

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Danberg, Baker, Brandel, Gentile, and Fischman; absent: Ald. Johnson; also present: Ald. Mansfield and Swiston
City staff: Michael Kruse (Director of Planning & Development) and Linda Finucane (Chief Committee Clerk), Chief Joseph LaCroix (Fire Department)

#160-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting discussion of potential redevelopment of a block of land bounded by Willow, Centre and Lyman Streets, to include the existing 60,850 sq. ft. Fire Department headquarters and Station #3 site.

ACTION: HELD 6-0 (Baker not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Kruse explained to the Committee that the purpose of this item, which grew out of the work of the Newton Centre Task Force, is to explore the possibility of re-developing a privately owned parcel and Fire Department headquarters and fire station #3 sites that abut it at the intersection of Willow, Centre, and Lyman Streets (PowerPoint attached). The MWRA owns the parcel over its aqueduct along Lyman Street. The City has an easement from the MWRA and although no building can occur on the aqueduct, the proposal includes raising the grade level with Lyman Street for more usable green space. Nino and Giancarlo Micozzi, who own the parcel that contains the Dellaria Salon, and their architects, TBA Architects and Archiart Associates, are proposing a private/public partnership that would include a new fire station and headquarters funded in exchange for the right to build approximately 100 housing units and approximately 50,000 sf of commercial/retail space. The proposal incorporates smart growth criteria and green environmental standards. The cost of the parking garage may be shared between private and public funds, depending on the number of spaces required for private residences and spaces available for the public, currently estimated at 168 spaces. The parking component would accommodate the displacement of the existing parking spaces in the Newton Centre triangle lot, which the Newton Centre Task Force Report recommends converting to green space. Chief LaCroix noted that fire station #3 is scheduled for a \$3 million major renovation in three years. In order for a proposed public/private partnership redevelopment to move forward, he will need to declare both Fire headquarters and Station 3 surplus, but is not yet prepared to do so at this preliminary stage.

This evening, Mr. Kruse was seeking direction from the Committee as to whether or not it would like the Planning Department to proceed to study the potential development. A summary “step-by-step” of the reuse process is attached; however, because the existing reuse ordinance was developed to deal primarily with closed school buildings it contemplates neither this type of proposal nor the proposal to develop the Austin Street

municipal parking lot discussed by the Committee last month, so some deviation from or creativity in establishing steps is inevitable, e.g., step 5.

Several Committee members had questions about the process and the issuance of a request for proposals. Mr. Kruse pointed out that ownership of the Dellaria parcel is a key factor in any proposed redevelopment and that any project will need a zoning amendment(s), a change of zone and a special permit, affording the public and Board of Aldermen many opportunities for input and review. Alderman Danberg gave a brief overview of her work as a member of the Newton Centre Task Force and raised the possibility of obtaining federal grant money. Alderman Mansfield was supportive of the concept in general. Upon a motion by Alderman Salvucci, the Committee took a straw vote and was unanimous 6-0 in support of the Planning Department taking steps to study the opportunities and constraints to redevelopment of this block of land for a mixed-use project. Mr. Kruse anticipates reporting to either this Committee or its successor some months from now. The item was held 6-0, with Alderman Baker not voting because he left the meeting to attend the Committee on Community Preservation Committee.

All other items were held without discussion and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carleton P. Merrill, Chairman