

Karen Mauney-Brodek, *President*

July 26, 2022

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance

1 Ashburton Place, Room 1411, Boston, MA 02108

Request for Coordinated Public Leadership and 120-Day Extension for Planning Around Franklin Park for Social Services, Housing, Transit and Environmental Needs

Commissioner Carol Gladstone,

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), planning for the demolition in the coming years of the dilapidated Shattuck Hospital, has issued a rapid 64-day Request for Proposal (RFP) for housing for the formerly homeless, recovery and related services to be developed in the hospital's place. The site in question is 13 acres of former Franklin Park land, which is difficult to access by public transit and isolated from neighborhood amenities such as grocery stores, schools, and houses of worship.

At the same time, 1000 feet away, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) has initiated a planning process for the adjacent 18-acre Arborway Yard which is planned to include many acres of housing, community focused-development and an electric bus facility. The Arborway Yard is located adjacent to the Forest Hills MBTA station, the Southwest Corridor regional greenway and a plethora of neighborhood amenities. Importantly, recent studies conducted by Northeastern University, based on prior community agreements, and planned needs for the Arborway Yard, illustrate that the Arborway Yard site could provide the community development and housing sought by the community partners, the MBTA's transportation needs, and the services and housing proposed for the Shattuck site.

The importance of housing for the formally homeless and the vital social services needed to address the struggles we are facing is clear. Our organization and our partners who work every day in these neighborhoods and their parks recognize the need for these services. However, the Commonwealth's proposal, leasing the Shattuck Hospital site for redevelopment for up to 99 years to a private organization with a 64-day proposal period, is not acceptable and will not arrive at the best outcomes.

The questions posed (and not posed), the process, and the current proposal will not result in the best solutions for our neighbors and lands. In considering the future of the former Franklin Park land, which serves several environmental justice communities, we must recognize that the key question, **"what does the public want to do with this public land?"** was never actually asked. Instead, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) unilaterally decided and announced the site's future use: housing for the formerly homeless and other related services, to be built and operated under a long-term lease by private entities.

EOHHS created a Community Advisory Board (CAB), focused on how to use this single site for services rather than determining the best use of the former parkland or considering alternative plans. The CAB underrepresented, or excluded, voices from environmental justice communities in Roxbury,

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Mattapan, and Dorchester. CAB meetings were not publicly announced, and neither agendas nor minutes were made available, which has undermined public trust in the community process and further eroded faith in government institutions.

At a key DCAMM hearing last year, half of the attendees, including two former Massachusetts governors and numerous members of the CAB, asked that other potential sites be explored for the recovery services in order to return parkland to Franklin Park. Alternative locations were not evaluated or presented to the public for discussion. Additionally, after the release of this rapid RFP, a new study showing over [1200 parcels identified for development](#) throughout the city of Boston was released.

The time to work creatively and collaboratively is now. Today we have new mayoral leadership and the fresh perspectives that come with it. In a few months' time, we will be welcoming a new gubernatorial administration as well. With the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and other infrastructure funds on the table, we are enjoying a period of historic public funding for projects that follow best practices. Government agencies can best serve their communities by exploring creative solutions, listening to their constituents, and working collaboratively to find the best solution for all.

In the middle of an historic heatwave, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to work together and support Bostonians on the front lines of the climate crisis, and coordinate to make better shared plans for open space, transportation, housing, and services. Siloed thinking just will not get us there.

It is prudent that the Commonwealth extend the planning timeline to allow for coordination, study and due process between the communities, creative planning and design partners, the City of Boston, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Many design and professional organizations are ready and willing to assist in developing proposals that would follow transit-oriented best practices, best support socially vulnerable community members, and provide open space to environmental justice communities.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council and others request a 120-day extension to the RFP period to ensure that the opportunities for collaboration are explored to ensure the best outcome for all community members.

Sincerely,



Karen Mauney-Brodek
President
Emerald Necklace Conservancy