

**COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC LANDS
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023, at 6:29 p.m.**

Voting Members present: Chair pro tem Lou DiMambro, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Charles Viola and Councilor Jeffrey Dillon. Absent: Chair Richard Gately

Non-Voting Members present: President Michael Concannon, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Joanne Campbell, and Councilor Robert Ferullo

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MOTION made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to return to the regular order of business on the posted agenda; all in favor, 4-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Viola to dispense with the reading of the minutes from the meeting of May 8, 2023, and to approve; all in favor, 4-0.

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Order to dispose of Fire Station #3, 654 Main Street, and to authorize Mayor to convey the properties in accordance with G.L. c.30B: Motion made by Councilor Dillon and seconded by Councilor Viola to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the order; approved, 4-0. President Concannon said the committee has received a memo from City Engineer John Corey. He said the memo is very helpful and the City Engineer's input is appreciated. He said Alderman Demers requested in November 2021 a conceptual plan depicting a roadway that would form an extension of Clinton Street, if the Central Square fire station ever ceased to be a fire station. He said Engineer Corey did the calculations. He said he wanted to take a little bit of time to review the conceptual plan. He said he felt it was important to separate the original order allowing the mayor to dispose of the two obsolete fire stations. He said he is glad Station 2 is on its way to being sold. He said he thought it was important for the council to take a closer look at Station 3. He said the city is fortunate in that there is a plan to take advantage of the space at the former Hurd Elementary School that benefits the neighbors. He said the Hurd is not being put up the auction and the city is potentially foregoing revenue. He said he thought this was an opportunity to discuss the Central Square fire station. He said he is not looking to put a stick in the spokes of the wheel. He said he would like to take a look at the information about demolition. He said he wanted more information about the traffic situation in and around the Central Square station. He said he would like information about the assessment of the Central Square station. He said all this information should be factored into the council's decision. He said he is skeptical but the information is good. He said the council may want to consider soliciting feedback from the neighbors. He said he is suggesting doing several deep dives to look at alternatives. He said it might end up being it's in the city's best interests to put the property up for sale. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said there is a similar situation on Wildwood

Avenue and the issue there is eminent domain unless the property owner changes his mind and opts to sell the land to the city. She said she thinks this is worth looking at again. She said the last thing the city wants to do is eminent domain. She asked if Engineer Corey's memo from 2021 is consistent with the conditions present in May 2023. She said the estimates seem a little off by today's standards. She said she is not an expert. She said she drove downtown today at 5:20 p.m. and she is still not sure 4-way signalization is required at Clinton Street. She said she will continue to make observations. She said one of the things that concerns her is the potential for development. She said apparently there are plans floating around for 175 units. She said she is concerned a traffic light would be a precursor to that. Councilor Dillon said his intention when this issue first came up weeks ago was the just slow the process down a little bit and talk about it. He said it is important for the city to make money, but he is never going to put money in front of safety and the right of residents to live happily in their neighborhood. Councilor Campbell said she does not think the city should sell any property. She said she thinks the city should hold onto it for potential projects down the road. She said there is a need for senior housing. She said if there are plans for 170 units, the city should hold onto the property and use it for senior housing. She said she would love to see the city go in that direction. She said the city is growing quickly. She said it makes sense to hold on to property until the city knows what it needs. Councilor Demers said he agrees with that sentiment. He said he was stunned to see the value of the property was as high as it is. He said he would love to hear from the city's Assessors Dept. He said the Central Square fire station parcel is landlocked. He said Mr. Tocci was allowing the firefighters to park on his property. He said literally the only thing that could be built there is a tiny house. He said he does not think the neighborhood would support variances. He said he would like to get an official comment from the Assessors Dept. He said any structure there would have to be pretty small. He said it would be virtually impossible to rehab the existing fire station because it is so old and dilapidated. He said the property assessment is \$750,000. He said he does share the concerns about opening the floodgates to future development. He said he has heard from Ward 4 constituents who are wary of development. He said everyone he has talked to is concerned about overdevelopment in the city of Woburn. He said there may be changes to the Ch. 40B legislation that could impact Woburn. He said the city has to think three moves ahead. He said the city has to consider what kind of impact there will be on traffic, etc. He said the more information the council gets, the more prepared it will be to decide. He said he is thankful the city is taking a longer look at this. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Dillon to send a communication to the Assessors Dept. asking for an assessment of the property at 654 Main St. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the value seems like an awfully high number. Councilor Demers said there will probably be access from private property required to demolish the fire station building. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the Ch. 40B numbers will change. She said the city should be mindful of the position it is in as far as Ch. 40B is concerned. She said the city is in a good position right now. She said the city has to be careful. Councilor Demers said the state has a governor who has prioritized affordable housing. He said Woburn has done its part, but there could be consequences if the affordable housing ratio is increased to 15 percent. He said he thinks the city has to think a few moves ahead. Councilor Viola said he appreciates Engineer Corey responding to the committee so quickly. He said he can't believe the property is worth \$750,000. He said if someone wants to build there, there is no parking. He said he campaigned against overdevelopment. He said he thinks the council should take its time and explore all the options. Councilor Campbell said he likes what Councilor Demers said. She said one of the benefits of holding onto the property is no one will be able to move forward with a

large development. She said holding onto this parcel is definitely beneficial to the city, as long as the building doesn't crumble to the point where it's a hazard. She said \$780,000 is a lot of money, but if selling the parcel could change the dynamics of the entire area. Councilor Ferullo referenced the demolition of the Tarky School and the Clapp School. He said those buildings were demolished because the city could not protect the buildings. He said when one window breaks, the rest of the neighborhood starts going through windows. He said then the buildings start to become an attractive nuisance. He said the city does not want broken windows. He said when he was police chief, the police department had to station a cruiser outside the Clapp School every night when it started to deteriorate. He said everything the city keeps; it is going to have to take care of. President Concannon asked if the committee votes on the motion to send a communication to the Assessors Dept. Motion approved, 4-0. President Concannon said he was also thinking the committee should reach out to the Planning Dept. in regard to potential uses for the property. Councilor Ferullo asked if the parcel has 100 feet of frontage. Councilor Demers said he thinks the dimensions are very tight. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Dillon to send a communication to Planning Director Tina Cassidy asking her what potential uses there are for the parcel at 654 Main St. if the fire station is demolished; approved, 4-0. President Concannon said he would also like the City Engineer to undertake a road safety audit. He said he is not looking to increase expenses. He asked if the City Engineer has the staff to conduct a road safety audit. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said the city has a contract with VHB and perhaps that might cover a road safety audit. President Concannon said that may be the appropriate mechanism. He said data from a road safety audit would determine whether there is a need for road safety improvements. Councilor Viola said the committee may also want to consider sending a memo to the WPD's Traffic Division seeking crash data within 50 feet of the intersection, in all three ways. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked why Councilor Viola chose a distance of 50 feet. Councilor Viola said 50 feet is the equivalent of four car lengths. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said it might be better to request crash data at the intersection as well as the driveways to the Boys & Girls Club and the Tocci property. Councilor Demers said the road safety audit should be conducted by a certified road safety engineer. He said the committee can certainly reach out to Sgt. Charles Stokes of the WPD's Traffic Division, but there may also be crashes in that area that go unreported or are not investigated by police. Councilor Ferullo said obtaining crash data should be a real easy lift for the police department. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said if the committee is not in a rush, then it might want to inquire with the Traffic Commission. President Concannon said he would appreciate the committee sending a memo to Engineer Corey asking him to have a road safety audit permit. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Dillon to send a communication to City Engineer Corey asking him to perform a road safety audit at the intersection of Main and Clinton streets as described in Engineer Corey's memo of May 25, 2023; approved, 4-0. Motion made by Councilor Viola and seconded by Councilor Dillon to send a memo to Sgt. Charles Stokes of the Woburn Police Dept.'s Traffic Division asking him to provide the committee with crash data at the intersection of Main and Clinton streets, the intersection of Main Street and Charles Gardner Lane and the intersection of Main Street and the entrance/exit of the Tocci property at 660 Main St.; approved, 4-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded Councilor Viola to adjourn, 4-0.
Chairman pro tem DiMambro adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees