

Special Town Meeting
May 2022

Article 11 & 12

Authorization to Purchase 481-483 Lincoln Avenue

Revitalization of Cliftdale Square has been a concern of the Town for many years. The area has been an important commercial and retail business district in Saugus for generations but in the past 30 years has gone through documented decline and disinvestment. As a result several studies and reports were undertaken.

In 2021 the Town formed the Cliftdale Revitalization Committee to assess the causes and potential responses to current economic trends in the area of Cliftdale. As part of the 2022 Master Plan update, Cliftdale was also identified as a top economic development concern and a priority area for public investment and incentives. The studies identified a primary cause of decline in the commercial sustainability in Cliftdale as a lack of accessible parking in proximity to destinations. Without available parking many potential patrons of local establishments do not stop in the area for services or products. The conclusions of the studies consistently pointed to the public acquisition of property to allow for expansion of accessible public parking.

The property located at 481-483 Lincoln Avenue (E5/17/3) is currently offered for sale at \$775,000.00 and Town Meeting is being asked to authorize the Board of Selectmen under MGL Chapter 40 Section 14 to purchase this property for a municipal purpose as a public municipal parking lot.

There are no other similar lots that meet all of the documented needs for public parking in Clifftondale and as a result this makes the Determination of Uniqueness for this property in the hope that the rare opportunity to acquire land for a documented and beneficial public purpose.

If it is the purview of Town Meeting to authorize the Board of Selectmen to purchase the property under Article 11, Article 12 requests the appropriation of \$775,000.00 for the purpose of acquiring this parcel known as 481-483 Lincoln Avenue (E5/17/3).

The funding source for this appropriation is a borrowing authorization.

Determination of Uniqueness for the Purposes of MGL Chapter 30B
481-483 Lincoln Avenue, Saugus, MA.

Property owner:

Saugus Bank c/o North Shore Bank

481-483 Lincoln Avenue, Cliftondale



The approximately .26 acre subject property containing a 3,606 square foot office building lies near the center of a longstanding commercial district in Saugus historically known as Cliftondale. The area has been an important commercial and retail business district in Saugus for generations but in the past 30 years has gone through documented decline and disinvestment. This has resulted in Cliftondale becoming an area of analysis and economic development initiatives and plans, which include the following studies and reports:

- 2016 Cliftondale Square Market Analysis
- 2021 Cliftondale Traffic and Parking Study
- 2022 Final Report of the Cliftondale Revitalization Committee
- 2022 Master Plan

These documents consistently confirm that Cliftondale is a distressed commercial center experiencing chronic and increasing blight, disinvestment and vacancies. In response the Town formed a Cliftondale Revitalization Committee in 2021 to assess the causes and potential responses to current economic trends in the area. As part of the 2022 Master Plan update Cliftondale was also identified as a top economic development concern in Saugus and a priority area for public investment and incentives.

In all the studies identified a primary cause of decline in the commercial sustainability in Cliftondale was a lack of accessible parking in proximity to destinations. Cliftondale is situated at the intersection of several high traffic volume roads in a dense residential neighborhood, but without accessible and available parking many potential patrons of local establishments do not stop in the area for services or products. Even on private lots containing businesses with parking, access to and availability of adequate parking stalls is challenging. The lack of any off-street municipal parking lots compounds the scarcity of the essential access to businesses that parking provides.

Therefore the conclusions of the studies consistently point to the public acquisition of property to allow for expansion of accessible public parking. To date few opportunities to acquire any parking for public purposes, let alone suitable parking, have materialized.

There would be no benefit to advertising a request for proposals or qualifications for a public parking facility at this location because the property is currently offered for sale at \$775,000 and the time needed for a full and traditional 30B process would not be feasible for the expedited transaction necessary.



Uniqueness of Property

The uniqueness of 481-483 Lincoln Avenue as a suitable property to meet the documented need to provide more public parking in Clifftondale can be summarized as follows:

- Few properties become available for sale in this area. This property is at once vacant, available, commercial and accessible on the main road, which is unique.
- The unique lot shape and configuration allow several essential elements for the construction of a public parking lot. The frontage is wide enough to provide adequate and safe two-way access and turning radii on a main road, and the lot is sufficient in width to allow for necessary 24' minimum drive aisles and standard parking stalls.
- The property has two means of access to different public ways, which allows for public safety equipment to service the site adequately.
- The lot is flat and conducive to cost effective stormwater drainage and snow storage so that the lot can be efficiently and cost effectively maintained to remain available to the public on a year-round basis.
- The lot is close to the MBTA bus stop and important walkable, high demand facilities in Clifftondale, such as the Post Office and Church, making it a unique opportunity to expand safe pedestrian accessibility in a priority location.
- The structure on the lot is of no historic value, unlike many properties in Clifftondale, so demolition for parking would not incur any loss of intrinsic value.
- The property is legal nonconforming for the purposes of zoning and commercial reuse or redevelopment of the property is limited, due to the most recent use as a former loan center. Potential change of use to more sustainable businesses would likely require more parking than the current parking and structure could accommodate.

There are no other similar lots that meet all of these minimum documented needs for public parking in Clifftondale. The Town therefore makes this Determination of Uniqueness for 481-483 Lincoln Avenue in the hope that this rare and fleeting opportunity to acquire land for a documented and beneficial public purpose in Clifftondale can be achieved.

Part I	ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT
Title VII	CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS
Chapter 40	POWERS AND DUTIES OF CITIES AND TOWNS
Section 14	PURCHASE OF LAND; CONDITIONS; LIMITATIONS; DEFINITION

Section 14. The aldermen of any city, except Boston, or the selectmen of a town may purchase, or take by eminent domain under chapter seventy-nine, any land, easement or right therein within the city or town not already appropriated to public use, for any municipal purpose for which the purchase or taking of land, easement or right therein is not otherwise authorized or directed by statute; but no land, easement or right therein shall be taken or purchased under this section unless the taking or purchase thereof has previously been authorized by the city council or by vote of the town, nor until an appropriation of money, to be raised by loan or otherwise, has been made for the purpose by a two thirds vote of the city council or by a two thirds vote of the town, and no lot of land shall be purchased for any municipal purpose by any city subject to this section for a price more than twenty-five per cent in excess of its average assessed valuation during the previous three years.

The words "municipal purpose", as used in this section, shall include any such land, easement or right therein within the city or town, so purchased or taken by eminent domain for the purpose of conveying or granting the same to the commonwealth for the use of a regional community college.