









10 CAMBRIDGE
V.F.W.
ST

CambridgeScore
471-3888







Description of Meetings Attended by Thecla Ree, 6B Russell Street, Cambridge:

April 11

John's proposal seemed a foregone conclusion: that there would be affordable housing in the VFW, *plus* space for the Cambridge artists (there were possibly 3 artists present at that meeting).

The overall tone was pleasant, and John appeared most receptive and accommodating ("absolutely" "great idea" "give me a call") to our concerns about things that actually he doesn't have any responsibility for: the dead/dying pigeon problem, the pigeon feces, changing the direction of the street traffic for the sake of safety, etc.

There was absolutely no mention of previous discussions with the seniors.

Besides the 6 of us from Winthrop Row, the 3 artists or so, other attendees included 2 women from 7 Russell Street, No. 1. We left the meeting feeling that there would inevitably be housing, but felt grateful that community space would also be allotted.

Letter for first May 2000 meeting

John sent a letter saying that an additional meeting would be held to neighbors who had not been notified. We could attend if we'd like, but the same information would be presented.

Second May 2000 meeting

Very different John Woods, very different tone: as others have mentioned, this was a heated night of discussion. John started off by stating that he would present the feelings of the community in his report, which are: and then he firmly said that he had solicited feedback and that people were in favor of housing. No mention of artist space. I was taken aback immediately.

Helene cut him off quickly with a loud, "NO. That's not what we had said." And Helene was absolutely right. Though John in April had presented the need for housing in Cambridge, there hadn't been any solicitation of feedback. Furthermore, from the discussion that soon followed, it was clear that the second meeting that we had not attended had been well attended by a number of senior citizens, that senior citizens had been requesting/expecting this space for quite some time, and that John had neglected to mention this in the meeting that had been attended by artists.

There was no mention of artists' space.

John did defend himself by reading aloud a phrase about the inclusion of "some possible space" for community use, I think, and passed floor

plans of the proposed housing that night.

He took a vote of who was in favor of affordable housing that night.

I believe that only 3 people raised their hands. I did say then that I'd be in favor of affordable housing if there was dignity to the way people could live, but I didn't know how that would be possible with the dark, cramped space allotted, and the proximity of the building to ours. John said, "Hey, that's how it is in Cambridge."

John did mention a couple of times that finding housing was his job, and he wasn't "going to give [us] a gun so that [we] could shoot [him] in the head," in answer to someone's question about what she could do to somehow be heard by the City.

Near the end of the night, fully realizing that his idea was not supported, he did say, "All right, I'll go back tomorrow and tell them that you yelled at me again."

Consent Communication #15

**A communication was received
from Thecla Ree, transmitting
a description of the meeting
relative to the VFW.**

In City Council October 16, 2000

REFERRED TO CALENDAR ITEM #1



City of Cambridge

Calendar Item #1

IN CITY COUNCIL

October 16, 2000

MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR BRAUDE
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR DECKER
VICE MAYOR MAHER
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

WHEREAS There exists in Cambridge a severe shortage of decent housing affordable to low and moderate income residents; and

WHEREAS: The City Council desires to increase the supply of affordable home ownership, now and in the future, for low to moderate income Cambridge residents to reside in decent, affordable housing; and

WHEREAS: Pursuant to Section 15A of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, as amended and accepted by the City Council on November 26, 1990, the City Council may, by a majority vote, transfer municipal land to another board or officer of the City for the purpose of constructing affordable housing; and

WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge owns a certain parcel of land and the building situated in Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue commonly known as the North Cambridge VFW Building, listed on the Assessor's Records as lot 37 of map 181; and

WHEREAS: The property at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue has been owned by the City of Cambridge since at least 1868: and

WHEREAS: The City Manager has recommended transfer of the property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust Fund for development of affordable homeownership for Cambridge families and the creation of some public space, and

WHEREAS: With regard to said transfer of the property, the City Council hereby issues the following directives:

That the City Manager and Community Development staff meet with the abutters regarding the design of the housing units, location of mechanical equipment, parking and related issues.

That the City Manager direct staff to re-open discussions and seek community input regarding the use of the approximately 500 square feet of community space.

That the City Manager direct staff to engage in outreach to the community regarding additional needs of the seniors and artists of North Cambridge.

That the City Manager report back to the City Council on these directives; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager is authorized to transfer the land and property at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute and deliver to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, in the name of and on behalf of the City of Cambridge in such form as the City Manager shall approve (such approval to be evidenced by such execution and delivery) such documents, instruments, agreements, deeds, licenses, warranties, indemnifications, releases or certificates, or amendments thereto, required by the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust to re-use the land and building at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue, and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute, accept, and deliver such supplemental or ancillary documents as are reasonable necessary to implement the intent of this Order and to execute, accept and deliver amendments thereto.

In City Council October 16, 2000.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-



D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

DISPOSITION REPORT

for

2103 Massachusetts Avenue

(North Cambridge VFW)

Home Ownership

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Cambridge has owned the property located at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue since before 1868 when the building was built to serve as a firehouse, a meeting hall, and a neighborhood police station. Since that time, the building now known as the North Cambridge VFW Building has served as home to a series of public purposes. Subject to the conditions noted below, the City Manager recommends that the City Council approve transfer of the property to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust so that the historical building can be developed into affordable homeownership for low to moderate income Cambridge residents and at the same time provide some public space in the building to be utilized by Cambridge residents.

Upon approval of the transfer, the Trust will issue a Request for Proposal to select a developer. The developer will be asked to restore the historical and structural integrity of the building and develop both the residential and public space based on input from the neighborhood residents. The residential units in the building will then be sold to Cambridge families with incomes below 80% of the median income at an affordable cost and the public space will be leased back to the City for a nominal fee for use as determined by the City in consultation with the neighborhood.

The recent end of rent control, combined with the escalating cost of housing throughout Cambridge, indicates there is a clear need for affordable homeownership opportunities. The development of high quality, housing with public space will benefit the community by:

- using a City asset to create affordable homeownership for Cambridge households
- restoring an historic City owned structure
- renovating a dilapidated City owned property
- creating public space for neighborhood activities
- creating a source of revenue by adding residential units to the real estate tax base
- fostering homeownership in North Cambridge

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE CITY PROPERTY

The North Cambridge VFW building is located at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue near the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Russell Street in the Porter Square Neighborhood. The building sits on a 6,316 square foot lot fronting on Massachusetts Avenue. The building covers most of the lot and abuts the Henderson Carriage Building and the recently developed condominiums and townhouses located on the corner of Russell Street and Mass Avenue. There is a curb cut and driveway at the rear of the site that can be accessed from Russell Street.

The exterior of the building is brick with concrete trim and a flat roof and contains many historically important features including an original hose tower and stable door indicating its early use as a fire station.

The interior of the building has an open floor plan on the first and second floor which were most recently used as a recreation area and function hall. There is a large staircase leading from the entrance of the building to the function room. The third floor is currently unfinished and was most recently used for storage. The basement of the building has a dirt floor with limited headroom.

III. HISTORY OF THE SITE

Based on information supplied by the Cambridge Historical Commission, the building was constructed in 1868 to be used as a firehouse, a ward room and as neighborhood police station. In 1906, the building was remodeled and given its present façade. From that time until the early 1920's, the building continued to be used as a police station and also served as a branch library.

In 1942 Cambridge closed its neighborhood police stations including the station at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue. Shortly thereafter the building was leased to a veterans' post, a use that continued until the mid 1990's. During the 1990's the building was also used as a meeting place for the Cambridge Boy Scouts.

The Historical Commission considers the building to be significant and cites the hose tower and stable door as important evidence of the building's early use as a fire station. According to information obtained from the Historical Commission, the original building was designed by the architect Edward T. P. Graham, a Cambridge native well known for the design of St. Paul's Church in Harvard Square, a number of buildings at Boston College, and a number of schools and apartment buildings throughout New England and in the Mid-West.

IV. EXISTING ZONING

The lot located at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue is split into two zoning districts, Business A-2/North Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District and the Residence B district.

There are approximately 4,098 square feet of lot area in the BA-2 district and approximately 2,2181 square feet in the Residence B district.

The BA-2 Floor Area Ratio is 1.75, so 7,171 square feet of gross floor can be created in this portion of the site. In the Residence B area the Floor Area Ratio is 0.5, which will allow 1,109 square feet of development to be created. The combined potential gross floor area for the site is estimated to be 8,280 square feet as of right.

