

**WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
COMMUNITY TASK FORCE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009**

MINUTES

Task Force Members Present: Marica Arvanites, Cynthia Brophy, Robert Chambers,
Susan D'Amato, Sheneal Parker

Guests: Patrick Cunningham, Perkins+Will
David Damon, Perkins+Will
Ben Ghosh, Office of Representative Jeffrey Sanchez
Kimberly Kelly, Perkins+Will
Tim Marsters, Perkins+Will
Michael Ross, City Council President
Johanna Sena, Office of City Councilor Michael Ross
Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Wentworth Representatives: Kevin Moore, Director, Public Safety
Mary Ollinger, Assistant, Business & Finance
Sandy Pascal, AVP, Community Relations & External Affairs
David A. Wahlstrom, AVP, Business
Annamaria Wenner, AVP, Student Affairs
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant (Fallon Towle Associates)

Public: Bill Kanteros, Greek Cathedral
Ben Johnson
Marc Laderman
David Taber, Mission Hill Gazette

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Attendees introduced themselves. In anticipation of Councilor Ross's arrival, Katelyn suggested switching the agenda and discuss the Campus Center first and student behavior last.

Campus Center

Dick Towle noted that the goal of the Campus Center is to attract students onto campus. He noted that the Campus Center is one of four projects being proposed in the Institutional Master Plan (IMP): the Campus Center, residence hall, Annex addition, and the Sweeney field move to Parker Street (with parking underneath). He noted that Wentworth is not currently seeking approvals for development on the Sweeney site. Dick added that in addition to the proposed projects, there will also be a small addition to Ira Allen and intensive building renovations campus-wide. He noted that Wentworth added over 900 beds during the last IMP and now we need to create a space, and the draw, to attract more students onto campus.

At this point, Dick turned things over to Perkins+Will for a PowerPoint presentation about the Campus Center. Patrick Cunningham began by highlighting the advantages of the proposed location—it gives Wentworth a face on Parker Street; creates a more formal campus space; and provides a gateway to the pedestrian pike. He also noted that it creates an opportunity for a porous building, and that by being strategically located near other major spaces on campus, it

creates connections that will draw students in. David Damon added that it also gives Wentworth a face on Ward Street.

Patrick spoke about the building's sustainability, and David added that they are targeting LEED Silver status for the building.

Patrick talked about the different spaces and the program for the building. Dick pointed out that with late night hours, this building would give students a much needed venue for late night events and lounging. David pointed out the Campus Center on the model and noted the connection to Watson at the mezzanine level. Patrick and David went through a number of slides with floor plans and building views. Annamaria Wenner noted that students were particularly excited for the large multipurpose space in the Campus Center. Events that might be housed in the space currently take place in the 610 Huntington residence hall; however, because it is a residence hall, they cannot open the events up to other Colleges of the Fenway (COF) schools. She added that this flexible space will allow for a variety of late night and weekend programming.

Patrick talked about the architecture, and how the building was designed to attract students by putting activity on the periphery. Sandy asked Patrick to point out where the potential connection would be made to Tansey as part of the long-term plan. Dick noted that the building addresses some of the concerns that emerged during the strategic planning process, i.e., transparent, no back doors, add life to Parker Street, welcoming, etc.

Referring to one of the views of the Campus Center, Robert Chambers asked if there were plans to eliminate street parking on that section of Parker Street. Dick said that there are no plans to eliminate parking.

Referring to the same view of the Campus Center, Annamaria pointed out the dedicated space for students clubs on the top floor. She noted that Wentworth has 50 active clubs and organizations, with 75% of students involved in at least one.

Bill Kantaros asked about Wentworth's plans to put metered parking along Parker Street. Dave noted that we have been working on that for nearly three years. Dick added that this project might help to get that activated.

Referring to the Ward Street view, Dick noted that the slide does not fully capture the plans for Ward Street. The Ward Street parking lot is to be truncated and there will be a small green area.

Dick continued, noting that the Campus Center is very likely to be the first project, creating demand for the housing, to come later. He asked if there were any questions.

Sheneal asked if we were hoping to begin the project in 2010. Dick responded that it really depends on the economy; we are confident, but cannot guarantee a start date because of the economic instability.

Marc Laderman noted that Wentworth has received a \$10m gift from Flanagan. With the New England Conservatory having recently received \$22m from MassDevelopment, Mark asked about the competition for these dollars. Dick noted that MassDevelopment has been a major source of funding for institutions, assisting non-profits with bond issues. He explained that it is really a form of debt, and that public/state money is not being used; there are subsidized bonds, but colleges and museums are not eligible for them. There was a brief discussion between Marc and Dick.

Dick moved to the *Neighborhood Meeting* slide, explaining that these were the emergent themes from our work with the community during the development of the strategic plan. On the first point, “*house as many students on campus as feasible*,” Dick noted that plans for the new residence hall would have apartment-style rooms hoping to attract more upperclassmen. Marc asked if they would be *dwelling units*. Dick explained that they would be dormitories, but apartment-style; they would have private bedrooms but still be under the supervision of a Wentworth staff person. Marc asked why they were not *dwelling units*. Dick pointed out that many dormitories are called *apartment-style*, adding that they are licensed as dormitories, not as apartment buildings. Marc cited the definition of a *dwelling unit* as somewhere you can *live, sleep, cook, and eat*, adding that you need to create affordable housing for dwelling units. Dick explained that we would remove 265 students that are currently live in work-force housing and bring them into a dormitory, adding that the goal is to return affordable housing to the community freeing up affordable units elsewhere. Dick added that we need to attract our students, and that it has been public policy to do that to free up neighborhood housing. There was a brief discussion between Marc and Dick.

Sheneal asked about the last point on the *Neighborhood Meeting* slide, *promote neighborhood stability*, asking if that includes hiring construction workers from the community. Dick noted that we try to be a leader in the Boston Jobs Ordinance. She replied that she has seen other schools put similar wording into their plans, but then there is no oversight. Ben Johnson noted that Wentworth should include language about what happens if it is *not* adhered to so contractors and subcontractors can be held responsible. There was a discussion about the Boston Job Ordinance and Wentworth’s plans for adherence.

Marc said that the IMPNF was not as fully developed as he would like to have seen, specifically referring to a section about pedestrian pathways. Tim Marsters said he was free to comment and any additional information would be responded to following the scoping. Dick added that there are a couple ways to do IMPNFs. Wentworth’s submission met the requirements, and there are plans to do additional pedestrian and traffic studies.

Annamaria provided a brief recap of the last meeting, noting that one of the main goals of Student Affairs is to have Wentworth dorms filled with Wentworth students. She explained how for the past couple years, they have changed their marketing strategy to focus more on the *parents*. She noted that nationally, students are more academically successful, do better in the community, and become more active alumni when they live on campus. She explained some of their marketing strategies:

- Information was sent home with students in December; that is typically when conversations happen with parents and when housing decisions are made.
- Housing deadline was moved to *before* spring break so students would not have another opportunity to sway their parents.

Annamaria reported that housing assignments for returning students jumped from 1,059 to 1,131 this year, 52 of which are off-campus students who have decided to move back on campus. She also noted that beginning with the incoming class of 2010, first and second year students will be required to live on campus.

Annamaria said that right now, they are targeting the parents of students who currently live on campus but have *not* deposited for next year. She distributed materials being sent to parents, adding that they will go out once they flush out who is returning in the Fall. Annamaria noted that in certain situations, she has been allowing students in the discipline process the option of suspension or moving back on campus. These students have chosen to move onto campus.

Councilor Ross asked for clarification about this, asking if students are allowed to move back onto campus if they get in trouble. Annamaria said she allows this when it *feels appropriate*, adding that there have been 3 such cases in the last month.

Sandy noted that this year, we are renting 173 beds to Emmanuel and Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS); next year we will only rent to MCPHS.

Sheneal asked how we could meet the need, based on information from the Accountability Ordinance Handout. Dick said that with the beds we are currently renting (173 beds) plus the addition of the new dorm (265 beds), we would be over 400. Sheneal asked how we could still rent to MCPHS. Dick replied that it would just be for the Fall semester, adding that by just renting to MCPHS, our interest is to get students out of Mission Hill.

Councilor Ross asked what our total on-campus percentage would be. Dick said it would bring us to 2,200 out of 2,700. Councilor Ross asked about the likelihood of juniors and seniors still moving off-campus, and Dick said that was the major reason behind having the new dorm be apartment-style rooms. He added that the Campus Center needs to come first, to really create the draw and morph to a residential campus. Councilor Ross noted that when Northeastern went from a commuter school to a residential school, students filled the neighborhood. Dick responded that they did not having adequate housing and their enrollment jumped. He added that Wentworth's plan is to improve quality, not quantity; plans are to keep enrollment fairly level. There was a brief discussion about room costs and affordability. Cindy reiterated that when Northeastern built their dorm, there was a huge influx of students. She asked if Wentworth would be willing to put it in writing. Dick noted that the language was in the IMPNF, page 6, and said that it is difficult to put outright because of the ability for it to affect Wentworth's debt capacity and negotiations with credit rating agencies. Councilor Ross asked if there was a BRA person present, and Katelyn was identified. He voiced that he thinks the language needs to be strengthened. He also thanked Annamaria, noting that she seems to be very much aligned with many of the issues they deal with, adding that even though she does not attend the Problem Properties meetings, clearly the message it making it to her.

In response to an earlier question from Councilor Ross about the number of suspensions and/or probations this year, Annamaria noted there were...

- 20 probations/institutional probations (i.e., final strike before suspension/expulsion; not allowed to represent the Institute in any capacity)
- 5 suspensions
- 52 parental notifications
- Nearly \$10,000 collected in fines, which is put toward programming.
- Only 2 repeat offenders (cited by BPD)

Dick emphasized that there is excellent internal communication and that Wentworth tries very hard to be proactive. He added that it was recently decided to put together a weekly higher-level review committee.

Councilor Ross asked if there had been a discussion about the endowment campus yet tonight. Dick responded saying at this point, Wentworth is not proposing a project; we are referring to it as a proposed future project and are not seeking any zoning. He added that we envision some type of community development plan with either an amendment to the IMP or a PDA. He added that this is noted in Section 4, page 14. Councilor Ross said he would be more comfortable with an amendment to the IMP.

Marc said he was very nervous about the discussions about Sweeney Field, noting the tremendous development and the need for public transportation upgrades. Dick said that there

would need to be extensive studies in order to propose that level of development. Marc said that it was frightening to see it in the IMPNF document, adding the impact would be tremendous and there might be a sense of entitlement later. Dick emphasized that we are not seeking any rights at this point, adding that it is a tremendously important site that is highly underutilized. He added that the impacts need to be studied. Directing her question to the BRA, Cindy Brophy asked if the BRA was weighing in on all the projects being proposed to connect the Back Bay to Mission Hill and the Fenway, i.e., Wentworth dormitory, MassArt dormitory, Christian Science Center project. Katelyn responded that there are designated BRA planners for each area, and that all major projects go through the Article 80 Process. She added that BRA planners are aware that the area is project heavy and there are always discussions about revisiting this area. Cynthia noted that there seems to be a need for more comprehensive guidance. Katelyn said that she would try to have some of the BRA planners attend the next Task Force meeting.

Dick noted that the IMP website (www.wit.edu/imp) was up and running, adding that meeting minutes and IMP documents would be posted there in the future. He said that two additional community meetings had been scheduled:

- Tuesday, April 28th - Fenway CDC, Urban Planning Group (6pm at 73 Hemenway Street)
- Tuesday, May 5th - Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
- Also, Wednesday May 13th - Public Meeting (6pm in the Faculty/Staff Dining Room)

Dick said that people interested in campus tours should contact Mary Ollinger to make arrangements.

Mike asked how many students we had from Boston Public Schools currently attending Wentworth. Dick said we would bring the number to the next meeting. Sandy added that the first Jimmie Beverly scholarship had been awarded to a young man from Alice Hayward Taylor.

Cindy asked about the number of students on the Accountability Ordinance Report, specifically why they were higher than the 2,700 referenced by Dick. Dick replied that the difference is part-time, adult, evening students that do not require student housing.

Councilor Ross asked Katelyn how everyone's comments are taken back to the BRA. Katelyn responded by saying that she takes concerns with her back to her BRA colleagues but the best and official way to get your comments on record is by submitting a written comment letter to her (comment period for IMPNF ends May 21st).

There were no further questions, and Katelyn noted that, for those interested in attending, there would be a scoping session at the BRA at 3pm on April 30th.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00pm. The next Community Task Force meeting will be the public meeting on May 13th at 6pm in the Faculty/Staff Dining Room (Beatty Hall).