



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 *ML*

DATE: December 16, 2010

SUBJECT: Home Rule Petition authorizing the City of Somerville to discontinue the existing Harris Park at 0 Cross Street East and to replace it with a new Harris Park at 15-25 Cross Street East

The Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD) respectfully requests that you forward to the Board of Aldermen (BOA) a request approve a Home Rule Petition authorizing the City of Somerville to discontinue the existing Harris Park in East Somerville and to replace it with a new Harris Park in East Somerville in a different location. As the BOA is aware, existing Harris Park is immediately adjacent to I-93, having been built there in the 1970's in commemoration of two young boys who lost their lives during the construction of the highway. In the intervening years, use of the park has been limited due predominantly to the noise, odor, and air quality impacts of the adjacent highway.

BACKGROUND

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.

As part of the PARC grant process, the new location of 15-25 Cross Street East must be designated as a park in perpetuity. This will allow the City to acquire these three parcels and design of a new park will begin this winter. As a result of this new opportunity, existing Harris Park will no longer be needed as open space. No municipal use has been identified for the property. Instead, the property could be brought into a private use, one that is more appropriate for and benefits from the site's location adjacent to the highway.

HOME RULE PETITION

Approval of the Home Rule Petition is needed expeditiously given the fact that the grant opportunity that will cover 64% of the cost of the site is only available in spring 2011. It is hoped that the local delegation will take up this petition and shepherd it through the legislature, recognizing the health and environmental benefits that can be received by relocating the park.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Aldermen approve the Home Rule Petition authorizing the City of Somerville to discontinue the existing Harris Park at 0 Cross Street East and to replace it with a new Harris Park at 15-25 Cross Street East

Attachments:

- A. Map of 15-25 Cross Street East
- B. Draft Home Rule Petition