

**Wentworth Institute of Technology IMPNF
BRA Public Meeting
Wednesday, October 20, 2010**

Minutes

Task Force: Cindy Brophy, Susan D'Amato, Matilda Drayton, Pat Flaherty, Judie Mercer, Sheneal Parker

Wentworth: David Damon, Design Consultant, Perkins+Will
Sean Manning, Traffic Consultant, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin
Mary Ollinger, Executive Assistant, Business & Finance
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business
Al Spagnolo, Design Consultant, Spagnolo Gisness & Associates
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant, Fallon Towle Associates
Annamaria Wenner, Associate VP, Student Affairs
Dane Zdunowski, Coordinator, Center for Community & Learning Partnerships

Public: Kathryn Brookins, Mission Hill News
Maria Jaen Centeno, Office of State Representative Jeffrey Sanchez
Kate Chang, Office of Congressman Michael Capuano
Kevin Cooke, Bond Brothers
Jane D'Angelo, Resident
Helen Frank, Resident
Richard Giordano, Resident
Summer Jackson, Office of State Representative Gloria Fox
Randy Kreie, Resident
Gloria Murray, Resident
David Nicholas, Resident
Rebeca Oliveira, JP & Mission Hill Gazette
Johanna Sena, Office of Boston City Councilor Mike Ross
Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Gary Walker, Local 103 IBEW
Betty Wallar, Resident
Callie Watkins, Fenway CDC
David Wilhelmi, Resident

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She briefly reviewed the steps Wentworth has taken in the IMP process over the last couple years. She reminded everyone that Wentworth filed its Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPNF) 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, and on September 29th Wentworth submitted their institutional Master Plan (IMP), initiating a 60-day comment period that ends on November 29th.

Sandy pointed out some of the major accomplishments that came out of the last IMP: the addition of two new dormitories and 903 beds; freshman and sophomore housing mandates; the

Office of Community Relations; and the growth of community scholarships. She acknowledged the ongoing partnership between Wentworth and the community, and thanked the community for their support.

She introduced Dane from the Center for Community Learning and Partnerships, and encouraged people to stop by the table after the meeting to pick up literature about the Center, and to talk to Dane about opportunities for projects and collaboration.

Dick thanked everyone for coming, and for the participation of everyone over the last 2.5 years. He added that some have been involved for 11 years, having gone through the last IMP process. Moving to the PowerPoint, he spoke briefly about the seven strategic objectives of the IMP: (1) Provide More Student Housing; (2) Update Academic Facilities; (3) Strengthen Core Campus & Student Life Programs; (4) Improve Campus Edges; (5) Enhance Pedestrian Connections; (6) Promote Responsible Student Behavior; and (7) Achieve New Levels of Sustainability.

Dick gave a brief overview of each of the Proposed New Projects in the IMP. He acknowledged the Proposed Future Projects, noting that Wentworth is seeking *no approvals* for these projects and they are only being explored. Should Wentworth decide to move forward with any of the projects, they would need to go through a complete community process. He then reviewed the existing conditions of the campus, and turned it over to Dave to talk about the academic programs.

Dave explained that Wentworth is coming up on its 100th year of teaching, having opened its doors in September 1911 as a vocational school. Focused on the trades, Wentworth has always been career-focused. He noted that since the last Community Task Force Meeting, the Board of Trustees approved three new programs for the Fall semester of 2011: Biomedical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. He added that these would not have a significant impact on enrollment – approximately 100 students, with 55 coming out of existing programs.

Dick talked about Wentworth's projected enrollment and student housing numbers, noting that Wentworth's goal is to house 97% of its students. He then introduced the architecture firms to describe each of the proposed projects in more detail.

Al Spagnolo (Spagnolo Gisness Associates) provided an overview of the new campus center project – the *Flanagan Campus Center at Beatty Hall*. He noted that the addition/renovation would be approximately 23k SF, with approximately 2k on the quad side and a larger addition on the Ward Street side. The addition on the quad side (1,800 SF) would be transparent and promote student life, and the addition on the Ward side would create a new entry and general improvements to make the area more friendly and transparent. He showed views from both sides and spoke about the major improvements along Ward Street – new lighting, new landscaping, and a pedestrian connection from Ward Street to the Pike to increase connectivity between Mission Hill and the quad.

Dick remarked that the community had consistently said that the Ward Street entrance felt like a “back door” and that many of these improvements were in response to their feedback. He introduced Annamaria Wenner to talk about the campus center programming, and noted her successful history of initiating programs to bring students on campus.

Annamaria began by recognizing the 45+ active clubs/organizations on campus, with 78% of students involved in at least one during their tenure at Wentworth. She noted that survey results show that students are looking for non-alcohol related events and healthier alternatives on campus. She explained that as part of this process, they looked at existing spaces to examine how they could better utilize these spaces to meet their needs. She acknowledged the "Weekends at WIT" program, which has been recognized nationally by the Coalition of Alcohol Prevention. She explained that all students that receive a drug or alcohol violation are fined, and the fine money goes directly into weekend programming, which typically attract between 200-250 students a night. Another new initiative that has been particularly successful is the special interest housing in residence halls for incoming freshmen, so students with similar interests – wellness, women in technology, leadership, video gaming, the arts, etc. – can live together in cohorts with shared interests. These cohorts are required to do programming for all students, which has been successful. They have received excellent feedback from students, and have received requests to offer similar special interest housing options to upperclassmen.

She emphasized that Wentworth shares the desire to have its students out of the neighborhood, and living on campus. She explained that students have a higher GPA and persist at a higher rate when they live on campus. She remarked that she is very proud of the new housing mandate requiring sophomores to live on campus, adding that the feedback from parents has been great and that it saves the parents from having that conversation with their children. She explained that they have switched their strategy for bring students on campus, and really target the parents, noting that they are the ones that pay the bills and make the decisions.

Annamaria spoke briefly about the first year seminar, and how it promotes responsible behavior, ethical decision-making, and their responsibility to their community – both at Wentworth and the greater community. She acknowledged the wonderful work of the Center for Community Learning & Partnerships, and their numerous collaborations.

Kathryn Brookins asked about the tax implications of bringing students on campus. She noted that she was obliged to oppose Wentworth's plans to bring students into on-campus housing, which is free from real estate tax, adding that she would like the names of the attendees from the meetings that were part of making this decision. She asked how much the new buildings would cost and where the funds will come from.

Dick explained that by bringing students onto campus, it takes the pressure off working housing. As far as tax responsibilities, he explained that Wentworth has been a leader on the Mayors PILOT Task Force, and that the Master Plan calls for them to develop a new plan in accordance with their findings. He added that Wentworth fundamentally disagrees with her point of view, but welcomes her opinions.

He explained that the first project – the Flanagan Campus Center at Beatty Hall – will cost approximately \$10m and will be funded by a gift from Mr. Flanagan. The second project – the addition to Ira Allen – will cost approximately \$12m and will be funded from cash set aside from the institute's operating budget. He noted that the other projects would move forward as cash becomes available. The third project – the Student Residence at 525 Huntinton Avenue – will cost approximately \$53m and will be funded by transfers from the operating budget and the issuance of tax-exempt financing when debt capacity rebuilds in 3-4 years. The remaining projects would be at least five years out, and would be funded by a mix a philanthropy and funds transferred from the operating budget.

Kathryn asked who Wentworth will get their bond issue from, and Dick responded that it would be a general bond issue – perhaps through MA Development or HEFA, or another organization that issues tax-exempt bond issues.

At this point, David Damon (Perkins+Will) provided 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:
 - Would run parallel to the Pike at the back edge of the West Lot; would provide a new entry point for the campus.
 - Approximately 45k SF. 3 10-foot stories (plus penthouse) for total height of 55 feet.
- New Sweeney Field on Parker Street:
 - Regulation-size soccer field. Fencing around, parking below (330 spaces).
 - 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.

Dick remarked that a substantial amount of work went into getting this idea right, adding that the community sees a lot of opportunity for this project – so there was a lot of interest and feedback. He noted that the reason there are so many images is to make sure we they got right – even though it's not up for project review.

At this point, Sean Manning (Vanasse Hangen Brustlin) began the transportation part of the presentation. He explained that their role was to examine the impacts of the proposed projects based on criteria put forth by the BRA in the IMPNF scoping document.

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

According to their 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 (320), Wentworth would be able to reach projected peak occupancy of 74%. Sean added that the additional spaces are necessary to accommodate special events on campus, including graduation, move in/move out, open houses, family weekends, etc.

Sean also talked about improvements Wentworth plans to make as far as pedestrian and bicycle access, specifically lighting, landscaping, improved way finding. He noted that Boston is implementing a number of new policies that require new projects to promote bicycle use. He added that, through the Colleges of the Fenway, Wentworth will be involved in the new bike

share program being rolled out next year, and a number of transportation demand management efforts. He also touched on Wentworth's move in/move out processes, noting that nothing will really change with the projects proposed in the IMP, adding that Wentworth already has policies in place to reduce the impacts.

Sean 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.

Kathryn Brookins asked whether they use the letter system to assess the effectiveness of the current traffic system. Sean responded that they do, and explained that they look at the intersection as a whole and assign letter grades to help non-technical people understand the intersection. Kathryn asked if they could provide a map of the existing conditions. Sean responded that all the studies could be found in the IMP, and that he would be happy to talk to her after the meeting. Dick later pointed the map out on page 114.

Dick described some additional pedestrian improvements to the campus – the portal through Wentworth Hall, the enhanced pedestrian pathway between Tansey and Beatty, a new sidewalk on the westerly side of Mindoro, and improvements to the Pike and around the new soccer field.

David Damon spoke about the Urban Design Guidelines and sustainable design

Sandy was introduced to talk about community benefits. She explained how we came up with our numbers, using the Mission Hill Summer Camp as an example. She multiplied the 60 neighborhood youths (between 6 and 13) times the number of classrooms (4 to 6) times the square footage, plus dollars for the junior counselors and housing for the college students that assist with the program. And then she multiplied that number times 10 years.

Sandy spoke briefly about Wentworth's tax assistance program (VITA) and STRIVE, a work transition program for special needs youths, that has had over 1,500 students over the last 20 years. She also talked about the growth of scholarships for the community, dollars contributed towards community policing on Mission Hill, as well as in kind and cash donations.

She concluded by saying that partnerships are a two way street, noting that Wentworth has done nice things for the neighborhood, but that the neighborhood has given Wentworth wonderful opportunities – for faculty, staff, and students – noting specifically being part of the Parcel 25 planning process and the collaboration on the senior building.

Dick Towle encouraged the group to read the community benefits section, pointing out that it is available online at www.wit.edu/imp.

Summer Jackson, from Gloria Fox's Office, asked if the presentation slides would be made available, and Dick said they would be posted on the website.

Ms. Jackson also commented on the value of making buildings transparent, but not so transparent that the public is seeing students in their pajamas. Dick replied that it would primarily be dining facilities on the main floor, adding that Wentworth is trying to have transparency where they can, but it should be something that is bright and welcoming.

A member of the public asked about Wentworth's LEED certifications, and Dick replied that Wentworth has committed to at least LEED silver on each project, adding that Wentworth also plans to capture the water runoff for irrigation. Dick noted that the sustainability portion of Wentworth's IMP is the longest he's ever seen.

A member of the public pointed out the potential security risk of having buildings be more open and accessible, and asked if Wentworth addressed this in their IMP. Dick responded that it's a push-pull issue, with residence halls being fully secured with card access, and buildings like Beatty Hall – that are meant to be open – being handled differently. He added that Wentworth has its own campus police force.

Pat Flaherty thanked Wentworth for their responsiveness. She remarked that as a result of financial reasons and Wentworth's listening skills, some positive modifications were made to the master Plan and it is a lot tighter. She thanked Annamaria Wenner for the initiatives and efforts being made with students and parents. As for the Master Plan, she noted that there are clearly a lot of "supportables" – academic upgrades to modernize the institution, additional residential life facilities. She voiced her support for the Master Plan.

Maria Jaen Centeno, from Jeffrey Sanchez's office, commented that Representative Sanchez was in full support of Wentworth's Master Plan, and thanked Wentworth for integrating the community into the Master Planning process.

Rich Giordano echoed Pat Flaherty's comments, saying that he supports more students in dorms. He noted that it's better for the students and it's better for neighborhood. He asked a question about the new Sweeney Field and the elevation change, and asked Wentworth to talk a little bit more about it. Dick revisited the slides about Sweeney Field, noting some of the improvements that were made as a result of community feedback.

Kathryn Brookins asked when Wentworth is proposing to move the soccer field. Dick answered that it would most likely be in the second half of the Master Plan, adding that when it moves forward, it will go through large project review. There was a brief discussion about the MASCO lease, she and voiced her concern that it would be a loss of a major amenity as public open space for the Museum of Fine Arts, adding that hopefully they'll have a chance to review it in 5 years. Dick responded that it is very unlikely the new field on Parker Street would be developed until Wentworth has a potential tenant and use for the current Sweeney Field.

Pat asked when comments are due, and Katelyn responded that they are due by November 29th, with the hearing on December 14th.

Cindy Brophy voiced concerns about the development of Huntington Avenue, noting the need for a unified streetscape. She asked the BRA if there was a bigger plan in place for developing the Avenue of the Arts. Katelyn responded that each project along Huntington Avenue goes through the BRA, adding that she would bring it to the BRA planning committee. Dick empathized with Cindy's point, adding that Wentworth is only working from their vantage point.

David Nicholas asked about the plans for open space, similar to the Evans Way Park. Dick noted that there have been numerous conversations with the Task Force about making open space more available to the community, adding that Wentworth is opening up a channel of communication between Sandy and community groups interested in using space. He reiterated that the pedestrian improvements will hopefully bring more people into the quad, with new signage and paving making it much more open to the public. He also pointed out that while the

Evans Way Park is owned by the Commonwealth, Wentworth maintains it and made a major contribution of about \$100k for the irrigation system. He added that the park is available to the public, but people don't know about it. Getting back to Huntington Avenue, David noted that he would rather see a wall with green on it, than just a wall.

With no further questions, Katelyn thanked everyone for coming. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00pm.