



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON CITY PROPERTY
DATE: MARCH 19, 2025
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS MARIA GUESTA, CHAIR; IAN ABREU;
SHANE BURGO (7:09); NAOMI CARNEY; LEO
CHOQUETTE; JOSEPH LOPES; LINDA MORAD (7:10);
SHAWN OLIVER

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DEREK BAPTISTE, BRIAN GOMES
AND RYAN PEREIRA

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Councillor Giesta called the Committee on City Property meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read Communications into the record; one from Councillor Baptiste explaining his absence, and two others from Councillors Burgo and Morad explaining their tardiness. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Choquette.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (DRAFT), for the redevelopment of a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC). (Matter ID #0090) (Referred – January 23, 2025.) (February 20, 2025 – VOTE: to table the matter at this time.)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS, (DRAFT), for the redevelopment of a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC). (Matter ID #0091) (Referred – January 23, 2025.) (February 20, 2025 – VOTE: to table the matter at this time.)

COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, in conjunction with the REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (DRAFT), for the redevelopment of a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC), requesting that the Committee on City Property vote to authorize the Planning Department to conduct an appraisal of the property being contemplated for potential disposition and authorize the Planning Department to conduct a survey of all City departments to determine whether the property is needed for municipal purposes. (Matter ID #0092) (Referred – January 23, 2025.) (February 20, 2025 - VOTE: send a communication to all department heads inquiring if the property is needed for municipal purposes; tabled) (February 20, 2025 - VOTED: To authorize the Planning Department to conduct an appraisal of the property being contemplated for potential disposition.) (February 20, 2025 - VOTED: To table the matter at this time.) (March 4, 2025 - communication sent to all department heads inquiring if there was a need for the property; no response received indicating a need.)

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To remove from the table the COMMUNICATION, REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL and the COMMUNICATION submitted in conjunction with the REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To Receive and Place on File a hard copy of a Power Point presentation previously reviewed with the Committee.

The Chair recognized Mr. Neil Mello, Mayor's Chief of Staff, who provided an overview of the proposal, similar to a previous meeting, during which a PowerPoint presentation detailed the project for the Committee. He noted that the Administration is seeking the Committee's approval to issue a Request for Proposals for the property, allowing a two-month window for submissions once it is issued. The aim is to gather written proposals by mid-May. These proposals will be reviewed by a committee comprised of department heads, the Planning Board, and the Ward Councillor. The objective is to submit plans to Mass Works for funding to construct an access road to the property.

Councillor Lopes inquired whether the City could submit a request to Mass Works before a specific proposal is selected. Mr. Mello confirmed that they would proceed with the request, while also notifying Mass Works about their ongoing negotiations with potential companies. The Councillor then asked about the current market conditions and their potential advantages for the project.

Mr. Andrew Julian from RND Consultants was recognized and explained that the market conditions could be assessed in three stages, depending on the types of businesses being proposed, the specifics included in the lease or sale agreement, and the number of phases required for project completion. Mr. Julian noted that the market is currently more favorable for projects involving healthier industries. He further emphasized the location's desirability and its convenient access to highways and the importance of transportation options, such as air and rail, in making the property attractive to developers.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property determined that a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC) is not currently needed for municipal purposes. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property authorize the City to offer a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC) for lease. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 7, Nays 1. (Councillor Morad OPPOSED.)

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property authorize the City's Purchasing Department, in close consultation with the Committee Chair, to proceed with issuing the Request for Proposal (RFP) in accordance with Chapter 30B, Section 16 of the General Laws and in accordance with Section 2-65 of the City Code; and that all bids received be submitted to the Committee on City Property with any written recommendations for selection that the Administration may choose to make to the Committee; and further that the RFP be substantially similar to the DRAFT RFP received by this Committee relative to the property described as a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC). This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 7, Nays 1. (Councillor Morad OPPOSED.)

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property, in addition to offering a portion of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course as an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC) for lease, also offer the property for potential sale. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 7, Nays 1. (Councillor Morad OPPOSED.)

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting two REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS (DRAFTS), for the disposition and development of the former Horatio A. Kempton School, located at 135 Shawmut Avenue, and the former William H. Taylor School, located at 620 Brock Avenue. (Matter ID #2077) (Referred – December 12, 2024.) (February 12, 2025 – tabled)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS, (DRAFT), for the disposition and development of the former Horatio A. Kempton School, located at 135 Shawmut Avenue. (Matter ID #2078) (Referred – December 12, 2024.) (February 12, 2025 – VOTE: send a communication to all department heads inquiring if the property is needed for municipal purposes; tabled) (February 13, 2025 – communication sent to all department heads inquiring if there was a need for the property; no response received indicating a need.)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS, (DRAFT), for the disposition and development of the former William H. Taylor School, located at 620 Brock Avenue. (Matter ID #2079) (Referred – December 12, 2024.) (February 12, 2025 – VOTE: send a communication to all department heads inquiring if the property is needed for municipal purposes; tabled) (February 13, 2025 – communication sent to all department heads inquiring if there was a need for the property; no response received indicating a need.)

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To remove from the table the COMMUNICATION, and the two REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS.

