#)
3. [Walker Pond and Saltonstall Park Presentation](#)
4. [Cliff Cook Written Comments - 6/26/25 Public Hearing](#)
5. [Public Hearing Comments Received by Email](#)