**2025 Annual Town Meeting**
**Article 22**
**Appropriate for East Militia Heights Development**
**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Who is applying for funding?**
   The Charles River Center, in partnership with the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Inc., has applied for funding from the Community Preservation Committee.

   The Charles River Center (CRC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity established in 1956 to empower and support people with developmental disabilities by offering high-quality, individualized opportunities that foster independence and community inclusion through day, residential, family, and in-home support services.

   The Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Inc. (POUA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit housing developer established in 1969 by the Archdiocese of Boston. To date, POUA has developed over 3,000 units of elderly, family, mixed income and special needs housing, channeling approximately over $650 million of investment into developments throughout metropolitan Boston, and currently has nearly 500 additional housing units, across several properties, under active development.

2. **What is the history of the project?**
   Studies indicate that only about 5% of autistic adults live independently, while 37% require overnight care. This underscores a significant gap of 58% of individuals who need support services necessary to foster autonomy among this population. In 2023, the Charles River Center acquired 3.5 acres of land at 59 East Militia Heights Drive in Needham to advance its goal of addressing the unmet housing need for individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities. CRC partnered with POUA to design an inclusive and vibrant community that provides an innovative and integrated housing model to address this urgent need.

   By offering inclusive housing and flexible, integrated support services—including assistance with daily living activities, vocational training, and social skills development—CRC hopes to empower adults with autism and intellectual disabilities to access their communities, gain employment, live more independently and achieve their personal goals.

3. **How many affordable housing units will this create?**
   The East Militia Heights project will create 86 new units of affordable housing for households earning at or below 30% to 80% of Area Median Income. The availability of these units is broken down as follows:
   - 43 units will be available through a closed referral system with the MA Department of Developmental Services for people with autism and intellectual disabilities.
   - 5 of the units will be set aside for CRC staff (earning at or below 80% AMI) who will provide after-hours support to residents, on an emergency basis.
   - 38 units will be available to households earning at or below 30% to 80% AMI and not restricted to individuals with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

4. **What other benefits will be included in the new housing?**
CRC will provide a comprehensive network of support and services alongside educational opportunities, including remote support for overnight monitoring, clinical support including medical, health and safety, college navigation, employment and career exploration, training and job support, adult companion and peer support, and transportation/shuttle services.

The integration of adults with disabilities and adults without disabilities is a critical component of the CRC model and is mandated by both federal and state law, which require such individuals to have access to the greater community, and receive support in the least restrictive, and most typical setting possible.

When complete, the project will provide a creative model of an inclusive community for other cities and towns across the state and beyond.

5. **What is the public benefit to the Town of Needham?**
   - The project adds to the number of affordable housing units in Needham, including an increase in the affordable workforce housing units.
   - The project enhances the broader community by fostering diversity and inclusion.
   - CRC will provide preference to residents of Needham at initial lease-up, to the extent permitted by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC).
   - The Community Center will be available to the public and for events.
   - The outdoor walking paths will be available to the public.

6. **Does appropriating money to this project violate the Anti-Aid Amendment?**
No. Any expenditure of public funds must be used to advance a public purpose and securing affordable housing is generally understood to be a legitimate public purpose.

In this instance, the Town, as a condition of funding, will require CRC to (i) enter into the Town's Grant Agreement; and (ii) execute and record an affordable housing restriction that secures, in perpetuity, the affordability of the project consistent with the representations contained in the CPA application and made during the Community Preservation Committee's review and hearing process.

7. **What is the affordable housing restriction?**
The grant agreement will also require that the CRC provide an affordable housing restriction that will be held by the Town, for the purpose of securing the affordability of all units within the project. The affordability restriction will include an affordability level at or below 30% to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) as represented during the application process. The affordability housing restriction will be memorialized in a separate, free-standing document from the grant agreement, will be executed by the Select Board and the Charles River Center, and will be recorded at the Registry of Deeds. The affordable housing restriction will be in effect in perpetuity.

8. **Why is local CPA funding important to this project?**
An award of CPA funding demonstrates strong local support for a project. This is a critical component for a successful application for Federal and State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit financing (LIHTC).

9. **Why is the Town not pursuing a loan?**
The Town has not yet used the loan provisions allowed under the Affordable Housing Trust statute. Significant research will be required to determine the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring (if even possible) that the Town would have the same guarantees issuing a loan as compared to signing a grant agreement. Protections inherent in the grant agreement process include the fact that payments are reimbursements and are approved under the oversight of the Town- Financed Community Housing Oversight Committee (T-CHOC).

The application date for EOHLC's FY2026 funding program has not been set. In FY2025, EOHLC's deadline was November 25, 2024. Conversion of this project from a grant to a loan would require that the October 20, 2025 Special Town Meeting support an appropriation to the Affordable Housing Trust, followed by a commitment by the Trust in a short time frame. Local commitment to housing projects is a key requirement for EOHLC in its decision-making. Because the process is highly competitive, the Charles River Center needs the Town's commitment to be clear and unambiguous as early in the process as possible.

The Select Board Charis have agreed to include a study of the use of loans through the Affordable Housing Trust over the balance of 2025. The funding request was presented as a grant during the public hearing process and CPC believes that the funding mechanism should not be changed after the hearing. The CPC and Select Board have both voted unanimously to support the article as a grant.

10. **Are CPA funds at risk?**
No. The grant, recommended by CPC through CPA funds, is based on a reimbursement model and will not be distributed until the total project financing is secured and construction is underway. CRC's requests for reimbursement will be reviewed and approved by Town staff and the Town Financed Community Housing Oversight Committee (T-CHOC), which was established by the Select Board specifically to oversee the use of funds appropriated by the Town to support the development of community housing by third parties.

Additionally, the Town's grant agreement will include a timeline for a funding status update. By September 30, 2028, the CRC and CPC will meet to discuss the status of the entire financing of the project, and if the complete financing is not secured, discuss a possible extension if financing is likely, or if there is a good cause for the delay. The goals of this meeting would be to:

- Ensure that appropriated CPA funds will not sit indefinitely without being spent;
- Ensure that the CRC has sufficient time to secure project funding in its entirety before CPA funds are at risk of being rescinded;
- Require that CRC provide a formal update on the project to the CPC; and
- Ensure that parties have an understanding of the status of the project, the status of the financing, and the updated timeline.

11. **Why is this request coming forward now?**
In order to be competitive during the application process with LIHTC and EOHLC, the CRC must show local support early on in the process. An approval of funding from Town Meeting and an executed grant agreement will show local support during their application process with LIHTC and EOHLC. No CPA funds will be disbursed to CRC unless and until complete project financing is secured, CPA eligible expenses are incurred, and a request for reimbursement is reviewed and approved by T-CHOC.

**12. What are the Charles River Center's funding sources for this project?**

| Funding Source | Total |
|---|---|
| CRC financed predevelopment funds until construction loan closing | $750,000 |
| ***CPA Funds*** | ***$2,840,223*** |
| Construction loan (of which, $11.4M will convert to permanent debt) | $13,493,998 |
| Equity from sale of Federal and State Tax credits (LIHTC) | $2,175,783 |
| CRC loan | $5,251,951 |
| MassHousing Workforce Program | $500,000 |
| EOHLC | $10,000,000 |
| Equity from sale of LIHTC | $15,912,767 |
| DOER/MassSaves | $1,113,785 |
| TOTAL | $49,976,509 |