



Allen Gallagher, Interim  
Chair  
Bob DiRico  
Dennis J. Duff  
Allison Eck  
Abigail Hammett  
Marissa Mayo  
Jamie O'Connell  
Amy Plovnick  
Matthew Walter

## CITY OF WATERTOWN Community Preservation Committee

**Minutes of CPC Meeting Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 7 PM held in hybrid format in the Lower Hearing Room of City Hall.**

**Committee Members Present:** Allen Gallagher, Interim Chair; Dennis J. Duff; Allison Eck; Abigail Hammett; Jamie O'Connell; Amy Plovnick and Matt Walter.

**Joining Remotely:** Bob DiRico

**Absent:** Marissa Mayo

**Others Joining:** Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator; Jackie Weir, Watertown Housing Authority; Cory Mian, and Grace Dowling, Preservation of Affordable Housing; Chris Nixon; Public Buildings Department; Nicole Gardner, City Council; Cliff Cook, Watertown Affordable Housing Trust; James Mello, Watertown Housing Authority; Jacky van Leeuwen; and Alex York.

**Others Joining Remotely:** Christine Rogers, CPC Housing Consultant

### 1. Call to Order

Allen Gallagher called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and noted it was being held in a hybrid format per the Governor's order suspending certain provisions of Open Meeting Law.

### 2. Committee Discussion

#### A. Willow Park Redevelopment - Additional Request Presentation

Allen read a support letter for the project from Jacky van Leeuwen that is attached to these minutes.

Jackie Weir of the Watertown Housing Authority (WHA), joined by Cory Mian and Grace Dowling of Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), presented the project with a recap of the design team and program details. The presenters

also provided updates on the status of project permitting and financing. Their presentation is attached to these minutes. Cory explained the need for more funds because of changes to Housing and Urban Development rental subsidies and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits available to the project. She anticipated the state would see a path to financial closing on the project by the end of 2026.

Cory described the reduction in uses of funds and expected 50% complete construction drawings as well as updated cost estimates to be ready soon. POAH's memo requesting additional funds is attached to these minutes. That memo details the reasons why more funds are needed and includes a revised budget.

Dennis J. Duff commented that the reason the state declined the project last year had nothing to do with the quality of the project, rather it was because the project didn't have all the required elements such as zoning approval.

Cory answered Dennis' question about the house being acquired on Nichols Avenue. She assured the CPC that their Purchase and Sale agreement provided much flexibility and time, so the project wasn't carrying the acquisition cost.

Dennis asked if cutting units would fill a funding gap. Cory said that would make the project less attractive to the state.

Abigail Hammett inquired if the reduced rent would get passed on to the tenant. Cory answered the reduction would not affect the rent charged for the units.

Abigail was concerned about lower soft costs and contingency making the project riskier. She wondered if more funding from the CPC would be helpful.

Christine Rogers added there is uncertainty in the process and that a competitive RFP process would get the best interest rates from lenders and investors and the most competitive prices from a General Contractor.

Amy Plovnick asked about the portion of predevelopment funds needed and what the funds would be used for. Cory emphasized the corporation was carrying predevelopment costs and as much as possible of the request was needed for predevelopment.

Jamie O'Connell asked if the project would save money on interest if the CPC granted predevelopment funds.

Cory said the CPC wouldn't lose money invested in predevelopment because POAH intended to get the project done.

Allison Eck asked if it was possible for the Housing and Urban Development rental subsidies to get smaller and Jackie Weir was confident the Housing Authority would obtain the rental subsidies needed to maintain the project's feasibility.

Matt Walter asked if there was a possibility the team would come back to the CPC for more funding.

Cory said if there were a funding gap the state would find a way to fill it, but the project would take longer to complete. If the operating subsidy is lost Cory could envision coming back to the CPC for another \$1M. She further explained

the project was entitled to an equity boost if it closed by the end of 2026 and that there are also caps on what can be charged for rents.

Bob DiRico asked if predevelopment funds are used before the state application is submitted and state funds are not awarded would those funds be lost.

Christine Rogers pointed out the developer is taking a risk and CPC funds for predevelopment would be put at risk.

Dennis asked what would happen to the house on Nichols Ave. Cory answered they would have to purchase it.

Lanae Handy proposed releasing the predevelopment funds incrementally based on project milestones. Christine Rogers suggested releasing \$500,000 once POAH is invited to submit a full application to the state and the other \$500,000 after notification that the project received state financing.

**Motion:** Dennis moved to recommend Preservation of Affordable Housing and the Watertown Housing Authority be awarded \$2M for the Willow Park Redevelopment project conditioned on \$500,000 becoming available for reimbursement if there is an invitation to submit a full application and the remaining \$500,000 be available if there is notification of state funding award for the project. Amy Plovnick seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Bob DiRico, Jamie O’Connell, Matt Walter, Amy Plovnick, Abigail Hammett, Dennis J. Duff, Allison Eck, and Allen Gallagher.

#### B. Commander’s Mansion Presentation

Allen introduced Chris Nixon of the Department of Public Buildings, whose presentation is attached to these minutes. Chris summarized the request, which focused on the following four areas:

- Architectural and engineering evaluation and design of the building envelope restoration;
- Window Restoration;
- Architectural and engineering evaluation and design accessible routes and entries to address Americans with Disabilities Act audit; and
- Elevator modernization.

He explained he had identified the windows in the worse shape and would save what was salvageable on the elevator. Matt Walter asked if the window frames were in good shape. Matt also asked about the jambs, if the slate roof repair would be a strip and repair, and if the Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) was useful.

