

This fall a search committee convened to select a new general public CPC member. The position was advertised for approximately one month, drawing 14 well-qualified Somervillians to submit applications to serve. The search committee narrowed the field and interviewed 5 outstanding candidates. After deliberation, the search committee presents Rona Fischman as the final recommended candidate to fill the CPC seat.

Rona has a long track record of advocating for diverse groups in Somerville to address social and economic justice as both a volunteer and professional, with a focus on housing affordability and accessibility for people with disabilities. Rona has been a long-time member of the Fair Housing Commission, but she is excited about the opportunity to expand her community engagement to encompass open spaces and historical community assets. (Rona would step down from the Fair Housing Commission if selected for appointment to the CPC.) Rona's deep community network and her technical expertise with real estate/local architecture and with accessibility/adaptive design will be a unique asset to the committee.

## **Community Preservation Committee**

### **General Public Member Application Form**

**Name**

Rona Fischman

**Briefly explain why you would like to join the CPC and how you feel you can support its work.**

I bring communication, management, and teaching skills to the table. I have a long track record of advocating for diverse groups in Somerville.

**Affordable housing:** I am a seasoned pro regarding fair housing, affordable housing, and housing for people with disabilities. I have established and nourished networks of people who address social and economic justice (including housing justice). I have experience speaking before the legislature. I have deep experience in residential real estate.

**Historic:** I have coursework in architecture and building structure. Over my 30+ year career, I have seen over 10,000 homes and been to full home inspections in over 300. I know how buildings work, including the 100+-year-old ones all over the city.

**Open Space:** Beyond having a sense for usability, I bring skills for universal design and adaptive design for people who are deaf, blind, or mobility impaired.

## **What I do:**

### Housing:

Ongoing outspoken critic of Realtor initiatives that focus on increasing the profit gained from owning land.

- Somerville Fair Housing Commissioner 2013-present
- Somerville Anti-Displacement Task Force, 2023-2025
- GBIO speaker on housing initiative, 2024
- Teacher at SCC first time homebuyer's classes for moderate income buyers 2006-2024

### Interfaith/Faith Community work:

- Accessibility Chair for Project Yachad. 2025. Project includes removing pews and increasing sound quality in a 1920s building sanctuary.
- [Daughters of Abraham](#), women's book groups: 2002-present. Founding member (2002) and Steering Committee member (2004-2009). There are approximately 500 women participating in interfaith discussions, nationwide.
- Led workshops at Temple B'nai Brith and Open Beit Midrash about racism within the Jewish Community. 2017.
- Somerville Interfaith Group: 1991-1998. This group of faith leaders did annual Thanksgiving events, pulpit exchanges, and other coalition building between faith communities. Launched Stand By Me campaign to support racial justice and support immigrants. Developed a safe home network through this coalition and provided volunteers to several domestic violence organizations in the area.

### Active Bystander Intervention:

[Teaching](#) and [writing](#) on the topic of how to interrupt hateful speech and action. 2016-present.

### Legislative action:

Actively supported these bills/initiatives in writing and testimony at the State House:

- Affordable Homes Act: H.1438
- Transfer fee legislation: H3845 H4063, H2747, S1771

### Skills I bring to the table:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Conversant in American Sign Language. Familiar with adaptive design for deaf, blind, and mobility impaired people.
- Familiar with residential real estate practices in Massachusetts.

### Honors received:

Was recognized by Somerville Board of Aldermen (now City Council) twice:

1. for work housing disabled adults in Somerville.
2. for starting a safe-home network for women fleeing domestic violence.

### **What I did for pay:**

#### Exclusive buyer's agent 1992-2024:

Licensed real estate agent, working only on behalf of home purchasers. I held a specialty in working with home purchasers who had special needs.

- 1992-1997: Homebase Real Estate, Belmont
- 1997-2008: Buyer Brokerage Realty, Newton
- 2008-2024: Owner, 4 Buyers Real Estate, Cambridge

#### Deaf-Blind Rehab Specialist 1984-1991:

Various positions in teaching, counseling, and administration serving the needs of middle-school-aged and adults who were deaf, blind, deaf-blind, or cognitively impaired.

- North Suffolk Mental Health, Chelsea
- HRI Hospital (outpatient services), Brookline
- Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Germantown, PA
- Belchertown State School, DMR Region 1, Belchertown
- Deaf Community Center, Framingham