

Proposal to Purchase 900 Worcester Street
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Prepared by
Board of Selectmen and St. James Ad Hoc Committee

Describe the site.

- 8 acres; zoned Single Residence District (10,000 square foot zone)
- Entire property is within the Water Supply Protection zone; westerly portion in the Flood Plain; wetlands to the rear of the site
- Abuts residential neighborhoods to the west (Dale Street) and south (Shadow Lane and Bay View Road); office park zoned Professional and Administrative to the east
- 2 buildings currently on the site: the church (2 stories, 17,622 s.f.) and rectory (2.5 stories, 4,231 s.f.)
- Proximate to a Town well field, Morses Pond and the Town Trail system
- Access is limited to Route 9, a state highway; changes to the roadway and alteration of the curb cuts will require Mass DOT approval

How do we know the \$3.8 million purchase price is a good deal for the Town?

Prior to entering into negotiations to purchase the property, the Board of Selectmen engaged Colliers Meredith & Grew (CM&G), to do a confidential real estate appraisal. Based on the current zoning of the property, CM&G estimated the fair market value of the property to be \$3.7 million. The appraisal also included valuation of the land if used for a residential multi-family use (\$4 million) and a retail/office use (\$3.5 million). The appraisal results are consistent with preliminary estimates developed through a 2010 land use study commissioned by the Planning Board.

What are the terms of the Purchase and Sale Agreement?

- The use of the site will be restricted to municipal purposes for 40 years.
- The Town is required to demolish the church and rectory within 12 months of closing and must prohibit the use of the buildings before demolition.
- The Town shall be responsible for real estate taxes for the property for up to 2 years.
- Any resale by the Town is limited to the five years following closing, and during that period the Archdiocese will share in profits realized on the sale on a declining scale.
- All items of religious significance will be removed by the Archdiocese prior to closing.
- If all canon law appeals are not resolved within a two year period, the Town will have the right to cancel the entire transaction.
- Conservation restriction(s) required, because of the use of Community Preservation Act funds, must be recorded before any building on the site.

When will the Town close on the site?

If Town Meeting approves the purchase, the Town will enter into a 60-day due diligence period. During this period the Town will complete all appropriate inspections, delineate the wetland area (where special permitting regulations apply); survey the property and determine the cost of building removal. If the Town is unable to complete its due diligence within 60 days, it has the right to extend that period for an additional 30 days. Following due diligence, the Town can close if all canon law appeals have been resolved. The final canonical appeal, recently filed, is pending resolution.

Who will pay for remediation of the site if contaminants are found?

If during the environmental inspection (21E) significant oil or hazardous materials are found on site the Town can negotiate the costs of remediation, or the Town can decline to move forward with the closing.

How will the purchase be financed?

The Community Preservation Committee has voted to fund \$2.6 million of the site acquisition costs (62.5%). Accordingly, the purchase price of the land (\$3.8 million) will be financed with a combination of Community Preservation Act funds (\$2.375 million) and a General Fund borrowing (\$1.425 million). The estimated annual cost of the debt service is expected to be \$145,000 in fiscal year 2014 and decline each year thereafter.

What other costs are associated with the purchase of the property?

A total appropriation of \$4.16 million will be requested at the Special Town Meeting. In addition to the purchase price of the land, this request is intended to cover the cost of:

- Site survey, environmental assessment and wetlands delineation (\$59,242)
- Building demolition (\$163,825)
- Property taxes pending closing of the land acquisition (\$56,933)
- Traffic study (\$35,000)
- Legal fees (\$20,000)
- Consultant fees (\$25,000)

Could CPA funds be used to cover a larger portion of the purchase and site preparation costs?

CPA funds are restricted for use in specific types of projects: open space and recreation, historic preservation/restoration, and affordable housing. They cannot be used to fund structures or the land on which structures will be built. Any property acquired with CPA funds is subject to permanent deed restrictions that limit the use to purposes consistent with the CPA.

How was the split between CPA and Town funds determined?

The site was evaluated to determine the optimal location for structures (including those to meet future Town needs) and the areas to be protected by the required deed restrictions with a vision to provide the greatest flexibility for future use of the site. As currently proposed, 62.5% of the site includes the portion of the proposed multi-purpose field and associated parking, the wetlands, flood plain, and steep slopes to the rear of the site.

During the Planning process what other uses were considered?

An unprecedented amount of planning for the site has been done since the 2004 announcement that the Church would be closed.

- The 2007-2017 Comprehensive Plan included a set of mixed-use development scenarios for this site.
- The 2006-2008 Metrowest Gateway Study proposed a vision plan for the area.
- The 2010 Concord Square Associates Alternate Land Use Study evaluated the property redevelopment of the site for residential use (single and multi-family), retail and office use, mixed use, and municipal/recreational use.

The Planning Board and the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation have also examined the site for affordable housing. Both have concluded the flood plain, wetlands,

Route 9 location, proximity to existing affordable housing, and lack of access to civic buildings, public transportation, parks, and schools make the site undesirable for affordable housing.

Why was a recreational use proposed?

All town boards and departments were invited to participate in the Alternate Land Use Study, understanding the rare opportunity the sale of the property provided. The Recreation Commission, in consultation with the Playing Fields Task Force and Wellesley Youth Hockey, came forward with a plan to use the site for recreational purposes which included an ice rink, a multi-purpose turfed playing field and town pool. A recreational use was the clear, strong preference of those who participated in the process.

How was the proposed recreation plan developed?

After the Alternative Land Use study was completed, the Board of Selectmen suggested the establishment of a committee to further investigate the proposed recreational plan. In May 2010 the Ad Hoc Committee was formed to further evaluate and refine the proposal, which is based on an analysis of the adequacy of existing facilities to meet demand and participation rates in organized team and club activities.

How will the proposed recreational facilities be funded?

The subsequent development of the site is proposed to be financed with \$900,000 of additional CPA funds, private financing and approximately \$1,000,000 in additional town funds. The ice rink and pool will be built using private sources of funding. The Town has done some preliminary research on the use of public-private partnerships to fund ice rinks. Additional work needs to be done to further define the specifications for the pool and to identify possible sources of funding. Following is a preliminary breakdown of the cost and sources of funding for the plan:

	Funding Source			Total
	Tax Impact	CPA	Private	
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
	<u>\$ 969,875</u>	<u>\$ 847,125</u>	<u>\$14,800,000</u>	<u>\$16,617,000</u>

How can we be certain that the recreational proposal is the best use for the land? Aren't there other Town priorities that should be considered?

After the Special Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen will initiate a process to solicit and review alternative uses for the property. While the Board supports the further study of the recreational proposal, it also wishes to assure that other uses have not been overlooked. The Board will evaluate alternate uses based on the following criteria:

- The use will “fit” on the site;
- Demonstrated municipal needs within Town priorities;
- Financial costs and implications in the context of the Town-wide Financial Plan; and
- The appropriateness of the location for the proposed use.

The Board will make a recommendation to Town Meeting of the most suitable use, within the constraints of the Town-wide Financial Plan, for the Town. Meanwhile, the Board is working on the development of a Senior Center at the American Legion site on Washington Street.

Has the Ad Committee vetted the recreation proposal enough?

Since the Purchase and Sale Agreement was signed on April 2, 2012, the Ad Hoc Committee has held 3 public meetings that were well attended (May 2, 3, and 6), and has met with the vigilers and neighbors within 1000 feet of the property (May 1, 2012). The Ad Hoc Committee has taken several groups on tours of the site and it also has presented the Recreation Plan to the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs and to many Town boards, including the Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Natural Resources Commission, Recreation Commission, Council on Aging and the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation. Since the inception of the Ad Hoc Committee in May 2010, the Committee has held or attended 46 meetings to discuss the recreational use proposed for the 900 Worcester Street property.

Does it make sense to purchase the site absent a commitment to build the recreational facilities proposed?

The sale of 900 Worcester is rare opportunity for the Town to acquire a parcel of this size. There is no question that a suitable municipal use for the site can be identified. At a minimum, as a result of the current review by the Ad Hoc Committee, it is clear that the land can be used to meet a demonstrated need for recreational facilities. The proposed deed restrictions will also ensure the protection of portions of the site that are proximate to other Town resources (Morses Pond, a Town well field, and the Town Trail system).

Does approval of the purchase of the property represent a commitment to go forward with the recreation proposal?

No. As described above, the Board of Selectmen will undertake a process to identify and evaluate alternate uses for the site, and will make its recommendation with regard to the best use of the site at a future Town Meeting.

What further action by Town Meeting will be required?

Town Meeting will authorize every phase of this project moving forward, including;

- The designation of the use
- Funding of design and permitting
- Approval and funding of facilities to be constructed

What is the Timeline for further TM action?

Depending on the timing of the closing, if the current appeal is resolved in the Town’s favor, the Board of Selectmen intends to present its report to the next Town Meeting recommending the preferred use for the property and recommending a course of action to implement such use.