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MBTA OFFERS RETAIL SPACE IN LYNN AND SWAMPSCOTT FOR BID

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | October 21, 2018

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has put three Lynn and Swampscott retail locations at their respective commuter rail stations out to bid, calling it a “rare opportunity” for potential tenants.

The locations include a building that North Shore Community College formerly leased long-term in Lynn and the Swampscott Railroad Depot, the historic train depot building which has sat vacant for years.

The MBTA released an invitation to bid to lease 10 separate retail concession locations, including space at three subway locations and six commuter rail stations.

“The MBTA seeks to provide a variety of retail and concession opportunities to its patrons, while also generating non-fare revenue for the MBTA,” reads an MBTA statement. “This ITB will provide the rare opportunity to lease retail concession space at some of the MBTA’s most active commuter rail stations.”

North Shore Community College had a more than 20-year lease at the 9,000 square-foot storefront with frontage on Market Street that the MBTA put out to bid. The area was used for classrooms and the Educational Opportunity Center, according to Linda Brantley, a spokeswoman for NSCC.

Their lease was terminated in 2017 when McGee South, the \$21 million Thomas W. McGee building was completed. The rental rate was \$17.50 per square foot, or approximately \$157,000, according to Brantley.

James Cowdell, Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn) executive director, said the building is in tough shape.

“I would like to see money put into the property by the MBTA so we can get a viable tenant,” Cowdell said.

The city has no involvement in the process, as far as preference for what type of business could potentially go there, as it’s “100 percent MBTA property,” Cowdell said.

The MBTA is also attempting to lease a 2,700 square-foot storefront located off the garage busway, but it’s not clear what the most recent use of the building was.

Swampscott’s old station building at the train station, which was built in 1868 and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, is not in use and has been vacant for years. Its last use was as a functioning train depot.

The town previously leased the building from the MBTA, but the lease has been up for several years. The town was looking into leasing the building again earlier this year, with plans to sublet the property to a potential tenant interested in reusing the property. The MBTA would have had to approve the use and the town would have been required to maintain the property, but those plans never transpired.

Town officials have expressed a preference for having a bistro, restaurant or coffee shop at the depot building to synergize the economic potential of the train station neighborhood, where there are already successful restaurants.

Officials have been working with the MBTA to make sure their vision complies with the town’s for reuse of the train depot. According to the town’s master plan, the train station area holds considerable potential for additional retail and dining sector growth.

In May, Town Meeting members approved a \$25,000 study, which allowed officials to plan for smart growth zoning in the train station neighborhood. Smart growth zoning is enabling zoning from Massachusetts General Law, which essentially allows communities to develop an overlay district that encourages growth around transportation corridors.

Swampscott’s Railroad Depot is a remnant of the Eastern Railroad, the first line to pass through the town and important to its rise in importance as a summer resort, according to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Bids are due on Dec. 19.



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