

To the Editor:

In 2003, the Fernald Reuse Committee was established by Special Legislation sponsored by Representative Thomas Stanley, and supported by Representative Peter Koutoujian, Senator Susan Fargo, the State Legislature and the Governor. This legislation was changed in 2004 to allow Reuse Committee member Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) to be a voting member and to include additional voting community members (Massachusetts Acts of 2004, Ch. 149, Sec. 402).

The Committee met three times in 2004, but meetings were suspended by the Commonwealth due to litigation by the guardians of Fernald residents against the State. The State has advised us that the Fernald campus will be closing by June 2010, and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) will be retaining and using the Malone Park buildings, the Marquardt building and the Shriver Center on the Fernald campus.

In April 2009, the Reuse Committee's planning efforts were able to resume. Continuing through the summer, fall and winter, the fifteen-member Reuse Committee and various subcommittees took public input, gathered the neighborhood concerns, examined the current uses, and suggested proposed uses, mindful of the current Fernald residents and the fact that Trapelo Road cannot accommodate any additional high-volume traffic.

The Fernald parcel currently has 71 major buildings and 14 other structures comprising approximately 1.2 million gross square feet, on approximately 200 acres of land.

The Reuse Committee began by addressing the needs of the current Fernald residents as well as the anticipated new residents that DDS intends to house in Marquardt and Malone Park in the future. The Reuse Committee urged DDS to consolidate those residents into a more centralized location on site rather than in the proposed divergent locations – some in Marquardt, located in the center of the campus; and some in Malone Park, located in the far westerly border of the campus.

Then the Reuse Committee recommended a 100-foot border around the entire parcel to protect the various neighborhoods in the city. The Reuse Committee also recommended that the historic buildings be retained and reused, and that other buildings be demolished and the resulting site be restored to the pristine open space areas that once existed on the Fernald campus. The forests and historic lawns were recommended to be preserved as well.

The Reuse Committee then examined the main site. The campus is serviced by a steam system with underground pipes deemed wrapped in asbestos, in addition to several abated old oil spills and significant amounts of coal ash deposited near the central power plant. The Reuse Committee has many concerns about the cost of environmental cleanup, the cost of building demolition, and the cost of land acquisition. Therefore, we recommend a full environmental analysis of the land and buildings.

In an ideal world, in light of the fact that Fernald has been in Waltham since 1887 and that we have been such a good neighbor – providing city services with no taxes since 1887 – Waltham should receive all 200 acres.

However, with the enormous amount of buildings on site and known and unknown environmental hazards, the cost of cleanup and demolition would be enormous. I, as Mayor, cannot recommend that the taxpayers bear this cost. As I have indicated publicly, we did not dirty this land, so Waltham should not have to pay for the cleanup of this parcel.

So, mindful of the cost of cleanup, the cost of demolition of buildings, the Reuse Committee is advocating for the City to acquire, at no cost, the northern section of the parcel (74 acres), free of environmental contamination and buildings that are not going to be reused. The proposed public uses in the northern section of the site are: cemetery, open space, recreation and farming.

An additional seventy-five acres in the southern section of the site is recommended to be reused for institutional, health care and residential uses subject to the State issuing Requests For Proposals. Many worthy proposals were forwarded to the Reuse Committee. Most of the historic buildings are located within the southern portion. The Shriver Center, in the northern portion, would be retained by the Commonwealth.

Additionally, the Reuse Committee recommended that the City acquire the 41-acre border including the forests which would benefit both the northern and southern parcels.

Going forward, the Reuse Committee and the City are going to work on an appraisal of the site, a title search and detailed environmental reports.

The Reuse Committee will also draft legislation for the State Legislative Delegation detailing the above. The reuse of existing buildings on the southern 75 acres and minimizing the density of that reuse to protect the neighborhoods will be our prime concern, in addition to trying to get the northern portion of the site for no cost.

I would like to thank Vice Chair Ward 4 Councillor Thomas J. Curtin, Senator Susan Fargo, Representative Thomas Stanley, Representative Peter Koutoujian,

Commissioner Elin H. Howe, Commissioner David Perini and their designees, City Planner Ron Vokey and citizen volunteers Joseph Attardo, Charles Brophy, Marie Daly, Raymond Russo, Joseph Vizard, Ralph Zampitella and Carl Zinnell for their work and expertise. I would also like to thank Assistant Planner Ted Fields and college intern Nick Dileo for their technical assistance throughout this whole process.

I would also like to thank the Waltham City Council for their assistance, input and collaborative efforts to protect the City of Waltham residents in this planning process.

To quote Vice Chair Thomas Curtin, "As Fernald goes, so goes the City of Waltham." We are all concerned with the ultimate disposition of this huge 200-acre developed parcel in Waltham.

The challenges going forward are to determine what the State will surplus, when it will be surplus, and whether or not an entity such as an educational institution(s), which is exempt from local zoning via the Dover Amendment, will bid on any or all of the Fernald parcel. If the State surpluses the parcel, in whole or in part, to an educational institution, the parcel could/would be removed from any potential tax rolls; and, equally troubling, the current control over the zoning of the parcel could/would be removed from the City of Waltham.

Therefore, united, we, the Reuse Committee, City Council and Mayor, will continue to work with DCAM, our State Delegation and the Governor to try to come up with a local planning reuse that benefits our local Waltham community.

But, I must caution everyone that all this could change at any time based upon the actual decisions of the State regarding this 200-acre State parcel within the City of Waltham borders.

For further information regarding the Reuse Report, please visit <http://www.city.waltham.ma.us//ferald/index.htm>.

Sincerely,
Jeannette A. McCarthy
Mayor