

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



ADVISORY COMMITTEE LETTER SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

June 13, 2012 at 7:30 P.M.

Wellesley High School Katherine L. Babson, Jr. Auditorium

TERM ENDS 2012

Virginia Ferko, Chair
Jack Haley
Maura Murphy, Secretary
Rich Page
Derek Redgate

TERM ENDS 2013

Laura Hockett, Vice-Chair
Catherine Johnson
Philip Licari
David Murphy, Vice-Chair

TERM ENDS 2014

Robert Capozzi
Becky Epstein
Ann Marie Gross
Marjorie Freiman
Deborah Robi
Rich Woerner

To the Citizens of the Town of Wellesley:

REVISED JUNE 4, 2012 ~~May 24, 2012~~

A Special Town Meeting will convene on Wednesday, June 13, 2012 at 7:30 P.M. at the Wellesley High School Katherine L. Babson, Jr. Auditorium, 50 Rice Street. All residents are welcome to attend the meeting in person or follow the proceedings on Wellesley Media Corporation's Government Channel (Comcast Channel 8, Verizon Channel 40). This letter presents the Advisory Committee's summary of the key features of the items on the Warrant for Special Town Meeting, which include requests for authorization to:

- Appropriate \$4,160,000 to acquire real property located at 900-910 Worcester Street, commonly known as the St. James the Great site. To meet this appropriation the Town seeks authorization to borrow, under the levy, the sum of \$1,560,000 (37.5% of the total appropriation) and to transfer \$2,600,000 (62.5%) from the Community Preservation Fund;
- Establish and charge a Committee to further analyze potential uses of the site including an enclosed ice rink, pool and playing field and to advise Town Meeting on next steps;
- Appropriate additional funds to dredge the northern basin of Morses Pond as described in the Management Plan for Morses Pond; and
- Transfer funds in the Morses Pond Management Program budget from expenses to personal services.

A more comprehensive *Reports to the Annual Town Meeting* (Report), including the Advisory Committee's analysis and recommendations and the Reports of other Town Boards and Committees to Town Meeting, will be mailed to all Town Meeting Members and to all Town departments. The Report will also be posted on the Town's website at www.wellesleyma.gov. Copies of the Report will be available at the Town Clerk's Office and at the Wellesley Free Library no later than seven days before the meeting. The Town Clerk's Office will mail a copy of the Report to any resident who requests one. If any further recommendations are made by the Advisory Committee in the period of time between publication of the Report and the opening of Special Town Meeting, a notice will be sent to Town Meeting Members by e-mail and the new recommendations will be posted on the Town's website.

The Advisory Committee thanks the dedicated Town employees, elected and appointed officials, and concerned citizens who devote so much time, energy, and expertise to the Town's affairs. Town Meeting is an opportunity to examine important issues, enter into dialogue, and vote as a community on how to best serve our Town and its residents. The Advisory Committee welcomes citizen input and suggestions. Our meetings are open to the public and always begin with a "Citizen Speak" session. We receive e-mail at advisorycommittee@wellesleyma.gov.

Sincerely,
Virginia Ferko, Chair

Article 1 - No motions are expected.

Article 2 – The Board of Selectmen (BOS) seeks an appropriation of \$4,160,000 for the acquisition of real property located at 900-910 Worcester Street, commonly known as the St. James the Great site, including funds for the demolition of existing structures, site work, traffic studies, an engineering consultant and other costs associated with the acquisition. To meet this appropriation the Town seeks authorization to borrow under the levy \$1,560,000 (37.5% of the total appropriation) and to transfer \$2,600,000 (62.5%) from the Community Preservation Fund.

Background and Existing Conditions

The St. James the Great Church and Rectory were built in 1958 on an 8 acre site owned by the Archbishop of Boston. As part of a process of reconfiguration by the Archdiocese, the parish was suppressed in October 2004. Parishioners have appealed the decision to close the church and have conducted a vigil within the church building.

In the past decade the Planning Board has studied the site and the surrounding stretch of Worcester Street (Route 9) as part of the Town's *Comprehensive Plan* and a visioning process known as the *Wellesley West Gateway Study*. Potential uses for the site, including housing, commercial and recreation were the subject of the *St. James the Great Alternative Land Use Study* concluded in 2010. In response to demonstrated need for and public interest in recreational uses of the site, an Ad Hoc St. James Study Committee was formed. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) funded an assessment and feasibility study by Gale Engineering that concluded that an enclosed ice rink and pool and a lighted playing field could fit on the site. Further information on these studies may be found on the home page of the Town's website www.wellesleyma.gov under the heading "St. James Property".

The property is zoned *single family residential (10,000 square feet)*. Municipal use is allowed pursuant to a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Town obtained a professional appraisal in 2010 which concluded that the market value of the property at its highest and best use as a residential multi-family development (requiring a zoning change) is \$4.0 million. The property developed as currently zoned for single family houses (market rate and affordable, as required by inclusionary zoning) was appraised at \$3.7 million. The value of the property is impacted by development constraints including wetlands, flood plain and a steep wooded slope at the rear. During the past several years the Town has notified the Archdiocese of its interest in purchasing the site if it became available for sale.

Terms of the Purchase & Sale Agreement (P&S)

The BOS signed a P&S on April 12, 2012 and an amendment to the P&S on May 29, 2012. The terms include a purchase price of \$3.8 million, no deposit, and payment by the Town of the property tax due on the property until closing (\$6,692 per quarter), in the nature of an option to purchase. The purchase is contingent upon Town Meeting approval, environmental inspections and survey of the property and wetlands. Closing could occur as early as fall 2012. The P&S provides that the Town may withdraw from its obligations under the P&S if it is not notified by the Archdiocese within two years that all Canon Law appeals have been resolved. The Town rather than the Archdiocese will have the obligation to ensure that the property is vacated. There is a claw-back provision that requires the Town to share with the Archdiocese profit on re-sale of the property within 5 years. The Town agreed not to use or permit the use of the church or rectory building, and to demolish both structures within one year of delivery of the deed of sale. Additionally the P&S provides a 90-year 40-year restriction on the use of the property by the Town or subsequent owners for the following purposes: to municipal purposes. a church; a school not operated by the Town of Wellesley; a facility at which stem cell research or services occur; or a facility at which any of the following either occurs or professional counseling advocates: abortions, euthanasia or suicide. A copy of the P&S Agreement may be found on the Town's website www.wellesleyma.gov under the heading "St. James Property".

Sources of Funds for the Acquisition

The BOS proposes to fund the appropriation from the General Fund and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. There is significant value in doing so: 1) the use of existing CPA funds reduces the amount of debt service required therefore minimizing the pressure on the annual operating budget; and 2) the use of CPA funds ensures a low-impact use of the site (with a major portion restricted to recreation and open space) providing both beneficial and aesthetic value to the town without significantly reducing the value of property.

CPA funds are raised by an annual property tax surcharge of 1%. The State matches a portion of these funds. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has included in its long-term financial plan up to \$3.5 million for the acquisition a large parcel such as St. James should it become available. CPA funds may be used only for certain purposes that include acquisition, creation and preservation of open space and recreational use. Land on which a recreational *structure* such as an enclosed ice rink or pool will be built may not be acquired with CPA funds. Land

acquired with CPA funds for open space or recreation purposes must be bound by a permanent deed restriction limiting use by the Town and any future owners to open space or recreation, as defined and recorded in a *conservation restriction*. Only the portion of the 900-910 Worcester Street site acquired with CPA funds (62.5%) will be subject to a conservation restriction. CPC has indicated that it may recommend the use of additional CPA funds at a later date to help construct a playing field and associated parking on this portion of the site. The portion of the site acquired with General Funds (37.5%) will not be subject to a conservation restriction and construction of structures such as an enclosed ice rink, pool or other municipal structures will be allowed. As currently proposed, the portion of the site to be acquired with General Funds is that portion most amenable to construction of structures (not the portion that includes the wetlands, the wooded slope and the area bounded by the flood plain).

The General Fund allocation of 37.5% of the appropriation will be raised by general obligation borrowing for a term of twenty years with annual debt service estimated at \$145,000 in the first year and declining each year thereafter. Debt service is funded in the Town's annual operating budget. The Town-wide Financial Plan currently projects an FY14 operating budget deficit, likely requiring a request for a Proposition 2 ½ override next year.

The BOS proposes to allocate funds for the appropriation as follows:

	Funding Source		Total Appropriation
	CPA	Tax Impact	
Purchase price	\$2,375,000	\$1,425,000	\$3,800,000
Property tax bills	35,583	21,350	56,933
Survey, site assessment & wetland delineation	33,589	20,153	53,742
Oil tank removal	3,438	2,063	5,500
Building demolition	102,391	61,434	163,825
Traffic study including peer review	21,875	13,125	35,000
Legal fees	12,500	7,500	20,000
Consultant	15,625	9,375	25,000
	\$2,600,000	\$1,560,000	\$4,160,000

Proposed Use

Acquisition of the property by the Town pursuant to this Article will not approve or fund any specific use. Subject to the Zoning Bylaw and necessary permitting, the permanent conservation restriction required as a condition of the use of CPA funds and the use restrictions imposed as terms of the P&S, the Town could use this property as it sees fit. In anticipation of this acquisition, however, the Planning Board and the Ad Hoc St James Committee have done substantial analysis of the site and the proposed use as a recreational campus. They have suggested for discussion, subject to public process and future Town Meeting approval, a preliminary plan that includes both public funding and private funding, including user fees and donations, as follows:

	Tax			Total
	Impact	CPA	Private	
Land acquisition	\$1,560,000	\$2,600,000		\$4,160,000
Parking, drainage & landscaping	142,275	237,125		379,400
Traffic mitigation	150,000	250,000		400,000
Field	660,000	360,000		1,020,000
Safety netting	17,600			17,600
Lights			300,000	300,000
Skating rink			5,000,000	5,000,000
Pool			9,500,000	9,500,000
	\$2,529,875	\$3,447,125	\$14,800,000	\$20,777,000

Article 3 – Under this Article, one or more Committees may be established and charged to further analyze potential uses of the 900-910 Worcester Street site. The BOS will ask Town Meeting to authorize an expanded committee to succeed the Ad Hoc St. James Committee to continue to study and analyze the site and potential recreational uses, including an enclosed ice rink, pool and lighted playing field. In a parallel process, the BOS intends to solicit public input and to consider the feasibility of other potential uses on the site. The expressed objective of the BOS is to report its recommendation on the best municipal use of the site to a Fall Town Meeting.

Article 4 –The Department of Public Works and the NRC seek an additional appropriation and transfer of CPA funds for the dredging of Moses Pond as prescribed in the Moses Pond Management Plan.

Article 5 – The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) requests a transfer of \$11,700 from expenses to personal services within the Moses Pond Management Program FY13 operating budget to fund watershed education and public outreach. No new appropriation is requested.



**Advisory Committee
Town Hall
Wellesley, Ma. 02482**

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA
Permit No.: 56467

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER WELLESLEY, MA

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



SPECIAL TOWN MEETING June 13, 2012 at 7:30 P.M. Wellesley High School Katherine L. Babson Jr. Auditorium

This letter presents the Advisory Committee's summary of the key features of the items on the Warrant for Special Town Meeting, which include requests for authorization to:

- Appropriate \$4,160,000 to acquire real property located at 900-910 Worcester Street, commonly known as the St. James the Great site. To meet this appropriation the Town seeks authorization to borrow, under the levy, \$1,560,000 (37.5%) and to transfer \$2,600,000 (62.5%) from the Community Preservation Fund;
- Establish and charge a Committee to further analyze potential uses of the site including enclosed ice rink, pool and playing field and to advise Town Meeting on next steps;
- Appropriate additional funds to dredge the northern basin of Morses Pond; and
- Transfer funds in the FY13 Morses Pond Management budget from expenses to personal services.

For updates and further information please go to www.wellesleyma.gov