Chris and Chris responded that: the frames were not rotted; most jambs would not need to be restored; the roof would not need to be stripped; and the CLR provided useful information about what was damaged and much interesting historical information and photographs.

Matt asked if the city could pay for the elevator without CPA funds. Chris said there was no funding available at that level so he would have to go through the

Capital Improvement Plan process. At this time there was only \$30,000 available annually for the Commander's Mansion improvements from Community Development and Planning in addition to the annual allocation by the Public Buildings Department.

Amy Plovnick asked what the public would have access to on the second floor. Chris replied, "The building would be more functional for public use with elevator access to second-floor rooms for private and public events."

Jamie O'Connell asked whether the elevator repair was maintenance because CPA funds are not to be used for maintenance. Chris answered the elevator work was an upgrade and not routine maintenance.

Abigail Hammett asked about the procurement of the design and whether there would be a Request for Proposals process. Chris responded that there would be a Request for Qualifications process to ensure firms with experience in historic envelope restoration were evaluated. Abigail worried that there wouldn't be enough competitive pressure on firms and that the contract should be structured with a fixed or not to exceed fee and remained concerned about the high architectural fees. Chris noted the contract would require the architect to bill hourly with a not to exceed clause. According to Chris, the goal is to obtain 100% schematics that provide enough information for a well-informed cost estimate.

Dennis asked if Chris had considered using the GBH public TV program, *This Old House*. Chris replied that the scale may be too large and they would not entertain a public procurement process.

Lanae asked if the construction documents and construction would be two separate phases and Chris assured the CPC that the work could be done in one phase with a good cost estimate.

Bob asked about window work being done and whether there could be water damage when windows are restored off site. Chris said window sash work could be done because the interior would be well protected by the storm windows remaining in place during the restoration.

Matt inquired about the city's maintenance plan for the elevator and Abigail clarified that Chris is seeking a cost set rather than a bid set as described in his memo.

**Motion:** Matt Walter moved to recommend \$610,000 for the Commander's Mansion building envelope renovation and elevator modernization, known as Phase I. Dennis J. Duff seconded the motion.

Abigail asked if a condition could be placed to hold a public tour. Chris was amenable to the request and also suggested holding a CPC meeting at the mansion.

**Vote:** Allison Eck, Jamie O'Connell, Matt Walter, Abigail Hammett, Dennis J. Duff, Amy Plovnick, Bob DiRico, and Allen Gallagher voted in favor.

### C. Future CPC Chairperson

Allen announced he would serve as Chair through December to present the CPA Funding recommendation to the City Council and a new chair was needed beyond that. Lanae asked if anyone was willing to serve as permanent chair for a one-year term and no one was willing.

**Motion:** Dennis J. Duff nominated Bob DiRico as interim chair for a 3-month term. Matt Walter seconded the motion. A vote was taken to elect Bob DiRico as interim chair.

**Vote:** Jamie O’Connell, Amy Plovnick, Dennis J. Duff, Bob DiRico, Allison Eck, Abigail Hammett, Matt Walter, and Allen Gallagher voted in favor.

## 3. Coordinator Update

### A. CPA Funds as of 9/30/25

Lanae summarized the CPA financials attached to these minutes. She reported the state match for 2025 was 16.9% of the \$3,164,200 surcharge revenue amounting to \$533,707. When Lanae provided the balances in the category reserve, she pointed out the motion to recommend CPA projects should include where the recommended funds would be drawn from.

**Motion:** Dennis J. Duff moved to transfer \$1million from the budgeted reserve to the community housing reserve, and Abigail Hammett seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Bob DiRico, Jamie O’Connell, Abigail Hammett, Dennis J. Duff, Allison Eck, Amy Plovnick, Matt Walter, and Allen Gallagher voted in favor.

Allen mentioned that he asked Lanae for the summary to show the CPA surcharge generated over 2 million annually. Matt brought up that last year was the first time the CPC recommended more in funding than was generated from the annual surcharge and state match. Lanae added the same thing would occur this year and eventually the CPC may no longer have so much in the fund balance due to the expected costs of upcoming projects, such as Walker Pond, the historic cemeteries, and the Commander’s Mansion restoration, which would each cost millions of dollars.

### B. Project Financial Tracking

Lanae informed the CPC that the Saltonstall project will likely return a sizeable amount back to the Open Space/Outdoor Recreation reserve. The financial tracking for the project is attached to these minutes.

## 4. Acceptance of Minutes

### A. 2025-10-16-Draft-CPC Minutes

**Motion:** Matt Walter moved to accept the October 16, 2025, minutes as written and Allen Gallagher seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Dennis J. Duff, Allison Eck, Jamie O’Connell, Bob DiRico, Amy Plovnick, Matthew Walter, Abigail Hammett, and Allen Gallagher voted in favor.

## 5. Adjourn

**Motion:** Dennis J. Duff moved to adjourn, and Jamie O’Connell seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Jamie O’Connell, Amy Plovnick, Allen Gallagher, Bob DiRico, Allison Eck, Matt Walter, Dennis J. Duff, and Abigail Hammett voted in favor.

**Adjournment: 9:39 PM**

### **Attachments:**

1. [Willow Park Redevelopment Additional Request Presentation](#)
2. [Commander’s Mansion Building Envelope Restoration Application Presentation](#)
3. [CPA Funds as of 9/30/25](#)
4. [CPA Project Financial Tracking](#)