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via email

John:

Thank you for meeting with Roslindale residents at Councilor McCarthy's office on May 16, 2018 to discuss the 104-108 Walter Street properties. It was beneficial to have all concerned around the same table for direct communication and as the first step in a process that could lead to final agreement about the future of these properties.

We appreciate the Feeneys and Mr. Ahern taking time from their business operations to meet with residents.

Additionally, we acknowledge the Feeney's transfer of the 108 Walter "Rear Parcel" to the City during the Mayor Menino Administration.

This transfer was a substantial addition to the Roslindale Wild. It has been to the benefit and positive use of Roslindale neighbors and all Boston residents. In addition, the 108 Walter "Rear Parcel" has significant value as a natural area for wildlife. Such intact woodland and freshwater wetland habitat is rare in the City of Boston and has been largely eliminated in urban areas elsewhere as well.

The Feeneys together with Mayor Menino and then Councilor Consalvo performed a lasting public service by completing the "Rear Parcel" transfer.

108 Walter "Front Parcel" and 104 Walter have remained the property of Feeney Brothers and Mr. Ahern. The future of these properties was a matter of great neighborhood interest at that time and it remains so today, as evident in the +1,000 on line and the abutters paper petition signatures in response to the current proposal.

We are writing now to confirm our suggested approach as discussed at the May 16, 2018 meeting. Please pass this letter along to your clients and contact us should further specifics be useful. A reply by June 1, 2018 is requested, as this will help us move forward in a timely way.

We seek to work with the Feeneys, Mr. Ahern and the City to evaluate preservation of 108 Walter as conservation land. This transaction with the 108 Walter "Front Parcel" would be a continuation and culmination of the initial "Rear Parcel" land transfer.

108 Walter "Front Parcel" includes wetlands, uplands and wooded areas that are integral parts of the overall Roslindale Wild ecological system. The property has local flood protection and area drainage features which preservation would help maintain. Preservation would have the further value of not adding to current traffic conditions along Walter St., particularly speeding at several dangerous blind hills and curves.

We see our meeting as the first step in a process where the end result – should we reach agreement – would be protection of land for public enjoyment, for its natural resource values and for advancement of balanced growth in Roslindale and the City of Boston.

Specifically, we suggest an up to 6 month “hold” on the City process to determine if this is a reasonable option.

An independent appraisal of 108 Walter based on its “highest and best use” would be the necessary next step should your client agree, followed by evaluation of funding sources and land conservation alternatives. We have done extensive research into these options and are highly confident a realistic plan can be identified.

While acknowledging the possible concern over this “hold”, we do point out that during the +15 years since the prior proposal was voluntarily withdrawn there has been no apparent urgency to move forward with development plans. The current proposal was submitted to the City in May 2017, but remained pending within the City’s system until January 2018, when activity briefly revived. The proposal has remained effectively “on hold” since March 2018 after a public presentation at the Longfellow Area Neighborhood Association was cancelled at your request.

In this context, we hope a further short “hold” will be acceptable, especially as it will have a focused purpose and might lead to a final resolution acceptable to all parties.

At our recent meeting at Councilor McCarthy’s office, concern was expressed about whether the current proposal has been accurately presented to abutters. To help alleviate this concern, we are separately sending backup materials for the petitions. As you will see, the petition materials support our proposed outcome.

Included here is a map based on the developer’s plans showing an approximation of how the proposed buildings would be partially built on wetlands existing at 108 Walter.

We make this recommendation as part of what we see as a focused, problem-solving effort about the future of 104-108 Walter, yielding a positive final result for the Feeneys, Mr. Ahern, Roslindale neighbors and the City. Providing the owners fair value for their property is an essential component of this proposal.

If the decision is instead to proceed now with City review of the current proposal, the Task Force position is the City should honor Mayor Menino’s public commitment that there would be no development on these properties. Since the current proposal was announced, we have received many inquires from neighbors, stating what we maintain is their accurate understanding that this issue was resolved years ago.

In closing, we affirm our commitment to a proactive, direct effort with the Feeneys, Mr. Ahern and City leadership and the goal of definitive, mutually agreed resolution. We believe this effort is preferable to engagement within the City’s process, which is time-consuming for all involved and uncertain as to when and what the final result may be.

Again, thank you for your clients’ willingness to consider our suggested approach.

Very Truly,
Roslindale Wetlands Task Force
Roslindale Wetlands Task Force