September 26, 2016

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Awaiting Report Item Number 16-16 stated that because affordable, senior and transitional housing continues to be limited in Cambridge, that available land to build such needed housing also continues to be limited, that the property at Vail Court has been and continues to be a blight on the neighborhood and a wasted opportunity to address the affordable, senior and transitional housing crisis in Cambridge, the City Council was renewing its request first made during the 2014-2015 City Council term for the City Manager to take steps to obtain the property located at 139 Bishop Allen Drive, on Vail Court, in Cambridge by eminent domain.

The Law Department successfully obtained a court order which required the owners of the property to secure and board up the building and which curbed the use of the property for illegal parking, and since then the Police, Fire and Inspectional Services Departments have regularly inspected the property to make sure it is properly secured and to deter vandalism or unpermitted entry into the building. However, it remains a blight on the neighborhood and a public safety concern. I therefore recommend that the City Council take this property pursuant to its eminent domain powers and to redevelop the property for the above described uses of providing much needed affordable, senior and/or transitional housing. Pursuant to the Council Order and in order to support this recommendation, I commissioned a real estate appraisal of this property which was prepared by Steven R. Foster, MAI. In his appraisal, Mr. Foster has determined that the fair market value of this property is $3,700,000.00. Accordingly, I attach for the City Council's consideration and action an Order of Taking in order to take title to this property by eminent domain, and request the appropriation of $3,700,000.00 from Free Cash to the General Fund Law Department Travel & Training (Judgment & Damages) Account.

Very truly yours,

Richard C. Rossi
City Manager

RCR/mec
Attachment(s)