

COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND BUILDINGS

June 21, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Chairman Long called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Long, Fajardo, Levasseur, T. Sapienza, Trisciani

Messrs.: B. Steele, S. Stebbins, M. Harrington, J. Tousignant, J. Craig,
K. McCracken, B. Cook, P. Chiesa

1. Communication from Phil Croasdale, Water Works Director, requesting that the City deem land and a building located on 515 Manchester Road in Auburn, NH surplus and authorize Water Works to lease it to the Town of Auburn for a community center.

Alderman Levasseur moved to deem the property surplus and authorize Water Works to lease it to the Town of Auburn. **Alderman T. Sapienza** duly seconded the motion.

Chairman Long called for a vote. *There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

2. Communication from Jeanine Tousignant, Project Facilitator, Mark Stebbins Community Center, requesting approval of the sale of Parks & Recreation land (Lot 318-3) on Parkside Avenue to be used for the construction of a community center.
(Note: Recommendations from Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, Assessor and the Economic Development Office are attached.)

Bill Steele, Chairman, Mark Stebbins Community Center Steering Committee, stated I appreciate being able to say a few words to this group tonight. By way of a little background, I started working in Manchester in 1971 right down the street and I still work there. The steering committee formed in the fall of 2021 and as we sit here today we have about 150 volunteers working on this project. As was just said, we would like to purchase this land near Parkside. We are thinking we would build a two-story building about 40,000 square feet that would house numerous not-for-profits to serve the needs of the west side children and their families. We have also provided all of you with a fair amount of information and would be happy to answer any questions. I will turn it over to Sally to say a few words.

Sally Stebbins stated thank you for having us here tonight. It was my husband, Mark Stebbins, who passed away a year ago on June 17, 2021. Mark was a Manchester native born and bred in Manchester. He became a very successful business person owning the ProCon Design & Construction firm and several hotels in the area. Once he became successful, he always felt a real strong need to give back to the community in which he was raised. Basically three generations of the Stebbins family lived in Manchester. When Mark was alive, he basically told me we were really going to step it up. I didn't know what that meant but in Mark's eyes he meant we are going to really start being generous in our donations. For the past 20 years, Mark was a strong advocate for Manchester's non-profit community. He generously gave of his time and

his talents to support their missions and encourage non-profits to collaborate. His philanthropic legacy includes a \$1 million donation to Manchester Boys & Girls Club Camp Foster renovations in addition to the Union Street clubhouse, a \$500,000 donation to renovate the Easter Seals headquarters in Manchester, a \$250,000 donation to expand the Leader in Me Program to all of the schools on Manchester's west side and the Healthy Hearts Program to both Gossler Park Elementary School and the Boys and Girls Club. In addition, we gave \$250,000 to WayPoint's Youth Resource Center in Manchester and \$150,000 to the YMCA Center for Youth Teen Leadership renovation project in Manchester. The reason I am saying this is that we are very committed to the Manchester community as you can see and when a group of Mark's friends, business associates and state leaders came to our family to say they would like to do something to honor Mark in Manchester on his passing...my son is now currently on the Manchester Boys & Girls Club Board and I have a daughter who is on the WayPoint Board and they both said at this point there is nothing, Mom, on the west side where Dad was really focusing his efforts and we would like to do something to bring the non-profits together on the west side and build something to service the people on the west side. That is how this whole idea got started of a community center bringing together non-profits under one roof, which is what Mark always talked about doing. It started as a grass roots organization and it has really blossomed. We have an incredible team working right now. We have done a lot of research and work talking to people and doing surveys and I think there is a real need out there and the Stebbins family is willing to step up and support this project in a big way and we hope the City of Manchester supports that effort.

Mike Harrington stated thank you for reviewing our request to purchase 4.1 acres of city-owned land located on the west side of Manchester. For us right now it is known as Map 13, Lot 3. I reside at 94 Chad Road here in Manchester. Myself and Mike Reed who could not be here tonight because he is out of town on vacation who is with Stebbins Commercial Real Estate were on the sub-committee searching for properties for the Mark Stebbins Center really since the inception back in the fall of last year. We have looked at numerous properties, some of which we came close to making offers on but nothing that really quite checked all of the boxes and fit what we really thought would be a prime location for a center like this. The property that we have requested that you deem surplus and approve to sell to us at \$600,000 does all of that. It has what we need including the proximity to the schools. If any of you have done any searches for property in Manchester and specifically on the west side, there is not much available. The west side of Manchester is very densely populated and there is not a lot of available land; certainly not buildable land. There are not even a lot of buildings that are capable of being renovated or certainly not renovated at a cost that would make it reasonable for a center like this to exist. I am here tonight to respectfully ask that you render this land surplus as we outlined in the package with a purchase and sale agreement, sell it to our committee for \$600,000 and move to make a recommendation to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to allow the purchase to go through. We are here to answer any questions.

Chairman Long stated I would like to first thank Mrs. Stebbins for her historic contributions to child advocacy in the City of Manchester and also for her continued advocacy. Manchester certainly appreciates it.

Alderman Levasseur asked are there any contingencies on the purchase of the land.

Mr. Harrington answered yes there are contingencies but not financial. We have a generous donor who has backed this and has committed to the \$600,000 purchase price but there are contingencies for approvals to build what we want to build there and environmental conditions need to be checked and there is a host of other contingencies which are typical in a commercial transaction for land. You very rarely get a land transaction that has no contingencies because whoever buys that land needs to know that they have the right to be able to build what they want there.

Alderman Levasseur stated the reason I ask is what is the anticipated closing date if there are contingencies.

Mr. Harrington replied we have 180 days for our contingencies and then we have a couple of extended periods that are outlined in the P&S agreement but we are hoping to start construction in the fall of next year. We would try to get through all of this this year and the first quarter of next year meaning through Planning and through environmental inspections and architectural design. There is a whole bid process that is going to happen that is going to go out to various contractors. That is another point that we would like to bring up as well. It wasn't part of our presentation but we are planning to use local contractors and bid it out to local engineering firms. We are anticipating that this is going to cost to build somewhere around \$17 million. We are not looking for the city to help us in any way other than to sell this property to us.

Mrs. Stebbins stated I would also like to point out that ProCon is not part of the construction process. We weren't on any of the other projects. We are not looking to boost our own revenue from these non-profit projects.

Alderman Levasseur stated I will say that I got two calls today. One from an abutter who was not notified. The only reason she called was she knew this was a project that will most likely go forward. She was not notified. Generally, as you know when it comes to a zoning issue everybody needs to be notified. If we approve this, it would be without notice to the abutters. There may have been questionnaires or surveys going out but specifically one person called. I got another email from somebody from Goffstown concerning the gardens. We discussed the issue of the gardens and what the plan is for that. I have talked to Mike numerous times on this. My understanding is you wanted to be sure that was left alone but I am not sure if that changed or not.

Mr. Harrington stated in the packet that was submitted, and Jeanine can speak to this better than I but we saw that it was certainly a condition of the existing land now. There are community gardens currently active on that site. We anticipate as part of our project and part of the mission of the Mark Stebbins Community Center that we will incorporate that in. We have support from Ara Tamzarian who is in charge of those community gardens.

Mrs. Stebbins stated I think it would be a wonderful addition to have the gardens remain there.

Mr. Harrington stated the building and the parking that surrounds it will not take up the entire site. There will be green space available and there will be garden space that will be made available.

Alderman Trisciani stated regarding the abutter notification, that will happen through the zoning and planning process because this project will be like any other project. All we are discussing right now is whether or not we deem the property surplus and sell it. I have attended several of the community meetings for this project with community members to kind of understand their feedback. This has received lots of support from different groups that do want this. I have also had several conversations with folks about the community garden. Out of those discussions, and Jeanine and I have followed up with those, the main ask was that either Ara or his designee from the gardens be part of it because as you know just deeming property for a garden isn't enough. We need to make sure it is the right piece of property to grow and get other gardeners involved. They are supportive and they understand that we need this. This would be a win for the west side. We have known for years that we needed this. From a gardening perspective, it is really just keeping in mind and maybe meeting with them and touring what they have done to date. They have built a community. I believe those gardens have been in place for about four years and the beauty of them is they have created walking paths and a community around it. It is just really critical in my mind that we keep them in the forefront of this planning to make sure that the community they built...this is the first time they have actually had a waiting list for gardening plots. It is just keeping them at the forefront and really keeping them involved as we do the planning to make sure that their needs are met and we aren't killing a community resources to try to gain another.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated Mrs. Stebbins, thank you for your family's generosity over the years and this generous offer. It is truly awe inspiring. The one problem I have is selling park land. Park land was entrusted to us by our forefathers and people before us to be held by the city for future generations so selling park land is not something that I can do. I want to support your project and I will support it in any other way I can maybe with leasing the land but I just can't sell park property. If we could find a way for you to lease it because nobody knows what the future is going to bring. With all due respect, foundations come and go and you don't know what is going to be happening in 10 years or 50 years or 100 years from now. That park land I believe is entrusted to the city for people in the future. I absolutely want to support you being able to use that property and I would support other ways to do that but I personally cannot sell it. I just cannot sell park land.