The Chair recognized Mr. Joshua Amaral, Director of Office of Housing and Community Development. Councillor Lopes inquired why the Taylor School property was not presented as three separate parcels to potentially generate greater interest. Mr. Amaral responded that, as previously discussed, the decision was made to offer the property as a single parcel. This approach is believed to be more advantageous, as splitting the property could attract less favorable proposals, and keeping all three parcels together is expected to yield better offers.

Councillor Morad inquired whether the proposals contained claw back language. Mr. Amaral highlighted the section of the contract that included these provisions and addressed her concerns. He noted that the language specifies development goals, stating that construction should be completed within 18 to 24 months from the time the property is purchased.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property determine that the former Horatio A. Kempton School, located at 135 Shawmut Avenue, and the former William H. Taylor School, located at 620 Brock Avenue are not needed for municipal purposes. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property authorize the City to offer the properties, the former Horatio A. Kempton School, located at 135 Shawmut Avenue, and the former William H. Taylor School, located at 620 Brock Avenue for lease or sale. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property authorize the City's Purchasing Department, in close consultation with the Committee Chair, to proceed with issuing the Request for Proposal (RFP) in accordance with Chapter 30B, Section 16 of the General Laws and in accordance with Section 2-65 of the City Code; and that all bids received be submitted to the Committee on City Property with any written recommendations for selection that the Administration may choose to make to the Committee; and further that the RFP be substantially similar to the DRAFT RFP received by this Committee relative to these properties, the former Horatio A. Kempton School, located at 135 Shawmut Avenue, and the former William H. Taylor School, located at 620 Brock Avenue, This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

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COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, requesting that 1215 Purchase Street, the former New Bedford Textile School complex, be transferred to the ownership of the New Bedford Redevelopment Authority in order to position it for housing development. (Matter ID #2080) (Referred – December 12, 2024.) (February 12, 2025 – VOTE: send a communication to all department heads inquiring if the property is needed for municipal purposes; tabled) (February 13, 2025 – communication sent to all department heads inquiring if there was a need for the property; no response received indicating a need.)

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Oliver, the Committee VOTED: To remove from the table the COMMUNICATION.

Mr. Amaral stated that the objective is to transfer ownership of the building, ensure its stabilization, assess the required repairs, and carry out the essential repairs, including securing the building's exterior and preparing it for sale.

Councillor Lopes inquired about the current ownership of the property and was informed that it belongs to the City. Recalling a previous dispute involving UMASS and the former Lang Administration regarding a bodily injury incident that raised questions about the building's ownership, the Councillor suggested that the title be clarified before the property is listed for sale.

Councillor Morad reiterated her concerns, emphasizing that resolving ownership issues is essential. She noted the importance of having a clear title and confirmed that the City must own the property before any repairs or sales can proceed. The Councillor pointed out that a title search is typically a simple process, often completed within twenty-four hours. She expressed her concern about the potential investment of \$500,000 in the building, only to discover later that it does not belong to the City.

Councillor Morad asked Mr. Amaral about the approval of the transfer, specifically regarding the inclusion of a provision stating that if the Authority sold the building, they would retain their initial investment plus 10%, with any remaining profits allocated to the City's General Fund. Mr. Amaral indicated that he had no objections to this. The Councillor then asked about the presence of clawback language in the proposals, to which she was informed that it would be included. She also proposed amending the requirement to sell the property within 18 – 24 months, with the stipulation that if it remains unsold, the property will revert to the Committee. Mr. Amaral expressed that he had no objections to this change either.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: That the Committee on City Property approve offering the city owned property located at 1215 Purchase Street, commonly known as the New Bedford Textile School for sale or lease for the purposes of development for residential use. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Burgo, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of an ORDER, transferring the city owned property located at 1215 Purchase Street, commonly known as the New Bedford Textile School, to the New Bedford Redevelopment Authority for the purposes of development of said property for residential use. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

At this time, 7:55 p.m., a short recess was taken. The Committee reconvened at 8:05 p.m.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To AMEND the ORDER, by inserting, after the words “residential use”, the words “or mixed use on the first floor”. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To AMEND the ORDER, by inserting at the end, the following: “The care and custody of the property shall revert to the City Council if the Redevelopment Authority does not have the property under agreement with a developer within eighteen (18) months. The City Property Committee may extend the eighteen (18) months upon majority vote”. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To AMEND the ORDER, by further inserting at the end, the following: “and further upon sale of the property, the Redevelopment Authority shall retain the initial investment to cover their costs plus an additional 10%, and with the remaining 90% of proceeds to revert to the City’s General Fund”. This motion passed on a roll call vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lopes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council, ADOPTION of the ORDER, as AMENDED, transferring the City owned property located at 1215 Purchase Street, the former New Bedford Textile School complex, to the New Bedford Redevelopment Authority for the purpose of development for residential use or mixed use on the first floor. The care and custody of the property shall revert to the City Council if the Redevelopment Authority does not have the property under agreement with a developer within eighteen (18) months. The City Property Committee may extend the eighteen (18) months upon majority vote, and further upon sale of the property, the Redevelopment Authority shall retain proceeds to cover their costs plus an additional 10%, and with the remaining 90% of the proceeds to revert to the City’s General Fund. This motion passed on a roll call vote – Yeas 8, Nays 0.

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Councillor Abreu made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Oliver.

This meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence Jr.
Clerk of the Committees