



## Regular Board Meeting of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this public meeting was conducted remotely with remote participation options.

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APPROVED Meeting Minutes

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### Meeting Files

- [Notice and Agenda](#)
- [Regular Meeting Minutes December 13, 2023](#)
- [Letter from US DOT and CRA Supporting Letter](#)
- [Staff Program Report](#)
- [Financial Report as of November 30, 2023](#)
- Proposed Updated CRA Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies
  - [Employee Handbook](#)
  - [Personnel Policies](#)
- [2023 Forward Fund Final Report and Presentation](#)
- 2400 Massachusetts Avenue Equity Investment and Middle-Income Housing Purchase
  - [Memorandum](#)
  - [Exhibit A: RFP - Development Opportunity for the Creation of Below Market-Rate Housing](#)
  - [Exhibit B: Excerpt from North Cambridge Partners RFP Response with Redactions](#)

### Presentations

- [Correspondence from Yinuo Wang regarding Fitchburg Crossing Initiative](#)
- [Rindge Pathway Connection Map - presented to Board](#)
- [Financial Report Presentation \(as of November 30, 2023\)](#)

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### Opening Statement

At 5:30 p.m., Ellen Shore, CRA Operations Director, said that Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this public meeting is being conducted remotely with participation options at the start of this meeting, and possibly at other times during the meeting, at the discretion of the chair. She then explained how to provide public comment. Board materials can be found on the CRA's next meeting webpage ([www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/next-meeting](http://www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/next-meeting)). This meeting is being recorded, including all video, audio, and QA messages.

### Call Roll

Board Chair Kathleen Born called the regular meeting. A roll call of Board members and the Executive Director was taken.

Chair Kathleen Born - present  
Vice Chair, Conrad Crawford – present  
Treasurer, Christopher Bator – present  
Assistant Treasurer, Barry Zevin – present  
Lauren Reznick - present  
Executive Director, Tom Evans – present

CRA staff members were also present. Ms. Born said that because this is a remote meeting, all votes will be taken by roll call and that Mr. Evans will repeat the responses of each member present.

### **Public Comment**

*James Williamson* said the he supports the connection across the Fitchburg commuter rail line. He said that the City's outreach regarding this project is seriously lacking, especially with residents of Jefferson Park and Brickworks. He noted that the CHA has emails from at least 20 people who were displaced; they have expressed interest in the planning and should be kept informed. Regarding middle-class subsidy housing, he explained another scenario when community members who raised issues at the one community meeting were excluded from future planning decisions. He is interested in an explication regarding the \$5 million proposal on the agenda and how the CRA got involved.

Ms. Born said that the \$5 million proposal is an agenda item and more detail will be forthcoming later in the meeting. The CRA had issued a request for development partners in an open procurement process. The CRA was approached by the developers of this project. The CRA ran a very transparent process.

*Heather Hoffman* said that people in North Cambridge are not following all of the machinations in East Cambridge. She received many emails from people who were just as curious as Mr. Williamson. There is too much going on in this city for anyone to know all of it and the current political climate is such that very few people trust our government. She will help to relay information to friends in North Cambridge.

Mr. Bator thanked Mr. Williamson and Ms. Hoffman for their comments. For the record, he emphasized that all CRA Board members are not paid government officials. The CRA Board members are Cambridge citizens who volunteer their time and pay close attention to what Cambridge residents say.

*Owen Barron* said that he lives across the road from the parcel that is being considered (for housing). He was excited to hear, a couple of years ago, that there might be development there. He was informed a few weeks ago that this hearing was coming up. He firmly supports more housing.

***A motion was moved by Ms. Reznick to close public comment. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans.***

***Chris Bator - yes***

***Kathy Born – yes***

***Conrad Crawford – yes***

***Lauren Reznick – yes***

***Barry Zevin – yes***

***The motion carried***

### **Minutes and Meeting Notes**

#### **1. Regular Meeting Minutes: December 13, 2023**

No comments were offered.