Alderman Fajardo asked is there a version of this where it is written into an agreement that should the purpose of the building change that the city would have right of first refusal to reacquire it.

Chairman Long replied we could ask for that. Would there be an issue with that?

Mr. Steele stated we are okay with the right of first refusal.

Jeanine Tousignant, Project Facilitator, stated I did come up to address a little more about the community gardens but let me just talk about this a little bit as well. We would

certainly be happy to have a right of first refusal if we had the property to sell it back to the city if we were no longer there. You are talking 30 or 50 or however many years from now. The other thing that we would be happy to put in is that if construction hasn't started within five years after the sale then we would certainly be amenable to giving the land back to the city at the purchase price that we paid for it. I just wanted to say that as far as the community gardens, it is definitely our intent to make sure that they are at the table throughout this process and to make sure that they are part of the integration. That goes right along with the mission of the community center which is making sure that we are lifting up the community and providing services. Through our community needs assessment, food scarcity as we all know is a big issue that has been identified and by having community gardens there it just goes right into addressing that food scarcity issue so it is part of the mission which is what we always have in mind; what is the mission and how do we lift up this community and how do we help the people on the west side. That is our only goal.

Mayor Craig stated I want to thank all of you for the work that you have been doing over the last year to bring this to the Board. This Board heard a little bit about the search for land on the west side and we were involved in that and I just need to double-down on that in terms of not having anything else available. When this land was identified, we walked the property and it was just a perfect site for this community center. I share Alderman T. Sapienza's concerns in terms of park land and selling park land. In the past when corporations have asked the city to purchase park lands, I have always said absolutely not because we will never get that land back. I feel very differently about this opportunity in front of us today though because to me this is an extension of Parks & Recreation. The mission of this community center is consistent with Parks & Recreation where they are serving the youth and families on the west side and then to take it a step further, they are investing \$17 million into this property and we all know that we would never be able to do that. The property is completely underutilized right now and the location near the schools and right in the center of where a number of families are living will just provide so much to the families on the west side that is needed. I encourage this committee to really think about this and think about the opportunity that is in front of us right now to really provide additional services to the west side families that do not exist. Just to take one thing a step further, when Sally talked about Mark being a businessman he was obviously a very successful businessman but he was compassionate and empathetic as well. I vividly remember meeting with Chris and Diane from the Boys & Girls Club when Mark was alive and talking about his mission to really bring non-profits together to make sure that they were being effective and efficient in serving our community and doing better for our community. That we are able to really talk about this and bring this to fruition is a really great thing for the city. I again want to thank you for all of the work that you have done and I hope this committee can support it.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated I completely agree with the mission but I think we can find a way to do it without selling the land so that in 25, 50 or 100 years from now we are not regretting it. It is park land and to me selling park land is just not something that I can do.

Alderman Barry stated Sally thank you and your husband and your family for everything you have done over the years and continue to do. I certainly appreciate it. I represent

Ward 10 on the west side and when I moved to the west side in 2014 I remember running into Dennis Stone who is part of the Boys and Girls Club. I was a former member of the Boys and Girls Club for quite a few years and it is important to me. When I was speaking with Dennis years ago we were discussing getting a facility on the west side because a lot of the kids can't get transportation over to the east side and they are losing out. I have coached sports for over 35 years so I am well aware of how important it is to get kids at a certain age on the right path and I want to continue that. Now my understanding because I did go to a few meetings is that initially this was geared towards...the way I looked at it and summarized it was that it was going to be another Boys and Girls Club but on the west side. So an extension of what is on the east side. Now I understand, which is not a problem, that possibly 50% of it is going to be used for the Boys and Girls Club. Is that accurate?

Ms. Tousignant stated thank you for coming to our meetings. Our intent is that the two anchor agencies would be the Boys and Girls Club and Amoskeag Health. We are in the process of figuring out what other agencies or service providers would also be located in the community center and that is based on the needs that need to be met. I want to reiterate that the mission of this is to serve children and families and we will make sure that that is who is in the building. There will likely be other non-profit agencies in the building but we just don't know who that is yet. We are in the process of surveying agencies and figuring that out.

Alderman Barry stated I think it is great to have Amoskeag Health there. I think Manchester Mental Health is awesome but my other understanding was that mental health would be within the building to deal with the children and their families. Is that accurate?

Ms. Tousignant responded that has not been determined yet. They are one of our planning partners and they are interested in being in the building. Again, we don't know exactly who will be in the building.

Alderman Barry stated my concern with that is if we are dealing with mental health and again we have it on Elm Street and we have it on the east side and I think the kids need it but my fear honestly and my big concern is that if we open the door for everyone that is dealing with mental health issues whether it be on the east side or city-wide and they are going to that facility that is going to be loaded with children...I just want to make sure that we are not going to be mixing people that are suffering from mental health issues especially ones that have had crimes against children. It scares me to death that something like that might happen. That is the last thing we need. We have two schools right next door and this is going to be a year-round facility. I just want to make sure, whoever is doing the study on this, that you take that into consideration. When you are dealing with children you have to make sure who is coming and going into that facility.

Ms. Tousignant replied we absolutely will and we will make sure that the security is there and this is focused on children and families. I would like to ask Kris McCracken from Amoskeag Health to come up and talk about that a little bit as a service provider. I think she is probably the best person to address that concern.

Alderman Barry stated other than that I support it. I think we need something on the west side. I would like to stay involved with this as much as I can.

Chairman Long stated I read the letter of intent and the intent is children and families. If we execute this letter of intent, it is about children and families period. That is my understanding.

Mrs. Stebbins stated that has always been the Stebbins family's focus. If you look at the history of contributions we have made it is always to children and families.

Chairman Long stated if it passes this committee, July 19 is the next BMA meeting where it will go before the full Board. I would like a little more stability on an anchor or the two anchors. I know what my perception is but that is my perception and if this was my land I would have no problem with it but this is city land and I have constituents that I represent and I need for certainty to know that some of these anchors we have been hearing about in these meetings are going to be those anchors. That would be helpful. Alderman Barry does that help you get a further understanding regarding your concern?

Alderman Barry replied yes and I really would be more than happy to sit down. I just want to make sure that you guys really look at who is going to be in there and at what capacity because my biggest concern is the safety of the children.

Kris McCracken, CEO, Amoskeag Health, stated I am a long time partner with the Boys and Girls Club along with the Manchester Mental Health Center and some of the other local agencies in town. Amoskeag Health and the Boys and Girls Club serve a majority of children and families. That is our focus population. Over 1/3 of our patients are under the age of 18 and we have over 6,000 children we provide pediatric care to. We do a lot of prenatal care and safety is very important when you have a lot of young families coming in. Certainly for us and for the benefit of our staff and other patients who are coming to access services, safety is paramount. You can be assured that Diane Patrick from the Boys and Girls Club is dedicated into looking into how we stand up secure environments that are safe for everybody and are closely monitored and that there are safe entrances and exits and all of those things that you would expect. Certainly I know that you live very close to us and can see the activity that we have at our site downtown but clearly understand that the focus is family and children and that the safety of the people attending any service that they have come to access whether it is to come and get food or to sign-up for WIC or whatever they might choose to access, that will be paramount. Obviously as two institutions in town – Amoskeag Health and the Boys and Girls Club, we are committed to serve as anchor institutions for the stability of this project.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked would you be agreeable to deed restrictions that require the property only be used to house non-profits with the mission of serving children and families on the west side.

Mrs. Stebbins asked that includes service providers too right.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked so you would be agreeable to something like that.

Mrs. Stebbins stated yes non-profits/service providers.

Ms. McCracken stated we have had conversations, for example, with Employment Security for signing up for TANF and other benefits. It is very hard to get to where those access points are right now near the airport so if a family can sign-up for WIC or sign-up for TANF and get some of those benefits right there, that would be super beneficial. I think our language is to provide access points that are non-profit for children and families with a combination of service providers that meet those needs. The NH Food Bank and other partners may be able to provide some of those supports.

Mr. Steele stated one of our attorneys is here and would be happy to discuss some of the restrictions.

Alderman Levasseur asked what is the square footage of the Boys Club on Union Street. Does anyone know?

Ms. McCracken replied I think they are about 10,000 square feet or 12,000.

Alderman Levasseur stated and you are planning 30,000 to 40,000 in this building. My concern is it is going to have a commercial feel and I don't think it should have any kind of commercial feel if it is going to be a neighborhood building. It is in a very residential area whereas the one on Union Street could go both ways because there is a lot of commercial in that area. They don't have any of these other agencies inside that building. From that perspective...I really want to see this go forward but I am looking at the footprint and I see at least 15 abutters and if you ever want to be an elected official and you don't notify the abutters, you hear about really quick. My only concern is if we vote to deem it surplus and you want to get the project moving and we don't have another meeting until July I would like those abutters to at least have an opportunity...I don't know if we want to have the abutters speak before we vote or wait for the July meeting and hear from them. They should at least be notified and the reason why is there is going to be a lot of different types of agencies going in there which may concern abutters more than a Boys and Girls Club would. I don't think anybody has any problem with the Boys and Girls Club. That is what I thought was going in there solely until today.

