

Report of the 22 Main Street Ad-Hoc Committee to the Freeport Town Council August 12, 2024

Committee Charge: To report on the future of the 22 Main Street lot, currently owned by Thomas Moser, with consideration of the town purchase and recommended use by the Town.

Committee Membership:

Andrew Arsenault: Chair and Town Resident Representative
Ben Gray: Town Resident Representative
Kathleen Meade: Town Resident Representative
Susan Nourse: Town Resident Representative
Andy Wilbur: Local Business Representative
Chip Lawrence: Council Representative
Matthew Pillsbury: Council Representative
Staff Support: Sophia Wilson, Town Manager

The committee met four times between April 2024 and July 2024 and had vigorous debate and conversation around the issue. The committee was unable to come to unanimous agreement on whether purchase was a reasonable option and what the best use would be if the town acquired the property. Given the complexity of the issue, it is not surprising that the committee was unable to reach a unanimous conclusion; however, a majority of members were not in favor of purchase at cost to taxpayers of \$500,000. There was discussion and unanimous support to acquire the parcel if there was little or no cost to the Town. The Committee reviewed scenarios illustrating the potential financial impact of purchase and reuse of the parcel.

These are included in Exhibit A to this report and summarized in the following table:

	Taxable Valuation	Revenue (Inc/(dec))	Expense (Inc/(dec))	Annual Fiscal Gain/(Loss)	Potential Mil Impact
30 Residential Units	\$4.5M	\$80,686	\$47,978	\$32,708	-\$0.01/\$1,000
8 Retail Units (10,000 SF)	\$1.5M	\$27,273	\$13,177	\$14,096	-\$0.03/\$1,000
4 Residential Units	\$400,000	\$14,427	\$12,278	\$2,149	+\$0.01/\$1,000
Open Space	-\$522,700	-\$ 7,187	\$ 5,000	-\$12,187	\$0.00/\$1,000

The committee took its responsibility seriously and wanted to provide the Town Council with a summary of the key takeaways in order to help move the issue to some resolution.

The following represents the prevailing themes, in no particular order, that arose around the two questions at hand. Each theme generally had support from multiple members of the committee.

1. Should the Town acquire 22 Main Street and under what specific circumstances?

- Majority Opinion
 - No, under no likely circumstances
 - Yes, if 100% supported by private or grant funding or through an outright donation to the town
- Minority Opinion
 - Yes, under the offered circumstances and with any level of private funding

2. What is the best use of 22 Main Street if the town were to acquire the property?

- Public space to extend the campus including an outdoor green space to be used for locals and visitors. Possible elements include seating, playground, tables and seating, art installations, interactive displays to educate about local history. This could also be used to support outdoor public gatherings, like the Freeport Farmers' Market and community events;
- Extend the campus for municipal services, to be used as a home for the new police department, staff/event parking, or a purpose to be determined later;
- Commercial/residential combination with or without the Town defraying the development cost; or
- Affordable housing with or without the Town defraying the development cost

Other considerations or comments on the above:

- Concern was raised about:
 - The potential cost to remediate or develop the site regardless of the use;
 - Ongoing maintenance costs depending on which option is pursued;
 - The relative small size of the lot and impact on the scale of any commercial or housing development;
 - The relative small size of the lot and impact of the scale of development for public safety; and
 - Private fundraising or grant funding dictating the terms and use of the lot.

- The group briefly discussed the potential of utilizing this parcel to enhance the municipal campus or allow for development of projects; however, it quickly identified the need to purchase adjacent parcels for this to be feasible. Given that these adjacent parcels are not publicly for sale, this option was not further examined.

In summation, the final conclusion was that the committee was unable to provide a unanimous recommendation to the Town Council. There was a majority opinion that the Town should not purchase the property at 22 Main Street for the offered price using taxpayer funds. The Committee is happy to answer any questions regarding the above summary and appreciates the opportunity to work through this process in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner.

- Attachments:
 - Exhibit A: Planning and analysis documents prepared by Brett Richardson
 - Exhibit B: Working documents to focus committee discussions prepared by Andy Wilbur