

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Minutes of Meeting
January 22, 2025**

LOCATION: Hybrid Meeting - Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building, 500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, and via Zoom

PRESENT: Dave Herer (Chair), Maureen Callahan (Vice Chair), Paul Dawson, Adam Block, Marshall Davis, Reginald Foster, Jim Rosenbaum

REMOTE: Keith LaFace

ABSENT: Betsy Millane

STAFF: Lauren Spinney

GUESTS: Edward Olsen, Gabrielle Queenan, Stacey Mulroy, Debbie Anderson

D. Herer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and completed a roll call for members of the Committee and staff, the results of which are noted above.

MEETING MINUTES

A. Block moved to approve minutes from the meetings of December 11, 2024 and January 8, 2025
P. Dawson seconded the motion. Motion carries (8-0).

**FY2026-09 NEEDHAM DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, PARKS & FORESTRY
DIVISION: BAY COLONY RAIL TRAIL REHABILITATION.**

This application seeks \$75,000 for construction costs associated with resurfacing trail pathways and improving drainage under the CPA category of Recreation.

M. Davis introduced Edward Olsen, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry, and Gabrielle Queenan, Sustainability Manager. The Bay Colony Rail Trail is a 1.3 mile, 10 foot wide, elevated stone dust pathway on a formerly active rail line owned by the MBTA. The trail was designed by the Needham Department of Public Works and constructed by MJ Cataldo, opening to the public on May 1, 2016. It is widely used by the community. After nearly a decade, some of the surface material has migrated and created loose, pocketed sections that impact both accessibility and safety. This project seeks to improve drainage and rehabilitate the trail surface by capping it with improved materials, regrading and compacting.

Parks & Forestry subcontracts ongoing trail maintenance to Maltby & Company of Stoughton, MA, which comes in twice a year to mow the entire path and once per year for preventative tree pruning so one rehabilitated it will continue to be maintained.

If recommended for funding and approved at the May Town Meeting, the DPW will put the contract out to bid, coordinate with the Rail Trail Advisory Committee and the Town Manager's office, advertise trail closure to the public and complete rehabilitation by Fall/Winter 2025-2026.

FY2026-07 NEEDHAM PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT & DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS: ELIOT SCHOOL GROUNDS RENOVATION (DESIGN).

This application seeks \$69,960 for design costs associated with the renovation of the Eliot School fields and playground under the CPA category of Recreation. Edward Olsen, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry, and Stacey Mulroy, Director of Parks and Recreation presented on behalf of the applicants.

Eliot Elementary School currently serves approximately 450 students. The school was rebuilt in 2003, at which time the field and playground structure were also completed. It has a total of 1.5 acres of outdoor recreational space that is also utilized by the Needham Extended Day Program, Needham Baseball/Softball, Parks & Recreation summer camp, and neighborhood families. The request is for design funds to create solutions for the outside area of the elementary school, which includes the field, playground, basketball court and walkways.

The design phase will include an overall assessment of these outdoor recreational spaces. They would like to connect the walkways around the perimeter, improving and/or securing access at Ardmore Road, Crane Street/Central Avenue and the Sudbury Path/aqueduct trail. With respect to the playground, the engineered wood fiber ground cover is expensive and must be replaced twice a year. It migrates onto the field with storm water and is a constant maintenance issue. They will likely replace it with poured-in-place rubber surfacing that improves accessibility, requires less maintenance and has a longer lifespan.

This project has been on the DPW and Park and Recreation's five-year Athletic Facilities Capital Plan for an extended period of time. If the project is recommended for funding and approved by Town Meeting, they will enter into a design and engineering contract with one of the Town's on-call engineering firms, facilitate a working group that includes input from the School Department and Eliot School principal, and engage the user groups and neighbors via neighborhood meetings. They anticipate requesting construction funds next Fall/Winter (2025/2026) with construction to begin in the summer of 2026.

FY2026-06 NEEDHAM PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT: ACTION PARK & PICKLEBALL COURTS (DESIGN).

This application seeks \$300,000 for design costs associated with construction of an action sports park and pickleball courts under the CPA category of Recreation. Stacey Mulroy, Director of Parks and Recreation presented on behalf of the applicant.

The Active Recreation Assets Working Group was established by the Select Board in 2022 and submitted its recommendations in 2023. The group identified an action sports parks and pickleball courts as possible options for popular, yet unmet active recreation needs in town. The Town engaged the engineering firm CHA Solutions to conduct a feasibility study of Mills, Hillside, Cricket and Claxton fields as possible locations for these two amenities. After conducting site visits, meeting with neighbors and convening a working group, the Park and Recreation Commission and CHA Solutions determined that Claxton Field was the best location, situating the action park at the quarry and the pickleball courts along Central Avenue, across from the transfer station.

If recommended for funding by the CPC and approved by the May Town Meeting, Park & Recreation will put the design project out to bid and engage an engineering firm in Summer 2025 to begin working on project scope, design and cost. They will create another working group that will include user groups and neighbors and anticipate requesting construction funds next Fall/Winter (2025/2026). CHA Solutions estimates that construction costs will be approximately \$3,000,000.

FY2026-02 NEEDHAM CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT & COMMISSION: TRAIL SIGNAGE IMPROVEMENTS.

This application seeks \$104,000 for upgraded trail signage and trail improvements on Town-owned protected spaces and trails under the CPA category of Recreation. Deb Anderson, Director of Conservation, and Dave Herer, Chair of the Needham Conservation Commission, presented on behalf of the applicants.

Needham has over 25 miles of trails in 11 locations throughout the Town. Trail maintenance had been overseen by staff from the Park and Recreation Department and members of the Trails Advisory Committee utilizing a trail stewards program to report issues. For various reasons, that has fallen by the wayside and signage has significantly deteriorated, resulting in signage that is not cohesive, confusing to follow and sometimes non-existent. They are hoping to reinstate the Trails Advisory Committee and trail steward program.

Signage improvements were previously recommended in the 2008 Trails Master Plan, which was funded by the CPA. In May 2021, Town Meeting approved \$6,000 in CPA funds that were used to retain consulting firm Tighe & Bond to help design a new system of branding for trail signage and standardized trail mapping.

They are now requesting funds for the purchase and installation of new aluminum signage, pressure treated posts, kiosks, and trail improvements such as bridges, bog walks and trail steps. The main goal is to upgrade and expand signage on existing trails and trailheads to make the trails more visible, safer, and easier to utilize by creating uniformity and incorporating new technologies like QR codes on the signs. A standardized kiosk design will be implemented moving forward as kiosks are replaced or installed new.

If recommended for funding by the CPC and approved by the May Town Meeting, they will engage with the various town entities that control the trails and finalize the list of locations that require trail markers, trail intersection signs, trailhead signs, interpretative signs, entrance signs, QR codes and/or kiosks with maps.

UPDATES ON FY2026 PROJECTS

FY2026-01 Needham History Center & Museum: Ongoing Collections Storage Upgrades. No updates.

FY2026-03 Charles River Center: East Militia Heights Development. M. Callahan reported that the CPC chairs met with Emily Achtenberg to discuss the housing projects and she raised some additional questions that will be submitted to the applicant. Also, Phil Crean informed her that they were meeting with the Town Manager and others today to discuss their zoning pathway, and would provide more information about zoning plans for this project after that meeting.

FY2026-04 Needham Housing Authority: Preservation of Seabeds Way & Captain Robert Cook Drive. D. Herer reported that he and A. Block met with R. Foster to tour the properties. A. Block shared that it was clear that there is extensive wear.

R. Foster suggested that the Town might consider bonding as a solution to the difference between the amount of community housing funds that are available versus what has been requested this cycle. The NHA is preparing a memorandum on this issue and will share it in advance of their presentation on February 5th. D. Herer shared that he requested a meeting with the David Davison, Director of Finance to discuss the bonding issue. Although the Town cannot issue a bond for a non-town entity, other towns have done so through their affordable housing trusts. He would like to explore if that is a possibility here.

With respect to the MBTA Communities Act, R. Foster shared that both the Planning Board and Select Board voted to move forward with the base plan at the May Town Meeting. The Office of Housing and Livable Communities notified the Town Manager that Needham will be in interim compliance with the law once the Town's action plan is submitted. As Needham will be in interim compliance, the \$1M grant to the NHA that was part of the Linden Chambers financing plan is no longer threatened/at risk. Additionally, the NHA was invited to submit their application for LIHTC financing.

FY2026-05 Needham Housing Authority: High Rock Estates Affordable Housing Land Use Study. D. Herer reported that he and A. Block met with R. Foster to tour the properties. A. Block suggested that High Rock Estates presents an interesting opportunity for the Town because there is capacity to produce more units. The land use study will provoke questions that will help identify different opportunities for the NHA to pursue.

R. Foster reported that he just received the memorandum from the Mass Housing Partnership regarding CPA eligibility concerns for this project. He will forward the email so it can be shared with the committee and Town Counsel. L. Spinney will coordinate a meeting with Town Counsel to discuss.

RETROACTIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF CPA FUNDING

R. Foster submitted additional projects to add to the list of retroactive acknowledgements. P. Dawson walked Town Hall and did not find any signage referencing the contribution of CPA funds. L. Spinney will identify the appropriate contact person for each project and make initial contact.

MATTERS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE:

None.

UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE

CPC meetings will be held on February 5 and February 12.

ADJOURNMENT

A. Block moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. M. Callahan seconded the motion. Motion carries (8-0).

For more information, the meeting materials are available at:

<https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=&Type=&ADID=13452>

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Spinney
Administrative Coordinator