

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice-Mayor, and Honorable members of the City Council,

On behalf of the Whittemore Action Committee, a neighborhood group which has been working to restore the Whittemore Ave Community Garden, I would like to respond to the letter from Rob Fawcett Jr's attorney which has been included under Manager's Agenda #12 this week.

As you may recall, we previously asked that you table Mr. Fawcett's curb cut application for 60-62 Magoun St, to provide an opportunity to discuss that and the fate of the former Community Garden site across the street. We had concerns over just how many curb cuts there would end up being in total and what the fate of the Garden would be.

Thanks to your action, Fawcett presented a plan to preserve a small portion of the site, 5,500 square feet out of 16,000, as a Community Garden via an easement. While we certainly dreamt of preserving much more open space, such is the nature of compromise. The remainder of the site would have 4 units of housing constructed on it.

The initial site plan had the garden as an L-shape, with part along Whittemore Ave and part behind some houses. Out of concern for that inner area being too shady, we submitted to Mr. Fawcett several drawings suggesting alternatives. We also suggested making use of the Townhouse Development regulations in Section 11.10 of the Zoning Ordinance, which would afford him greater flexibility on the number of buildings, their position, and the size of sub-divided lots, all without a special permit.

The conclusion from this dialogue was that he would have his architect draw up alternate plans, keeping the garden fully along Whittemore Ave.

The result of that is the site plan included in his letter. The garden has unfortunately been reduced in size by a further 10% to just under 5,000 square feet, but as requested it is situated well to receive the best possible sunlight. The problem is that we did not have a chance to review the other elements of this site plan, which calls for houses very close to existing homes, a lot of driveway pavement, and 30' of curb cuts.

So, there's still more work to do. We need to sit down with Mr. Fawcett, his architect and with City zoning officials to hammer this out. Fortunately, in a conversation I had with Mr. Fawcett today and which he said he will re-affirm here to you tonight, the housing plan is not intended to be final and he will accept our help in revising it.

We would like the City to reply to the letter in the affirmative, that yes, there is serious enough interest on both sides to continue to the appraisal stage. The expectation should be set that the final site plan is not yet determined, although generally the dimensions being discussed are acceptable.

The letter also requests the pending curb-cut for 60-62 Magoun St be granted tonight.

My view is that despite the letter being legally non-binding, Fawcett is putting himself on the hook with you and with the City Manager in a very significant way. His development on the Garden will need one or more curb cuts. If there is some sort of reversal-- and I don't believe there will be-- the City does have other tools at its disposal.

Mr. Fawcett is to be praised for coming to the table and engaging with us. He is putting a lot out there by presenting a formal letter proposing garden preservation. This is a noteworthy good-faith move, and I would like you to respond in kind by granting the curb cut, allowing this process to continue forward. We look forward to working with Mr. Fawcett's team and the City to complete the site plan.

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