The BA-2 requires 600 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, which would allow 6.83 units to be created. The Residence B requires 2,500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit, so there are no units allowed from that portion. A total of six units are allowed on the parcel.

The BA-2 height limit is 45 feet and the Residence B height limit is 35 feet.

Each dwelling unit requires one parking space.

V. ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL USES

The site is located in a retail area of Massachusetts Avenue between the Henderson Carriage Building on the left hand side and six residential unit on the Russell Street side. The Henderson Carriage Building has retail on the first floor combined with office space on the upper floors. The six residential units on the Russell Street side include a small retail space on the first floor Mass. Avenue side.

Given its location, the building has the potential to act as a transitional property linking the primarily retail use of the Porter Square section of Mass. Ave with the residential neighborhood of the Russell Street area. The following potential uses were examined when looking at the re-use of the property:

1. **Open Space:** The limited size of the lot (6,316 sq/ft) combined with the historical significance of the existing building makes the use of the property as open space an impractical alternative.

- 2. Public Space:** Given the long history of community use of the building, CDD considered use of the building for some type of public activity. In fact, during the process of exploring the feasibility of creating housing at the building, discussions were held with members of the North Cambridge Artist Group (NoCa) about designating some space for use as art gallery or workshop space. Plans to use the property exclusively for housing were modified to accommodate some public space. Additional feedback from neighborhood meetings indicated an interest in using some or all of the available space for a variety of non-residential uses including an area for functions associated with activities sponsored by the North Cambridge branch of the Council on Aging.

CDD will continue to work with neighborhood groups to explore ground floor uses at the building.

- 3. Affordable Housing:** The building at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue has the potential to be converted successfully to a residential use. An architectural firm working on behalf of the Community Development Department (CDD) has determined that it is feasible to convert the building into a series of individual units. A structural engineer has also conducted a preliminary analysis of the building and has identified some structural defects at the property. The defects will be addressed by the work associated with framing out the residential units.

The need for affordable housing throughout Cambridge is apparent based on a review of recent housing prices. According to information from Banker & Tradesman the 1999 Median sales price in Cambridge for all properties was \$395,000. The median condo price in the City for 1999 was \$249,000. The median sales price for condos in 1999 in Area 11 was \$321,250 indicating an even more extreme affordability gap in the North Cambridge area.

VI: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED USE OF THE SITE:

A. The Planning Process

The Housing Division of the Community Development Department (CDD) first began looking at the North Cambridge VFW Building in late 1997. Since that time two neighborhood meetings have been held and there have been presentations at two meetings of the Porter Square Neighborhood Association as well as two meetings with representatives of NoCa.

After reviewing the allowed use of the building under current zoning, CDD commissioned an architect and an engineer to explore the feasibility of re-using the building for housing. Once it was determined that the re-use was possible, housing staff began looking at the financial feasibility of creating affordable housing at the site. Later in 1998, in response to a Council request to the City Manager, CDD looked at the potential impact of using a portion of the space for some artist space in response to inquiries by members of the NoCa. After consulting with the architects, CDD determined that it would be possible to use approximately 500 sq/ft of the first floor of the building for non-residential use without significantly impacting the financial feasibility of a potential affordable residential project.

Given these parameters, housing staff began the process of obtaining feedback from the neighbors. CDD staff made a presentation to the Porter Square Neighborhood Association and followed it up with outreach to the abutters. CDD held a neighborhood meeting on April 11, 2000 which was attended by 14 residents. Abutters, particularly those abutters living in the recently constructed condominiums on Russell Street, expressed concerns about opening up windows that had been bricked over immediately adjacent to their units. Additional concerns were expressed about the possibility of air conditioning units hanging over their outdoor areas.

CDD also heard from neighbors about traffic and parking issues associated with existing conditions and concerns about the additional negative impact of adding residential units at the site.

A second neighborhood meeting was held on May 11, 2000 to ensure a broad range of neighborhood comments on the re-use of the building. At the second meeting there were a number of discussions about increasing the size of the non-residential portion to accommodate a larger scope of activities including the potential use of the site for activities initiated or sponsored by the North Cambridge Elders Services, as well as art related activities. Neighborhood residents also raised concerns about putting families with children in residential units developed at the building with particular concerns raised about the lack of play space and safety issues associated with the location of the site directly on Massachusetts Avenue. Additional comments were made about the potential impact of developing the site which already has difficult traffic and parking conditions.

B. The Development Plan

The City Manager recommends that the City Council approve the transfer of this site to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust (Trust) for the development of affordable homeownership opportunities for Cambridge families and the development of approximately 500 sq/ft of public space at the property.

If approved, the Trust, through the Community Development Department, will continue to work with the neighborhood residents to establish development guidelines for the re-use of the building at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue. The goal will be creating affordable homeownership residential units for income eligible Cambridge households.

Using the guidelines established, the Trust will issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) to select a developer. The RFP will include the development guidelines and will specify the objective selection criteria that will be used to rate the proposals. The Trust will then convene a Project Review Committee to review developer proposals and provide a final recommendation.

The Project Review Committee will include both Trust members and a representative from the neighborhood. The Trust will select the developer, and will work with the designated developer to complete the financial packaging and final design. The Trust will convey the site to the developer at the initial project closing.

Preliminary Timeline:

Action to Be Taken	Time Frame
• Issue RFP	Two months from Transfer of land to trust
• Trust Designate Developer	Two months from date of RFP
• Initial Closing/Construction Start	Two months from designating developer
• Initial Occupancy	Nine months from construction start

B. Nature and Affordability of the Proposed Development Objective

The proposed use of the site is an adaptive re-use of the building to create residential homeownership units for Cambridge families with incomes up to 80% of the median along with the creation of some public use space on the first floor of the structure.

Site and Design Standards

The new units created at the site will be developed within the historical façade of the existing building in compliance with the requirements of the Cambridge Historical Commission. The new units created will be consistent with the high quality standards of other City sponsored developments and will incorporate input from the neighborhood residents in the establishment of development guidelines.

Unit sizes and specific design features will be developed shortly after the transfer of the property to the Trust based on input and discussions with neighborhood residents and groups. The exact amount of public space and use of the public space will also be developed as the re-use project is more defined based on public comment and availability of funds.

Income of Households Benefiting

The City's goal is to create affordable homeownership opportunities that will be affordable to the households with limited incomes. This goal will be achieved by making the units available at level that will be considered affordable to a household whose income is at or below 80% of the median income which is currently determined to be \$50,200 for a family of four. Properties will be priced so that potential buyers will need to spend no more than one third of their gross monthly income on housing debt. In order to create this level of affordability, CDD staff will explore using a variety of public and private resources, including Trust funds and federal HOME funds, to ensure the units are available to the widest group of income eligible households as possible.

The Trust fund will ensure long-term affordability by requiring all units to be transferred with deed restrictions that will maintain the units as affordable for at a minimum of fifty years. This will ensure that the use of scarce public funds will create long-term affordability of these housing units.

Resident Selection

This housing will be for Cambridge residents who meet the eligibility criteria. The developer will be required to market the units in both North Cambridge and Cambridge as a whole.

Role of the Community

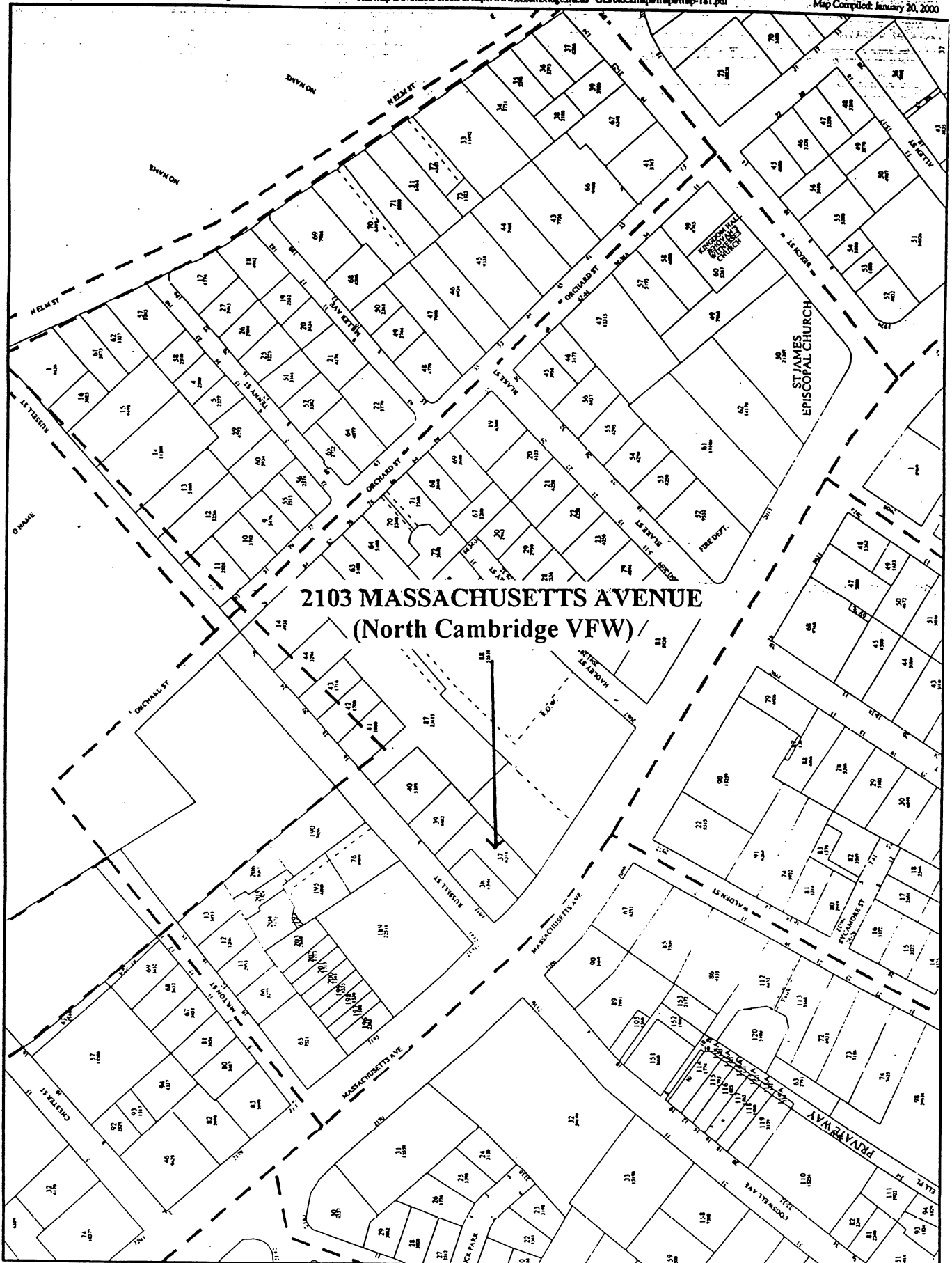
Neighborhood meetings will continue to be held to develop the RFP, to review proposals received from developers, and provide neighborhood input throughout the construction period.

VII. CONCLUSION

The City has an outstanding opportunity to use a vacant and increasingly dilapidated City owned building as a means of meeting one of its top priorities: increasing the supply of affordable housing.

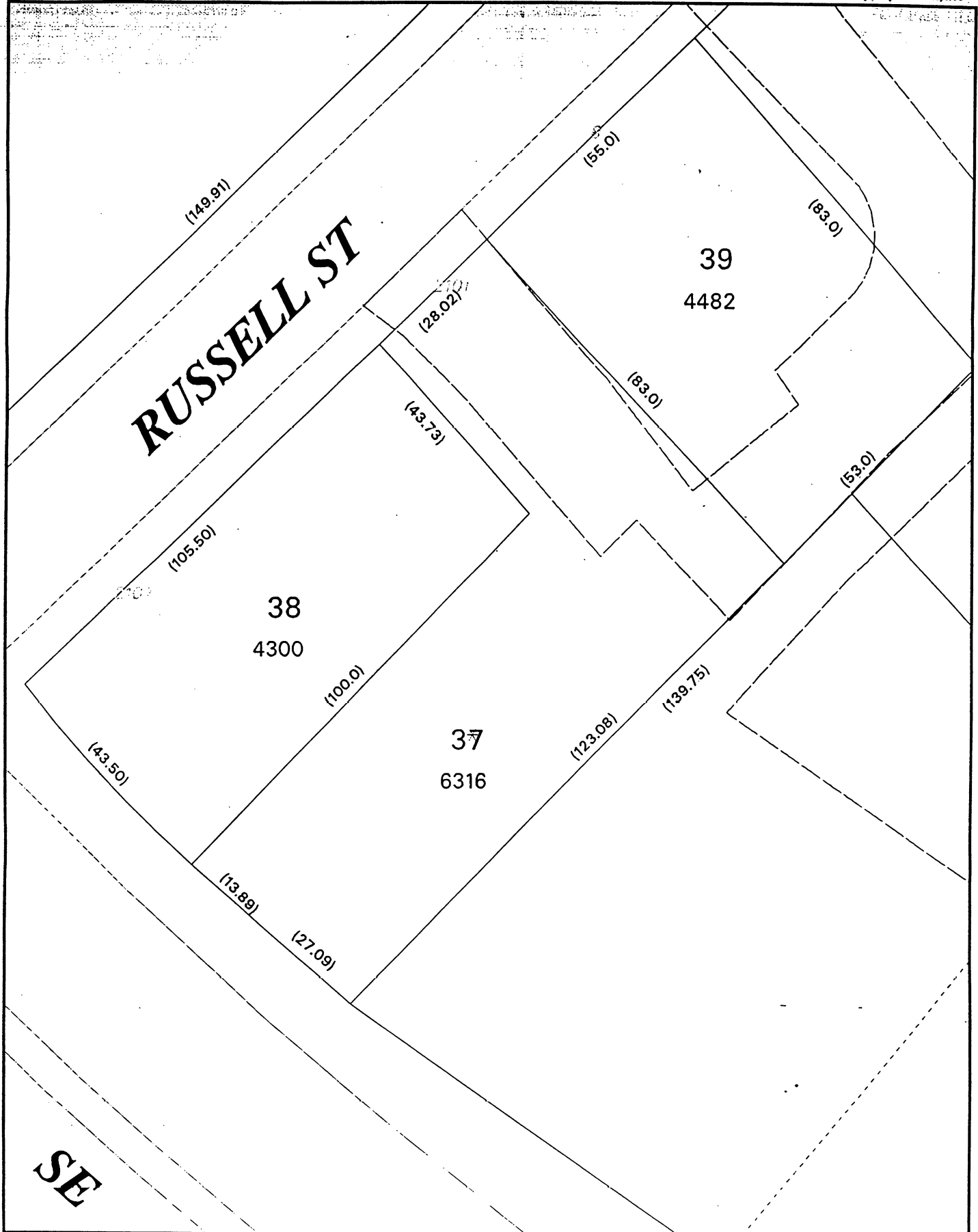
The development of the site at 2103 Massachusetts Avenue as proposed will:

- use a City asset to create affordable homeownership for Cambridge households
- restore an historic City owned structure.
- renovate a dilapidated City owned property
- create public space for neighborhood activities
- create a source of revenue by adding residential units to the real estate tax base
- foster homeownership in North Cambridge



2103 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
(North Cambridge VFW)







City of Cambridge

Calendar Item #1.

IN CITY COUNCIL

September 11, 2000

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to provide the City Council with a report summarizing recent community meetings held relative to the disposition of the North Cambridge VFW; and be it further

ORDERED: That said report be provided to the City Council in two weeks.

In City Council September 11, 2000.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BETH RUBENSTEIN
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

MALAINA BOWKER
Deputy Director for
Community Development

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: ^{BR} Beth Rubenstein, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Date: September 25, 2000

Re: Calendar Item #1 dated 9/11/00: Report on recent community meetings held relative to the disposition of the North Cambridge VFW.

In response to the above referenced order, this report addresses the community outreach related to the disposition of the VFW for use as affordable housing and community space. CDD staff met with community members regarding the redevelopment of the VFW over a period of sixteen months. As is indicated in the Disposition Report, CDD intends to continue to meet with the community as the plans and the Request for Proposals are developed.

Spring 1999

CDD staff attended the Porter Square Neighbors Association regular meeting to discuss the possibility of redeveloping the VFW as affordable housing and to get feedback from the group. Approximately 10-15 people attended the presentation.

June 1999

CDD met with five representatives of North Cambridge Artists (NoCA) to discuss their thoughts and their needs surrounding the possible redevelopment of the VFW Building. In response to their input, CDD asked its architect to look at the feasibility of incorporating non-residential use within the residential use.

Fall 1999

In response to a request from members of NoCA to incorporate a non-residential use into the redevelopment plan, CDD met with NoCA members to discuss the results of the architect's modifications to the preliminary drawings, incorporating a non-residential use into the first floor plan.

April 2000

CDD hosted a meeting at the North Cambridge Senior Center to present redevelopment plans for the VFW and solicit feedback from neighbors on the plan. Over sixty households in the area of the building were notified of the meeting by mail; fourteen residents attended the meeting.

May 2000

CDD hosted a meeting at the North Cambridge Senior Center to present redevelopment plans for the VFW as a residential project with a small community space, and to receive feedback from neighbors on the plan. Over eighty neighbors were notified of the meeting; ten residents attended this meeting.

May 2000

CDD staff attended the Porter Square Neighbors Association regular meeting to discuss progress made to date and report on the feedback from neighbors on the plan to re-use the VFW as primarily residential. Approximately 10-15 people were present for the presentation and discussion.

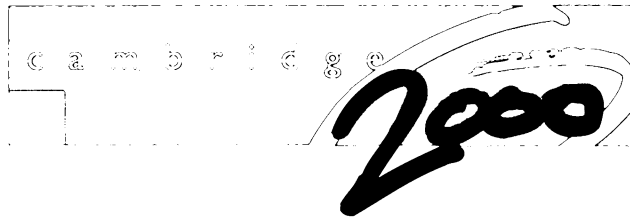
June 2000

In June, CDD hosted a meeting at the North Cambridge Senior Center with neighbors involved in previous meetings to discuss the VFW Disposition Report and CDD's plans to submit the report to the City Council. Approximately fifteen people attended the meeting, including members of the North Cambridge Senior Center, NoCA, and abutters.

August 2000

In response to an invitation from the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, CDD staff attended a meeting to discuss the VFW Disposition Report submitted to the Council. Approximately twenty people attended the meeting.

2.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

October 2, 2000

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 00-72, regarding a report on recent community meetings held relative to the disposition of the No. Cambridge VFW, received from Assistant City Manager Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



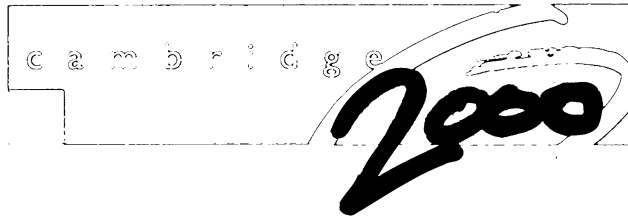
2000 Things 2 Do in 2000

Consent Agenda #2

**Relative to Awaiting Report Item
Number 00-72, regarding a report
on recent community meeting held
relative to the disposition of the
No. Cambridge VFW.**

In City Council October 2, 2000

*Referred to Calendar
Item 1*



7.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

July 31, 2000

To the Honorable, the City Council,

I am submitting for your consideration the attached Report on the Disposition of the North Cambridge VFW. The proposal is to transfer the property to the Affordable Housing Trust to reuse the building for the development of homeownership for Cambridge residents.

Although property and land dispositions to the Trust are exempt from the Disposition of City Property Ordinance, the report is patterned on the requirements of the Ordinance. As the report illustrates, the neighborhood has been and will continue to be a participant in all discussions relating to the re-use of the site. This property has been used in the past as a firehouse, a police substation, and in most recent years leased to the VFW, but is no longer needed for any of these purposes.

I recommend that the City Council approve the transfer of this site to the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust (Trust) for the development of affordable homeownership opportunities for Cambridge families.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", written in a cursive style.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager



2000 Things 2 Do in 2000

Consent Agenda #7

S 319

Relative to the Report on the
Disposition of the North Cambridge
VFW.

10/16/2000

Order Adopted with
4 directives

In City Council July 31, 2000

CHARTER RIGHT
BY C. Sullivan

9/11/00

Tabled on motion of
Councillor Sullivan. Order Adopted.