



Bob DiRico, Chair
Dennis J. Duff
Allison Eck
Allen Gallagher
Abigail Hammett
Marissa Mayo
Amy Plovnick
Marilyn Salvas
Matthew Walter

CITY OF WATERTOWN Community Preservation Committee

Minutes of CPC Meeting Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 7 PM held in hybrid format in the Lower Hearing Room of City Hall.

Committee Members Present: Bob DiRico, Chair; Dennis J. Duff; Allison Eck; Allen Gallagher; Abigail Hammett; Marissa Mayo; Marilyn Salvas and Matt Walter.

Others Joining: Lanae Handy, Community Preservation Coordinator; Michelle Moon, Department of Community Development and Planning; Letitia Tormay, IMEG; Katie Swan, Department of Community Development and Planning; Leo Martin, Conservation Commission; Libby Shaw, Trees for Watertown; Genie Johnston, Trees for Watertown; Lori Shapiro, Watertown Community Gardens.

1. Call to Order

Bob DiRico called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM and noted it was being held in a hybrid format per the Governor's order suspending certain provisions of Open Meeting Law.

2. Walker Pond Presentation by IMEG Consultants

A. Final Design and Eco-Study (Phase1) Presentation

Michelle Moon presented an overview of the Walker Pond project that included existing conditions, environmental findings, community engagement process, and the conceptual design produced. The presentation is attached to these minutes.

CPC Questions

Question	Answer
Allen Gallagher How many parking spaces?	Michelle Moon 12 spaces pared down from 50
Will a structural engineer check the stability of the metal structure on the site?	Yes

<p>Allison Eck</p> <p>How will acoustics or how sound travels through the space impact design?</p>	<p>Letitia Tormay</p> <p>Will have play area/activity near and on lawn to avoid noise conflict with different or more passive uses.</p>
<p>Amy Plovnick</p> <p>Would construction documents and construction be completed in one phase?</p> <p>Are there other sources of funds?</p>	<p>Michelle</p> <p>To be determined</p> <p>The city plans to seek state grants that are a good fit.</p>
<p>Matt Walter</p> <p>Was there any conflict between community desired design elements and the professional opinion of staff and consultants?</p>	<p>Michelle</p> <p>There was consensus throughout the project.</p>
<p>Dennis Duff</p> <p>Is the design set?</p> <p>Is there additional parking for people who drive to the pond?</p>	<p>Michelle</p> <p>There are many unknowns. This is the concept with schematic and design development to be done.</p> <p>There are many units of housing near the pond and there is connectivity to the river. There are 8 public spots at Bell Watertown, that are labeled for public use, but it's not enforced.</p>
<p>Allen</p> <p>Any thoughts of dredging the pond to remove the junk?</p>	<p>Katie Swan</p> <p>That would require further environmental process.</p>
<p>Bob DiRico</p> <p>Any danger of liability if children fall in the pond and would it need to be fenced off?</p> <p>There is going to be a lot of activity and there will be a need for staff to oversee it.</p> <p>There will be requests and a need to shovel in the winter.</p> <p>The area will be a huge dog walking area and there will need to be someone to ensure dogs are leashed.</p>	<p>Michelle</p> <p>It is no worse than most urban ponds and swimming wouldn't be allowed.</p> <p>Katie</p> <p>It's an urban pond and you wouldn't want dogs to swim in it.</p> <p>Michelle</p> <p>(Related to activity and staffing comment) There's a lot more activity at Arsenal and think the setting is more natural and people will pack up what they bring in.</p>

<p>Matt</p> <p>What parts will need the most maintenance—a pollinator garden will need to be maintained.</p>	<p>Michelle</p> <p>The lawn and the trees in the forest.</p> <p>Bob</p> <p>The area near BJ's will need maintenance due to trash blowing in.</p>
<p>Abigail Hammett</p> <p>How much did the surveys influence the conceptual design?</p> <p>How much were the things delayed due to the studies?</p> <p>Is this considered the deliverable? Abigail would like to see more documentation.</p> <p>The layout of parking seems funny is that because of the truck turnaround?</p> <p>Could the Manley Way property allow parking on the weekends?</p> <p>Who did the cost estimate? Could that be shared as part of the concept package. What was assumed as the basis?</p>	<p>Letitia Tormay</p> <p>It influenced it quite a bit knowing how to design and program to feature wildlife ecologically valuable areas.</p> <p>Michelle</p> <p>The project was delayed by months.</p> <p>This was intended to be a summary of the process, many slides were cut.</p> <p>The next steps would involve a Licensed Site Professional, permitting and Conservation Commission review and other environmental issues</p> <p>Letitia</p> <p>Topography grades and materials would be added in further design development.</p> <p>Letitia</p> <p>A cost consultant did the estimate and the high-end amenities were used for the estimate.</p> <p>Michelle</p> <p>There are things in there that were not requested. Though once they get cut there may be some surprises that offset cost savings.</p>
<p>Public Comments</p> <p>Libby Shaw (Trees for Watertown)</p> <p>Would like to see it maintained as a natural space and would like to think about soundscape to preserve the natural environment.</p> <p>She is concerned about having a community garden in the space and thinks that community gardens would be more protected in other locations.</p>	

