



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Public Property Committee

Councillor McDonald, Chair
Councillor O'Malley, Vice Chair
Councillor Spadafora

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

6:15 PM

City Hall, Room #105
215 Pleasant Street

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Councillor Carey McDonald, Councillor Ryan O'Malley and Craig Spadafora

Also Present: Council President Winslow
Councillors Colon Hayes, Condon, Crowe, Linehan, Simonelli, Taylor
Alicia McNeil-City Solicitor
Maria Luise-Mayor's Office
Michelle Romero-City Planner/Historical Comm Liason
Nelson Miller-Bldg Director
Carol Ann Desiderio-City Clerk
Attorney Rob DeMarco-Attorney for the property owner

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:20 PM.

Minutes to be Approved

[125-24](#) Minutes of February 6, 2024 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Spadafora, seconded by Councillor O'Malley, that the Committee Minutes of February 6, 2024 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

[98-24](#) Order: Whereas, 15 Ferry Street, the M. Ida Converse Building, is one of the last existing buildings created through the philanthropy of the Converse Family; and Whereas, the Historic Commission will be holding a public hearing on the proposed demolition of said building at their meeting of Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 6:00 PM;
Now, Therefore, Be It Ordered that the City Council negotiate with the owner of 15 Ferry Street to acquire the building and land located at 15 Ferry Street (known by City Assessor's Parcel ID 075 272 211) for historic preservation through gift, purchase, land swap, or other transfer.

Sponsors: Ryan O'Malley

Attachments: [Parcel id# 075272205 used for 15 Ferry Street relocation.](#)
[100-24 City Council agenda](#)
[CPC Letter to City Council and Mayor re 15 Ferry Street Preservation 2023.01.29](#)
[MHC to Mayor CC 2.21.24 re 15 Ferry wAtts](#)
[MHC to Mayor & CC 1.23.24 re 15 Ferry wAtts](#)

Councillor McDonald explains the topic today will be about 15 Ferry Street, Ida Converse Building. He asked Councillor O'Malley to introduce his papers which were referred to this committee and then get updates from folks at the meeting who may have any updates. He said Rob from you about your client if there is any information you would like to share if there is any new information in terms of the demolition planning or any other new information we may have to receive from legal or the historical commission. He would be happy to receive them at this time. Then have a discussion about how the Council would like to proceed on these options and others we may put on the table at this time. Clerk Cagno read Paper's 98-24 and 100-24 into the record.

Councillor O'Malley said he thinks it is helpful to go through the history. He refers to two papers received from the Historical Commission (see attached). It goes through the history of the building. It has passed through different hands over the years. It was formerly owned by former Rep. Chris Fallon and was then purchased by Attorney DeMarco's client who have been extremely helpful in working with the City to try and find some preservation option for this building and thanks Rob for being a big part of the influence. This has been going on for years and Covid delayed it longer. Presently in May 25, 2022, Councillor Spadafora and the Council unanimously approved an order that the City Council approved the relocation of the building at 15 Ferry St to MHS at 77 Salem St to the area at the corner of Salem and Holmes St. and accept the building as public property. The CPC did not accept that relocation to the lawn at MHS but they are willing and able to contribute up to \$205,000 to the move. The property owners are willing to contribute to the relocation of the building. He feels that we can ideally come up with a use for this building. He is bringing it to the Public Property Committee because he feels that if we can thread the needle for this property with all the support we have it will be a win win for everyone.

Councillor McDonald asked one clarifying question, despite the order the house was not moved and it says we take possession of the property, but we in fact, the City, do not have possession of that property.

Attorney DeMarco said my client has indicated to me and still holds to this, that if the City wants the building they can come and take it any time they want. Which you have not done. Part of the order that has been put in front of you that land is part of that statement and he wants to be clear on the record there is absolutely no way that the land will be part of any negotiated deal that is not possible. Due to the costs he has been incurring right along there is a question of the amount of what he can contribute that is something we all need to work on. That's not to say it's zero but there are places we need to talk and issues we need to get through to make this work.

Councillor McDonald said we all understand if we had the land this would not be an issue. Why did the house not get moved after we approved it's move.

Attorney DeMarco said we worked with Wolff House Movers for months they are the preeminent group in the country to do this kind of move. This is a block building not a wooden structure and it need to be moved in a specific fashion and sealed up in a cage

so that it doesn't break apart. The prep takes forever. We took apart the area in the basement, we measured the size of the area. The work has been completed and the time comes to move the building. We have gone through a process but the CPC stopped. We had meetings out on the lawn and there has been an enormous amount of community outreach on this and he respectfully disagrees with the assessment that did not happen. We published news articles rendering the house on the front lawn. We met with the Historic Commission and spoke with the Mayor.

