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Worcester City Council votes to advance the Community Preservation Act to the November ballot

WORCESTER – This week, the Worcester City Council voted in favor of putting the Community Preservation Act on the November 8, 2022, giving voters an opportunity to decide whether to adopt CPA. The effort is put forward by Yes for a Better Worcester, a growing coalition of local and state-wide organizations dedicated to the passage of CPA in the City of Worcester.

The [Community Preservation Act \(CPA\)](#) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources.

In his remarks at the hearing, **City Councilor Khrystian King** noted that Worcester is the largest city without CPA. "I look forward to putting this on the ballot and letting the people decide. I appreciate the folks who have brought this forward once again," Councilor King said.

Those voting in favor included **Mayor Joe Petty, Councilor Khrystian E. King, Councilor Thu Nguyen, Councilor Katie Toomey, Councilor Sean M. Rose, Councilor Etel Haxhijaj, and Councilor Sarai Rivera**. A list of petitioners is attached to this press release.

A number of residents and advocates addressed the Council and encouraged them to let the voters decide.

Former Mayor Joe O'Brien, Chair of "Yes for a Better Worcester" the Municipal Ballot Question Committee, stated in his testimony: "The City Council should take the lead and vote to place the Ballot Question and avoid the city cost of reviewing a petition and the time required to secure some 10,000 signatures. Let the voters decide. Direct democracy is the best. We are prepared to go forward and educate the voters in the coming to vote Yes on this ballot question."

Frank Callahan of Elm Street and Treasurer of Yes for a Better Worcester, noted: "No city that has adopted this has rescinded it. The CPA will be a source long after the one-time ARPA funds are spent."

Ann T. Lisi of Berwick Street: “I will be glad to add \$64 a year to my tax bill (the estimated surcharge if the CPA is adopted) to participate in such a worthy community effort. And I am glad that low-income households will be completely exempt from any surcharge if the CPA is adopted. This is a true community effort that I hope wins at the ballot box. Also, we are leaving money on the table (the matching funds) if we don’t adopt the CPA.”

Ajayi Harris of Cornell Street: “Every neighborhood deserves to have better play areas for kids. The CPA will be a source for the outdoor recreation needs of our city now and for decades to come. I’m excited about that.”

Henry Hernandez, Worcester resident and organizer with Neighbor to Neighbor, stated: “Everyone knows there is a housing crisis in our city. The CPA can be a seed fund to help build more affordable housing that working families so desperately need.”

Hernandez also made note that the City was receiving ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) money to support housing efforts that would not be available long-term, and that CPA was a sustainable revenue source to support housing to go into effect around the same time that ARPA will expire.

Deb Packard of Drury Lane and executive director of Preservation Worcester stated: “Protecting historic properties impacts the economy and quality of life. This fund will help preserve critical structures for the long haul.”

With this CPA proposal, the Yes for a Better Worcester is putting forward a 1.5% surcharge on local property tax bills. Each dollar raised in Worcester through the CPA will receive a match from the state’s CPA Trust Fund, disbursed each November by the Department of Revenue.

Worcester residents, through Registry fees, are already paying into this statewide CPA Trust Fund. The CPA Trust Fund money is generated by fees charged on documents filed at the Registries of Deeds (\$50 and \$25 as of December 31, 2019). The November 2021 base match for communities was 39.4% of what they raised at the local level – a new record-high distribution of \$79 million to CPA communities.

Worcester’s CPA proposal will include the following exemptions:

- First \$100,000 of residential property value
- First \$100,000 of commercial & industrial property value
- Low-income individuals & families
- Low- to moderate-income seniors

ABOUT Yes for a Better Worcester

Yes for a Better Worcester is a growing coalition of local and state-wide organizations dedicated to the passage of CPA in the City of Worcester. Local partner organizations include: Worcester Cultural Coalition, Worcester Interfaith, Regional Environmental Council Worcester, Preservation Worcester, Walk Bike Worcester, Greater Worcester Land Trust, Worcester Common Ground, League of Women Voters of the Worcester Area, Mass Audubon/Broad Meadow Brook.