



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Environment, Resiliency & Parks

Matt O'Malley, *Chair*

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

December 6, 2021

Dear Councilors:

The Committee on Environment, Resiliency and Parks was referred the following dockets for consideration:

Docket #1145, message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend an amount not to exceed Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000.00), from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program, awarded to the City of Boston, through the Parks and Recreation Department, for renovations to Winthrop Playground, located in the neighborhood of Dorchester.

Docket #1146, message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend an amount not to exceed Three Hundred Eighty Seven Thousand One Hundred Sixty Four Dollars (\$387,164.00), from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program, awarded to the City of Boston, through the Parks and Recreation Department, to help fund the acquisition of two parcels on the western shore of Sprague Pond at 0-4 Lakeside Avenue in Hyde Park, as a permanently protected parkland to be known as the Sprague Pond Shoreline Reserve.

These matters were sponsored by the Administration, and were referred to the Committee on November 3, 2021.

Summary of Legislation

These two dockets are grants from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a public hearing on Dockets #1145 and #1146 on Friday, December 3, 2021. Aldo Ghirin and Nathan Frazee of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department and City Archaeologist Joe Bagley provided testimony on behalf of the Administration.

Regarding, **Docket #1145**, Mr. Ghirin explained that the docket requests authorization of \$400,000 for the reconstruction of Winthrop Playground in Roxbury. He noted that this playground is next to the Winthrop Elementary School and functions as both a school and community space. He shared that the existing conditions include a park with permeated, lawn, and paved surfaces, basketball and tennis courts, and a

play area, including a water play feature. He noted, however, that the space is due for upgrades; the playground currently has hazardous trees, worn equipment, cracks in courts, graffiti, and limited accessibility to the court areas. The concept plan for renovations include a new basketball and multisport court, refurbished with new surfacing and new fencing, new 5-12 and 2-5 playgrounds, a new splash pad with state of the art features, new exercise equipment and a paved exercise circuit, a refurbished lawn area for open field play and use as a practice field, new game tables, new benches, adaptations to improve the park to ADA compliance and the playground beyond ADA requirements, and new tree plantings, for a net gain of eight trees. The grant will contribute to the total cost of \$2.4 Million for the renovations, and a capital request for the remainder will be in the Department's budget request this coming year. The proposed completion date for the project is June 2023.

Regarding **Docket #1146**, Mr. Ghirin explained that the docket requests authorization of \$387,164 to help fund the acquisition of the Sprague Pond Shoreline Reserve in Hyde Park, to make it into a park. He stated that Sprague Pond recently received protection under the Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act with a designation as a "Great Pond". Per state law, great ponds must be public for boating and fishing. He explained that the shoreline is privately owned, so the City has been working with the Commonwealth on grants to help acquire it. He explained that the Sprague Pond vicinity is also considered per state guidelines to be an Environmental Justice neighborhood, as well a high heat area, according to the University of Massachusetts, factors which contributed to the State's favoring of the City's grant application for the site. He noted that this site has also been a longtime goal of the City, as it was recommended in the 2011 Hyde Park Strategic Plan to acquire the land for use as a waterfront park. Mr. Ghirin also explained that the site has the potential to be a nationally significant historical, cultural and archaeological reserve area, as a former encampment of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and an archaeological sensitive site for Native American occupation. Acquiring the site will help the City explore these possibilities and protect and preserve any archeological significant resources that may be present. Mr. Bagley highlighted that without landmark designation, or State or Federal protections, unless the City acquires the land, it cannot enforce archaeology on the parcel. He explained that should the acquisition go through, he would be able to proceed with a community archaeology project and an archaeological survey.

Mr. Ghirin clarified that Docket #1146 is a vote to accept the grant money to work towards an acquisition, and not a vote on acquiring the land at this moment. He noted that this grant funding would be a supplement to \$1 Million previously approved funding from the Community Preservation Act to acquire the land.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Environment, Resiliency and Parks, I recommend moving the listed dockets from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At that time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that these matters **OUGHT TO PASS**.



Matt O'Malley, Chair
Committee on Environment, Resiliency & Parks