

CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC LANDS
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2024, at 6:57 p.m.

Voting Members present: Chair Lou DiMambro, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Charles Viola, Councilor Robert Ferullo, and Councilor William Pappalardo.

Non-Voting Members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Robert Toro, and Councilor Joanne Campbell. Absent: Councilor Joseph Demers

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon

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Reading and approval of the previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Viola and seconded by Councilor Dillon to dispense with the reading of the minutes from the meeting of October 23, 2023, and to approve; all in favor, 5-0.

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Order that Fire Station #3 located at 654 Main St. be made available for disposition and that the Mayor be authorized to convey such properties: Mayor Concannon said this order came down about a year ago. He said initially the request was to dispose of fire stations 2 and 3. He said Station 2 was auctioned off and the City Council at the time wanted to review the status of Station 3. He said the order is now back before the committee. He said the City Council President has gauged the state of mind of his district and he thinks the city is at the point where President Dillon has determined how best to proceed. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked if Station 3 will be made available. She asked if it will be put out to bid. Mayor Concannon said that is up to the council. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she would be 100 percent for putting the property out to bid. Mayor Concannon said he does not think there is any value in the city using the building. He said if the council wants him to put the property out to bid, that's what he will do. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she is aware there are concerns the city would just hand it over. She said if it is going to be auctioned, she is 100 percent on board. Councilor Pappalardo said he agrees with Councilor Mercer-Bruen. He said the city wants to make sure it gets the best price. Councilor Viola said the city has no further use for the land. He said he agrees the property should be put out to bid. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to

address the order; approved, 5-0. President Dillon said he had hoped to have a community meeting but after conferring with the City Clerk, it was decided there was potential for violation of the Open Meeting Law. He said he instead reached out to the neighbors and community groups. He said he believes there is a statute that requires the city to send it out to the highest bidder. He said he does support having it sent out to the highest bidder. He said he sees no further use for the building. He said the lot is less than 40,000-square-feet. He said the setbacks are very tight on both boundaries. He said he thinks the next use is to dispose of it any way that is available for bid to the public. Councilor Campbell said she is not in favor of giving up any municipal land but it is a small parcel. She said she might be inclined to keep the land if the building could be restored in some way. She asked if the city has looked into that. Mayor Concannon said the building is so old and in such bad shape that the cost to refurbish it would be prohibitive. Motion made by Councilor Viola and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to allow members of the audience to address the committee. Cynthia Tocci, 16 Lowell Street, said she is on the board of the facilities committee for the Woburn Boys & Girls Club. She said the board has had discussions about straightening out Clinton Street for egress to the Boys & Girls Club. She said taking a left out of the Boys & Girls Club's driveway is chaotic. She said the double intersection is a problem. She said if the parcel upon which the fire station sits was used to straighten out the driveway, the land would have to be donated and it would be a tradeoff. Rachel Kuberry, 6 Blake Street, said she wishes a community meeting would have happened. She said she thinks there was an opportunity to have a public meeting to survey the community. She said she hopes there is public commentary. She said her number one priority is safety. She said it is not realistic to have it as a park. Planning Director John Cashell said he thinks the city should look into this parcel in the context of a much larger scope. He said there are a lot of drainage issues that need to be addressed. He said if the city also ends up disposing of the old Wyman School, there could be changes to the common at Central Square and the elimination of the 1-way street. He said there are a lot of moving parts. He said the city should seriously consider what is the best utilization of that property. He said the fire station is not a building that can be rehabbed. He said the city has an opportunity to determine what is the best use for the city. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she will not support handing over the Central Square fire station parcel to someone. She said clearly there is value to this property. Councilor Toro said he is 100 percent in favor of disposing of the fire station to the highest bidder. He said he will not support just handing it over. He said the disposition of the land needs to be properly handled. Mayor Concannon said he will abide by what the City Council decides. Councilor Campbell asked what the mayor's thoughts are about improving traffic flow. Mayor Concannon said there have been conversations about traffic flow, and former City Engineer John Corey was asked to produce an engineering plan. He said he understands what Planning Director Cashell is saying about an opportunity to straighten out the intersection. He said he is not asking the council to do one thing or the other. He said if the council tells him it is ready to decide to auction it off, that's what he will do. He said if the council wants to take a further look at it, he will do that. Councilor Campbell said she feels like the property could be used to help traffic and therefore she feels like the city should hold onto it. She asked if holding it for six months is a big deal. Councilor Ferullo said everything else aside, anything the city can do to give the Boys & Girls Club access is beneficial. He said there are access issues at that intersection. Councilor Viola said he attended a neighborhood meeting and it seems like Mr. Tocci would be the only person to build on that site. John Tocci, Tocci Construction LLC, 660 Main Street, said he is not looking for a gift. He said he is looking to avoid a missed opportunity. He said there was a meeting with more than 70 people and they

showed their plans. He said his concern is someone is going to purchase the property and leverage him and the city out of an opportunity to improve public safety. He said it is going to be a public street. He said he is going to tear down a condemned building. He said please just hold onto the option, so the City Council and the mayor can weight their options. Director Cashell said this situation really does have a public good by straightening out a public way. He said the city would benefit from Mr. Tocci's project. He said it is a unique situation. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to return to the regular order of business; approved, 5-0. Councilor Toro said he agrees there is a concern someone could leverage the property against the city. He asked if there is an option to sell it at fair market value. Mayor Concannon said the value of the land has been assessed. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said if that intersection is so bad, the city shouldn't be waiting for someone to fix it. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Buren and seconded by Councilor Viola that the order "ought to pass" to allow the mayor to dispose of the property through proper channels; approved, 5-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Viola and seconded Councilor Mercer-Bruen to adjourn, 5-0. Chair DiMambro adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent

Clerk of Committees