



## Availability of Courthouses

To: Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools

From: Dr. James P. Hall, Chief Operating Officer

Date: May 15, 2020

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The following report is in response to the motion by Mr. Descoteaux:

**[By Andy Descoteaux]: Ask the Superintendent to ask the City Manager what the status is of the empty judicial buildings in the city. If they are available for city use, the LPS could use one or two.**

I have relayed this request to the City. I was provided some initial analysis that was done in the Fall of 2019 pertaining to the renovation of the District Court (see enclosure). There were parking, zoning, and historical considerations which limited uses for the District Court building on Hurd Street. A proposed use as a police facility had been reviewed in depth. It appears from the attached letter that the Hurd Street site will be temporarily used to alleviate parking needs, while a future use is studied.

I will continue to follow up with the City in regard to the old Superior Court/Registry of Deeds building on Gorham Street and in regard to the Juvenile Courthouse off of Appleton Street to see if there are opportunities for the School Department to utilize these sites in order to preserve funds. I suspect that there are parking, zoning and historical considerations that would also limit both the renovation and/or use of these buildings as office space or for schools.

MEMORANDUM

Diane Nichols Tradd  
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager

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

DATE: October 8, 2019

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 5/22/18 BY COUNCILOR CONWAY  
REQUEST CITY MANAGER EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF RELOCATING OUR POLICE  
STATION TO THE SITE OF THE DISTRICT COURT LOCATED ON HURD STREET WHEN  
VACATED BY THE STATE

Craig Thomas  
Deputy Director

Various City departments completed a preliminary assessment of the feasibility of repurposing the existing courthouse located at 41 Hurd Street as a new Lowell police station. A spatial needs assessment completed for the Lowell Police Department (LPD) in September 2015 estimated the total space necessary for an LPD facility for the next twenty years. The estimated total space needed for an LPD facility is approximately 138,000 square feet. The existing size of the Courthouse at 41 Hurd Street is only 47,426 square feet. Meeting the approximately 138,000 square feet would require a new building or a major renovation. Parking, zoning, and historical considerations were discussed as part of this feasibility assessment and are summarized below.

**Parking**

The existing Hurd Street site has the capacity for approximately 90 parking spaces. A redevelopment of the Hurd Street site would trigger bringing noncompliant curbs into zoning compliance. This would effectively reduce the amount of available parking spaces available to 40 or 50 spaces. Per current City zoning, approximately 345 spaces would be required to match the proposed floor space proposed in the spatial needs assessment for a LPD facility.

**Zoning**

Any addition or garage necessary on the Hurd Street site could be constructed right against the property line which can help in maximizing the available parking on the existing site. Any structures or additions would have to go through the Historic Board for review.

**Historic**

Any structures or additions would be reviewed by the Historic Board. City members that walked the existing courthouse building concurred that the existing layout is awkward and that renovations would likely be more costly than new construction. The existing MOA for the site restricted demolition of the existing structure.

The City met with DCAMM in May 2019 to discuss the City's initial feasibility assessment. A leading concern was the historical restriction in the current MOA, and especially the awkward layout and current condition of the building. The City expressed interest to DCAMM in repurposing this property for a City facility.

DCAMM reviewed this request for demolition and discussed it with DPD and Historic Board Administrator, Steve Stowell. DCAMM will need approval from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for demolition of the existing structure. Earlier this week, Steve Stowell sent DCAMM a draft of the required MHC Project Notification Form (PNF) outlining the need for demolition, and summarizing the immediate need for public parking for submittal to MHC. Once the building is demolished, the property would be used for a municipal parking lot to help ease the parking issues in the HCID/Downtown until future development has been determined.

DCAMM will now proceed with appraisal of the property. Once the PNF is approved by MHC the City and DCAMM will discuss the appraised value and necessary amendments to the MOA.

DNT/ns

cc: Christine Clancy, PE, City Engineer  
Chief Richardson, Lowell Chief of Police  
Steve Stowell, Historic Board Administrator