

WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Community Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, August 25, 2010

Minutes

- Task Force:** Robert Chambers, Matilda Drayton, Pat Flaherty, Judie Mercer, Marta Rivera, Carrie Simon
- Wentworth:** George Chryssis, Vice President, Executive Affairs
Mary Ollinger, Executive Assistant, Business & Finance
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business
Bob Totino, Vice President, Finance
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant (Fallon Towle Associates)
Annamaria Wenner, Associate VP, Student Affairs
- Guests/Public:** Steve Cunningham, Spagnolo Gisness & Associates
David Damon, Perkins+Will
Howard Muise, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin
Rebeca Oliveira, Mission Hill Gazette
Alison Pultinas, Mission Hill resident
Johanna Sena, City of Boston
Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Charlotte Fleetwood, Boston Transportation Department

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone back, noting that the Task Force had not met since last October 14th. Attendees introduced themselves.

Katelyn spoke briefly about the steps Wentworth has taken in the IMP process. She reminded everyone that Wentworth filed its Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP NF) in April 2009, and received its Scoping Determination. Given the state of the economy, Wentworth took some time to reassess their needs. Some minor changes were made to the plan, and Wentworth filed a Notice of Project Change on July 26, 2010. Upon review, it was determined that the changes did not warrant additional study under the Scoping Determination. Katelyn noted that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to discuss the changes proposed to be included in the IMP document and review the transportation study.

Pat Flaherty asked if there is a comment period when a notice of Project Change is filed. Katelyn responded that since there will not be additional study under the Scoping Determination the public can comment on the limited changes during the 60-day comment period of the IMP filing.

Sandy took a moment and provided an updated on some of the staffing changes that have occurred since our last meeting. She noted that John Heinstadt (former Vice President of Business & Finance) retired last December, and that his position has been split between Bob Totino, Vice President for Finance, and Dave Wahlstrom, who was recently promoted to Vice President for Business. She noted that Community Relations was moved under the President's Office, and introduced her new boss, George Chryssis, Vice President for Executive Affairs.

Dick distributed 3 handouts: a comparison of projects in the IMPNF to the proposed IMP; the letter to the BRA regarding the IMPNF Notice of Project Change; and 10-year Enrollment and Student Housing Projections.

Dick went through his first handout (*see attached*), reviewing each change made to the IMPNF. He noted that the two primary objectives in the IMPNF – to attract students to campus and to modernize the institution's academic facilities – have not changed.

Dick moved to the enrollment handout, noting that Wentworth's goal is to house 97% of its students. He added that Wentworth is confident they can do this because excellent system in place for attracting students, and the high retention rate.

Pat Flaherty commended Wentworth for coming in with a plan. With the addition of 2 dorms in the last 10 years – and plans to add another 305 beds in next five years – she noted how far Wentworth has come to get to 97%. She expressed appreciation for the housing mandates Wentworth has implemented, emphasizing not only the student behavior implications, but also the economic impact of students living in the neighborhood, which is so important to maintaining the viability of the neighborhood.

Dave credited the entire Dean of Student's office for building such a strong foundation for this to work. He praised them for developing such strong programs, making on-campus housing so attractive, and communicating with parents about the benefits – financial, academic, retention, etc.

Steve Cunningham provided an overview of the new campus center project – the *Flanagan Campus Center* – at Beatty Hall. Rather than a stand-alone building, this would be an addition/renovation off the front and back of Beatty. He presented renderings, showing how the renovation would open up the building and provide a new face to the Ward Street side. Further, it would truly engage the pike, and increase connectivity between Mission Hill and the quad.

Pat Flaherty asked if the Flanagan Campus Center is the first anticipated project, and Dave responded that it was, as well as the addition to Ira Allen.

Dave noted that as the plan evolves, the parking on Ward Street is likely to disappear. Steve added that there are a lot of planning issues in this area – storage units, loading for the cafeteria – that will need to be resolved during this process. Dave continued, noting that Wentworth has already made some efforts to soften that area and make it more open. The iron fence around the perimeter of the campus from the tennis courts to the Beatty Lot was recently taken down, and the area around the gymnasium was sodded and planted.

Marta Rivera asked for verification about the parking spots, and Dave confirmed that they were likely to disappear. He added that there would probably be more landscaping there. Marta asked how far Wentworth's development/Beatty addition would be from the public sidewalk on Ward Street, and Dave answered 40-50 feet.

Matilda Drayton asked if the Physical Plant service building would be getting a facelift as part of this project, and Steve replied that it was not part of this project scope. Dick added that as we do renovations, we will be looking for new opportunities for improvement.

With no further questions, David Damon began a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the other proposed projects in the IMP:

- Ira Allen Addition:
 - 3 stories (32 feet) high; would complement the existing building.

- Will house 10 new teaching labs, 24 faculty offices, and space for student collaboration.
- 525 Huntington Ave Residence Hall:
 - 7 stories of residential life (approximately 26 feet lower than the highest point on 555); height reduced in response to height concerns.
 - Will house 305 students.
- Center for Engineering and Technology
 - Approximately 45k SF. 3 10-foot stories (plus penthouse) for total height of 55 feet; surrounding heritage buildings are between 55-59 feet.
 - Dick interjected that the building reflects that it's modern, but in keeping with the basic historic presence.
 - Would run parallel to the Pike at the back edge of the West Lot; would provide a new entry point for the campus.
- New Sweeney Field on Parker Street
 - Regulation-size soccer field elevated above a 330-car surface garage.
 - Uneven ground level would cause the field to be at grade at the corner of Parker and Station, and approximately 13 feet high at the corner of Parker and Prentiss (the highest point), with public stairway access.

When viewing the perspective from Prentiss Street, Matilda Drayton commented about the imbalance of shrubbery and plantings on the two sides of the streets.

Pat Flaherty asked if there was a perspective from the Parcel 25 location. Dick responded that we would work on that for the next meeting.

David continued with his presentation, pointing out the improvements to the streets, particularly to Mindoro Street, and the sidewalks all around that area. He also spoke briefly about the parking level, and Dick commented that the number of spaces was reduced from 403 to 330. Dave added that, to account for that lost parking, Wentworth would no longer be able to lease spaces to MASCO.

Pat asked if that lease was year-to-year, and Dave responded that it may be every other year.

Pat voiced her concern about the above-ground parking lot. She inquired whether it was possible for her to support the *use* of the site, but not the *design*. She asked if there was a way to drop it underground, even half a level. She continued, saying that they want to support Wentworth's IMP, but that they would have a hard time supporting this design.

This prompted a discussion about project height and parameters. Dick noted Wentworth would like to secure the height and size parameters so that if there is an opportunity for development, there will be a zoning envelope. Pat emphasized the significance of the project height, noting that pedestrians would be walking next to an open garage or a wall; she asked if there was any possibility of sinking it. Dick responded that Wentworth will do more elevations to see the impact. He also commented on the all around improvements that will be made to the sidewalks and paving to make that area more attractive.

Pat explained that people had really high hopes of what would happen to that area. Dick reiterated that Wentworth would work on this, adding that the goal is not only to find something that works, but also something that the community can embrace as an attractive improvement.

Johanna Sena said that Wentworth is to be commended for everything they've done. She added that this was the only concern Councilor Ross had coming out of their meeting this morning, and could they consider looking at other options.

The discussion continued, and Pat said she supported Wentworth's need to upgrade academics, adding that they may even support the future plans for the Sweeney Field development. She asked again, whether the IMP could move forward without nailing down this design.

Katelyn noted that Wentworth is seeking Article 80D approval for the projects which includes project height, use, massing and location, adding that if there are concerns about any of these parameters that they should be addressed when Wentworth submits the IMP. Specific urban design elements such as materials would be decided upon when the projects go for 80B Large Project review. . As more renderings were presented from Parker and Prentiss Street, Task Force Members asked a number of questions about widths, setbacks, and project specifics. Dick wrapped up this discussion by saying that Wentworth needs to show the height and perspective more effectively, adding that we would provide more renderings at the next meeting and arrange to meet with interested community members before the next meeting.

David concluded his presentation by discussing the pedestrian improvements within the core of the campus, specifically the improved connections between Parker and Huntington, the Quad and Ward, and the Quad and Ruggles.

With no further questions, Howard Muise began the transportation part of the presentation. He noted that as part of the Article 80 process, universities are required to prepare a transportation plan that examines traffic, parking, public transportation, bicycle usage, and transportation management strategies for the institution. Additionally, the plan includes loading protocol and move in/move out processes.

Howard explained that Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) analyzed traffic at eleven locations around campus to establish a baseline. Then he walked the Task Force through their analysis of future conditions, both with the IMP projects (*build*) and in the absence of the IMP projects (*no-build*).

Alison Pultinas asked if VHB took counts on Parker Street. Howard responded that they did not, but they did counts at the Ruggles/Parker intersection to help them evaluate the traffic patterns.

Howard explained that Wentworth is very well served by public transportation, adding that it also falls on a very heavily trafficked corridor. He added that it's unusual that the peak direction does not change between the morning and evening commutes, and attributed this to the number of institutions in the area.

In his analysis, the build scenario would have essentially no effect on traffic conditions because the impact of projected increases in faculty and staff would be offset by the increase in students living on campus. With regard to parking, there would be a total loss of almost 200 spaces. However, by reclaiming the spots currently leased to MASCO, Wentworth would be able to reach projected peak occupancy levels close to 60%.

Howard reviewed VHB's analysis of pedestrian and bicycle access, transportation demand management strategies, and Move-In/Move-Out procedures. Dave noted that, this year, freshmen arrive to campus on 9/2 and returners arrive on Labor Day (9/6). Howard added that Wentworth's Move-In/Move-Out program has been very successful with the help of police assisting pedestrians across Huntington Avenue.

Howard concluded his presentation with an analysis of the potential future projects – the Sweeney Field site and the Residence Hall at 630 Huntington Avenue. He noted that because these are only *projected* projects, VHB only did trip generation studies, adding that if they became real projects, further studies would be done.

Alison Pultinas commented that a peak occupancy of 60% seems very low. Dick replied that this is reserved for surge capacity, for events like open houses, accepted student day, move ins, graduation, etcetera. Alison continued, saying that if this is only for a few occasions a year, visitors should be able to utilize public transportation and street parking. Dick responded that this would ultimately create havoc in the neighborhood, and that students and their parents need to be able to make campus visits very easily.

Charlotte Fleetwood agreed that 60% seemed low, and suggested that Wentworth investigate this further with the Boston Transportation Department.

There was a discussion about the lack of available parking in the neighborhood, and possible solutions including meters, additional resident-only parking, and creative signage. It was decided that Sandy would coordinate a meeting with Mission Main, Alice Heyward Taylor, and the Boston Transportation department to see if they could come up with a viable solution.

Dave spoke of accommodating 80 MassArt parkers displaced by their residence hall construction in the Mindoro parking lot and that it would be resurfaced and fenced similar to the other lots.

With no further questions, Katelyn reviewed the upcoming schedule. It was agreed that the next Task Force Meeting would be on **Wednesday, September 22nd**. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30pm.

Wentworth Institute of Technology
 Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPNF) Compared to the Proposed Institutional Master Plan

	<u>IMPNF</u>	<u>Proposed IMP</u>
Proposed Projects		
Flanagan Campus Center	40,000 sq. ft Facility at Tennis Court site	Renovation & addition at Beatty Hall*
New Student Residence at 525 Huntington Avenue	6 to 9 Stories 260 to 395 Bed Spaces ¹	7 Stories 305 bed spaces ²
Addition to Ira Allen Building	18,000 sq. ft.	No Change.
New Academic Facility	40,000 sq. ft. Addition to the Wentworth Annex	45,000 sq. ft. Center for Engineering & Tech. at site of Willson Hall & the West Parking Lot ³
New Soccer Field above 330 Surface Parking Spaces	To be located at Parker Street Parking Lot.	No Change
Potential Future Project Commercial R& D/ Office	Potential Development of up to 650,000 sq. ft at Sweeney Field	No Change
Potential Future Project Student Residence, <u>630</u> Huntington	Not Included	Potential Development of a 6 story, 100 Bed Space Facility
Student Enrollment Projection	3,600 Students ⁴	3,400 to 3,800 Students ⁴
Employment Projection	21 employees to be added	Up to 111 employees to be added
Parking Space Reduction	271	197

* The project will include a 7,000 square foot addition and the renovation of approximately 23,000 feet to update and expand student activity space, meeting rooms, dining areas and dining concepts, function space, meeting rooms, student lounges and study areas.

¹ The IMPNF allowed for 260 new bed spaces for Wentworth students and up to 135 additional spaces for other colleges

² The proposed IMP calls for 305 bed spaces for Wentworth in this facility and none for other institutions.

³ Requires the demolition of the 2 story, 8,135 square foot Willson Hall built in 1962 and a 4,000 square foot, one story addition to Kingman Hall constructed in 1955. Both of the buildings have been modified several times and lack the historical significance of the surrounding iconic Wentworth Buildings.

⁴ Student enrollment totals include all full-time students enrolled in classes and all students enrolled in a full-time Co-op placement