

**107-111 Cypress Street Acquisition Study Committee  
Minutes for June 2, 2016**

**107-111 Cypress  
Street Acquisition  
Study Committee**

Neil Wishinsky, Chair  
Milly Baker  
Cliff Brown  
George Cole  
Betsy DeWitt  
Linda Hamlin  
Brian Hochleutner  
Carol Levin  
Merelice  
Lark Palermo  
David Pollak

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Committee Members present: Neil Wishinsky, Milly Baker, Cliff Brown, George Cole, Betsy DeWitt, Linda Hamlin, Brian Hochleutner, Carol Levin, Merelice, Lark Palermo, David Pollak

Staff present: Kara Brewton

Guests that signed in: Regina Frawley, David McDonald, JP Walsh

Handouts: Agenda, Committee Charge & Scope of work, Tax Assessor's Property Card for 107-111 Cypress Street, Boundary/Topographic Survey of 107-111 Cypress Street dated 4/5/16 by DiPrete Engineering

Presentation: 5/31/16 Existing Conditions photos & survey slides by K. Brewton

1. Swearing-in (Linda Golburgh, Assistant Town Clerk)

Linda swore in the Committee members.

2. Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and Kara notified members of the upcoming Conflict & Open Meeting Law Training for those that needed to do so.

3. Town studies & discussions with property owner

Neil Wishinsky reviewed history of discussions with property owner about high school expansion studies, potentially using or purchasing the property for school use, owner's desire to build housing in addition to offering approximately 40,000 sq. ft. of school use, and current housing proposal without school use. Neil reported that the property owner's representatives, including Keith Nashawatay, had expressed some interest in potentially selling the property to the Town – "for the right price." Keith represented that the owner might be interested in a cash alternative in lieu of trying to pursue a housing project or the burden of potentially finding a replacement tenant. Keith noted they were looking for a life after the current lease, which was 2-3 years away.

Neil and other Committee members described the existing property conditions while looking at the photos and materials via the presentation. There was some discussion about whether the building was two or three stories on the side of the T-tracks, the existing large storm sewer utilities, and other easements including driveway access to the adjacent residential property. George Cole had to leave the meeting early.

4. Decision making process design

Neil Wishinsky reviewed the scope of work for the Committee and the need to have work and any recommendations completed by October 2016. This will allow the Town Administration time to consider proposed budget options in the event the Committee recommends bringing the question of acquiring the property to Town Meeting, which at the earliest, would be Spring 2017 Annual Town Meeting.

The Committee discussed the potential of a MBTA at-grade pedestrian crossing and/or the potential for an air rights development connecting the high school campus with the property. Lark Palermo and others noted that based on their experience the MBTA would not likely respond to these types of questions before October, and it should not be a deciding factor in whether or not the Committee decides to recommend the purchase of the property.

Although the housing project may be permitted while the Committee continues their work, the valuation of the property will likely be not directly affected by that process. For example, fair market value assessment would include consideration of other properties in the area that have been upzoned or issued variances. Kara suggested bringing in Special Town Counsel John Leonard and the Town's property appraiser for this project to answer the Committee's questions before the appraisal is begun.

Kara noted that to stay on task, she would like for the Committee to have identified all the information we think we need to know by the end of June.

5. Related work with other concurrent Town/School studies

Kara Brewton noted that the School Committee was completing their preliminary visioning study regarding the high school expansion this summer, and planned on deciding on a concept (and any sites required) to move forward with by Spring 2017. In the meantime, the Town is working on a Strategic Asset Plan for all municipal/school needs this summer and fall. The Committee discussed the current annual leases for School administration, BEEP programs, adult education, and Pierce classroom spaces. Beginning in Fall 2018, the Old Lincoln School will be available for interim High School expansion needs until a permanent High School expansion project can be constructed.

Committee discussion included:

- How large of a building could be put on the property, but noted that proposing future conditions of the site might be more suitable to discuss following the question of whether the site would be a strategic purchase for the Town.
- Merelice noted that she felt that the question of purchasing the property only seemed to make sense if the Schools were going to use it for the high school expansion.
- Cliff Brown & Carol Levin noted that the real question for the Committee to answer was whether the property would make sense to purchase as a strategic buy for a reasonable price.
- Milly Baker noted that the neighborhood does not see this property as a prime commercial use, but rather housing or the high school use. However, she noted they would also probably be open to other uses.
- The Committee considered breaking out into Subcommittees, but decided instead to do that only if the list of tasks got so complicated that they needed to divide the work. Carol Levin noted that all of the tasks were so interrelated, it would be best if the Committee continued to meet as a whole for as long as feasible.

Finally, the Committee agreed that due to the proximity of existing high school and recreation uses, it would be helpful for David Pollak to write a memo summarizing school needs for the Committee, as well as for the Committee at an upcoming meeting to have a conversation with Lisa Paradis, Recreation Director.

6. Consultant/staff scope & timeline

Kara Brewton reviewed the following potential consultant work pieces with the Committee:

- a. John Leonard, Special Town Counsel to help the Committee understand process related to acquisition, including eminent domain.
- b. Property Valuation & Real Estate Consultant Services – Allan Foster – appraisers are very busy right now, so this work may take a couple months before we get back a report. The Committee would like to speak with Allan Foster & John Leonard at an upcoming meeting before this work gets started.
- c. Title Search – Town Counsel’s office has already started this work; records documenting the makeup of the ownership are not immediately clear; more research is needed to understand the existing ownership structure better.
- d. Phase I Site Assessment – The Committee agreed the contract for this work through Peter Ditto, Director of Engineering, could be started. However, the Committee would like to try and find out information from adjacent properties and public information through DEP before wasting consultant time/money on this work.
- e. Existing traffic counts & preliminary trip generation study – The Committee agreed to put this work on hold until early Fall, once other work is begun. Kara noted that Engineering believes they can handle much of this preliminary analysis in-house.
- f. Existing building conditions survey – The Building Department offered to help the Committee with a zoning analysis once the Committee is further in their work. In the meantime, they noted we may want to hire a real estate consultant if the Committee decides to get into future redevelopment scenarios, especially related to the MBTA.

Next steps prior to the next meeting included:

- a. Betsy Dewitt will research Building documents to see whether there is existing geotechnical or environmental information available from the Cypress Lofts conversation.
- b. Kara Brewton (via Greer Hardwicke) and Milly Baker (via John Dempsey) will research historical uses of the property.
- c. Neil Wishinsky will ask the property owner representative questions that Committee members will forward to him, including trying to schedule a potential site walk.
- d. David Pollak will write a summary memo to the Committee of short-term and potential long-term school needs that could potentially affect Cypress Street.

- e. Cliff Brown and Carol Levin will try and work out a proposed decision path as well as financial considerations for the Committee.
  - f. Kara Brewton will coordinate a future Committee meeting with Lisa Paradis (Recreation Director), Special Town Counsel John Leonard, and the Town's appraiser.
  - g. Kara will ask Town Counsel when the title search will be complete and ask whether we can request a blanket public records request with MassHousing related to this site.
  - h. Committee members will email questions for the property owner to Neil Wishinsky and for the Special Town Counsel and the appraiser by June 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - i. Kara Brewton will send out an email confirming whether the meeting on June 30<sup>th</sup> will be in the morning or early evening, and also send a Doodle poll for a following meeting the week of July 11<sup>th</sup>.
7. Schedule site walk & regular meeting times
- The Committee agreed they did not need to schedule a group site walk, and that the meeting for the week of July 11<sup>th</sup> would be determined via a Doodle poll.