

**Wentworth Institute of Technology DPIR
BRA Public Meeting
Faculty/Staff Function Room, Beatty Hall**

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

Minutes

**Wentworth/
Panel:** Michael Coleman, Design Consultant, Beacon Architectural Associates
Jamie Fay, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates
Judith Kohn, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates
Mary Ollinger, Budget & Office Manager, Wentworth
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP for Community Relations, Wentworth
Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”)
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant, Towle & Associates
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President for Business, Wentworth

Task Force: Cynthia A. Brophy, Fenway
Adelline Stallings, Mission Main
Patricia Flaherty, Mission Hill, MHNHS
Sheneal Parker, Fenway, Fenway CDC
Carrie Simon, Mission Main

Public: Mort Ahmadifar, MHNHS
Phil Bernard, Wentworth (Housing & Residential Life)
Matthew Brooks, Fenway Civic
Chris Byrne, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)
Jim Cronin, the Warren Group
Frank D’Orso, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)
Anne-Marie Desroches, Mission Hill
Lula Drayton, Wentworth (Planning & Construction)
Mark Fortune, Building and Construction Trades Council
Joyce Foster, Fenway CDC
Betty Galvin, Mission Hill Resident
Catherine Gallagher, Back of the Hill, MHNHS
Phil Hammond, Wentworth (College of Professional & Continuing Education)
James Hoffman, MHNHS
Jenn Kosses, Wentworth (Assistant Dean of Students)
Katie Lauretano, Representative Sanchez’s Office
Erik Miller, Wentworth, Center for Community and Learning Partnerships
Mike Pankievich, Wentworth (Physical Facilities)
Joyce Phillips, Vancouver Street resident
Wade Phillips, Vancouver Street resident
Carmen Pola, Mission Hill, ABCD/PHF
Jennifer Reyes, Sociedad Latina
Jessica Rosario, ABCD Parker Hill/Fenway
Susan St. Clair, Mission Hill Resident, Problem Properties Task Force
Maria Sanchez, MHNHS
Johanna Sena, Councilor Ross’s Office
Kevin Smith, Wentworth, Planning & Construction
Dave Tamasy, Gamma Phi Kappa Association (11 Vancouver Street)
Nicholas Torres, Wentworth Student Government
Marty Walsh, Boston Building Trades Council
David Welch, MHNHS
Annamaria Wenner, Wentworth (Dean of Students)
Diane Williams, Alice Heyward Taylor
Luanne Witkowski, Mission Hill Resident, Problem Properties Task Force
Esther Wong, Vancouver Street resident

Welcome and Overview of Process

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone to the public meeting for Wentworth's Draft Project Impact Report ("DPIR") for the student apartments at 525 Huntington project. She introduced herself and reminded everyone that the residence hall was included in Wentworth's Institutional Master Plan ("IMP") in 2010 as a proposed project, and the use, location, massing and height were approved. She explained that tonight Wentworth would be discussing the design and impacts of the building, noting that the comment period for the DPIR ends on November 12th. The BRA will then review the comments, and the BRA Board will issue an adequacy determination on November 15th.

Sandy Pascal welcomed everyone to the meeting. She expressed her excitement for the new dormitory project, and noted that Wentworth has worked hard to meet with its abutters and adjust the design of the building to try to meet their needs.

Dave Wahlstrom introduced the Wentworth staff members in attendance and urged the public to feel free to ask them any questions. He provided some background on the previous Master Plan (approved in 2000), specifically the addition of beds and Wentworth's transition to a residential campus.

- 2001: Wentworth opens residence hall at 610 Huntington Ave, adding 464 beds.
- 2002: Wentworth purchases and renovates 66 Louis Prang, adding 12 beds. Wentworth also begins offering students 12-month leases.
- 2005: Wentworth opens residence hall at 555 Huntington Ave, adding 355 beds.
- 2007: Wentworth acquires 525 and 634 Huntington Ave as sites for future residence halls.
- 2009: Wentworth gives Mass Art 4,400 SF of land for the construction of a 493 bed residence hall with Mass College of Pharmacy. Wentworth also introduces policy that sophomores (not living at home) would be required to live on campus (beginning fall 2011).
- 2010: Wentworth donates 8,000 SF land parcel on Gurney Street to Mission Hill for the planning and construction of a new senior housing facility.
- 2011: Wentworth renews Institutional Master Plan.

Dave explained that one of the major goals of the current Master Plan was to strengthen the on-campus amenities to support a vibrant residential community. Starting with the campus center, amenities include an updated food service operation, fitness center, recreation facilities and student program offices. Additionally, as part of the Master Plan, Wentworth built their first academic building since 1972, an addition onto Ira Allen – known as *the Center for Sciences and Biomedical Engineering* ("CSBE") – allowing for state of the art facilities.

Looking ahead, Dave explained that the hope is to break ground on the Students Apartments @ 525 Huntington in the spring of 2013, and open in the fall of 2014. Adding 305 beds, this project is designed specifically to attract upper class students (3rd, 4th & 5th year). He also pointed out the other projects approved in the Master Plan – the Center for Engineering & Technology (in 2017-2018) and the Relocation of Sweeney Field (in 2018-2019 or 2019-2020). He added that outside of the master plan – in at least another ten years – Wentworth plans to turn 634 Huntington Ave into a another residence hall, adding approximately 100 more beds.

Student Apartments @ 525 Huntington

Dick Towle reiterated how much Wentworth has done to address the issue of bringing students back onto campus. In addition to mandating that sophomores live on campus, he highlighted Dean of

Student's outreach program to upperclassmen and their parents. He explained that the program for the residence hall is in direct response to her efforts, and the issues students cited for moving off campus.

Dick noted that Wentworth's student population (including coop students) is approximately 3,600 full-time students, of which 1,850 live on campus. He identified approximately 1,325 true commuters – 1,100 commuting from metropolitan Boston and 225 commuting from their parent's homes in Boston – which leaves an average of 375 upper-class (3rd through 5th year) students living in the neighborhood. Dick noted that this project is targeting that specific population, adding that if they can attract 305 of them, Wentworth will be providing housing to 97% of the students seeking local housing in the City of Boston. He added that there will always be a small percentage of students that not live on campus for religious, cultural, health, or psychological reasons.

Dick explained that, based on student feedback, 3rd through 5th year students want apartment-style housing – with full kitchens, dining areas, living rooms, in-unit washer & dryer, high quality finishes, granite countertops, and dishwashers – comparable to what they could find in an apartment off campus. Dick noted that the project has all of those amenities, and to fulfill another request by upperclassmen, the majority of the bedrooms are single-occupancy to give them more privacy. He explained that unlike workforce housing, all utilities, internet, cable television, and a basic dining plan are included along with security, programming and activities. At a rate 20% less than apartments in the neighborhood, Dick emphasized that students have a significant incentive to be on campus.

Dick described the triangular site plan, bounded by Huntington Avenue, Louis Prang, and Vancouver Street. He reiterated that the project adheres to what was approved in the IMP in terms of size and height, and is actually slightly smaller. He noted that, as stated in the IMP, the building will provide 305 beds and be a maximum of 84 feet / 7 stories high. The square footage of the building is down to approximately 109,672 square feet (from 119,000 approved in the master plan). The building footprint has been reduced to 12,665 square feet to allow for the creation of a 2,300 square foot public green space and a wider sidewalk on Louis Prang (from 9 feet to 15 feet). Dick explained that this reduction was accomplished by improving the efficiency of the building, and that the program still includes 71 units and 305 beds (207 singles and 49 doubles).

Michael introduced himself and expressed his excitement about the project. He noted that most of the slides will look familiar, but they reflect the latest design revisions: the additional setback on Louis Prang, the development of the park, and some revisions to the exterior detailing. He gave a brief overview of the building, and highlighted the following changes:

- The Louis Prang sidewalk was widened, allowing for both trees and pedestrian access.
- The Vancouver sidewalk was also widened, allowing for trees and a small planting area which provides screening for the loading area.
- The dumpster at the corner of Louis Prang and Vancouver was removed. Trash will still be stored in that room, but it will be taken offsite to another dumpster on campus, reducing the need for trash pickup.
- A public space was added at the corner of Huntington and Louis Prang.
- The public plaza will have a sculpture, potentially designed by the Industrial Design students.
- The housing department was relocated to the corner of Huntington and Vancouver, which reduced the number of units from 72 to 71.
- A Hubway station was added on along Huntington to discourage pedestrian cut through.
- The entrance to the building was moved from the back corner more into the plaza area.
- Plantings were added to create a buffer between the plaza and the residential units.

Michael reviewed a typical unit plan and a number of perspective views, stressing how the scale, materials, and design fit well in the context of the neighborhood.

Jamie Fay introduced himself, and explained that Fort Point was responsible for putting together the DPIR and would be reviewing the contents tonight. He described the environmental impacts of the project, focusing on Wentworth's commitment to sustainability. He noted that Wentworth would be working with abutters to develop a Construction Management Plan outlining policies to limit impacts during construction, including loading/unloading areas, pedestrian reroutes, and work hours. It will be approved by the City and all contractors will be required to follow the terms.

Dave reviewed a number of services that Wentworth provides to the Vancouver Street neighborhood, noting that many of them were discussed at the last meeting but that it had been suggested they be formally documented. He went on to identify a number of additional services that would be provided during construction of the building. He gave a number of examples of how Wentworth has fulfilled its commitments in the past, and emphasized that Wentworth takes its commitments very seriously.

Dick spoke about the public benefits of the project and introduced Marty Walsh, from the Building Trades Council, to talk more about opportunities for people to get into the trades. Marty talked about *Building Pathways*, a seven week pre-apprentice program and career pathway into the construction industry. He answered a few questions about the process, and Katelyn opened up the meeting for public questions and comments.

Questions/Comments

- Katie Lauritano spoke in support of the project on behalf of Representative Sanchez.
- Johanna Sena spoke in support of the project on behalf of Councilor Ross.
- Maria Sanchez spoke in support of the project, and invited other schools with students living in Mission Hill to do the same [*build more student housing*].
- Nicholas Torres spoke in support of the project. He noted that there will always be some students who refuse to live on campus. However, bringing these amenities to student housing – and focusing on the needs of 4th and 5th year students – was a great idea.
- Pat Flaherty spoke in support of the project on behalf of Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services. She noted that conversations surrounding the behavioral and economic impacts of students living in Mission Hill date back to 2000. She thanked Wentworth for taking the issues seriously and implementing policies and practices to bring students back onto campus. She also thanked and commended Wentworth for working closely with abutters and being responsive to issues and concerns raised by the community.
- Joyce Foster spoke in support of the project on behalf of the Fenway CDC. She noted that they have been watching this project carefully, and that they are extremely impressed by the percent of students this project will result in bringing on campus. She noted that students in the neighborhood has been a burning issue in the Fenway, and applauded Wentworth for putting together a plan that accomplishes so much.
- Carmon Pola spoke in support of the project. She congratulated the BRA staff for putting together the meeting and for making a complicated process more understandable. She also congratulated Wentworth on the beautiful building, and expressed her pleasure with Wentworth bringing its students back on campus, and keeping them on campus. She asked if the wider sidewalk has been looked at as far as accessibility, and Michael Coleman responded that it has and that the site and building are fully accessible.

- Luanne Witkowski spoke in support of the project, saying that not only will the building improve the quality of life on Mission Hill, but it's nice to see a school recognize that an education goes beyond the classroom. She thanked Wentworth and the BRA for making everything run smoothly, adding that this is a great example of how the community and institutions can work together to make things happen.
- David Welch spoke in support of the project. He said he remembered when institutions were not quite as open, but that most of them have gotten the message by now. He commended Wentworth for being an institution that got the message early on, and said they've done a wonderful job on these plans and on future plans.
- Frank D'Orso spoke against the project. He explained that his fraternity ended about ten years ago, and that they have since poured about \$330,000 into refurbishing the property because they care about the neighborhood, adding that they work with their neighbors, including the Wongs. He said that a lot of the fraternity is still involved, with roughly 400 active alumni. He asked that Wentworth and the BRA take a look at the neighborhood on Vancouver Street – there are only three homes left – and the owners are interested in keeping their homes, not necessarily moving or selling.

Frank explained that the fraternity has done a lot to improve the neighborhood, recalling a time in 1984 when the gas station was overgrown with weeds and he and his friends got permission from the City and weeded the gas station. He emphasized that he would like the project to reflect more of the park and less of the building, more of the neighborhood and less of Wentworth's vision, adding that Vancouver Street will never have sunlight if this goes through.

Frank asked the group what happens when Wentworth goes after their neighborhoods, they'll want someone to represent them and their interests, noting that the politicians didn't attend the meeting but sent their assistants. He said Mr. Wong fought in D-Day and shouldn't have to sell his home. He noted that the Museum of Fine Art's parking garage was only allowed to be as high as it was because of the neighborhood, and emphasized that he was against approvals for anything more than a 3-story building.

Katelyn explained that the size and height had been approved in the IMP. Frank responded that some people were hearing about the project for the first time, and as a homeowner in the neighborhood he was concerned and would like the opportunity to hear a response from Wentworth.

Dick explained that Wentworth went through a three year master planning process, which included community charrettes, as well as the formal Article 80 process, and at least 12 advertised meetings. The institute had sought approval for a 9 story building, but because of feedback from the community, Wentworth was responsive and reduced it to 7 stories.

Dick added that Mr. D'Orso is not a home owner; he is a member of an association that has 460 members that rents two apartments to students who are unsupervised.

- Susan St. Clair spoke in support of the project. She introduced herself – pointing out that she is a homeowner and a homeowner who lives in her home, noting that she has put a significant amount of money into her house and that she is very involved in the community. While the Vancouver residents have the problem of shade, her street has the problem of being run out of the neighborhood by the students. She noted that they have more problems than you could imagine from the students, and she wants more dormitories and more encouragement for the students living in the dormitories. She commended Wentworth for going above and beyond what is necessary, and for trying to accommodate the needs of 4th and 5th year students.
- Jennifer Reyes spoke in support of the project on behalf Sociedad Latina, saying that Wentworth has been a great partner and that they see great opportunities here.

- Kathryn Gallagher spoke in support of the project. She noted that they have built hundreds of units of affordable housing, but people can't enjoy them as much as they have in the past. She said that Wentworth has been an example to the other institutions in the area, and suggested they follow suit.
- Matthew Brooks spoke in support of the project on behalf of the Fenway CDC, adding that any student housing helps the situation. He acknowledged a few minor concerns about leasing beds to other schools – and assisting with enrollment creep – but voiced their full support for the project.
- Jessica Rosario spoke in support of the project on behalf of ABCD Parker Hill/Fenway, as well as many Mission Hill families.
- Mort Ahmadifar spoke in support of the project. He said he understood Vancouver residents' concern about the shade, but explained that it was hard for him to be too sympathetic with the student behavior he's experiencing in his neighborhood. He noted that there are only three owner-occupied buildings remaining on his street, and that you can't have it both ways – if you're going to get students out of the neighborhood you have to build dorms.

Mort mentioned Wentworth's support for the Mission Hill Little League, and thanked Wentworth for their generosity. He concluded by saying that after students graduate, you want them to stay in the city; but they cannot afford to live here. He reiterated that you can't have it both ways.

- Wade Phillips spoke against the project. He explained that he and his family live across the street, and have known the people at Wentworth for thirty years. He is a proud graduate of Wentworth, and understands that they have an important interest here. But he explained that he also lives here and has watched the whole neighborhood be eaten up by Wentworth, adding that most of the residents are gone and only 8-10 of the units are resident livable.

Wade noted that everyone who has spoken does not live right here. He said that they don't object – they're not questioning Wentworth's integrity or whether they should build a dorm – but that a 7-story dorm is not necessary right here, and couldn't it be put elsewhere. He explained that the building will tower over them, allowing only 13% sunlight in their building all year long. He concluded by saying that they don't object to Wentworth's commitment to the community – owning the land, putting something there – but that a 7-story building just cuts off the neighborhood.

- Joyce Phillips spoke against the project. She noted that they live right in the middle of the students too, and have dealt with it for years. She said she hopes the building lives up to everyone's expectations. She explained that when Wentworth was building 555 Huntington, their building shook constantly. Her mom was sick in bed and was afraid the building was going to fall down. She understands that this new building is happening, but she wants proper measures to be taken to mitigate the impacts. Katelyn noted that they would be involved in the development of the Construction Management Plan.
- Nicholas Torres responded to a previous comment, noting that he had been a Vancouver resident for two years – and just recently moved to Louis Prang – so he knew the impact the project will have on Vancouver Street. He still fully supports the project.
- Maria Sanchez responded to a previous comment about politicians not being present at the meeting. She noted that the people most affected by the situation are – the residents and the committees.

Katelyn adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:40pm, reiterating that all comments are due by November 12th and that her contact information could be found on the agenda.