

CITY OF LYNN**Special City Council Meeting
Lynn School Committee
February 23, 2021
Council President Darren P. Cyr**

*****MEETING WILL BE TELEVISED LIVE ON THE LYNN COMMUNITY TELEVISION (LCTV) GOVERNMENT CHANNEL AND ALSO STREAMED ON THE LCTV'S FACEBOOK PAGE *****

Ten Councilors Present (Councilor Lozzi absent).

Seven School Committee Members Present

**Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance**

Council President Cyr thanked Council Members, Mayor Thomas M. McGee and Lynn School Committee Members Brian Castellanos, Donna Coppola, John Ford, Lorraine Gately, Jared Nicholson, and Michael Satterwhite for attending tonight's meeting regarding the Former Marshall Middle School on Porter Street.

Council President Cyr stated that the reason he called this joint meeting of the City Council and the School Committee is that after watching the School Committee's Building and Grounds Committee meeting, he thought that the School Committee members needed more information on this property.

Council President Cyr stated that the building is a safety hazard. He said that there have been drug overdoses, breaking and entry, kids destroying the inside of the building, and that you need a hazmat suit to enter the building. He and Council Vice-President Barton have received complaints from the neighbors regarding the homeless in the building, prostitution, and drug activity on the property. The building has safety issues not only for the Police and Fire Departments, but for the neighbors. Council President Cyr stated that the city cannot maintain the building. The School Department has voted in the past to demo the building. The original cost estimate was \$2-\$3M Dollars. But due to the asbestos concerns, it would cost \$9.5 Million Dollars to demo the building. The city is constantly spending money out the city's Budget on this property. The City of Lynn is the 3-4th largest District in the state. The

city has 27 buildings, with 12 of them over 100 years old. We need to build new schools. Land is at a premium and we need to find land to build a school. He stated that this location is not a great location for a school. It is surrounded by multi-family homes in a densely populated area.

Council President Cyr stated that none of us are experts in determining where a school should be located. I would like to see an outside source, with two School Committee members and two City Councilors sit on a Committee to identify land and for building a school.

Council President Cyr stated that School Committee member Coppola suggested taking a piece of the land for a Learning Facility at this site. He stated that there are three schools within a few blocks of this property. They are Ingalls, the new Marshall and Aborn. Ingalls has three times the amount of land, and would be a good spot for a Learning Center.

Council President Cyr stated that this was a very important issue, and that the city does not have \$9.5 Million dollars to tear this building down. We need money to build schools. This money could go towards new schools. He said he had many meetings with the neighbors, and they are frustrated and concerned about what is going to happen at this property.

Council President Cyr said there were stipulations on the RFP. Developers who are interested in the building most likely need tax credits which take 6 months to a year to obtain. They also would need vouchers and then need time to work with a bank for financing. If someone bought the building, they would take the building over immediately and relieve the city of liability.

Michael Bertino, CFO stated that his job was to advise city officials on all financial matters. He stated that things are better today, we have a lot of choices and are looking at making the best use of the money we have. He stated that this building is a liability to the city. It is not good for the city to spend any more money on this building. He stated that any money could go towards the building of a new school, or to a study to build a new school. It is a liability because it is an uninsurable piece of property deemed hazardous. We have spent countless of hours responding to calls with public safety officials. We either have to take our money (\$3-4M Dollars) spending towards new school projects and making recommendations to the Mayor and the Council. It's hard to recommend because we have no plan. We need a new RFP and remove the restriction. I would rather put money towards new assets. We have to move forward, creating new assets in the form of schools. My position is that at this day and age, its not the right move for the city to spend anymore money than necessary on that building and hopefully move forward in a different direction with the remaining funds that we do have.

Chief Archer addressed the Council and School Committee members. He stated that the Fire Department has recorded 23 incidents at this property. The fire alarms are constantly going off. He gave an overview of the fire that was at the building in October.

Chief Desmarais stated that the Police Department logged in over 60 calls for this property. The building is unsafe and has asbestos. He said that there is a lot of activity outside the building, drugs, loitering, etc. He is afraid for his men going in for a distress call.

Mike Donovan, ISD Director stated that this building is in horrible shape. He gave a brief overview of the condition of the building. He stated that the last use of this building was April 2016. He stated that the building was put into non-occupied status. When closed, it was deemed one of two worst schools in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Donovan gave an overview of the asbestos issue. He stated that the 1963 building will be coming down soon. He said that we will be left with the 1923 building that has no power, roof leaks, windows boarded-up. This building will deteriorate day after day. Everyday, every weather event, this building will be in worst condition for the city. It will be made safe, but not made any better.

Motion made by Councilor Colucci and seconded by Councilor LaPierre to go into Executive Session to discuss potential litigation and liability.

**Motion carried by the following yea and nay vote:
10 YES 0 NO**

**Roll Call – Lynn School Committee
7 YES 0 NO**

School Committee Member Donna Coppola spoke. She stated that we are in a bind. This property is the only piece of property we can use for a school. We're in dire need to bring schools up to par. The Lynn School Committee and the Lynn City Council should work together. If we give you this property, what does the Lynn School Department get?

Council President Cyr stated that he agreed with School Committee Member Coppola. We are working together. There is no land in Lynn.

School Committeeman Michael Satterwhite spoke. He stated that he agrees we do need to work together. He had concerns with the transfer tabled for air quality and he is looking for data for other schools.

Council President Cyr stated he would like to set up a Committee of two City Council members, two School Committee members, and an outside source to work with the Solicitor's Office and Attorney Mihos to look at the feasibility of a new school and what makes the most sense.

CFO Michael Bertino asked to speak.

He stated that he doesn't see how we can move forward if we can't get past whether we simply have to surplus a building so we can take this liability off the books. He stated that we can't wait around, bleeding money, having a liability on our books, if we can't simply make this one decision. It's one decision that hopefully bring us all together to make another five or ten positive decisions to build a school. It still doesn't make sense to hold a liability on our books that can cause death and harm to someone. It's never going to be a school. I heard that from everyone tonight, we need to move on, make one decision at a time. I can't get pass declaring this building a surplus.

School Committeeman Jared Nicholson spoke.

He stated that all are working on the same team. He stated the Lynn School Committee has shown that they are ready to move forward. He said he is trying to understand, and that why can't we go through with the process again.

Council President stated the process in putting out an RFP, getting the responses which would be about 4-6 months. Then we're looking at another year for the tax incentives and vouchers. The stipulation needs to be removed from the RFP. The Council would like to work with the School Committee to work and help remove the stipulation. School Committee member Donna Coppola asked what the problems were with the stipulation. Council President Cyr stated that the stipulation stated that they would have to take the building over within 6 months. Council President Cyr asked Attorney Lamanna to verify what the stipulation was. Attorney Lamanna stated that the stipulation stated that the closing would take place within 60 days and that the purchase price was a minimum of \$4M Dollars or it would revert back to the School Department. He stated that to knock down the property at \$4-5M Dollars was not a realistic purchase price. School Committee member John Ford questioned if that was the first or the second RFP. Attorney Lamanna stated that the second RFP was rejected because they needed two years for financing \$4M Dollars.

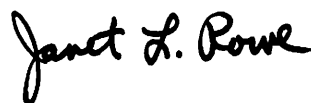
Mayor Thomas M. McGee stated his belief was that it is not an appropriate site for a school and that a school would not be built there. He also mentioned the density of schools in the neighborhood. It's time to move forward and focus clearly on the investments made relating to the circulation at the school buildings. He agreed to a \$6M Dollar investment on ten buildings to allow ventilation systems to be improved, looking to build a new Pickering, and create a study for the potential location. Mayor McGee agreed to forming a committee in conjunction with the MSBA to build a new Pickering, create an ongoing Capital Plan to create the schools we need in this

community. Mayor McGee stated that he believed that we must move this property off the rolls.

Motion made by Councilor Colucci and seconded by Councilor Barton to adjourn.

Notice of this meeting was posted in the City Clerk's Office at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance.

A True Copy Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet L. Rowe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

CITY CLERK