

CPC Working Group

Report to the Boston City Council

December 2017

INTRODUCTION

On August 23, 2017, the Boston City Council established a 90-day working group charged with assisting the Council's Special Committee on the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

From the ordinance:

The working group shall assist the Special Committee to recruit and evaluate candidates for the Council's first four selections to serve on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), including feedback on the development of an open and transparent application process and materials for interested candidates; preparation of evaluation criteria; assistance reviewing applications received; and recommendations for a representative and diverse set of nominations;

Councilor Flaherty, chair of the Special Committee, appointed members to the Working Group (WG), who were notified of their appointment on October 2. These appointees were: Shelly Goehring, Jeff Gonyeau, Beverley Johnson, Curtis Kemeny and Cortina Vann. On October 26, Beverley Johnson resigned from the WG because she decided she wanted to apply for a seat on the CPC. Through CPA director, Christine Poff, the WG requested a replacement and recommended several individuals to assist the WG, offer additional input and create an odd number in case of ties, but the Special Committee did not appoint a new fifth member.

DEVELOPING A PROCESS

Our first meeting was **October 11** at 26 Court Street (Boston CPA office). We reviewed the draft CPC application materials that Christine Poff had created and decided on suggestions to offer the Special Committee the next day.

We initially waited for clarity on what, specifically, our role should be. However, given such a short timeframe we decided we needed to act. We reviewed the ordinance creating the Working Group and moved forward with thinking through an open and transparent process, including evaluation criteria.

On **October 26**, we met a second time to cover a very full agenda:

1. Accept last meeting minutes
2. Quick review of application and guidelines (already posted online by this date)
3. Outreach plan
4. Determine process for reviewing applications
5. Create criteria for evaluating applicants
6. Develop questions for applicant interviews
7. Calendar – Roughly map out remaining meetings to submit to Special Committee

Our goal was to present the Special Committee with a thoughtful approach to review and evaluate candidates for the CPC, in an open and transparent manner. We were also concerned with the short timeline given our personal work demands. So having clarity with the process and time demands was imperative.

Outreach Plan

Christine Poff, CPA director, definitely drove the outreach seeking candidates for the CPC with dozens of presentations around the city, as well as phone calls, email and meetings. She worked tirelessly to get the word out to press, organizations and leaders.

Working with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement (MOIA) and the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS), the application was translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Chinese and Cape Verdean Creole. Outreach was done to these linguistic communities through MOIA and ONS.

The WG supplemented Christine's work by reaching out to Boston Main Streets and other business groups, members of Yes for a Better Boston, The Dorchester Reporter, Bay State Banner, some neighborhood associations and historic preservation groups.

We also developed a flyer that was distributed via PDF and hard copy.

In addition, Yes for a Better Boston (YBB) organized an extensive CPA forum in October at Franklin Park that drew upwards of 100 people. The meeting was solely focused on educating Boston residents about CPA and urging people to apply for one of the four at-large seats on the CPC.

Process for Reviewing Applications

Assuming that we might receive 100 applications, we were uncertain how long the reviewing, sorting and winnowing process would take. However, we assumed it would take a significant amount of time to be methodical and thoughtful.

We decided on the following, intended as a flexible guide:

Pre-round – Christine Poff will review all submissions and make sure they are complete. She will then scan and upload to GoogleDocs, email or hand deliver all complete submissions by Nov 10.

First round – As a group, we will go through each submission and make initial cuts considering factors such as whether applicants made the case that they qualify for the seat they applied for (e.g., history of involvement in the community; experience in historic preservation, open space and/or affordable housing; or business experience).

Second round – Next we will go through remaining submissions on a deeper level and make additional cuts. This means we will begin measuring candidates against each other to choose those we feel best meet the “soft criteria.”

Third round – During this round, we will get to 16 finalists, going through “hard criteria” to assure they reflect the CPC ordinance's goal of a board that reflects the geographic and racial/ethnic diversity of the city.

Create Criteria for Evaluating Applicants

In determining criteria, we largely followed the information we asked for in the application.

Hard criteria

1. Boston residency
2. Organizational affiliations
3. Length of time living in Boston
4. Gender
5. Race/ethnicity
6. Age

Soft criteria

measured through the statement of interest

1. Area(s) of CPA expertise
2. Judgement and experience
3. Degree and type of civic engagement

Develop Questions for Applicant Interviews

We were interested in promoting a fair process and gaining additional information that we thought would be helpful in weighing how a candidate might contribute to the CPC. We developed questions that could be asked of every candidate invited to interview. This would allow City Councilors to evenly weigh each candidate. These questions were largely not used by the Special Committee in interviews.

We agreed on 10 questions to be used in 30 minute interview slots:

1. Why are you interested in the CPA?
2. What, to you, are the best things about Boston? What do you think are the biggest challenges facing Boston?
3. Describe a project that falls under the purview of the CPA that you would like to see funded in your neighborhood.
4. What factors do you think should be used to determine how to spend CPA money?
 - a. Scenario: The CPC has budgeted to spend \$3 million on historic preservation, but requests for \$4 million have been received. What criteria might you use to decide which projects to fund?
 - b. Scenario: Dorchester has over 100,000 residents out of about 673,000 total residents in Boston and yet is only one of 23 neighborhoods. How might you weigh how to distribute funds across the city?
5. What relevant skills and experiences would you bring to the committee? Why should you be selected over other candidates?
6. Please share a time when you were able to achieve a positive outcome in a collaborative group setting. What was your role in the accomplishment?
7. Imagine you are a member of the CPC and strong disagreement arises over how to allocate funds by CPA category: historic preservation, affordable housing and open space/outdoor recreation. How might you react or work to achieve consensus?

8. Members of the CPC must be active volunteers. Do you realistically see yourself being able to contribute five or more hours each month to the work of the CPC, including attending meetings?
9. What might be the best meeting locations for you?
10. Do you have any questions for us?

Schedule

Lastly, at our October 26 meeting we mapped out a schedule, anticipating how long each step would take. We proposed the following schedule to the Special Committee, although it was altered, along with our role as the Working Group (on November 9th, we were notified the Special Committee would solely lead interviews and decide the final four nominees).

STEP ONE -- November 9 and 10th – Christine Poff does a pre-round review of all submitted applications to make sure they are complete (application, one page paper, resume and references). She will compile, copy and distribute to Working Group members.

STEP TWO -- Monday, November 13, 3-5pm (other dates/times if needed: Wed, Nov 15, 10am-1pm, & Thurs, Nov 16, 11am-1pm) – Review applications to narrow down to 16 finalists.

STEP THREE – Thursday, November 16 -- Begin setting up interviews for Monday, Nov 27 and Tuesday, Nov 28 and calling references for the finalists

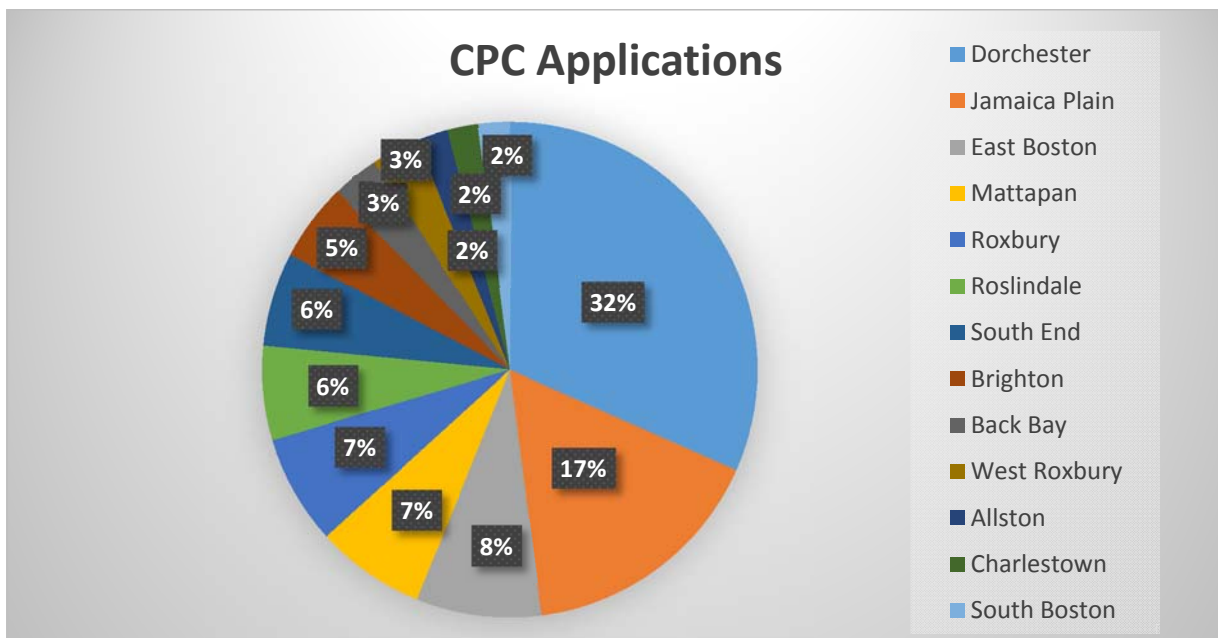
STEP FOUR – Monday, Nov 27 and Tuesday, Nov 28 from 3-7pm each day

- Interviews both days (approx. 30 min per person)
- If candidates need interpreters, we anticipate a longer interview (perhaps 40-45 minutes)

STEP FIVE – Final meeting to decide on the four nominees needs to be set.

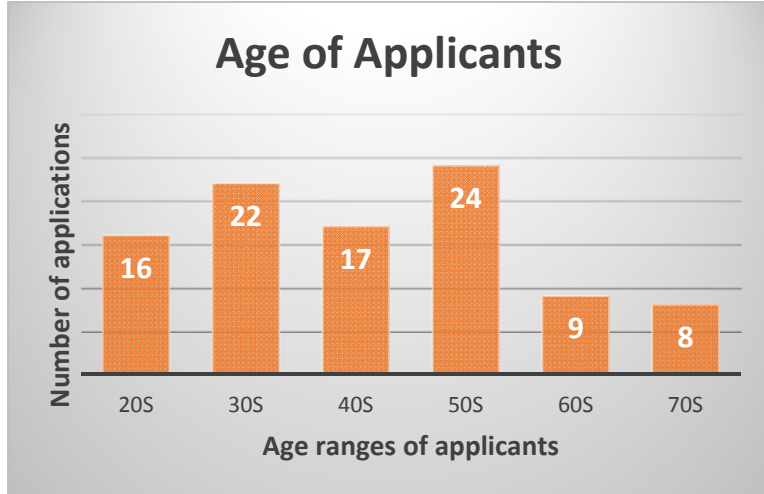
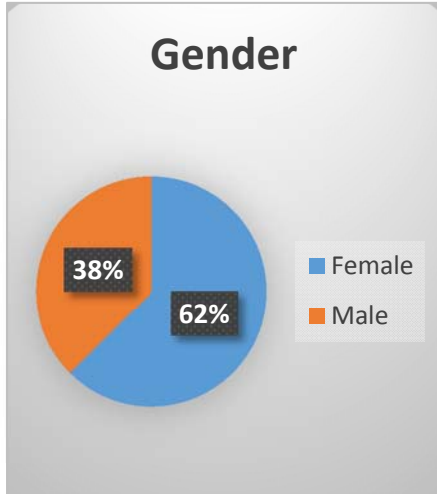
APPLICATION ANALYSIS

While 114 applications were received, 10 came in late and were not included in the review process. Applications from 19 communities were submitted with 49% coming from Dorchester and Jamaica Plain.



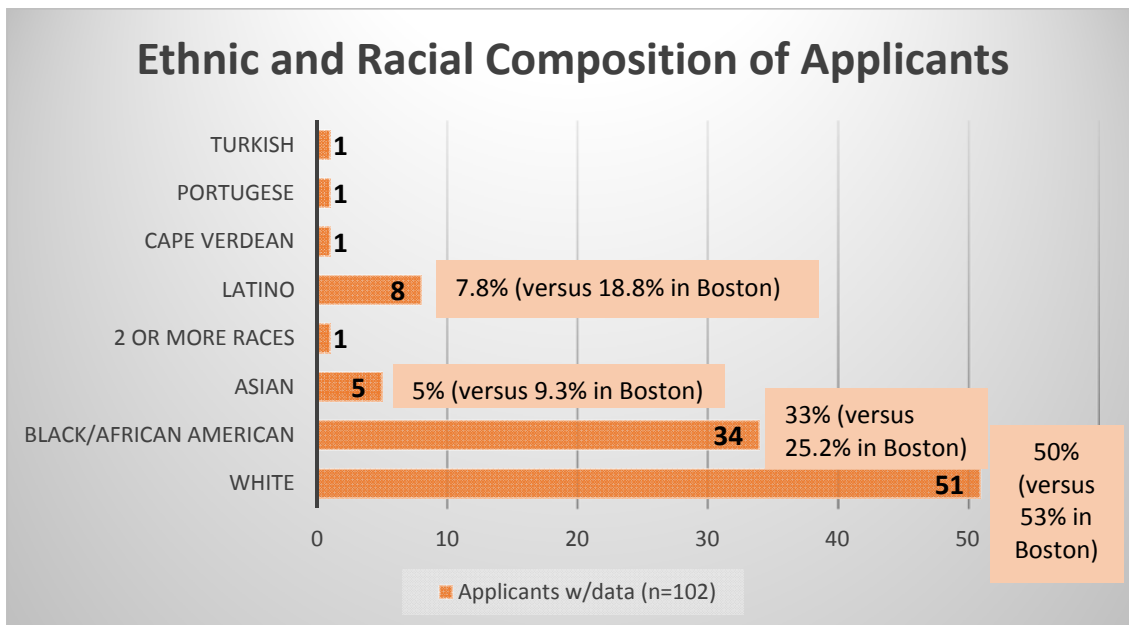
The neighborhoods of Beacon Hill, Chinatown, Hyde Park, Mission Hill, North End and West End each had one resident submit an application.

Interestingly, applicants were overwhelmingly female (62% vs 38% male), but applicants were fairly well distributed over the age spectrum.



Perhaps the most surprising feature of CPC applicants stemmed from the racial and ethnic makeup. While people who are Latino make up about 18.8% of Boston’s population (Census 2015 estimates), only 7.7% of our applicants identified as Latino. One applicant identified as both Black and Latino and is counted in both categories in the chart below.

In addition, while Boston’s population is approximately 9.3% Asian, only 5% of our applicants identified as Asian.



Note: Not all applicants submitted optional demographic information so our data is not complete.

REVIEWING APPLICATIONS

Since applications were due on Thursday, November 9, and the Special Committee notified us they wanted to interview our finalists beginning the week of Thanksgiving, we had less than one week to narrow 104 applications down to 16 finalists.

Christine Poff stayed at work very late on November 9 to make copies of all submitted applications for WG members and City Council staff. On Veteran's Day, she hand distributed them to us and over Veteran's Day weekend, we each spent at least eight hours (and some of us spent 10+ hours) reviewing the 104 completed applications. The intent was to begin with discussion immediately when we met on Monday, November 13. Unexpectedly, staff from Councilors Flaherty, Campbell and Wu decided to attend (they were invited, but we had not received confirmation) so it took some time to get all of us on the same page (e.g., applications numbered the same, discuss potential conflicts).

This meeting on November 13 ran from 3:00-7:00pm (with just a short break for some of us to take work calls and cancel an evening commitment). During this first round of reviewing applications, we were able to narrow down the number of candidates to 39. On Wednesday, November 15, we met for another 2.5 hours to bring the list to 16. Once again, staff from Flaherty, Campbell and Wu's offices were with us. Since the WG had an even number of members (4), Christine Poff voted to break ties when necessary. **We spent a total of 6.5 hours considering applications.**

We were impressed with the passion expressed and the breadth of experience presented. Many people spoke of an interest in transparency and making CPC decisions based on equity and need. We wrestled with our charge to recommend 16 finalists. Boston residents gave us so much to consider.

While potential conflicts of interest were not identified in the application, we did discuss the potential of appointing people who represent organizations that are likely to be before the CPC on a regular basis. We wanted to make sure that the final composition of the committee did not have members who would need to recuse themselves often. Given this concern, we decided to eliminate executive directors and real estate staff of community development corporations.

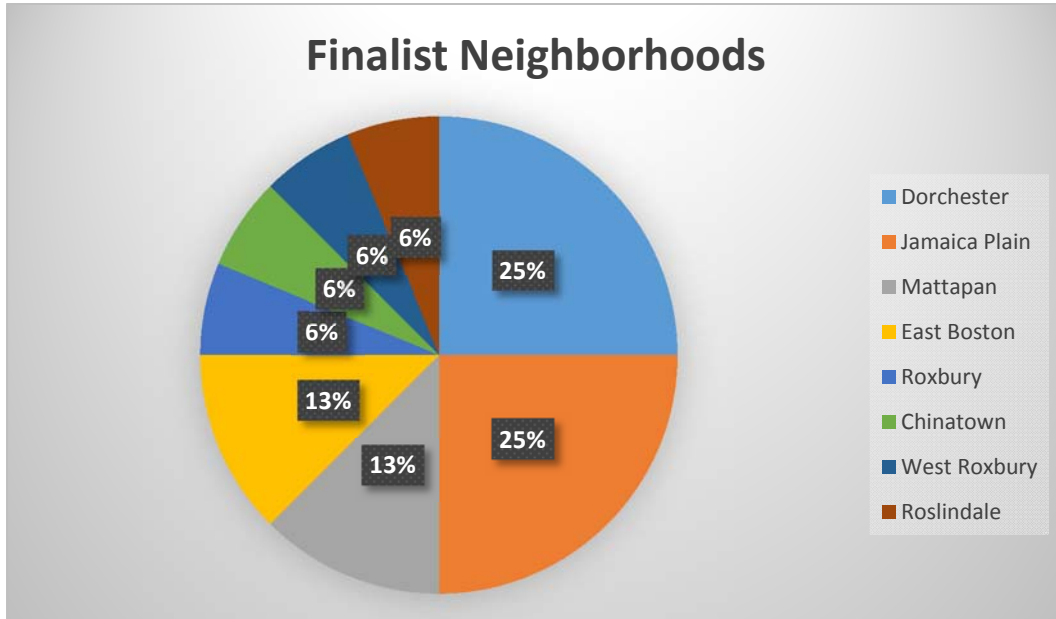
In addition, we wanted members who have lived in Boston long enough to have a decent sense of the neighborhoods and the city, as a whole. Applicants living in the city for under one year were eliminated due to this interest. However, applicants did not have to live in the city for *many* years to be chosen as a finalist.

When considering a person's history of community involvement, we did not expect that an applicant in his/her 20s would have the same length of service as someone in his/her 50s.

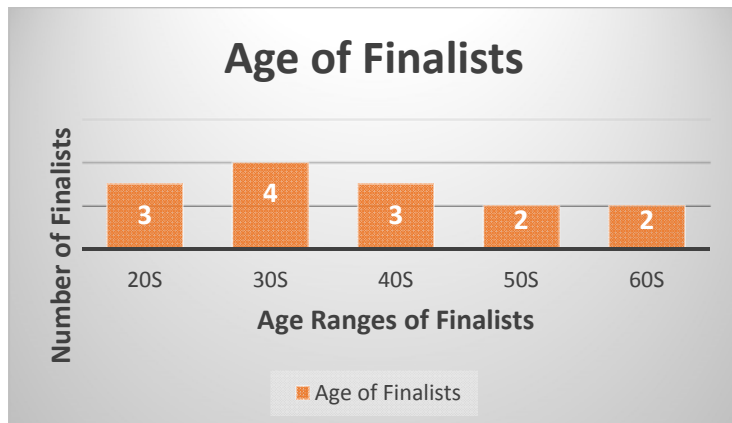
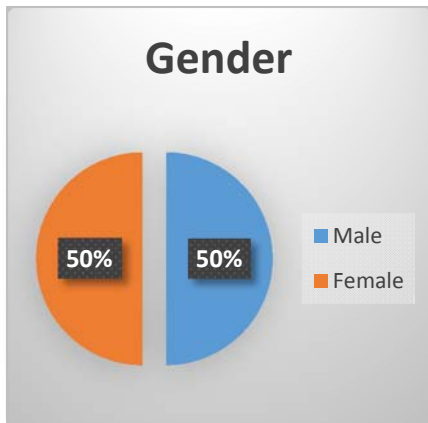
OUR 16 FINALISTS

In making our decisions, we also took into account the backgrounds of the five members appointed under the Community Preservation Act (CPA) statute, as directed in Boston's CPC ordinance. The CPA statute requires one appointment from the conservation commission, one from the historical commission, one from the planning board, one from the housing authority and one from the parks commission. These appointments are three men and two women. Four are white and one is African American. Two live in Roslindale and one lives in Jamaica Plain, one in Roxbury and one in West

