



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: June 9, 2020

SUBJECT: UPDATE TO 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

In 2019 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 were summarized in the previous motion response, and included below with updates.

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.

Note that on February 27, 2020 DCAMM received correspondence from MHC, determining that that proposed project would have an “adverse effect” on the property “through transfer or sale of a State Register property without adequate conditions or restrictions regarding preservation, maintenance or use of the property; and the destruction of a State Register property.” The MHC also stated that they anticipate working with DCAMM and the City to seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the adverse effect of the proposed demolition.

Acquisition of Property

DCAMM had the property appraised based upon the value of the underlying land minus the demolition costs for municipal use. The appraised market value of the property is \$485,000 for municipal use. DCAMM has stated that the cost to purchase the property is non-negotiable.

DCAMM would like to move forward with the disposition of the property. At this time the City Council should determine if it is in the best interest of the City to acquire the property from the state for \$485,000, work with MHC to mitigate the adverse effect of the proposed demolition, demolish the building for approximately \$800,000, and build an approximate 120 space parking lot for \$250,000. Future commercial or residential development could be considered, but would require a reappraisal by DCAMM.

DNT/ns

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