



City of Methuen, Massachusetts

Department of Economic & Community Development

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David. J. Beauregard, Jr.
Mayor

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Director

ORDER

Resolution Declaring, the Edward F. Searles Estate, a Certain Parcel of Land with Buildings thereon Located at 209 Lawrence Street in the City of Methuen (Assessor's Parcel ID 714-41-1) along with its identified list of historic artifacts as Surplus Property and Authorizing the Same to be Sold Under G.L. c. 30B by Request For Proposals With Historic Restoration and Preservation Restrictions And Other Conditions As Further Determined Appropriate By The Mayor

WHEREAS: On November 12, 2024, the City of Methuen, authorized under the applicable provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, acquired the Edward F. Searles Estate located at 209 Lawrence Street, and identified as Assessors' Parcel 714-41-1, along with an identified list of historic artifacts on the property and within its buildings in an arm's length transaction from the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary for total consideration of Three Million Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$3,250,000) and for the purpose of preventing their destruction and permanent loss to the City and for the purpose of soliciting Requests for Proposals (RFP) that would ensure the restoration and preservation of the historic property and all historic artifacts therein at private expense; and

WHEREAS: The Mayor convened the Searles Estate Future Use Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the administration, City Council, key municipal boards and commissions, and private and public sector subject matter experts who have met several times and conducted a public hearing, and who based on their expertise, and their review of public feedback, and expense and public resources data for maintaining the Searles Estate as a City run concern, have reached a consensus that issuing an RFP with conditions for the private ownership and operation of the Searles Estate is in the best interests of the City and the best interests of the successful, long-term historic preservation and renovation of the Searles Estate; and

WHEREAS: The Mayor has determined that said property is surplus for municipal use and has, in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 20, section 20-2(c) and 20-12(b), of the Methuen Municipal Code and M.G.L. Chapter 30B, requested a determination by this Council of said property being considered surplus and available for disposition by such an RFP process; and

WHEREAS: In accordance with the above-cited laws, the Mayor has sought and received the value of Eleven Million Six Hundred Nine Thousand Dollars (\$11,609,000) for said property by the Board of Assessors; and

WHEREAS: This Council will, by this resolution, authorize the disposition of said property by a Request for Proposal (RFP) process in accordance with Chapter 20- Sections 20-2 and 20-12 of the Methuen Municipal Code and applicable Massachusetts General Laws; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall recite that the City has begun the nomination process for the entire Parcel to be designated a National Historic Site and listed on the National Register of Historic Places as authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; and the pursuit and acceptance of such designation by the purchaser shall be a requirement of any sale; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall require that the historic structures on the parcel, including but not limited to all the buildings and structures that were constructed prior to and during the lifetime of Edward F. Searles (1841-1920), be restored, preserved and protected through a recorded preservation restriction by the City; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall require that the listed historic artifacts located in and on the Estate shall not be further sold or conveyed, and must be maintained and preserved to historic standards as part of the Estate; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall recite that the Parcel is not zoned for, nor is it a candidate for new residential housing construction due to parcel limitations including inadequate access/egress, a lack of sufficient utilities infrastructure, protected resources on site, and the City's goal of registering the property as a National Historic Site; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall recite that the Parcel and artifacts shall be conveyed in "As-Is" condition and that the sale shall not include the separate cemetery lot for which the purchaser must maintain reasonable and appropriate access for City maintenance and for the public; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall recite that proposals shall not be evaluated solely based on price, but shall also be evaluated on considerations including, but not limited to, the scope of funds committed by the purchaser to the historic renovation and preservation of the Estate and its artifacts, the timeline proposed for the substantial completion of such historic preservation and renovation, the level of ongoing financial commitment to maintenance and preservation after initial renovation; the documented financial ability and stability of the purchaser to accomplish these goals; the willingness/commitment to pay taxes or make payments in lieu of taxes to the City based on the assessed value of the Estate, the willingness/commitment to hire Methuen residents for any jobs created, the willingness/commitment to open the Estate to the public, and the willingness/commitment to collaborate with the City to allow charity events at the Estate with proceeds benefitting the City; and

WHEREAS: The RFP shall require that the costs of recording the transfer shall be borne by the purchaser and that the City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: By the City Council of the City of Methuen that, acting in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Methuen Municipal Code, the City Council hereby:

1. Determines the property to be surplus and authorizes the Mayor to take all necessary action to issue an RFP for its sale including the above conditions and other conditions at his sole discretion;
2. Authorizes the Mayor to convey the property along with the identified historic artifacts by deed and bill of sale for the purpose of promoting property reuse and investment sensitive to, and with the above-recited reasonable and appropriate protections for the preservation of the historic, architectural and cultural integrity of the parcel located at 209 Lawrence St., Methuen, MA, identified as the Edward F. Searles Estate, Assessors' Parcel 714-41-1;

3. Authorizes the Mayor to convey said parcel pursuant to a Request for Proposals and award on such terms as the Mayor deems proper and necessary in promoting historic restoration, preservation and reuse, for a preferred minimum price of Three Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,500,000) representing the \$3,250,000 price paid by the City for the property plus the \$250,000 paid by the City for insurance and maintenance costs for the Estate;
4. Authorizes the Mayor to convey the property for less than fair market value, less than the current assessed value, and less than the preferred minimum price of Three Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,500,000) provided that the City determines through the RFP process that the selected bidder's proposal best meets the City's non-price based criteria outlined above, and is in the best interests of the City's expressed goals of the historic renovation and preservation of the Estate and its artifacts for the residents of Methuen and future generations, and documents the reasons for its decision in writing; and
5. Waives the requirements of Sections 20-12(c), 20-13, 20-14, and 20-20 of the Methuen Municipal Code.