



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON CITY PROPERTY
DATE: MAY 15, 2023
TIME: 7:02 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS MARIA GIESTA, CHAIRPERSON;
DEREK BAPTISTE; SHANE BURGO (7:08); NAOMI
CARNEY; BRIAN GOMES; WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY;
SHAWN OLIVER; RYAN PEREIRA

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS IAN ABREU; SCOTT LIMA; LINDA
MORAD

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Councillor Giesta called the Committee on City Property Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read Communications into the record from Councillors Abreu, Lima and Morad explaining their absences. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Carney. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on City Property meet with a representative from the Mitchell Administration, to discuss what action plan is being implemented for the number of vacant School and City buildings, that are not generating taxes and are deteriorating in the City (Ref'd 05/12/2022) was received and placed on file by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Markey. This motion passed on a voice vote. (1)

The Chair recognized Andrew O'Leary, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, who addressed Councillor Gomes' motion requesting an action plan for the number of vacant School and City buildings.

Mr. O'Leary explained the School Department has been looking at its vacant buildings for further use. When it is determined that there is no educational need for them, the School Committee takes a vote to turn the property over to the City. The properties ultimately end up in the City Council Property Committee and sit there until action is taken. The old school building inventory includes Dunbar, Taylor, Kempton, Phillips Avenue, Ingraham and soon to include Congdon and DeValles. Mr. O'Leary stated that the former Ingraham School is being developed. He also stated the Dunbar School was under an agreement for development with Cruz Construction.

Councillor Baptiste asked if any of the schools on the list had any historical value. Mr. O'Leary answered that none of the buildings have any official historical designation. Councillor Gomes suggested that the process of disposing of the properties should be faster.

The Chair recognized Jennifer Vieira, DFFM Director, who addressed the City building surplus. She explained that the Phillips Avenue School was still pending in the Council's City Property Committee. She stated that there are three public safety buildings that will be designated as surplus in order to secure RFP's. The properties include Fire Department buildings on Kempton Street and Brock Avenue and the Cove Road Police Department. She added that the property at Hillman and County Street is a CPA property and repairs and restoration are taking place.

Councillor Pereira asked if the City would be looking to sell these properties. He was told they were. He also asked if the City was properly maintaining the surplus properties to avoid damage that might affect a possible sale. He was told that they were.

Councillor Carney asked if Kempton School has transferred to the City yet. She was told it had not. Mr. O'Leary explained the school has been vacant for six years. The delay in the transfer was because the property had been considered by Alma del Mar as a satellite school, which they eventually decided against.

Councillor Markey asked if there was a particular timeline in place to turn over schools to the City. He was told there was not, but when the decision is made by the School Committee it is a simple vote to refer.

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To Table the matter at this time. This motion passed by a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Pereira and Abreu, requesting, that Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, come before the Committee on City Property to discuss the Hazelwood Park upgrades, and further; to discuss the possibility of adding pickleball courts to the upgrades (Ref'd 02/09/2023) (Matter ID #0279) was received and placed on file by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Carney. This motion passed on a voice vote. (2)

The Chair recognized Mary Rapoza, Director of Parks, Recreation and Beaches. Ms. Rapoza provided the Committee with an overview of the motion's request to discuss the Hazelwood Park upgrades and the possibility of adding pickleball courts.

Ms. Rapoza explained the upgrades to the bowling green have been completed and are officially opening on Saturday, May 20, 2023. There will be bowling and croquet demonstrations. The gazebo roof is to be replaced and the electrical works will be upgraded. It is the Park Department's plan to offer outdoor concerts at this location. They have received CPA funding to study the cottage to see if it is fiscally prudent to repair it. She added that the stone fixture will be having its interior portion repaired.

Ms. Rapoza further stated that the Park Department looked at the possibility of pickleball courts at Hazelwood Park, but the National Pickleball Association recommends a 400' buffer from homes due to the noise that the game creates. She went on to explain it is like ping pong but on a larger scale, and the noise becomes an issue. Based on this information, it was decided not to install pickleball courts in the Park at this time. They will, however, be restoring the current tennis courts.

Ms. Rapoza informed the Committee that the Park Department will be installing pickleball courts at Buttonwood Park, which will also have tennis courts. She added that the tennis courts would be removed from Brooklawn Park and pickleball courts would be installed in their place.

Councillor Pereira asked if there was any consideration being given to placing pickleball courts in the South End of the City. He was told yes, that they were looking at possibly placing them at Ashley Park. Councillor Baptiste acknowledged it was a growing sport and he was pleased the City was looking into erecting such courts. Councillor Giesta voiced concern about removing the tennis courts from Brooklawn Park, which is in her Ward.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take “NO FURTHER ACTION” at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Pereira, requesting the DPI Commissioner Jamie Ponte appear before the Committee on City Property, to update the City Council on the Rodney French Boulevard road improvement project (Ref'd 02/23/2023) (Matter ID #0359) was received and placed on file by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Carney. This motion passed on a voice vote. (3)

The Chair recognized Shawn Syde, DPI City Engineer and Stephanie Crampton, DPI Assistant Engineer. Both provided an overview of the proposed Rodney French Boulevard road improvement project.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Pereira, the Committee VOTED: To receive and place on file a handout from DPI relating to the West Rodney French Streetscape Improvements. This motion passed on a voice vote.

It was explained that DPI will be doing upgrades in the Rodney French Boulevard area from Cove Road to Brock Avenue, past the Kilburn Mill. Work is being done to correct the water gathering issues in the area as well as improvements to the traffic pattern. The project is being funded by a MassWorks and DOT grant. The City has reached out to the local utility companies to do underground work as the first stage of the project. This is currently taking place. The project will consist of storm water improvements, to include water gardens. The project encompasses approximately 2,100 feet of roadway, to include sidewalks and bike paths.

The project will also include the addition of 51 new trees in the area. The City is currently working with the Kilburn Mill. The Mill owners have stated that they do not need the curb cuts that are presently in place along its building as they do not use the loading docks connected to the building. Councillor Pereira was pleased to hear about the partnership with Kilburn Mill.

Councillor Gomes asked if the flooding around the Kilburn Mill when its downpours would be addressed in the construction. He was told it would be. It was explained that this is the lowest part of the City and that there is currently nowhere for the water to go. By installing green infrastructure in the means of a water garden, an area is created to naturally absorb overflows of water. Councillor Gomes also asked that a crosswalk be considered at the Mill. He was told that was part of the plan.

Assistant City Engineer Stephanie Crampton gave an overview of the timeline for the project. It will be done in two phases, the first from Route 18 through Brock Avenue. Councillor Pereira asked about traffic impact during the construction. He was told there would be no on-street parking during the days of construction. Barrels will be put in place and removed at the end of the day to allow neighborhood parking.

Councillor Gomes asked that the project be mindful as to where they put the trees so that they do not grow to affect the lights above. Councillor Markey expressed the same concern about roots affecting piping. They were both told that all of this is being taken into consideration. Councillor Burgo asked who would be responsible for plowing the bike path, once constructed. He was told that responsibility would fall to the City.

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend that the City Council take “NO FURTHER ACTION” at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on City Property meet with the new owners of the former Hallmark Nursing Home on Rockdale Avenue and the former Sassaquin Nursing Home on Acushnet Avenue for the purpose of discussing what their plans are at said locations. (Ref'd 08/18/2022) (4)

On motion by Councillor Pereira and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To follow the Chair’s recommendation to waive the reading and recommend that the City Council take “NO FURTHER ACTION” at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Councillor Pereira made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Burgo. This motion passed on a voice vote.

This meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees