

# Stevens Commons roads to be transferred to Hallowell

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By Jason Pafundi

HALLOWELL — The City Council on Wednesday will discuss the transfer of roads within Stevens Commons that would pave the way for the start of infrastructure repairs on the campus.

Under terms of an agreement with owner and developer Matt Morrill, the work cannot begin on the 54-acre property off Winthrop Street until he transfers the deeds to the road to the city of Hallowell.



Matt Morrill talks about pulling the ivy off the Erskine Building, in background, while leading an April 20 tour of the Stevens Commons in Hallowell. The City Council on Wednesday will discuss taking ownership of the roads at the complex. Staff file photo by Joe Phelan



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The road work will be funded using \$600,000 approved by voters in April as part of a \$2.36 million [bond package](#). Mayor Mark Walker said the city hopes to issue the bond Thursday or as soon as possible thereafter so that the road improvement work at Stevens Commons — and other work around the city — can begin.

Earlier this month, Hallowell officials determined the upcoming infrastructure and road work at Stevens Commons is not subject to Planning Board [review](#). The determination was made after discussions among the City Council, City

Manager Nate Rudy, Planning Board members, Stevens Commons owner and developer Matt Morrill and legal counsel for the city and the developer.

As part of the agreement with the city, Morrill will remain involved in the bidding process and will help oversee the work done on the site. He bought the former Stevens School property from the state in April 2016. Three bids were submitted, and Rudy said the winning bid will be chosen at Wednesday's meeting.

Rudy said the plan doesn't call for widening any of the existing roads, partly because that's what the Maine Historic Preservation Commission has required for maintaining the Stevens Commons "quad" and because it serves the campus better to not have wide roads there.

The Highway Committee and other city officials met last Thursday and reviewed plans for the work with Morrill and came away from the meeting thinking that the plan is "workable and meets the ordinance standards," Rudy said.

Once the bond is issued, the city can begin working on other projects funded by the controversial package, including repairs to rural Hallowell roads; renovation and improvement of city-owned buildings, including the historic Second Street fire station; and the conversion of a parcel of land where the Dummer House currently stands into a parking area for visitors to downtown Hallowell.

Morrill, of Grand View Log and Timber Frames in Winthrop, has said that improving the road network within Stevens Commons will make the property more attractive to outside developers, and he needs other developers to help him realize his vision of turning the campus into mixed-use development and centerpiece of Hallowell.

In the year since he bought the campus from the state, Morrill has done a number of below-the-surface infrastructure improvements, found six tenants to lease office space in the Baker Building, secured a commitment from Community Housing of Maine to convert the Central Building into senior housing units and reached a deal with the city to locate a new fire station on the site of the Farwell Building. He has said several times that he's invested more already than he's received from the city, and he said the infrastructure improvements are needed for the redevelopment to take the next step.

"(Those) improvements are the foundation of this whole project," Morrill said in April. "It paints a nice starting point for other people to participate, and it's already a real project with real tenants."

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