

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON CITY PROPERTY
DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2021
TIME: 7:01 P.M.
PLACE: HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020 ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW G. L. C. 30A, SECTION 20 AND THE CITY COUNCIL'S VOTE TO WAIVE RULE 21A

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY, CHAIRMAN; NAOMI CARNEY, VICE CHAIRPERSON; IAN ABREU; DEREK BAPTISTE; HUGH DUNN; MARIA GIESTA; BRIAN GOMES (7:06); SCOTT LIMA; JOSEPH LOPES; LINDA MORAD

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR DEBORA COELHO

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Councillor Markey called the City Property Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. Everyone was present except for Councillor Coelho.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting AN ORDER that the City acting through its City Property Committee issue an RFP for the purpose of acquiring the new site for the City of New Bedford Public Schools' Central Kitchen in substantially the same format as attached thereto (Ref'd 06/25/2020) (07/23/2020 – tabled) (08/10/2020 – remain in committee) was removed from the table and received and placed on file by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Lopes. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0. (1, 1a)

Councillor Morad asked Councillor Markey if they could take up item number two, the Communication as well, and there was no objection.

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Council President Lopes submitting a copy of a letter regarding the School Committee's recommendation to purchase property at 449 North Street for the New Bedford Public Schools' Food Service Department (To be Referred to the Committee on City Property.) (Ref'd 02/11/2021) was received and placed on file by Councillor Lima and seconded by Councillor Lopes. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0. (2)

Dr. Rabinovitch was present and gave an overview of the RFP process. The NBPS hired a project manager to determine the feasibility of the project to include size of the building, parking, and other items as it related to the type of building they would need for their new central kitchen. The School Department had one entity respond to the RFP that was issued, the owners of the property at 449 North Street. The School Committee approved the location and has now sent it to the City Council for consideration and approval to negotiate the purchase of the building. If the City Council approves this, once a price is negotiated they will return to the City Council looking for authority to apply for an appropriations bond.

Councillor Lima explained he liked the project but had hoped the project could be built on city-owned land and allowed the current property to be a part of the city's tax base.

Andrew O'Leary, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations NBPS, was present and explained that they were told that the city did not own a parcel big enough to allow for the proposed building the School Department was looking for, this is the reason the RFP was issued. Dr. Rabinovitch stated they had determined it would be a more expensive process to have to purchase land and build then it would be to buy an existing parcel and rehab it.

Councillor Abreu asked Robert Shaheen when the building was up and running if they would look to professionalize the operation and perhaps allow other organizations to use the property. He was told yes; that this is an opportunity to create up to eight (8) new jobs, including a Chef and a Warehouse Manager.

Councillor Lopes asked Dr. Rabinovitch if the potential costs included outfitting the kitchen and he was told, that to rehab the eight existing school kitchens would be greater than the costs to create a central kitchen. He cited the costs to upgrade NBHS's kitchen is estimated to be \$1.5 million. They would also use other vendor plans to create revenue to cover the costs of the paying for the central kitchen. Mr. O'Leary went on to explain that currently there is \$6 million in their debt service fund that would be used to move the project forward covering all projected costs.

Councillor Gomes asked if the revenue received would be used towards the upkeep and maintenance of the equipment and he was told yes.

Councillor Morad asked Dr. Rabinovitch to clarify how the reimbursement monies received from programs could be used for creating a new central kitchen. She was told that the money could not be used to buy a building, but it could be used to rent a building, which is why they are asking the city to fund the purchase and the School Department would pay rent to the city until the loan was paid in full. None of the city's monies would be used it would be all paid from government reimbursements from the food program. She asked how much land is needed for this project, it was determined to be a full acre of property. Councillor Morad asked CFO Sky for a list of the surplus land in the city.

Councillor Lima asked what the top dollar is the city can get for the property at 449 North Street. Dr. Rabinovitch said he was told by the Solicitor's Office, that the offer should be based on the last three years of assessments on the property of the same value, plus no more than an additional 25%. This equates to a \$1 million purchase price for the building, and additional \$1.5 million for the rehab, not including the equipment purchases.

CFO Sky explained that he would prefer to come back to the City Council to approve a loan order to cover the entire project. He believes this would be approximately \$3.5 million and payment would be \$250 to \$270 thousand a year on a twenty-year note.

A discussion ensued about the possibility of locating property owned by the city that could be given to the School Department to building on and use the \$3.5 million towards the costs of erecting the building and not having to buy a building that was

constructed in 1935; but allow for the creation of a state-of-the-art building for a central kitchen. Dr. Rabinovitch thought this to be a worthwhile process to explore. Councillors Morad, Lopes and Carney endorsed this process.

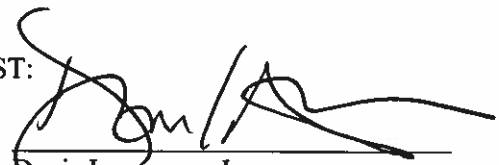
Councillor Lima agreed with the recommended process as well. He did, however, give an overview on how he would like the property at 449 North Street to be developed if the property was eventually chosen. He would like the area to mirror the City of Springfield's central kitchen and would like the building and property to have green space and a neighborhood feel. He does not want an industrial looking building on this property in this neighborhood especially where it abuts several homes on Jenny Lind and Hillman Streets.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To table these matters for less than thirty (30) days. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0.

Councillor Lopes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Giesta. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:03 p.m.

ATTEST:



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees