

City of Cambridge

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair
Councillor Kathleen L. Born
Councillor Jim Braude
Councillor Henrietta Davis,
Councillor Marjorie C. Decker
Vice Mayor David P. Maher
Councillor Kenneth E. Reeves
Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.
Mayor Anthony D. Galluccio

In City Council December 4, 2000

The Finance Committee held a public meeting on November 8, 2000 beginning at 6:15 p.m. in the auditorium of the Kennedy School, 158 Spring Street. The purpose of the meeting was to continue previous discussion and to receive an update on open space in East Cambridge.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the Committee, Mayor Anthony D. Galluccio, Vice Mayor David P. Maher, Councillor Henrietta Davis, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury.

Also present were Robert W. Healy, City Manager, Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Assistant to the City Manager and James Maloney, Assistant City Manager for Finance.

Councillor Sullivan convened the hearing. He welcomed those present and announced that Councillors Braude and Reeves had expressed their regret at being unable to attend the meeting. Councillor Sullivan acknowledged the presence of School Committee Member Joe Grassi.

Councillor Sullivan stated that in light of the November 6, 2000 communication from the City Manager to the City Council, Attachment A, he would like to focus the meeting on an update of the potential for acquiring open space on Fulkerson Street. He invited the City Manager to make a presentation.

Robert W. Healy described the city's actions with respect to property at 135 Fulkerson Street and 303 Binney Street. City staff spoke with one property owner and got the impression that although the property was not currently for sale, a reasonable offer might be entertained. Staff will speak to the other owner who owns the Metropolitan Pipe site. For the City, the ideal would be to take the taxi site and part of the Metropolitan Pipe site to complete a rectangle across Fulkerson Street. He said that the property currently sits in three zoning districts: IA-1, IB-1 and C-1. Under the

city wide rezoning proposal, the first part would go from IA-1 to multifamily residential. That part could be left for future residential development and not be part of an eminent domain taking for the open space. He emphasized that the possibility of closing Fulkerson Street would need to be thoroughly discussed with the neighborhood residents. Mr. Healy said that city staff have a limited appraisal that needs updating. He said that this does seem to be an opportunity to acquire property that would assist in filling the need for more open space and playing fields in the eastern part of the city.

Mr. Healy said staff have inquired about the Budweiser site but it is by far the most expensive site; it is currently leased to Whitehead Institute.

Mr. Healy reported that staff have talked with the School Department because they would need to find an alternative location for overnight school bus storage in the next contract.

Mr. Healy emphasized that while eminent domain is a power of the City, it can be very expensive if it is a hostile taking. Ideally, the city would want to negotiate with both property owners and sever the Metropolitan Pipe property in a way that doesn't destroy the value of the rest of the property. Soil testing has not been done. The property formerly had railroad use so there is petroleum and coal contamination.

Councillor Sullivan asked about the square footage. Mr. Rossi said it would be 140,000 sq. ft. total, approximately four acres. Ahern Field currently consists of 113,000 sq. ft. The combined total would be about eight acres. St. Peter's Field is five acres.

Mr. Rossi noted that it would not be surprising if Metropolitan Pipe wants more density in the remaining piece of property.

Councillor Davis said that this is great news.

Councillor Sullivan asked about the timeline and noted that it might be possible to narrow Charles Street a little by Ahern Field.

Richard Brown, member of the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee said that this is a great space to acquire. He asked what type of field would fit and whether Ahern is a full field now.

Mr. Rossi said that Ahern is not a full soccer field. If Fulkerson Street could be closed, there could be a plan for one large parcel.

Mr. Healy stated that another piece of the parcel could be looked at for another use, for example, a skate park. He cautioned that the city needs to be careful about the effects of deflecting traffic.

Mr. Rossi warned that in this economy there are always developers who could try to outbid the City.

Mr. Healy explained the need to keep the discussion general at this point.

Joe Grassi, Cambridge Street, thanked the City Manager and the City Council for moving on open space in East Cambridge.

Councillor Sullivan thanked Mr. Healy and his staff.

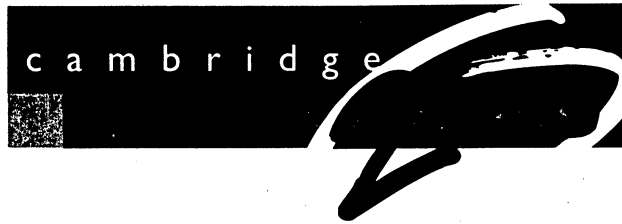
Mayor Galluccio added his thanks, and Councillor Toomey expressed his appreciation.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

For the Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael", written over a horizontal line.

Councillor Michael A. Sullivan
Chair



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

November 6, 2000

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item Nos. 00-74 and 00-96, regarding the acquisition of open space in East Cambridge, please be advised of the following:

The City has had limited appraisals done on 135 Fulkerson Street and 303 Binney Street. Staff are involved in preliminary discussions with one of the property owners and has explored the potential for a split acquisition of the second parcel. In all likelihood, these acquisitions would have to be in the form of eminent domain takings. Hopefully, we will negotiate acceptable (to both parties) purchase price resulting in a "friendly taking" similar to the processes used for 238 Broadway.

Since the possibility does exist that this may not be achievable, I am not at liberty to discuss prices at this time; in the event that the "friendly taking" process is not achieved, the potential for litigation exists.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec



2000 Things 2 Do in 2000

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Committee Report #4

Committee Report from Councillor
Michael A. Sullivan, Chair of the
Finance Committee for a meeting
held on November 8, 2000 to
continue previous discussion and
to receive and update on open
space in East Cambridge.

In City Council December 4, 2000

Report Accepted

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