Maria Luise, Special Assistant to the Mayor, said we also had meetings with the Superintendent and Rob was there. Michelle Romero added there was a survey done as well. The Chair of the School Committee Adam Weldai and the Principal attended meetings and student leaders. They saved the community garden.

Councillor McDonald clarifies that the site could have been used there was not an engineering barrier. issues

Attorney DeMarco absolutely no issues. The amount of the work and money we have brought in have been extreme.

Councillor Simonelli asked how much does it cost to move the house and what is going on the site

Attorney DeMarco said we have already expended \$200,000 and there is another \$700,000 needed to move it. We are going to seek to have a residential building and go before the Council to go above the six stories with 57 condominium units, including affordable units for first time home buyers on the site, retail on the first floor and a parking garage underneath not one for one and we will need some parking relief.

Councillor Spadafora said the location is TBD but the biggest challenge is the \$700,000. If we had the funding we could find the location. He doesn't think that the location will change the cost of the move. There is no issue with the foundation. His point is we can't go backwards if we get the \$205,000 minus the amount the owner will put in we are short. We have to figure that out.

Michelle Romero, City Planner, said as Councillor O'Malley mentioned the two letters from the Historic Commission (see attached) she wants to say for the record all the attachments, documents and public comments are in favor and that the Historic Commission still strongly supports the preservation and hopes that the City can find a location and solution for this especially in light of the fact she understands that the demolition permit has been issued. The commission understands and is not reviewing anything under the demo ordinance for the new permit. This is a new demolition permit that has been issued.

Councillor Colon Hayes said she think she heard that the School Committee was not aware of this as of last week. I agree you could have done outreach and people could say they didn't hear. At my community engagement meeting last week the youth specified one of the reasons they want a Youth Council is that they were not aware of the building being moved to the High School and they need to be more involved in knowing things that were happening. She has gotten phone calls from people who have not heard about it.

Maria said the kids that would know about it have graduated. Attorney DeMarco said that he has been working on this for five years now. He said we have done everything what we were asked to do and gone further. Here we are now. We are more than willing to work

with the City but by all rights he could walk down the street and take the building down they have a demo permit in hand.

Councillor Crowe asked when and where did the \$700,000 price tag come from don't you have to take down wires.

Attorney DeMarco said one of the sites we did a study on was across from the old Courthouse. They said absolutely not we could not get there. We have looked at the HS and across the street from the HS every site has had an issue. Now I understand the possibility about going down Main Street to Pine Banks and the converse family may have ideas of bringing it down there.

Councillor McDonald said the question is how much the price tag vary with the moving of building

Attorney DeMarco said the most recent update to the estimate was in June. The most expensive part of this is taking it off on to the street and taking off the street on to the lot. A straight shot down the road he didn't feel would be that much of an increase however, there would be an increase. We want to try to figure out finances, my client is willing to dip into his pocket but not for \$500,000 he is carrying the cost for his building. His client said if they approve \$350,000 the night we talked about this he said he would do it now time has passed and he cannot commit to the number he is willing to give. We need to come up with a plan or else we need to knock the building.

Councillor Taylor has been researching the Pine Banks area because there is a preschool at that site looking for an inside site. Specifically Melrose parents are willing to do capital fundraising to have a full day program at that site. This would fulfill the original intent to use the building for children. She is missing the piece of talking with Pine Banks because the care taker at Pine Banks has left and the Board is taking over and she needs to see if there is something they will entertain and also the daycare and how funding they would contribute on that end as well and also with Maura Healey's funding preschool education. If all the pieces fall into place and finding funding is the issue she feels uncomfortable to ask the City for funding now, but if we could coordinate all these pieces we could salvage this building still onto historical property and revert back to its historical use.

Councillor Winslow said there was some effort that the Mayor made about eighteen months ago to approach Pine Banks even if we come up with the land and location I like that idea but you have to find the means to rehab it and operate and maintain it. He feels it is worth re-approaching the Board there. Even if we have land and funding who will take care of it and will it have beneficial use with the new owner who will take care of the basic operations of the building.

Michelle Romero, City Planner doesn't want to dismiss any of these ideas but wanted to say this is one of the three remaining converse buildings and it is currently located in converse square. The City owns the parking lot abutting the land. There were two alternatives to shift the building to the parking lot. If the building is moved across the There still will be parking in that lot I could encourage you to consider a simpler solution City owned land next door which will be noticeably less money and it will still be in converse square. She would like to articulate for the record why we are not focusing that as the primary option they want the building preserved we all want the building preserved. Secondly, the other thing repeatedly proposed by the Historical Commission was to incorporate where the building is on site into the project to keep the exterior and incorporate it into the new project by the new owner. It seems like a feasible option we

should consider to save the building. That would be something the City would encourage the owner to do potentially incorporate it into any special permit that is granted that be incorporated into the project.