***A motion was moved by Ms. Reznick to accept the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board on December 13, 2023. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans.***

***Chris Bator - yes***

***Kathy Born – yes***

***Conrad Crawford – yes***

***Lauren Reznick – yes***

***Barry Zevin – yes***

***The motion carried***

## **Communications**

### **2. Correspondence related to the US DOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant for the Bicycle Pedestrian Crossing of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line**

Mr. Evans said that staff have been working on a circulation/connectivity/open space planning effort around the Rindge area. This was initially focused on the Just-A-Start Rindge Commons project in coordination with the other residential towers along Rindge Avenue. During this time the City also began studying a bridge connection across the Fitchburg commuter rail line in conjunction with some planning work around redesigning the community path. Through that coordination, the City asked the CRA to write a letter of support for a federal grant to complete a design of this proposed bridge. The CRA's letter to the DOT and their response is part of the Board's packet. Mr. Evans said that since the agenda was published, he received another letter from a Brickworks Condominium resident. The letter, which is now posted online with the other documents for tonight's meeting, says that the bridge makes a connection most directly from the Jefferson Park area but there would be a desire for people to connect to it throughout the neighborhood and from Rindge Avenue as well. Although that connection would be more easily made through an easement that exists through the driveway of the Brickworks Condominiums, the CRA staff proposes a better connection with regards to pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

Kyle Vangel, Director of Projects and Planning, gave more details about that connection. He said that the CRA's process is not focused on the Brickworks site. Staff have been working closely with the communities in the buildings at 362, 364, and 402 Rindge Avenue for almost a year to understand their preferences and aspirations for connectivity within the parcel. Staff have been discussing various trail locations with the MBTA, Just-A-Start, and Schochet. The CRA hired three community engagement coordinators, who lived within the Rindge development, to work with CRA staff. A meeting was held last Thursday at 402 Rindge Avenue which elicited additional resident feedback. Staff continue to study the paths for regional connectivity. The CRA does not own the easement going through the Brickworks Condominium, which was noted as a concern in the letter from the community. That easement is adjacent, but separate, to the CRA's efforts.

Mr. Crawford said that reconnecting communities is a great initiative to remedy and mitigate past harms of transportation infrastructure, especially in North Cambridge and the Alewife area. He is encouraged and excited for the CRA to be participating in these efforts with community participation.

Mr. Zevin said that he only sees bits and pieces of all the concerns. The path along the east edge of the Rindge tower parcels seems reasonable, but it doesn't address how one gets over the tracks. The letter from the residents of Brickworks certainly made an excellent case against going through a bunch of twists and turns at the Brickworks, but it wasn't accompanied by any plan. He also doesn't know where the best place would be to go over the tracks, assuming that going under is no longer possible.

Mr. Evans said that the bridge work is not part of the CRA scope, but rather is a city project. The bridge, which underwent a feasibility study, is proposed to be adjacent to the Jefferson Park property redevelopment. The bridge could connect to the path work along the Rindge Commons and the Schochet property and hopefully make a connection underneath Route 2 to Alewife. He explained that connectivity in this area is like a bunch of different puzzle pieces that need to link up. Furthermore, they all have different processes. The CRA staff have focused on the connections through the Rindge tower area. Staff can, however, create a comprehensive graphic that covers all the connections.

### **3. Written communications received since the publication of this meeting notice**

The email letter received from Yinuo Wang regarding safety concerns about the Fitchburg Crossing Initiative was previously noted.

## **Administration Items**

### **4. Monthly Staff Report**

Mr. Vangel highlighted the staff report included in the Board packet.

He noted that the kickoff event for the Black History Month will be on Sunday, February 4th. More information will be distributed as it becomes available. There will be a keynote speaker. The CRA is excited to be involved in this great event.

## **5. Financial Report as of November 30, 2023**

Gardy Laurent, Director of Finance and Operations, summarized the financial report included in the Board packet.

Mr. Evans said that a lease has been signed with Lemelson-MIT and revenue for the space is anticipated beginning in April 2024.

## **6. Updated Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies**

Mr. Vangel spoke about the history of the CRA Employee Handbook. It was updated in October 2022, in particular to clarify sick leave payout policies. In his presentation, he listed reasons to update this document again at this time.

A separate Personnel Policies document will be created that identifies policies to be governed by the CRA Board. The Employee Handbook identifies policies governed by the Executive Director but would also include policies included in the Personnel Policies document. A change to the Personnel Policy document would require a Board vote. The two documents are always intended to be updated in unison, such that there should never be any inconsistency between them. However, if there were to be any inconsistencies for whatever reason, the Personnel Policies document would govern over the Employee Handbook.

Mr. Zevin wondered if it was truly better to keep two documents, since synchronizing them is challenging.

Mr. Evans said that the goal was to create a nimbler document, especially in regards to workplace hours and hybrid operational procedures. A similar parallel document situation exists with the Internal Controls Document and the Operational and Procedures Document. He said that the Employee Handbook includes more procedures.

Ms. Born said that she understands the issue with keeping documents in sync, but as a Board member she is more concerned with general principles than operational implementation.

Mr. Evans said that the formatting of a single document could indicate if the issue is a Board or an Executive Director governing issue.

Mr. Bator echoed Ms. Born's comments. Boards make policy. They should not be involved with day-to-day operations. The Board should grant the authority to the Executive Director for such issues.

***A motion was moved by Mr. Crawford approving the Amendment to the CRA Personnel Policies. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans.***

***Chris Bator - yes***

***Kathy Born – yes***

***Conrad Crawford – yes***

***Lauren Reznick – yes***

***Barry Zevin – yes***

***The motion carried.***

## **Projects and Programs**

### **7. 2023 Forward Fund Final Report and Presentation**

Alexandra Levering, CRA Senior Project Manager, explained the goal of the Forward Fund. The focus tonight is on the Capital Infrastructure grants but the five Feasibility Study grants previously awarded will also be discussed. She explained the details of the Capital Infrastructure grant.

There were 12 applicants. Eight organizations were given 2023 Forward Fund Capital Infrastructure grants in Round 2. Joshua Croom, CRA Project Planner, spoke about each project and introduced representatives from the organizations. Unfortunately, Joelle Nims, the Director of Partnership and Development for CASPAR, Inc, was unable to attend. Representatives from the other seven organizations gave a bit more detail about their projects and expressed their gratitude to the Board.

- Ivy Molan, Executive Director, Brattle Film Foundation
- Tina Alu, Executive Director, Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
- Sarah Diller, Executive Director, CitySprouts
- Julie B. Wilson, President, Harvard Square Homeless Shelter Corporation
- Carmen Chan, Vice President of Philanthropy, Just-A-Start
- Taylor Mortell, Director of Development, Maria L. Baldwin Community Center
- Paulo Pinto, Executive Director, Massachusetts Alliance for Portuguese Speakers

Ms. Levering gave an overview of the five recipients of the 2023 Feasibility Study grants who will use the funds for consultation and architectural studies to inform future capital infrastructure grants. The total distribution will be \$50,000. The remaining \$50,000 is being reallocated to the Capital Infrastructure Grant program. She said that she is pleased to be able to award funds to 11 different organizations. Eighteen or so applications were received, which is the largest number received to date. The Board will be updated with project status.

Ms. Born said that the ability of the CRA to use its assets in ways that help the community warms her heart.

Mr. Bator said that the Forward Fund was one of the first efforts and ventures of this Board to be a citywide redevelopment authority that would spread some of the wealth emanating from Kendall Square to other parts of Cambridge. It is a great pleasure to see the group of grant awardees. He hopes the CRA continues this program for years to come. He would like to increase the amount budgeted for this program in the future. The CRA will be in a financial position to do so. Mr. Bator said that public notices or press releases should be used as a marketing effort to widen the outreach.

## **8. 2400 Massachusetts Avenue Equity Investment and Middle-Income Housing Purchase**

Ms. Born said that the next topic is a new venture for the Redevelopment Authority that was discussed in executive session on December 13th. It is now ready for further board discussion and a decision about whether to proceed.

Mr. Evans said that this is a creative new venture in the CRA's redevelopment and housing work.

Mr. Vangel summarized the memo in the Board packet; it provides background information, explains the proposed transaction, and states reasons for staff's recommendation to approve the motion.

Ms. Reznick asked if the funds would be paid out this month. Mr. Vangel confirmed. He added that in talking with legal counsel, the opinion is that the CRA is a municipal redevelopment authority so it makes legal sense for the CRA's contribution to be directed towards the land. The plan is for these funds to support closing on the development and the purchase of the property.

Mr. Evans added that staff have invoiced Boston Properties for the 121 Broadway residential project, which is the development project that created this affordable housing home ownership obligation. Assuming those funds are received within a week or two, current CRA funds won't be touched for this project.

Ms. Reznick asked about the expected timeline for the project itself with North Cambridge Partners. Mr. Vangel said that after the closing, North Cambridge Partners would wind down operation of the existing building, with the tenants relocating or closing. The plan is to move into demolition over the summer and begin construction before the end of the year. The expectation is that the project would move forward this year depending on various factors, including entitlements and the ability to raise additional capital.

Ms. Reznick said that she is very excited about this project and the direction this is taking for the CRA in being able to deploy its resources in this way. She is also excited about this project in particular because it brings more affordable housing.

Mr. Zevin agreed and he is happy that it is a good architectural proposal and doesn't adversely impact its surroundings.

Mr. Vangel said that the Board packet also has materials including renderings.

Ms. Born said that she likes this model for the CRA for the reasons that were stated. She noted that one of the speakers tonight referred to some controversy about this project. There was a rezoning. The City Council voted on the rezoning. The matter of the entitlement for the project has been settled as far as the zoning is concerned. It's in a good location. Adding transit-friendly development is exactly what the City and the State are trying to do.

Mr. Crawford is happy to be involved in this project which is creating affordable housing.

Mr. Evans noted that the entitlement process is not fully wrapped up. The project still needs to go through a special permit process, which will probably involve additional conversations with the community and the Planning Board. Staff believes that the City is encouraging these housing projects. It also involves home ownership, which has not often been seen in projects coming through the permit process. Staff assumes that the Planning Board will be interested in seeing it through but the special process does sometimes require some additional analysis and some adjustments to projects as they evolve. The CRA does not have a role in the entitlement review but staff will certainly be paying attention and will keep the Board apprized as it goes through the process.

Ms. Born asked if the CRA would be free to testify on behalf of the project even though it doesn't have any official role in the entitlement review. Mr. Evans said that citizens of Cambridge could testify but he wasn't sure how CDD might want the CRA to engage with the Planning Board. Staff have spoken to CDD staff and the City Manager about this project who were supportive of the participation and very interested in the middle-income component.

***A motion was moved by Mr. Crawford authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a subscription agreement, operating agreement, and option agreement for a five-million-dollar (\$5,000,000) investment into the 2400 Massachusetts Ave. development project, to support housing development in Cambridge and the delivery of at least four thousand (4,000) square feet of middle-income home ownership housing. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans.***

***Chris Bator - yes***

***Kathy Born – yes***

***Conrad Crawford – yes***

***Lauren Reznick – yes***

***Barry Zevin – yes***

***The motion carried.***

### **Other Business**

At 7:33 p.m. the Board had concluded all of its scheduled business. It was clarified that it will not reconvene in open session thereafter.

Mr. Vangel will send new Zoom links to the Board and Staff for the Executive Session which will start at 7:50 p.m.

***A motion was moved by Ms. Reznick to enter into Executive Session to consider terms of potential real estate transactions in support of affordable commercial space. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans.***

***Chris Bator - yes***

***Kathy Born – yes***

***Conrad Crawford – yes***

***Lauren Reznick – yes***

***Barry Zevin – yes***

***The motion carried.***