



Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

DATE: July 14, 2020

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION S/C MOTION OF 5/19/20 BY COUNCILOR ELLIOTT
REQUEST CITY MANAGER ENGAGE APPLICANT AND MASSDOT EITHER
DIRECTLY OR THROUGH THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR FURTHER
DISCUSSION AND INPUT REGARDING THE PROJECT

On May 19, 2020 the City Council Transportation Subcommittee discussed a development proposal for the former Raytheon site south of Interstate 495. The site is split between the City of Lowell and the towns of Tewksbury and Billerica. The portion of the site in Lowell is wetlands and unavailable for development. The redevelopment as proposed will occur in Tewksbury and Billerica. The two towns have already reviewed and issued most, if not all, necessary permits for the project to proceed.

Members of the Transportation Subcommittee and other Councilors in attendance expressed concerns about traffic impacts and safety for the section of Lowell south of I-495 at Exit 37. Councilors identified three major areas of concern: understanding and addressing the impacts of the new development on Woburn Street; safe access to a City-owned park on Commonwealth Avenue that is across Woburn Street from the majority of park users; and possible improvements to I-495 Exit 37 to improve traffic and safety.

Staff in the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) reached out to the applicant to review the major concerns identified by the Council. At this time, we are happy to report we've reached a preliminary agreement with the applicant and Town of Tewksbury to address those concerns. The proposed agreement addresses the concerns in the following way:

1. Concern: Understanding and addressing the impacts of the new development on Woburn Street.
 - a. Proposed solution: The permit issued by the Town of Tewksbury includes a post-occupancy traffic monitoring plan. The permit identified this monitoring plan as the way to ensure the responsiveness of the completed traffic mitigation. The permit requires the applicant and towns of Tewksbury and Billerica to consult with the City of Lowell on the scope of this monitoring process. Tewksbury planning staff agreed to ensure this review extends along Woburn Street to the I-495 Exit 37 ramps in Lowell.

2. Concern: Safe access to a City-owned park on Commonwealth Avenue.
 - a. Proposed solution: The applicant agreed to provide a \$50,000 mitigation fund to the City of Lowell at the time a building permit is issued for the project. This will allow planned improvements to be completed before the site construction is complete. The City is proposing to install a rectangular rapid flash beacon (RRFB) and make sidewalk improvements at the intersection of Woburn Street and Commonwealth Avenue to increase safe crossing to the park. The City has installed several RRFBs in recent years to improve safety for sidewalk crossings on busy streets.

3. Concern: Possible improvements to I-495 Exit 37 to improve traffic and safety.
 - a. Proposed solution: The Town of Tewksbury permit requires the applicant to create a \$100,000 fund to initiate design of improvements to Exit 37. DPD staff is working with NMCOG and MassDOT to begin the process of improvements to the Exit 37 ramps. However, DPD staff have concerns about whether the \$100,000 can be quickly used for these improvements or if MassDOT will need to follow their standard design and construction process, which can take several years. Due to concerns about MassDOT's timeline, the applicant and Town of Tewksbury are working through an agreement that the \$100,000 can be used for safety improvements around the Exit 37 ramps on Woburn Street. The City of Lowell, Town of Tewksbury, and applicant will work together in the coming weeks to determine what is feasible with MassDOT and, if necessary, begin planning for safety improvements along Woburn Street with this funding.

The preliminary agreement is in the final stages of discussion. The Tewksbury Planning Board will review item #3 above at their regular meeting on Monday, July 13, 2020. Staff in multiple departments are working to get the agreement finalized before the permit appeal deadline of July 20, 2020.

CRT/ns

cc: Christine P. O'Connor, City Solicitor
John R. Hucksam, Jr., Assistant City Solicitor
Craig Thomas, Deputy Director, DPD
R. Eric Slagle, Development Services Director
Natasha Vance, Transportation Engineer
Jared Alves, Senior Planner