

**WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
Community Task Force Meeting  
Faculty/Staff Function Room, Beatty Hall**

**Tuesday, September 11, 2012**

**Minutes**

- Moderator:** Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”)
- Task Force:** Cindy Brophy, Fenway  
Robert Chambers, Mass College of Art (“MassArt”)  
Matilda Drayton, Alice Heyward Taylor  
Pat Flaherty, Mission Hill, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services  
Judy Mercer, Alice Heyward Taylor
- Wentworth:** Michael Coleman, Design Consultant, Beacon Architectural Associates  
Lula Drayton, Technical Assistant, Planning & Construction  
Jamie Fay, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates  
Judy Kohn, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates  
Mary Ollinger, Budget & Office Manager, Business & Finance  
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs  
Kevin Smith, Clerk of the Works, Planning & Construction  
Bob Totino, Vice President, Finance  
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant, Towle & Associates  
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business  
Annamaria Wenner, Associate VP for Student Affairs
- Public:** Shaina Aubourg, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Chris Byrne, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)  
Katie Lauretano, Representative Sanchez’s Office  
Paul McGovern, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)  
Hiroshi Miyazaki, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)  
James Murphy, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)  
Rebeca Oliveira, Mission Hill Gazette  
Joyce Phillips, Vancouver Street resident  
Wade Phillips, Vancouver Street resident  
Alison Pultinas, Mission Hill resident  
Jennifer Reyes, Sociedad Latina  
Johanna Sena, Councilor Ross’s Office  
Susan St. Clair, Mission Hill resident  
Ester Wong, Vancouver Street resident

**Welcome and Overview of Process**

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Attendees introduced themselves. She provided a brief overview of where Wentworth is in the Project Notification Form (“PNF”) process for the student apartments at 525 Huntington Avenue.

- Wentworth filed PNF with the BRA July 13<sup>th</sup>
- BRA Public Meeting July 31<sup>st</sup>
- 30-day comment period ended August 13<sup>th</sup>
- Scoping determination issued August 29<sup>th</sup> (available online at [www.wit.edu/imp](http://www.wit.edu/imp))

Katelyn explained that the BRA has requested Wentworth submit a Draft Project Impact Report (“DPIR”) in response to the scope, which will involve an additional 45-day comment period. She added that the BRA would host another public meeting during that 45-day period and that her contact information could be found at the bottom of the agenda.

Sandy Pascal welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended particular gratitude to the Task Force members for their help in this process. She expressed her excitement for the new dormitory project and emphasized the value of working with the neighborhood on the design, adding that the softened design of the Flanagan Campus Center along Ward Street emerged from community input and feedback.

Dick Towle explained that there were two major thrusts driving the Institutional Master Plan (“IMP”): to upgrade the academic facilities (the addition to Ira Allen), and to attract students onto campus (and out of the neighborhood) for their social activities (the Flanagan Campus Center). Annamaria Wenner noted that the Campus Center has been open only two weeks, and is already surpassing her expectations. She noted that students have visited the fitness center in record numbers, both during peak and off-peak hours.

Dick explained that the major objective of the student apartments project has always been to attract 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> years students back on to campus, or retain them on campus adding that the addition of 305 beds would enable Wentworth to house 97% of their students seeking local housing. He noted that Wentworth had made some changes to the design in response to comments.

Michael Coleman highlighted the following changes to the building design:

- The building height was reduced to 78 feet along Vancouver Street.
- On Louis Prang, the building was setback an additional 4 feet to allow for a wider sidewalk.
- The building entry onto the plaza was moved away from the residential units.
- The plaza has evolved to include a sculpture and benches, although it will remain primarily plantings. Additionally, a hubway station was added in front of the plaza to deter pedestrians from illegally crossing Huntington Avenue.
- Public meeting spaces were moved to the Huntington/Louis Prang corner of the building, showcasing the activity and differentiating it from the residential wing. Additionally, this moves the housing office to the residential wing, centrally located in the residential campus.
- Bike storage was relocated on the first floor, with access off Louis Prang.
- The trash room was moved to the corner of Huntington & Louis Prang, away from non-student occupied buildings. This reduces the parking loss (to four spaces) and eliminates the need for a curb cut. Further, plantings will be used to soften the area.

Paul McGovern asked whether the fire hydrant would be moved, and Michael said it would not.

Alison asked about the sidewalk width on Huntington where the hubway will be introduced. Michael responded that it is about 15 feet. Dick added that, with the area in the plaza, it will actually get wider. Hiroshi Miyazaki asked about the sidewalk on Vancouver, and Michael explained that it will be getting wider because of the building setback.

Paul McGovern asked about the impact of 305 students moving into the neighborhood with cars, noting that the parking situation is already problematic. Dave responded that Wentworth is not anticipating a significant impact. Annamaria explained that a large portion of the student population lives in Massachusetts and opts not to have a car. She added that juniors and seniors often need to have a car for their coop semester, noting that this rotates on a semesterly basis. Chris Byrnes pointed out that with students moving closer to campus, they will likely stop taking public transportation. Dick explained that most of the students moving into this building are already walking and taking public transportation, and that very few students bring cars. He added that Wentworth has

excess parking capacity on Parker Street, and that Vice President Wahlstrom has the capacity to issue stickers if necessary. He pointed out that currently the parking on Vancouver Street is completely unregulated, and that there may be an opportunity for improvement by making it residential parking or adding meters.

There was a lengthy discussion about the impact of converting Vancouver Street to residential parking, as well as the increasing cost and overall effectiveness of vehicle registration.

Dick noted that it is Wentworth's belief that this project would reduce the number of cars. James Murphy asked whether an underground parking garage was ever considered as part of the design, and Dick responded that it was not. Paul McGovern asked how many upperclassmen currently live on campus and Annamaria responded that it was just under a thousand, of which approximately 45-50 have overnight spaces on campus. Dick reiterated that a small minority of Wentworth students have cars on campus.

Michael continued reviewing the plans, and explained that every floor will have approximately 48 beds plus a collaborative workspace. Each unit will have two bathrooms, a galley kitchen, and laundry. He added that the elevator core has moved since previous plans, making it more centrally located. Dick continued, noting that every unit will have high quality, durable finishes, and that internet, cable tv, and all utilities will be included. He added that leases will be 20-25% less than market housing, and that Wentworth is really trying to make this building attractive to older students.

Chris Byrnes asked about the price of leases, and Dick said they would run approximately \$12,000, which includes meal plan, as compared to \$14,000 for market rate housing.

Paul McGovern asked about the current occupancy rate of our residence halls. Dick explained that they are all full, noting that some of the freshman units are rented to other schools. He added that Wentworth requires freshmen and sophomores to live on campus, but now they need to attract the juniors and seniors, and they currently they do not have rooms that are attractive to them. Ultimately the plan is to de-densify some of the freshmen rooms to make them more appealing, and with enrollment projections around 4%, they will be able to achieve those target rates. Paul inquired whether the current dormitories could be reworked to accommodate those students, and Dick responded that it would not be possible without closing them down, and that is not an option.

Michael continued through the renderings, pointing out some of the changes noted earlier in the meeting. Additionally, he pointed out some additional changes:

- On the elevation renderings, he noted the height of the buildings, with a maximum height of 84 feet down to 78 feet on Vancouver Street (a 6 foot reduction).
- The overall mass of the building was reduced by lowering the exterior walls.
- Bay windows were added.

In response to a comment from the BRA Public Meeting, Michael presented some context perspectives to show what the building will look like from various locations in the surrounding area (e.g., the Fens, Evans Way Park, etc).

Before Katelyn opened it up to questions, Dick noted that in the past, Task Force members had asked about creating pathways for project-related construction jobs. He noted that Wentworth reached out to the Building Trades Council, and a representative will be at the Public meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup>. He reiterated Wentworth's commitment to achieving the goals in the Boston Job Ordinance, as well as make headway with the local residents as best they can.

## **Questions/Comments**

Cindy Brophy asked about the vision for the open/flexible spaces on the first floor, and whether there would be any commercial activity. Michael responded that it would be a meeting space for student and administrative groups, as well as public interest groups that could schedule the space through Wentworth. There is no plan for commercial use.

Pat Flaherty noted that at the last public meeting, issues had been raised relative to snow removal, and asked whether there was some way for that to be addressed. Dave and Dick responded that Wentworth already provides some snow removal services but can do more, adding that it is in Wentworth's best interest to be a good neighbor. Paul McGovern noted that Wentworth has been very helpful about snow removal, and asked if there was a way to remove cars from the street to plow more thoroughly. Dick responded that, right now, the street is unregulated so there is not a system in place. Currently, city plows cannot make it down the street, so they are forced to leave. At which point Wentworth clears the streets using their smaller plows.

Alison Pultinas asked if Wentworth still leased beds to other institutions. Dave responded that yes, Wentworth is currently leasing beds to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Emmanuel, and Mass College of Pharmacy, approximately 150 in total, in Evans Way and Rodgers Hall. Robert Chambers noted that it is not uncommon for colleges to lease rooms, adding that of the 493 beds in MassArt's new dormitory, 200 are leased to MCPHS.

Alison asked whether the corner of Huntington and Louis Prang was the appropriate location for meeting room space, questioning the visibility and Wentworth's use of the communal space in 555 Huntington. Dave noted Wentworth's need for meeting spaces, and the increased focus on interdisciplinary projects and collaboration, adding that this would help enliven Huntington Avenue.

Joyce Phillips noted that she was disappointed to see no standing area for student drop off. Dave pointed out a doorway on Vancouver Street (next to the trash area), which could potentially be used for short-term pick-up/drop-off.

Wade Phillips voiced his displeasure with the size of the building, commenting that it is very large in comparison to the residential buildings, and will essentially turn Vancouver Street into an alleyway. He expressed his concern about shadows, particularly in the winter, and reiterated his concern about the size. Paul McGovern noted that there have been similar effects from some of Wentworth's other buildings. Chris Byrne commented that the new building would immensely devalue the properties on Vancouver Street, and wondered how that would be addressed. He inquired about the need for such a tall building, and suggested reducing the height to match those on Vancouver Street. Dick explained that Wentworth proposed a 6 to 9 story building in the IMP, which was reduced to 7 stories (a reduction of over 30 feet). He added that this size is still financially feasible for Wentworth.

Dick empathized with the residents' concerns, but noted that the institute owns the land and acquired it with the purpose of building a dormitory. He noted that there are positive impacts to this project as well, noting the cleanup of the hazardous waste on the site.

Susan St. Clair asked about Chris Byrne's properties, and his interest in the project, noting the desire to have owner-operated homes in the area. Chris explained that he lives outside the City. Pat Flaherty followed up, inquiring about the ownership and history of 11 Vancouver Street. Chris explained that it was purchased in the mid-1960s, and operated as a fraternity with Northeastern. The fraternity is no longer associated with Northeastern but the alumni all share in its ownership. He explained that they rent the upper units to students and use the first floor for meeting space. In response to questions Chris noted that rent is paid to the fraternity and that the property is taxable.

Alison Pultinas asked about enrollment numbers, and why Wentworth increased the number of beds to 305 (up from 260 originally proposed in the IMP). Dick explained that the new number includes

modest growth over a 10-year period, and the goal of housing 95-100% of students. Wentworth noted that the current enrollment is just over 3,600 students. Annamaria added that the impact of mandating freshmen and sophomores to live on campus has increased retention.

Wade Phillips empathized with Wentworth's situation – owning the land and wanting to develop it – but emphasized that the building design is overwhelming for that space.

Katelyn reiterated that Wentworth would be submitting a DPIR, with a 45-day comment period. She pointed out her contact information at the bottom of the agenda. With no further questions, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:40pm.