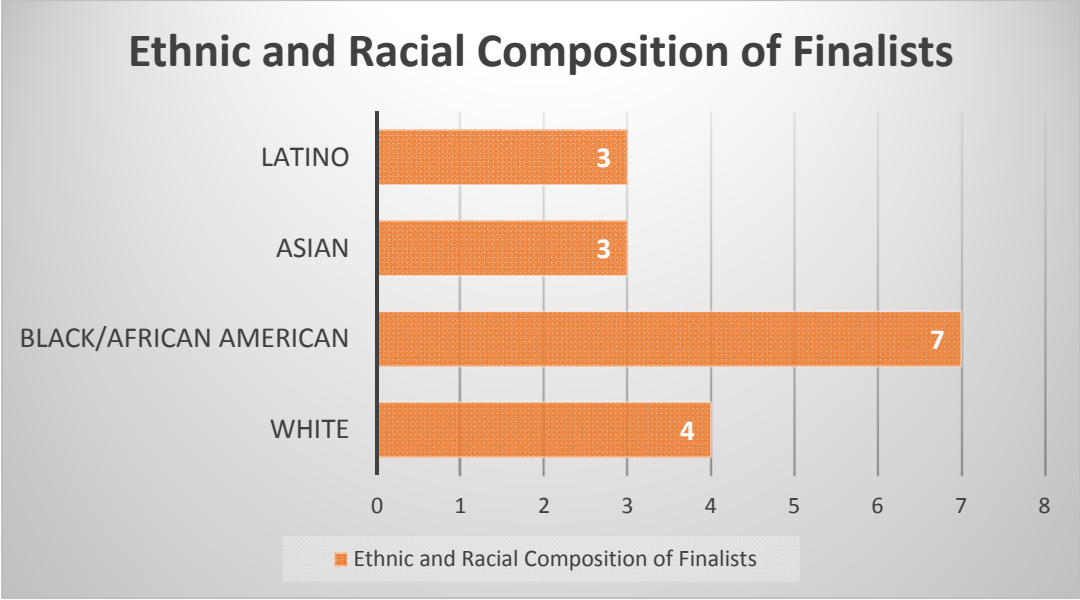
Roxbury. Given these already known appointments, it is not surprising that our finalists reflect a higher percentage of people of color than found in the full applicant pool. However, given the very high number of applications from Jamaica Plain and Dorchester, our finalists also reflect this slant.



Unlike the application pool, we ended up recommending an equal number of men and women. And while some of our finalists did not submit optional demographic information, two of the applicants that did not list their age are likely in their 50s or 60s. This makes the age distribution very equal.



Out of eight total applications from people who identify as Latino, we chose three as finalists. And out of just five applications from people who identify as Asian, we chose two. Given the significant response from the Black/African American community, we included seven as finalists (one person in this category is also counted as “Latino”).



One of our finalists was going to be out of town during the interview process. We urged the Special Committee, through their staff, to utilize Skype or other technology to allow all candidates to fully participate. At least one candidate did interview via Skype.

We recommended the following finalists based on three categories outlined in the CPC ordinance:

Business/finance Experience (1 appointment)	Expertise in open space, historic preservation and/or affordable housing (1 appointment)	History of Community Involvement (2 appointments)
Britt Harter Beverley Johnson Matthew Kiefer Ying Wang	Dorothy Clark Ray Porfilio Susan Pranger Madeligne Tena	Acia Adams-Heath Brian Keith Lincoln Larmond Anh Nguyen Juan Ramos Gabrielle Sims Giovanny Valencia Kannan Thiruvengadam

REFERENCES

Then we spent hours calling references for each of our 16 finalists, right at Thanksgiving time. Responses were typed, compiled and distributed to the Special Committee. While we did not reach all three references for each person, our goal was to complete phone interviews with at least 1-2 references for each candidate. This occurred for 15 of the 16 finalists. The references of one candidate would just not respond to our multiple inquiries.

CLOSING

A key aspect of this process that was challenging for the Working Group was the slowness in which members were appointed and then the time lapse between being appointed and receiving clear direction of our role from the Special Committee. Since the choice was made to complete the process during this legislative cycle, it led to an extremely short timeframe for the full process of soliciting applications and narrowing them down to four appointments.

As volunteer members who are all fully employed, this created a significant demand on our time over a very short period. For some of us, there was also an expectation that the Special Committee and Working Group would interact more collaboratively during the process, but we largely played separate roles.

It is our recommendation that in the future, roles and expectations be clearly defined by the City Council, or Special Committee of the City Council, before appointments are made to a Working Group. This will not only allow the process to be more efficient, but can allow committee appointees to better understand what is being asked of them before they emphatically say, “yes!”

Working Group members took our role very seriously and accepted the appointment in good faith. As a team, we worked well together and seemed to balance each other’s interests and perspectives. All of our meetings were open and publically announced.

We all want to see CPA implemented in a fair, open and transparent manner. We want CPA to be wildly successful in Boston. It is our hope that our small role has helped in this process.

Respectfully submitted,

CPC Working Group

Shelly Goehring, chair

Jeffrey Gonyeau

Curtis Kemeny

Cortina Vann

With support from Christine Poff, CPA Director