Councillor O'Malley said POI he reached out to Ron Hogan waiting to get a call back on that. The paper talks about a land swap the applicant was always interested in doing a grander vision actually mimicking the home of the original industrial image. He also reached out to Ron to see if we could do a grander vision for this block.

Councillor Spadafora said this is the challenge he has. He has no problem trying to preserve the building but he is not for putting in a parking lot besides losing any space for our retailers we are limited there. All that does is shift that building into our parking lot and we will have to pay to move that five years from now and that will cost us money, that is a short term solution. With all due respect to the Attorney for the developer, at the end of the day there is a lot of discussion that comes down to him about money. They are not going to tear that building down because they need a special permit. If he tears it down he will not get the count from the Council for the special permit, we do not want them to buy out of it. He understands the situation they are in we are in a pragmatic situation we want to save the building we don't have a place for it, but we have no money so no matter where we move it there will be a cost. For him he thinks it is about where are we going to get the money and that everything else becomes easier in vision.

Councillor Colon Hayes said she has reached out to the Mayor about moving to the parking lot and he responded they looked into it that is an incredibly busy area we opted to not go with that idea it was a parking issue.

Attorney DeMarco said first he wanted to make sure everyone is clear about one thing we did ask the architect about incorporating the building into the design of the building but it is not possible it will not be preservation. In terms of the parking lot, the slide over will be less expensive but in terms of the parking spaces there is a cost and became a question of public policy do you give up the spots. To Michelle's point our plan was to replicate the facade of 21 Ferry St. to 15 Ferry St. our look would have had the facade of 21 Ferry Street. We were told the parking lot would not work and we started on the front lawn.

Councillor Winslow said one of the things is the public policy of whether preservation of the building is worth asking the Council. The question is does this committee want to send this up or down and send it to the Full Council to be voted up or down and have conversation and let the chips fall where they may. He suggest that may be one recommendation the committee makes to clarify things vote it up or down.

Councillor McDonald asked Councillor Taylor if it would be helpful if she had more time about a week or two to find out about the Pine Banks option.

Councillor Taylor responded yes. She said it's worth getting the information to see what funding is available we may be able to get and at that point we would have done as much as we possibly can.

Councillor McDonald from the Chair recommends we table the papers for a couple of weeks to let Councillor Taylor get the information and schedule another meeting. He thinks we can't make any decisions until we find out if this possibility that is worth the next stages to investigate or not. Through the Chair, his perspective is the concern of the cost to the City and his biggest concern is of taking on the liability of a Historic Building we don't have a plan for or a plan of how to maintain. He feels there is a way to

square off the circle of the parking issue but he doesn't want to take on the liability of the building if we don't have a plan for what we are going to do with the building. This sounds like a possible plan.

Councillor O'Malley asked Nelson Miller, Building Commissioner as a team could we find the plans for the duct bank on Ferry Street and could he help us locate that. He also asks if anyone knows of any other philanthropic organizations in Malden please let the clerk know we can try to reach out to them. He then moves the papers out to be tabled pending receiving more information from Pine Banks.

A motion was made by Councillor O'Malley, seconded by Councillor Spadafora, that the Order be tabled. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

100-24

Order: That the City Council investigate utilizing a portion of the Ferry Street Parking Lot (known by City Assessor's Parcel ID 075 272 205) to relocate and preserve 15 Ferry Street, the M. Ida Converse Building, (known by City Assessor's Parcel ID 075 272 211).

Sponsors: Ryan O'Malley

Attachments: [Parcel id# 075272205 used for 15 Ferry Street relocation.](#)

[100-24 City Council agenda](#)

[CPC Letter to City Council and Mayor re 15 Ferry Street Preservation 2023.01.29](#)

[MHC to Mayor & CC 1.23.24 re 15 Ferry wAtts](#)

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A motion was made by Councillor O'Malley, seconded by Councillor Spadafora, that the Order be tabled. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Other Business

Tabled Papers

53-24

Order: That the City Council review the usage of the vacant property on Goodwin Avenue known by City Assessor's Parcel 091 776 612 and make a recommendation as to its future usage and feasibility as a community garden.

Sponsors: Ari Taylor

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Councillor Spadafora, seconded by Councillor O'Malley, that this meeting be adjourned at 7:14 PM. The motion carried unanimously.