Brad Cook, Attorney, Sheehan-Phinney, stated I am counsel for this project volunteering my time like everybody else is. I have a couple of comments on the discussions. First of all, between now and July I think it would behoove us all to have the Solicitor's Office and us sit down and talk about deed restrictions and the other things we talked about like right of first refusal and a possible reverter if the entity went out of business. To Alderman T. Sapienza's point, the difference between putting a \$17 million building on a sold piece of property versus on a leased piece of property that can be arranged to get it back either way at the end of the project with the city, is the park land is going to have a big building on it either way and it is not going to be park land. I think this can be arranged in such a way that the city will be satisfied that at the end of the road they will get it back. This is a non-profit. There is nobody profiting from it. It is a 501(c)(3). Nobody gets dividends and nobody would get the proceeds when and if it is sold other than the city or another 501(c)(3)'s to do good work in the city. We all have a mindset when we think about big projects and who is making money. With this one

nobody is making money because it is a 501(c)(3) but I would encourage us to continue the dialogue between now and then as to the design of the building and the fitting into the neighborhood. That is part of the planning process and the approval process but certainly the abutters and everybody else will have input into what it looks like. I think there is great sensitivity to have it attractive and inviting and appropriate. While I appreciate the comments and I think that's true, I think that is for another discussion on another day.

Alderman Levasseur stated my understanding is your board took a vote that you did not want to lease the property. If we say \$10,000 a year for 50 years that would save you money upfront to get this project going. Did you vote that you don't want to accept a lease even though that would probably make a few more aldermen more amenable to the project?

Atty. Cook replied I believe it was a more positive vote on what we wanted not what we didn't want. I think the board decided that it was seeking what it applied for and that was to purchase the property for \$600,000. If the Board of Mayor and Aldermen were to say we are only going to lease it to you for \$1/year for 70 years, I think we can do the math and \$70 is less than \$600,000.

Alderman Levasseur responded I don't think I said \$1/year.

Atty. Cook stated well several other aldermen have said it.

Alderman Levasseur stated I didn't think this was going to be a profit for the city when it came in so I was actually surprised that you were willing to pay \$600,000, which is very generous. I was thinking \$10,000/year for however many years to get to that number and then we would have the lease which would really settle some of the nerves of some of the aldermen for this project. My only worry about it is we did have a west side Boys Club and eventually it closed. So 20 years from now if there are no more kids that want to go there anymore, what are you going to do with the building? We don't want to have whatever going in there because you have that sole decision without the city having oversight over what would go there because there is a school next to it.

Atty. Cook stated I think as far as restrictions, we can talk to the city about that and address what happens if the kind of services that are envisioned cease being provided there and what happens to the building if there is no substitute user for the same purposes. Would it revert to the city or would the city exercise its right of first refusal...however that is done.

Alderman Levasseur stated I don't want the building back. I just know it is nice to have that contingency in case it happens.

Alderman Fajardo stated I have some more nuts and bolts questions that I would love to just put out there. I am wondering about the impact traffic wise and parking wise to the neighborhood. It is obviously very dense over there and I know the two schools are there already. As someone who lives right up against a school, I know that it can sometimes have an impact on the quality of life for the residents in the area so I wanted to ask the question and give you the opportunity to address it.

Chairman Long stated Zoning and Planning will answer those questions. I don't believe they have done a traffic study.

Alderman Fajardo stated maybe a more straight forward question is would parking be incorporated. I know you are not that far in the planning.

Mrs. Stebbins responded there are no designs for this building yet but our initial thought was to have parking. One of the reasons we liked this location is that we thought so many of the children and families could physically walk there and it is on a bus route. So yes we are concerned about the amount of traffic. We would like people to walk because it is in their neighborhood.

Alderman Trisciani moved to deem the property surplus and ask that the Stebbins Community Center group work with the Solicitor on deed restrictions including right of first refusal and a reversion clause.

Peter Chiesa, Deputy Solicitor, stated part of the motion should include that the direct sale to this purchaser is in the best interest of the city as opposed to going to a public sale where there would be an auction or sealed bid.

Alderman Trisciani moved to amend her motion to include the direct sale to the purchaser as it is in the best interest of the families and children in the city and especially for the west side community. **Alderman Fajardo** duly seconded the motion.

Chairman Long called for a vote. Aldermen Long, T. Sapienza, Trisciani and Fajardo voted yea. Alderman Levasseur voted nay. The motion carried.

Chairman Long stated Mrs. Stebbins again I thank you for your historic, not only financial help but your advocacy also.

There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman T. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Levasseur**, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee