



## CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

November 4, 2020

City Council President Joseph P. Lopes and  
Honorable Members of the City Council  
133 William Street  
New Bedford, MA 02740

CITY CLERKS OFFICE  
NEW BEDFORD, MA  
2020 NOV -5 A 10:39  
CITY CLERK

Dear Council President Lopes and Honorable Members:

I am pleased to submit for the Council's consideration the attached *Act Authorizing The City of New Bedford To Convey Certain Land Acquired For Open Space and Playground Purposes*.

As you know, with the support of the New Bedford legislative delegation my Administration recently announced a plan for an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC) on 100 acres of the 275-acre Whaling City Golf Course on Hathaway Road.

The announcement also included news that a solution had been developed to resolve an important legal hurdle related to the business park project. When protected recreational land is repurposed for development, municipalities are required by the Commonwealth to enact special legislation which lifts the development prohibition and places into protection comparable land elsewhere.

A 2017 decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Smith v. City of Westfield, expanded the definition of lands classified as protected by Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. The City was consequently required to place into protection new land equal to the entire 100 acres proposed for the business park, a figure well beyond the City's initial estimate of 25 acres.

After consultation with local conservation organizations and officials, including the Buzzards Bay Coalition, the Town of Dartmouth, and the Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust (DNRT), the City determined that the only viable strategy for compliance with the state requirement was to partner with the DNRT to place a conservation restriction on a portion of the 224-acre property owned by the City on Woodcock Road in Dartmouth. In January of this year, the City and DNRT entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for this purpose.

Consistent with the DNRT MOU, the attached measure would put the City in a position to successfully comply with Article 97 requirements by removing approximately 100 acres from protection on the golf course site in New Bedford and conferring protection on 156 acres of the Dartmouth property.

The City Council's approval will allow the measure's legislative supporters, led by Senator Montigny and Representative Christopher Markey, to then work to secure its anticipated passage in early 2021, clearing the way for continued advancement of the AMC.

*Background: Benefits of the Advanced Manufacturing Campus*

The AMC is expressly developed with a view toward the needs of the state's and region's leading industries, and will incorporate the amenities, landscape and building design, and other features seen in high-quality business parks.

Building on a business park concept first introduced in 2017, the AMC refines the City's development approach, incorporating fresh information from real estate and golf industry professionals, conservation organizations, and state economic development experts. In addition, studies commissioned by the City and its state partners have now confirmed several earlier, preliminary assessments. Among the findings, the Advanced Manufacturing Campus would:

- Capitalize on high demand among major commercial real estate interests as the pandemic accelerates a pre-existing trend which saw focus shifting to large, highway accessible, "greenfield" sites in eastern Massachusetts outside the I-95 and I-495 corridors.
- Create 1 million square feet of new industrial/office space assessed at \$80 million
- Generate \$2.7 million in annual property tax revenue
- Produce more than 1,000 new jobs

As I noted in conjunction with the recent public announcement, constructing a new business park from scratch is no small undertaking and a complex challenge for any city, but if we are serious in New Bedford about reducing the property tax burden, regenerating our local economy, and keeping local government financial stable, we have no choice but to find a way to succeed. And with our existing business park at full capacity, it is critical to have a new driver of commercial growth. The plan recently presented to the public creates this critical driver.

It is important to also note the extensive, sustained effort that has been invested in the plan. Several years of study, planning, and revision have brought us to current stage. The plan is significantly better for those efforts. It is more pragmatic, achieves more of our goals, and is more responsive to the community. Most important, the project is grounded in a robust body of research that gives us confidence in our approach.

*Background: A New Understanding of the Options for Ensuring A Successful Golf Course*

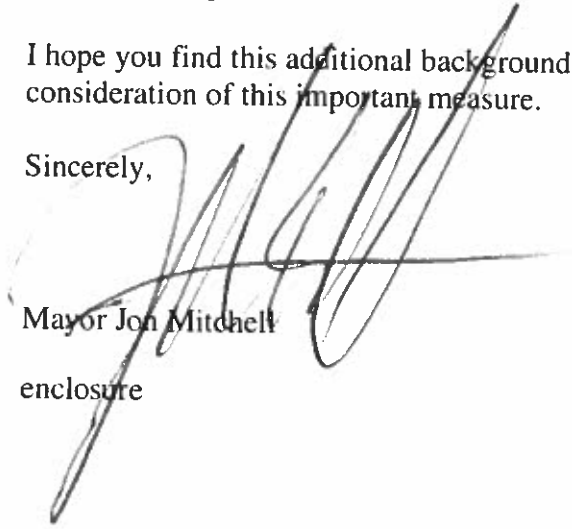
The 2017 business park concept reduced the number of operable golf course holes from 18 to 9 based on preliminary engineering reports. Subsequent surveys led to an adjustment of the business park borders and reduction in size, which has allowed for reconsideration of several golf course options.

Under my Administration's proposal, the City would leave open the option of an 18-hole course, an option for a 9-hole course, and an option for 9+ "flex solutions" that create opportunities for a course operator to change active holes for various purposes or events.

Under all options, a new clubhouse and parking area (comparable to existing facilities) will be constructed, and additional enhancements will be considered, including a driving range and practice areas. The course option and amenities ultimately selected will be based on continued stakeholder input and a further assessment of market trends.

I hope you find this additional background information useful, and I thank you for your consideration of this important measure.

Sincerely,



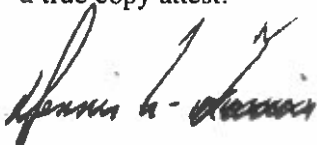
Mayor Jon Mitchell

enclosure

**IN CITY COUNCIL, November 12, 2020**

Referred to the Committee on City Property.  
a true copy attest:

Dennis W. Farias, City Clerk



City Clerk