

**Wentworth Institute of Technology
Community Task Force Meeting
Faculty/Staff Function Room, Beatty Hall**

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Minutes

BRA: Katelyn Sullivan, Project Manager

Task Force: Matilda Drayton, Alice Heyward Taylor Resident
Patricia Flaherty, Mission Hill, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
Bill Kantaros, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
James Kasida, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Judy Mercer, Alice Heyward Taylor Resident
Marta Rivera, Mission Hill Resident
Susan St. Clair, Mission Hill Resident, Problem Properties Task Force

Wentworth: Lula Drayton, Technical Assistant, Planning & Construction
Jim Greene, Project Counsel, Rubin & Rudman
Brian Healy, Design Consultant, Perkins+Will
Edward King, Project Consultant, Edward M. King & Associates
Judy Kohn, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates
Tom McCormack, Director, Planning & Construction
Mary Ollinger, Budget & Office Manager, Business & Finance
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs
Matthew Pierce, Design Consultant, Perkins+Will
Bob Totino, Vice President, Finance
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business

Public: Shaina Aubourg, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Matthew Brooks, Fenway Civic Association
Neil Conley, Local 7
Brennan Cooke, Fenway CDC
Simone Dodge, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Dorr Fox, Fenway CDC
Sarah Hamilton, MASCO
Jim Hoffman, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
Michael Kalambokis, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Katie Lauretano, Representative Sanchez's Office
Rebeca Oliveira, Mission Hill Gazette
Stephen Malley
Alex Mavradis, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Joyce Phillips, Vancouver Street resident
Wade Phillips, Vancouver Street resident
Alison Pultinas, Mission Hill resident
Johanna Sena, Councilor Ross's Office
Eddie Small, Boston Courant
Father Cleopas Strongylis, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Esther Wong, Vancouver Street resident

Welcome

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reviewed the agenda and introduced Sandy Pascal. Sandy thanked everyone for coming and introduced the Wentworth staff members and consultants.

Zoning Recap/PDA & IMP Amendment *(PowerPoint presentation available at www.wit.edu/imp)*

Jim Greene introduced himself and reviewed the agenda for the presentation. He showed Wentworth's Institutional Master Plan, and identified Sweeney Field as the site of the 500 Huntington Avenue project. He explained that moving the project forward requires a two-step approval process:

1. Zoning Map and Text Amendment to change the underlying zoning of the Sweeney Field site from *Institutional* to *Commercial* ("Wentworth Community Commercial CC-3 District") and allow for a Planned Development Area (PDA) Plan. Jim identified the other Community Commercial districts in Mission Hill: Brigham Circle (CC-1) and Parcel 25 (CC-2), and explained that the Zoning Map & Text Amendment application would be going to the Zoning Commission tomorrow.
2. Once the Zoning is changed, Wentworth can file a PDA plan for the site. Jim explained that a PDA plan is required for any commercial development, and provides specific details about what can be built on the site. It includes building uses, locations and dimensions; transportation and parking aspects; open spaces; etcetera. The PDA will go through an extensive community review process and must be approved by the Zoning Commission and the BRA.

Jim explained that, since Wentworth plans to utilize a portion of the development for its Center for Innovation in Engineering and Technology, it will need to go through another step to allow for Institutional Uses in the PDA:

3. Institutional Master Plan (IMP) Amendment to allow College or University Uses in the Planned Development Area.

He explained that Wentworth would be working on the application for the IMP Amendment and the application for the PDA at the same time, and that they would both go through a community review process.

Jim went through three slides: (1) a map of Mission Hill showing the existing zoning boundaries; (2) a narrative of the text amendment going to the zoning commission; and (3) a map showing the two existing community commercial districts (Brigham Circle and Parcel 25), plus the proposed Sweeney Field site. He also reiterated what would be covered in Wentworth's PDA filing, noting that if it is approved, Wentworth would sign into a number of agreements for the actual construction of the building, including the Boston Residents Construction Employment plan and Linkage.

500 Huntington Ave. Project Program

Jim provided an overview of the project:

- 640,000 GSF in three buildings on 3 acre Sweeney Field parcel (up to 97,400 SF Wentworth Center for Innovation in Engineering and Technology; Office, Research and Development, Laboratory Space, Services and Community Uses; up to 15,000 SF Retail/Commercial on ground floor level)
- Up to 490 parking spaces underground

- Buildings One and Two: six stories, 118' high to top of roof screen
- Building Three: 18 stories, 280' high to top of roof screen
- 64,000 SF of Open Space and Pedestrian Connections
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 5.0 (*FAR is the square footage of the proposed building divided by the size of the lot; it is a way of comparing overall density across sites*).

Jim outlined the public benefits of the project:

- Economic impact of over \$2 billion to the Boston economy over the first ten years including construction and permanent jobs
- Substantial housing and jobs linkage payments and tax revenue to the City of Boston
- Tenant will create jobs, co-op placements and internship opportunities for local residents and students
- Expanded Retail/Commercial opportunities will attract new businesses and employers to the area
- One-phase development will include the planned Wentworth Center for Innovation in Engineering and Technology

Jim asked if there were any questions.

- Pat Flaherty asked if Wentworth's jobs and Linkage agreements would happen during the Article 80 approval, since the project will be developed by a private developer under Article 80. Jim said it could either happen under Article 80 or that Wentworth could make the agreements during the PDA process and assign them to the developer as part of the obligations. He explained that the benefit is there's already an agreement in place before anything starts; it would be documented as a commitment. Sandy added that Wentworth could include it in the Request for Proposal process with the developer.
- Bill Kaneros asked about the heights and locations of the three buildings, and Brian Healy transitioned into project design.

500 Huntington Ave. Project Design

Brian Healy introduced himself and explained that his presentation would be brief, allowing plenty of time for questions. He explained that Wentworth has been working to refine the project and site layout, given the numerous institutional and neighborhood abutters. He explained that as the architect, he was charged with creating a building not only committed to Wentworth's mission, but also Wentworth's commitment to the neighborhood, providing as many public amenities as possible for the project. He explained that the project will create broader connections to the community through its use of pedestrian pathways and significant open space that would be open to the public (approximately 50% of the site). He reviewed a number of new images and renderings from different vantage points around the neighborhood emphasizing the open space and connections, and asked for feedback at the conclusion of the presentation.

Timeline

Jim reviewed the timeline for the project, noting that the dates have not been determined:

- Task Force/Community Meeting on Draft PDA (Tonight)

- BZC Hearing for approval of Text Amendment (Tomorrow)
- Wentworth file PDA and IMPNF-IMP Amendment
- Task Force /Community Meeting on PDA and IMPNF-Amendment
- 45 day Comment period on IMPNF-Amendment and PDA
- WIT file IMP Amendment
- Task Force/Community Meeting on IMP Amendment
- 60 Day Comment Period on IMP Amendment
- Task Force Meeting
- BRA Board Meeting recommending the PDA and approving IMP Amendment
- Zoning Commission Hearing approving PDA and IMP Amendment

Questions/Comments

- Bill Kanteros asked for clarification about the site uses under the CC zoning. Jim went back to the presentation slide with examples of allowed uses in a CC district, and explained that in the PDA document, the uses would be described in much more detail. He noted that Wentworth needs the CC zoning to move forward with the PDA, which is required to pursue a commercial development.
- Susan St. Clair asked for clarification about the “research/laboratory” use allowed in the CC zoning. Jim explained that it could be a high-tech lab use, adding that Wentworth is not interested in putting a Longwood Medical Area lab there. Dave reiterated that he does not envision it being a biological lab; Wentworth is interested in technology.
- Matilda Drayton apologized for missing the last meeting, and said that her only concerns are the height and location of the 18-story building. Jim explained that there would be more opportunities to talk about that once the documents are filed.
- Matthew Brooks, Fenway Civic Association, asked if the language in the Zoning Amendment could specify that the laboratory be used as a dry/technology lab and not a wet/biomedical lab. Jim explained that this is not the zoning for the project – it’s the underlying zoning for the site – and that it could be discussed in the PDA. Pat Flaherty said that it’s the underlying zoning that matters, and before Wentworth submits the PDA, that will be the zoning for the site. Jim agreed, but said that Wentworth will still own it. He explained that if the PDA didn’t go through – which would be a disaster for this project – Wentworth would push it back to an Institutional District. Pat said that the site could be sold with just the underlying zoning, emphasizing that the underlying zoning *does* matter. She noted that there are slight differences between each CC district. Jim explained that the allowed uses in this CC would be the same as the allowed uses in the CC1 and CC2 districts, noting that Wentworth did not add or remove anything. Going back to Mr. Brooks’ question, Katelyn explained that the map and text amendment have already been written and submitted but said that that Wentworth should talk about the specific uses—and limits—they envision for the site during the Zoning Commission hearing.
- Michael Kalambokis, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral, spoke on behalf of the Greek Cathedral. He explained that they don’t oppose the development of the area, noting that they’ve seen many changes since the cathedral was built. He expressed their love of the neighborhood and their neighbors. However, he expressed concern for the placement of the 18-story building, which would obstruct their view of Huntington Avenue and the Museum of Fine Arts. He noted that the cathedral had met with the development team and outlined their thoughts on the best way to place the building. He

also expressed concern about Wentworth taking on a venture – where it's not theirs – for the first time. Jim explained that, while it's a first for Wentworth, it has been done before in the area. Michael reiterated that once it's no longer used by the institution, there are a lot of things to worry about, including the possibility of future development and future sale.

Michael outlined the following concerns, emphasizing the need for community input in every aspect:

- Planning & development
- Zoning changes and regulations
- Architectural drawings and proposed uses
- Excavation & engineering studies
- Project impacts (environmental, shadow, water table, moisture, traffic, redirection of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, wind, the scope and size of proposed development, the size and placement of 18-story building, obstructed line of sight).
- Impacts during construction (e.g., vehicle and pedestrian traffic, parking, street closures, impacts on mid-week services).
- Impacts after construction (e.g., vehicle and pedestrian traffic, commercial loading, cathedral parking, building damage).

Jim empathized with Michael's comments, saying they seem like the same concerns anyone would have in connection to a sizeable project like this. He explained that once Wentworth files the documents, the BRA will ask them to address all of those concerns, and they will begin doing studies. He noted that that's how the process works and that's why the BRA sets comment periods, emphasizing that Wentworth will provide the information.

- Allison Pultinas asked what the 490 parking spaces will be associated with. Jim explained that the spaces would be used for the entire development, including spaces for retail and potentially Wentworth, as they plan to use up to 97,000 square feet of the development). Allison noted that it is a high destination for transit, and said that it doesn't make sense to have a garage.
- Alison asked for clarification about the architect's comment that 50% of the site would be open to the public. Brian explained that half of the site would be open space, and the other half would be the footprint of the buildings.
- Alison asked whether Wentworth was planning to make any changes to the Pedestrian Link on, Parker Street, which is a very dangerous mid-block crossing. There was a brief conversation about the crossing, and Jim explained that Wentworth would explore the issue with Boston Transportation Department (BTD). Alison said the best thing Wentworth could do for the site is to improve the sidewalk conditions on Ruggles Street for pedestrians and bicyclists, and she asked whether that was happening. Jim responded that it was.
- Alison asked if the 40-foot yard was being reserved for open space or for the transit reservation for the urban ring tunnel, and Brian responded that it was for the transit reservation.
- Susan St. Clair asked when all these studies – traffic, wind, shadow, etc. – would take place. Jim explained that Wentworth would begin studies as soon as they file the

document. He explained that the BRA will tell Wentworth what to study, based on their findings and people's comments. Katelyn explained that Wentworth has done some preliminary studies, but that as comments come forward, the BRA will ask those studies to be done as part of the scoping determination.

- Wade Philips, Vancouver street resident, commented that the road conditions in this area are very poor, noting that last year someone was killed at the intersection of Huntington and Ruggles, just standing there. He commented that it's a major intersection for emergency service vehicles – Boston Fire Department, Boston Police Headquarters, Longwood Medical Area – and that adding 500 vehicles to the area seems excessive. He added that he has major concerns about cars entering and exiting the parking garage on such a narrow street, particularly during rush hour. He said he knows it will be addressed, but he's going to keep pressing the issue.
- A question was asked about the location of the parking garage entrance. Brian explained that, the goal was to keep it off of Huntington and Ruggles and as far from the Parker/Ruggles intersection as possible. He explained that that had a lot to do with the location of the tower – to help facilitate moving the parking entrance as far away from the intersection as possible. He explained that, in an effort to prevent traffic disruptions, the loading dock would be located inside the parking garage and there would be several extended ramps for the parking queue.
- Brennan Cooke expressed her concern about the safety of the pedestrian walkways of the project. Brian apologized and said that the lines may be misleading. He explained that some of the lines are not meant to suggest pedestrian walkways, but rather symbolic connections across Ruggles and Parker. Brennan asked if they had considered any alternatives, such as footbridges or something similar. Brian said it's a very good point, and something that has been brought up numerous times. He reiterated that the symbolic connections are misleading, and will be changed; and that any street crossings would take place at crosswalks. Brennan requested that it does take a long time for pedestrians to get to campus from Ruggles, and that she would like to see that issue addressed during the project development. Brian explained that when they look at vehicular traffic, they will definitely look at pedestrian traffic.
- Susan St. Clair commented that someone was killed at the corner of Ruggles and Huntington, noting that traffic and the MBTA Green Line making pedestrian crossing particularly dangerous. She said it's already a disaster and that this project is just going to make it more difficult. Katelyn noted that Wentworth could have a Task Force meeting at some point dedicated to traffic and impacts, adding that she could invite the area's transportation planner, who would take the concerns under consideration as she's writing her comments.
- A member of the public asked if the BRA has a Master Plan for the area, and whether that will come into play as they review this project for the zoning change. Katelyn explained that each neighborhood is bound by its own zoning code. The man asked if there is some sort of plan that steers the zoning code, to say whether this zoning fits into the plan for the area. Katelyn explained that this has come up before but besides zoning there's no area-wide "plan" for Mission Hill or specific planning study for the Avenue of the Arts, adding that there is a Mission Hill planner at the BRA who reviews all projects in context and considers them all together and their impacts. She added that BRA urban design staff also looks at all the projects in context not just architecturally. Specifically, she pointed to the PowerPoint slide that BRA urban design staff requested of Wentworth that shows the current project in context with the other larger buildings along Huntington

Avenue. She also explained that other smaller areas have plans – or studies – right now in the city, but there's not an area plan for Mission Hill.

- The member of the public asked Wentworth would propose any mitigation efforts to offset the impacts of the 500-car parking garage. Katelyn said there would absolutely be mitigation with the project. She added that she recently reviewed Wentworth's IMP document, approved in 2011, and the BTD had commented that they would need to do their own review of this project and would like Wentworth to look at reducing the number of parking spaces. The member of the public asked if it would be possible for some of the mitigation to go towards more mass transit for the area, noting the MBTA's plan to end Green Line service at Brigham Circle on weekends. He explained that, if you're going to have a trip generator come into the area, they could do some mitigation efforts towards mass transit or bicycles. Katelyn said she thought that would be possible, and encouraged him to put that in a comment letter
- The man followed up on a question that was asked earlier, about limiting some of the uses. He said it to make more sense to limit the uses at the zoning stage, rather than when the building is being built, since zoning has to do with the uses. He said it seems like if the uses are going to be restricted, this would be the time to do it. Katelyn explained that the uses are restricted to what Jim had discussed, so in that sense, they are limiting the uses for the area. He responded that, even though Wentworth isn't proposing those uses, five years from now the project may change and no one will remember what was promised. Katelyn explained that the uses will be in Wentworth's filing – and in the PDA and IMP Amendment – and they can't diverge from that; if they do, they have to go through the whole process again. Whoever goes into the building will be held to those uses. Jim reiterated that if they would want to use it for something other than what's detailed in the plan, they would have to go through the process again for approval. He added that the plan will get more refined and specific in the PDA.
- Susan St. Clair asked whether the zoning still applies if the property gets sold. Jim responded that it is, and that it can't be changed without start over and going through the process again.
- Allison Pultinas asked if Wentworth has talked to the Museum of Fine Arts, and whether there is a MFA representative on the Task Force now. Katelyn said there is not. Sandy explained that Wentworth has already met with them once and that they already have another meeting scheduled. Allison commented that it seems the MFA is going to be very affected by this project, and that Wentworth may want to consider adding a representative to the Task Force.
- Wade Phillips asked when the initial PDA is expected to be filed. Jim explained that Wentworth has to submit a preliminary draft to the BRA to make sure the language is appropriate, and that they are hoping to file by the end of the month. Wentworth will put a notice in the paper – and notify the Task Force and give them hard copies – and then there's a comment period. Jim added that Wentworth is anxious to get the process started. Wade asked how the public gets notified about the filing. Katelyn explained that the BRA always sends hard copies to the Task Force, and electronic copies can be found on the BRA website and on Wentworth's website. She added that if he could email/call her if he would like to receive a hard copy.

With no further questions or comments, Katelyn adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:15pm.