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December 1, 2008

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee on Housing and Community Development met as Committee of the Whole on December 1, 2008 with Chairman Rebekah Gewirtz presiding and Committee members Aldermen William White, Thomas Taylor, John Connolly, Walter Pero and Dennis Sullivan also present and voting. Also present were Chief of Staff Michael Lambert, Administrative Assistants Jesse Baker and Michael Buckley, Monica Lamboy and Sergio Lucien from SPCD, Steve Mackey from the Chamber of Commerce, and several interested members of the public.

Ms. Lamboy addressed the committee regarding a state study regarding the proposed location for a new Green Line maintenance facility and said that the study evaluates using Yard 8, noting that if Yard 8 is not used, the project would be delayed. Ms. Lamboy further discussed possible uses of the area and the impacts that would be made on those uses by locating the maintenance facility at this site. Ms. Lamboy went on to discuss the Greenberg Study and the complexity of the project, discussing various square footages, use mixes, infrastructure, the possibility of a sports stadium and possible distinctions between the proposed site and sites at Assembly Square and North Point. With regard to a sports stadium, Ms. Lamboy told the members that a stadium would encompass 10 of the available 100 acres and she then explained that the emerging life sciences industry could be incorporated into the area. An environmental impact will be filed by the end of January, followed by a comment period.

Mr. Lambert told the members that the CBT study is being reviewed and he then discussed the master plan for the area in question noting how the value of the land would be increased, thereby strengthening the argument that a maintenance facility at that site is not the best option. Mr. Lambert also stated that the state should help with the city's financial burden and he noted that it is difficult to argue with the MBTA, even though the city's position is credible.

Chairman Gewirtz noted that the Greenberg study favors the stadium concept and she questioned whether the state would take into consideration the fact that the Greenberg study was funded by Robert Kraft and Herb Chambers and, therefore, might be biased to the stadium concept.

Mr. Wig Zamore stated that the focus should be on the value of Brickbottom and Innerbelt to the state. Mr. Zamore said that a full plan must be in place before people will invest in the area and that the city doesn't have a positive intake with respect to real estate taxes in the area in question. Mr. Zamore believes that the

city needs 10 million square feet of office and R&D space and thinks that the area should be planned to house future start-up businesses.

Mr. Joseph Lynch discussed the elimination of the track system in the Innerbelt and Brickbottom areas and asked what type of businesses like to be near such tracks. Ms. Lamboy addressed the question and pointed out both the positive and negative impacts of the tracks and suggested ways to deal with them.

Those present agreed that all involved parties must come together with a strong voice to make the city's wishes known.

Alderman Connolly's motion *that the Mayor and the City of Somerville's Economic and Planning staff formulate a specific Master Planning Action Process to be implemented as soon as possible, prior to December 11, 2008, that would reflect the unified agreement of City Government, business and community organizations eager to offer persuasive alternative plans that would not deter economic development, nor diminish the quality of life, nor exacerbate the barriers already created by transportation infrastructures, to date*, was approved.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman Rebekah L. Gewirtz, Chairman
Committee on Housing and Community Development

COMMITTEE REPORT

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
December 1, 2008

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk