



**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 9, 2010

**SUBJECT: Request to Appropriate and Authorize Expenditure of \$127,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund for Due Diligence Activities in support of the Application to the MA Board of Library Commissioners**

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The Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (“OSPCD”) respectfully requests that you forward to the Board of Aldermen a request to appropriate and authorize the expenditure of \$127,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to conduct due diligence activities in support of a potential application to the MA Board of Library Commissioners for up to 40% of the cost to construct a new Central Library. The appropriation will fund needed analyses including environmental assessment & geotechnical soil analysis, real estate appraisal, title search, ALTA survey, and the securing of options on up to three properties.

**BACKGROUND**

Prior Efforts to Fund Library Expansion

The City of Somerville had previously been awarded Construction Grant funds. The Board of Library Commissioners recognized that Somerville’s Central Library was a deserving candidate and had received nearly \$4 million in 1995, however the funding was rescinded when the city elected not to bond to finance the remaining renovations costs. In 2006 the Library engaged library consultants, The Providence Group, to prepare a Facilities Planning Study which concluded that the existing library is too small to meet the needs of Somerville Residents. The Library is using a \$60,000 Planning and Design Grant to secure the services of CBT Architects/Childs, Bertman, Tesckares, Inc. to prepare the conceptual drawings for the construction grant application.

2010 Municipal Facilities Master Plan

In 2009, the Board of Aldermen authorized funding for a Municipal Facilities Master Plan. Since that time, the City entered into contract with The Cecil Group, Inc. which has conducted a space needs analysis of all City departments and some school administrative programs. The consultants conducted detailed surveys, developed a new building program, and performed analysis of possible locations for municipal and school

administrative facilities. The intent of the study was to create a plan that would optimize department efficiencies and better serve the public.

The soon-to-be released Municipal Facilities Master Plan determined that the space required for a central library to adequately serve the residents of Somerville, would be approximately 45,000 square feet of floor space. The study examined ten potential sites and five planning scenarios. The consultants, along with OSPCD staff narrowed down the site and scenario options based on certain criteria, including but not limited to, accessibility, potential to generate economic activity, and improved departmental efficiencies. Based on this, the final recommendation concluded that a new Central Library should be located in Union Square at the public safety block.

Potential Site

The recommended site for the combined city hall and central branch library is the Public Safety Block, which includes the city-owned Public Safety building and three other privately held properties:

Address	Assessor's MBL	Status
238 WASHINGTON ST	81-D-1 and 81-D-2	Occupied by Ricky's Flower Market, a former gasoline service station
273 SOMERVILLE AVE	81-D-9	Vacant (portion of property may have been formerly occupied by gasoline service station)
269 SOMERVILLE AVE	81-D-7 and 81-D-8	Auto body shop
259 SOMERVILLE AVE	81-D-5	Vacant
261 SOMERVILLE AVE	81-D-6	Two-family residence
234 WASHINGTON ST.	81-D-3	City-owned
220 WASHINGTON ST.	81-D-4	City-owned



MA Board of Library Commissioners Library Funding Grant

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners has announced a new round of library construction grant funding for January 2011. The new grant offers a rare opportunity for Somerville and other communities to leverage 40 percent of the total acquisition and construction costs associated with a new or renovated library. State library officials have reported that this will likely be the most generous funding formula the state and dependent municipalities will experience in the foreseeable future. Moreover, state officials report that this type of construction grant cycle is occurring less frequently, approximately every five to seven years. It is important to note that land acquisition is an eligible activity under the grant application which can help the City pursue the option of a Library facility using limited local resources.

For these reasons, the Somerville Library Board of Trustees, along with the Director of Library Services, initiated the state application process with the intent to submit a completed application at the beginning of 2011.

Cost of Due Diligence & Option

As part of municipal due diligence, funding is needed to conduct due diligence activities at the privately owned sites noted above. These activities include, but are not limited Environmental Assessment & Geotechnical Soil Analysis, appraisals; title search; and ALTA survey. A report for each study would be generated for each property owner. In addition, the City must show that it has negotiated purchase options for the privately owned properties, although no movement toward acquisition is anticipated until the grant is received. The total estimated costs for the requested activities and associated reports is \$127,000.

**RECOMMENDATION**

OSPCD recommends that the Board of Aldermen appropriate and authorize the expenditure of \$127,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to conduct due diligence activities and to secure options to purchase three privately owned parcels at the recommended site.