<p>Libby Shaw (continued)</p> <p>Make protection of the existing habitat the primary goal of the property and avoid impinging on wildlife. Don't clear woodlands to provide viewing platforms and swings should be far away from the pond.</p>	
<p>Genie Johnston (Trees for Watertown)</p> <p>The prevailing winds from the west and people camping out create the trash problem. Need to partner with Waltham to deal with the cleanup and maintenance.</p> <p>She likes the idea of making something out of the metal structure, but all the ideas require the cutting of a large oak tree, so incorporate the tree into the design because several large oaks near the truck turn around were lost</p>	
<p>Leo Martin</p> <p>Work with Waltham to make BJ's pick up their trash. He would like to see the metal structure saved rather than dug up. On parking, BJ's has a huge parking lot that is underutilized. Agrees that it is not a good spot for community gardens. There are more wetlands associated with the pond and the city should acquire the north parcel to complete the property.</p>	
<p>Allen</p> <p>Would a fence keep the trash out?</p>	<p>Genie Johnston</p> <p>No, the prevailing winds from the west will cause trash to get past the fenceline.</p>

3. Acceptance of Minutes

A. 2026-3-19 Draft CPC Minutes

Motion: Allen Gallagher moved to accept the 2026-3-19 CPC minutes as written and Dennis J. Duff seconded the motion.

Vote: Dennis J. Duff, Allen Gallagher, Marilyn Salvas, Allison Eck, Bob DiRico, Amy Plovnick, Matt Walter, Marissa Mayo, and Abigail Hammett voted in favor.

4. Chair Update

Bob mentioned the recommendation to the City Council for \$100,000 in CPA funds for the construction documents to rehabilitate the cemeteries. Lanae will follow up on when approval of this project will be placed on the Council agenda.

Bob also gave an update on Saltonstall Park, noting the fencing had been removed, the landscaper trimmed the grasses, and that people are using the park.

5. Coordinator Update

A. CPA Project Financial Tracking

Lanae gave an update on the open projects. Saltonstall Park project will return a substantial portion of the contingency to the open space reserve. Financial tracking details are attached to these minutes.

Phased and In-Progress Projects

Lanae reported that one bid was received for the cemeteries project and Walker Pond is wrapping up with the presentation given at tonight's meeting.

Recommendations for pond health and how ecological studies inform public use and programming will continue to be addressed in the next phase of the project.

Lanae will follow up with Michelle about the IMEG deliverables before the final payment is disbursed.

B. CPA Funds as of 3/31/26

Lanae reported in the new fiscal year, once FY2026 is closed, there will be more funds available, though as of 3/31st there is nearly \$15 million in the fund balance and almost \$2,500,000 that can be used on projects in any CPA category. There is nearly \$750,000 in the open space reserve and almost \$1,800,000 in historic preservation reserve, while community housing is depleted. The CPA financial statement as of March 31, 2026 is attached to these minutes.

The Department of Revenue informed municipalities that the state match would be about 15%. At the last meeting, Matt Walter mentioned the CPC should be proactive in looking at the funds available and potential projects.

Lanae informed the CPC that there will be construction projects that come out of the phased Walker Pond, Cemeteries, and Commander's Mansion building exterior projects. There will also be design and rehabilitation projects for the Mansion landscape. The City Manager cited in the capital improvement budget, that the city will seek CPA funds for all of these projects in the FY27 budget. As heard tonight, Walker Pond is \$8-10 alone. The cemeteries historic preservation plan estimated just over \$1,500,000 for that project nearly 2 years ago. There are no estimates for the Commander's Mansion building exterior beyond the windows and none for the landscape. The city will likely request at least \$1.1 million for the North Branch Library.

6. Member Update

Allison reported that she met with Tyler Cote to brainstorm about the community process for the CPA 5-year plan update. Tyler had not thought much about it at that point. He mentioned a survey as part of the initial process to see what themes emerge, a community education component or CPA refresher, and various data

gathering opportunities such as a drop box in several locations.

Marissa suggested having a drop box at the Browne House open for free day in June. Marilyn proposed making a presentation board with a QR code for survey access.

Lanae pointed out she needed to start advertising for the public hearing and needed a title for the after Committee feedback that public hearing was dull. The CPC agreed to celebrate the 10th anniversary with the title the Watertown CPA is turning 10.

The Committee hoped Tyler would be able to attend the May meeting to report on the community engagement plan.

Marilyn didn't have a report but stated community gardens are a positive presence in open spaces.

Matt will ask the Historical Commission to consider having Matt report next month.

7. Adjourn

Motion: Dennis J. Duff moved to adjourn, and Marilyn Salvas seconded the motion.

Vote: Amy Plovnick, Marissa Mayo, Dennis J. Duff, Bob DiRico, Allison Eck, Marilyn Salvas, Allen Gallagher, Abigail Hammett, and Matt Walter voted in favor.

Adjournment: 8:46 PM

Attachments:

1. [Walker Pond Presentation – Final Design and Eco-Study Summary](#)
2. [CPA Project Financial Tracking](#)
3. [CPA Funds as of 3/31/26](#)