



City of Cambridge

29.

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 31, 1997

COUNCILLOR DAVIS
 VICE MAYOR BORN
 COUNCILLOR DUEHAY
 COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO
 COUNCILLOR REEVES
 MAYOR RUSSELL
 COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
 COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
 COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: All playing fields in Cambridge are scheduled to the max; and

WHEREAS: This heavy use makes proper maintenance almost impossible; and

WHEREAS: This City Manager and his staff have shown great foresight in the past about expanding open space; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back on the prospects for creatively increasing the supply of open space and playing fields including the following:

1. What would it take to make Pacific Park more useable?
2. Could an additional playing field be added to Russell Field?
3. What possibilities are there for land trades with Harvard and MIT, particularly to increase open space to serve the Longfellow, Maynard and Fletcher Schools?
4. Is there a possibility for a public/private partnership to use private school fields to aid in rehabilitation of public fields used by all city children?
5. Any other creative ideas.

In City Council March 31, 1997

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

D. Margaret Drury

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk

3. What possibilities are there for land trades with Harvard and MIT, particularly to increase open space to serve the Longfellow, Maynard and Fletcher Schools?

We have completed an assessment of property owners abutting the Longfellow, Maynard and Fletcher Schools; neither Harvard or MIT own properties near these schools, making a land swap to increase the open space around these schools with them improbable. The abutting parcels are mostly residential.

The City is in the process of developing an open space acquisition plan that will include an approach to acquiring residential property, if appropriate, to expand the open space around elementary schools. Acquisition of property is complicated for a municipality largely because of the state procurement law. The City will explore whether it can engage the Trust for Public Land to negotiate a land acquisition on its behalf, once a desirable parcel is put up for sale.

The elements of the acquisition plan include:

- Monitoring desirable addresses (when a desirable parcel goes up for sale) by the Assessor's Office, using a service (i.e., Rosenoff's);
- Engaging the Trust for Public Land to negotiate acquisition when a parcel goes up for sale, if possible; and
- Establishing an Open Space Acquisition Fund through the City's capital budget process. The Open Space Committee will present its recommendation to develop such a fund to the Capital Budget Committee during the next budget cycle.

I would like to note that when the City was planning the construction of the Agassiz and Haggerty Schools, the City did actively engage abutting land owners in discussions to sell their property to increase the open space around these schools. This was successful at the Agassiz School, where Harvard University sold the City an abutting parcel which allowed the open space around the school to be increased. However, this approach was not successful at the Haggerty School; the City spoke to all abutting property owners, but were unable to acquire additional property.

4. Is there a possibility for a public/private partnership to use private school fields to aid in the rehabilitation of public fields used by all city children?

Currently, the City has partnerships with MIT and Harvard for the use of their facilities, and will continue to seek ways to expand these partnerships. MIT currently allows the use of its recreational facilities for special events (i.e. Youth Games, Girls Olympics), and has allowed the Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School to use its facilities for track and field events.. Similarly, Harvard has allowed use of its stadium in Allston for special events (i.e. Thanksgiving Football Game).

The BB & N facility is currently under construction. In fact, BB & N has requested use of the City's fields while construction takes place (which we were unable to accommodate). Next Spring when the BB& N construction is complete and fields are open, the City can further explore use of its facility. However, its facility is used heavily

when the school is open - which coincides with the times the City is most in needs of additional fields (Spring and Fall soccer season).

It is also important to note that the City uses MDC facilities as well: the Central Little League uses Magazine Beach for minor little league games and practices; Gore Street rink is used for hockey; and the two outdoor pools (at Magazine Beach and Russell Field) are used extensively during the summer.

Any other creative ideas.

The policies in the City's Growth Policy document on open space address a number of key issues regarding the possible addition of open space. The most productive avenue in recent years has been the integration of the creation of open space into urban design plans for the City's redevelopment and commercial areas. Opportunities where the City had been able to create more open space in this way include CambridgeSide Galleria & the East Cambridge Waterfront, Brookline St. Housing, University Park and North Point.

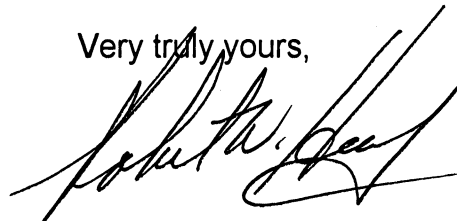
Other opportunities for larger recreational opportunities include: the construction of the new Water Treatment Plant, and the renovation of Kingsley Park and Lusitania Field; and development of old industrial spaces - North Point and Alewife areas.

The Growth Policy document also suggests that additional opportunities for open space use should be pursued with regional recreation facilities, such as the MDC's Magazine Beach. In addition, the document notes that the significant fiscal resources necessary to acquire even small parcels in Cambridge makes this a challenging proposition, particularly taking competing needs into account. Consequently, acquiring parcels in Cambridge for open space should be considered primarily when resources are provided through state or federal acquisition programs.

Other opportunities to increase open space may include various non-conforming property in the City i.e. property along rail road tracks that are used for industrial purposes, or commercial property in residential neighborhoods.

The next step, which the Open Space Committee recommends, is to look at open space/recreational resources by neighborhood. By doing this analysis, the City will identify open space needs by use - both neighborhood and citywide.

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



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19.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

August 4, 1997

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report #4 regarding increasing the number of playing fields and amount of open space in the City, please be advised of the following.

The Council Order requested a report of prospects for creatively increasing the supply of open space and playing fields including the following:

1. What would it take to make Pacific Park more usable?

Pacific Park is currently heavily used for youth soccer. As grass and trees grow, it will increasingly be used for casual uses as well.

Conceptual plans for the area developed with the neighborhood include expansion of the site to include play equipment, passive sitting areas, a ½ basketball court, and community gardens. The top choice is to remove the abutting building located on Pacific Street, to increase the amount of open space. The City does not own this parcel, and we have reason to believe that contamination may exist on the site from former uses. Acquiring the building and cleaning up the site would only be feasible with the assistance of state or federal grant money. In the absence of grant money, the City is prepared to proceed with a design process on the existing smaller footprint. As this parcel is CDBG eligible, CDBG funds were allocated in past budgets for modest redevelopment costs. Present plans are to pursue grant funds when they become available; regardless, the City hopes to proceed in FY1999 or FY2000 with or without the building.

2. Could an additional playing field be added to Russell Field?

The City recently completed a study of Russell Field where a landscape architectural firm, working with a Design Advisory Committee, assessed integrating new uses on Russell Field. We specifically looked at the possibility of adding additional field space, and assessed adding a running track as well as a playing field, changing facility/rest rooms, tot lot and community garden to the existing footprint. While the garden, tot lot and changing facility/rest rooms could be integrated, a track could not be accommodated without the eliminating of a soccer and baseball field. Because of the amount of space needed for additional playing field, abutting land would have to be acquired (an additional 87,000 square feet is needed). The cost of acquiring this land make it prohibitive at this time.

Consent Agenda #19

Cal. 7
330CM

Relative to Awaiting Report Item
Number Four, regarding increasing
the number of playing fields and
amount of open space in the City.

6/15/98

Referred to City Manager
and Order #15

Referred to Public Service
Committee

December 22, 1997
Remains on Calendar
for next legislative
session on motion of
Councillor Sullivan
and Councillor
Davis.

3/2/98

No Action Taken

3/16/98

No Action Taken

3/30/98

No Action Taken

4/6/98

No Action Taken

4/13/98

No Action Taken

In City Council August 4, 1997

Charter Right was
exercised by
Councillor Toomey
September 8, 1997

Tabled by
Councillor Triantafillou →