



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

**Department of Planning and
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**Alison C. Steinfeld
Director**

TO: Brookline Select Board

FROM: Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee
Planning Staff

DATE: July 15, 2020

SUBJECT: **Committee Recommendation – 2Life Communities**

2Life Communities (f/k/a JCHE) was one of three developers to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the Town to solicit responses for the redevelopment of the Kent/Station Street parking lot, a 15,997 s.f. +/- Town-owned parcel. The RFP stated the Town's interest in exploring opportunities to redevelop the site as affordable rental senior housing while also retaining the number and uses of the existing parking spaces for merchant and overnight resident parking as part of the development program.

After extensive review of two proposals, the Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee recommends that the Town begin negotiations with 2Life Communities in order to determine if satisfactory terms can be reached between the Town and the developer.

Kent/Station Street Affordable Senior Housing Committee - Community Process

Long before the issuance of the RFP, favorable action on a citizen-petitioned Warrant Article at the fall 2016 Town Meeting led to a planning process for the Kent Street parking lot. The Warrant Article asked Town Meeting members to adopt a resolution requesting that the Town study the Kent/Station Street Town-owned parking lot for the purpose of redeveloping it for affordable senior housing. Following passage of the resolution, the Select Board appointed the Kent/Station Street Affordable Senior Housing Committee.

The Kent Street Committee's focus was to determine the feasibility of redeveloping the municipal parking for senior housing while retaining the existing public parking spaces. Beyond determining feasibility, the Committee's charge was to consult with the neighborhood and report back to the Select Board with recommendations for site redevelopment. To meet its charge of seeking public input, the Committee held thirteen public meetings, including two site visits, from July 2017 to January 2019. During that time, the Committee reviewed and discussed information relevant to redevelopment of the site, including the historic and contemporary context of the neighborhood and how a potential new development would fit within the built environment.

Over the course of many meetings, the Committee completed the following tasks:

- Worked with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to explore the site's reuse potential, including review of a preliminary construction budget and operating pro forma that considered a number of Town-mandated requirements and their effects on project feasibility
- Created a Request for Information (RFI) document -- authorized for release by the Select Board in March 2018 -- to solicit feedback from the development community concerning the Town's proposed development program for the site
- Hosted a Public Information Meeting (public hearing) on October 29, 2018 to solicit community input on the redevelopment of the parking lot, including feedback on design considerations and acceptable parameters for the reuse of the site for affordable rental senior housing
- Created an RFP that was responsive to community feedback received at public meetings and public hearings and that utilized public comment to inform the creation of development requirements and guidelines that developers must address in their RFP responses

The Select Board heard an update from the Committee in February 2019 and then held a public hearing on April 23, 2019 to discuss the Committee's draft RFP. Prior to its vote, the Board reinforced the Town's commitment to issue an RFP that was responsive to the comments and concerns of abutters, neighbors and local businesses. After considering comments received at the public hearing and the recommendations of the Kent/Station Street Affordable Senior Housing Committee, the Select Board voted on April 30, 2019 to authorize the release of an RFP to solicit development proposals for the Kent Street lot. The RFP was issued by the Town's Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) in July 2019.

Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee – Proposal Review Process

The Town received three proposals from developers in August 2019. The Chief Procurement Officer then appointed and convened a Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee and tasked it to review all proposals deemed responsive to the RFP and to make a recommendation on whether the Select Board should designate a site developer at the conclusion of proposal evaluations. After an initial review, only two of the three proposals were shortlisted for further consideration.

The Town was fortunate to receive proposals from two accomplished, mission-based developers whose capabilities as both developer and operator of affordable senior housing were held in high regard by the Evaluation Committee. The Committee met seven times from October 2019 to May 2020 to conduct a review of proposals, which included in-person interviews in November 2019 with teams from 2Life Communities and B'nai B'rith Housing - the two developers whose proposals were shortlisted through the Committee's evaluation process.

To complete its work, the Evaluation Committee initiated three rounds of follow-up questions for both developers. The questions honed in on details of site and building design, public and private financing, the developers' proposed role as housing operator and the methods they would employ to assist residents as they age in place. To support the review of proposals, the Committee employed the services of an experienced development consultant, who was brought aboard to analyze the feasibility and the practicality of the overall development plans from both a technical and fiscal perspective. The consultant's supplemental analysis informed the Committee's recommendation to the Select Board.

After many months of work by the Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee in vetting two responsive proposals, the Committee took the following vote on May 21, 2020, hereby offered for the Select Board's consideration:

VOTED: That, while it finds both the 2Life and B'nai B'rith proposals to be of high quality, the Selection Committee prefers 2Life, while recognizing that its financial request is excessive and needs to be significantly reduced. The consensus of the Selection Committee is to authorize the Town to enter into negotiations with 2Life to see if the Town and 2Life can reach agreement on an appropriate subsidy amount and a mutually acceptable Letter of Intent.

While the Committee's vote falls short of recommending the Select Board's designation of 2Life as site developer, the vote does recommend that the Board authorize a negotiation process. To support the vote of the Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee, planning staff asks that the Select Board vote the following:

1. Authorize the Housing Advisory Board to form a Kent Street Negotiating Committee, to be staffed by the Planning and Community Development Department, to begin a process of negotiation with 2Life Communities for the purpose of determining whether the parties can reach agreement on a Term Sheet that lays out acceptable terms and conditions, including cost and subsidy level, for the redevelopment of the Kent Street parking lot
2. The Negotiating Committee shall consist of five individuals, no fewer than two of whom shall be current members of the Housing Advisory Board and no fewer than two of whom shall be members of the prior Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee or the prior Kent/Station Street Affordable Senior Housing Committee
3. Charge the Negotiating Committee to appear before the Select Board at the end of negotiations to report on the status of a Term Sheet, to offer a recommendation on the designation of 2Life as site developer and to advise on the pursuit of next steps, including Town Meeting actions required for the disposition of the Kent Street parking lot for affordable senior housing

Kent Street Developer Evaluation Committee

Heather Hamilton (Committee Chair)
Roger Blood (HAB)
Virginia Bullock (Housing Staff)
Bill Madsen Hardy (HAB)
Yvette Johnson (Neighborhood Resident)
Jonathan Klein (HAB)
Liz Linder (Neighborhood Resident, Business Owner)
Don Warner (EDAB)