




**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE, MAYOR**

**Office of the Executive Director**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

**FROM:** Monica R. Lamboy, Executive Director 

**DATE:** December 16, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Acquisition of three East Somerville parcels at 15-25 Cross Street East (Map 89, Block K, Parcels 14, 15, and 16)

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The Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD) respectfully requests that you forward to the Board of Aldermen an Order authorizing the acquisition of three East Somerville parcels at 15-25 Cross Street East (Map 89, Block K, Parcels 14, 15, and 16). Acquisition of these parcels will allow for the construction of a new Harris Park away from the I-93 Highway and will facilitate the disposition of the existing Harris Park property for a use more appropriate to the location. The appraised value of the park is \$630,000 and a State PARC grant in the amount of \$403,200 has been received to offset the total cost.

**BACKGROUND**

The property consists of three parcels that total 16,590 square feet located at 15-25 Cross Street East. The Map/Lot/Block numbers on the City's Assessing Maps are 89-K-14, 89-K-15, and 89-K-16. Until last year, there were three large storage sheds on the site, but they were demolished by the owner at the direction of the Somerville Fire Department and Inspectional Services Division. The parcels are immediately adjacent to the former Fire Station building on Broadway at Cross Street East where the City's senior center and youth center are located.

At the end of 2007, the Board of Aldermen issued an order making the existing Harris Park and the adjacent right-of-way available for disposition in the hopes of finding a property owner willing to swap parcels so that a new park could be constructed further away from the highway. Interest was expressed by the owner of 15-25 Cross Street East, but negotiations were never concluded.

On June 10, 2010, the Board of Aldermen authorized OSPCD to seek funding as part of a Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant application and enter into any

understandings or assurances with the Commonwealth to receive funds to acquire the three parcels on Cross Street East. On October 21, 2010, the City was notified that it had won this PARC acquisition grant. This was a highly competitive year for these grants; the State saw applications double from 2009 to 2010. Somerville was one of only two communities statewide to receive multiple PARC grants this year. The City received an award of \$403,200 which represents 64% of the total acquisition cost of \$630,000. The City is required to provide a match of \$226,800 from its local resources. The grant funds must be expended and reimbursement requested by June 30, 2011.

These three parcels are particularly well suited for a park in that they will serve the same residents that are currently served by Harris Park, they are adjacent to the City-owned Senior Center and Youth Center, are located in an environmental justice community, and are located a reasonable distance from I-93.

## **PROCESS**

Board of Aldermen approval of four actions is needed including: a) acceptance of PARC grant and dedication in perpetuity; b) appropriation of capital funds; c) authorization of acquisition of parcels; d) approval of a Home Rule Petition to discontinue the existing Harris Park and transfer the park to the new location. Once the acquisition has been approved, staff will secure approval from the property owner to perform environmental testing of the property. If the tests identify that remediation is necessary, the price paid for property may be reduced. Funding for the testing is available through an EPA grant the City received earlier this fall.

At present, it is anticipated that this transaction will be a sole source acquisition under G.L. c. 30B, s. 16 due to the unique nature of the site and the fact that it is best suited to serve the needs of the States Streets neighborhood of East Somerville. If a friendly transaction is not determined to be feasible, a separate staff report may be prepared in the future to request approval from the BOA for a taking of the site.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of Aldermen make a determination that advertising for proposals will not benefit the City and authorize the sole source acquisition pursuant to G.L. c. 30B, s.16, of three parcels at 15-25 Cross Street East (89-K-14, 89-K-15, and 89-K-16) for \$630,000 and also authorize staff to negotiate with the property owner for a lower price if environmental contamination that requires remediation is found.

### **Attachments:**

- A. Appraisal of 15-25 Cross Street East
- B. Map of 15-25 Cross Street East
- C. Board Order Authorizing Acquisition
- D. Board Order for PARC Grant