

**Wentworth Institute of Technology PNF
BRA Public Meeting
Blount Auditorium, Annex Central**

Tuesday, July 31, 2012

Minutes

- Task Force:** Pat Flaherty, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
Marta Rivera, Resident
- Wentworth/
Panel:** Michael Coleman, Design Consultant, Beacon Architectural Associates
Jamie Fay, Fort Point Associates
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business
Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant, Towle & Associates
- Public:** Stephanie Ainbinder, Massachusetts Building Trades Council
Shaina Aubourg, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Joe Boston, Wentworth Center for Community & Learning Partnerships
Mark Fortune, Boston Building Trades
George Greenidge, Councilor Ross's Office
Jim Hoffman, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
Nate Homan, *The Patch*
Jamie Kelly, Wentworth Public Affairs
Judy Kohn, Fort Point Associates
Katie Lauretano, Representative Sanchez's Office
Charlie Noyles, Wentworth Public Safety
Mary Ollinger, Wentworth Business & Finance
Peter Shanley, Mission Hill Gazette
Ester Wong, Resident
Joyce Wong Phillips, Resident

Welcome and Overview of Process

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order at approximately 6:20pm. She welcomed everyone to the public meeting for the Project Notification Form that Wentworth submitted for the new dormitory at 525 Huntington Avenue. She introduced herself and reminded everyone that the dormitory project at 525 Huntington was included as a proposed project in Wentworth's Institutional Master Plan ("IMP") submitted in 2010, and received approvals for location, massing, height and density. She explained that tonight Wentworth would present a summary of the Project Notification Form ("PNF") submitted to the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA"), which details the impact and design of the project. She added that the 30-day comment period ends on August 13th and that her contact information could be found at the bottom of the meeting agenda. With no questions, Katelyn introduced Sandy Pascal.

Wentworth Introductions

Sandy Pascal welcomed everyone to the meeting. She expressed her excitement for the new dormitory project, and introduced Dave Wahlstrom to provide an update on the IMP projects.

Update on Current IMP Projects

Dave Wahlstrom introduced the evening's presenters – Dick Towle (Towle & Associates), Michael Coleman (Beacon Architectural Associates), and Jamie Fay (Fort Point Associates) – and provided some background on the previous Master Plan (approved in 2000), specifically the addition of beds and Wentworth's transition to a residential campus. He explained that one of the goals of the current Master Plan is to provide the on-campus amenities to support a vibrant residential community, starting with a campus center.

Dave provided an update on the Flanagan Campus Center project. He explained how, with the help of a \$10 million donation from William Flanagan, Wentworth converted the lower two floors of Beatty Hall into a campus center. There was an addition to the Ward Street side of the building for dining space and a new bookstore, and a "pavilion" space was added to the quad side of the building, for lounge, fitness, and enhanced dining space. Dave noted that the space would be fully open and operational by the end of the month, having received Certificate of Occupancy and Health Department approval.

Dave provided an update on the addition to the Ira Allen building (known as the *Center for Sciences and Biomedical Engineering*). He explained that the renovation of the existing space – plus an 18,000 square foot addition of new science labs – was complete, and invited everyone to see it at some point.

Dave presented pictures of the two completed projects, and introduced Dick Towle to speak about the dormitory project at 525 Huntington Avenue.

Student Apartments @ 525 Project

Dick noted that the two main goals of this IMP are (1) to develop state-of-the-art teaching and lab facilities, as seen with the Ira Allen addition, and (2) to attract students onto campus for both their social and living accommodations. He reiterated the significance of the Flanagan Campus Center for attracting students to campus for their weekend and evening activities, and that Wentworth was now in position to pursue additional on-campus housing, with the Student Apartments @ 525 Huntington. Dick reinforced Wentworth's commitment to bringing its students onto campus by acknowledging (1) Wentworth's mandate for sophomores to live on campus (which went into effect last Fall), and (2) the Dean of Students for her tremendous outreach to parents and students emphasizing the advantages of on-campus living.

Dick explained that of Wentworth's 3,600 full-time students, 375-400 of those students still live off campus in the local neighborhoods, most of which are upperclassmen. He noted that the goal of this project is to attract 305 of those students back onto campus by providing services and amenities they seek when moving off campus. Dick noted that this would enable Wentworth to house 95-100% of its students seeking local housing in the City of Boston, adding that there will always be a small percentage that will choose to live off campus for cultural, medical, or religious reasons.

Dick explained that the goal is to move forward with what was approved in the IMP. The facility will have 305 beds, and be 7 stories high, a maximum of 84 feet. It will be approximately 118,000 square feet – slightly smaller than the zoning envelope approved in the master plan (119,000 square feet). Dick noted the proximity of the building to the rest of Wentworth's on-campus housing, emphasizing the opportunity for joint programming and clustered supervision.

Dick described the amenities of the apartments, and emphasized the focus on the older student. With a total of 72 units – and 305 beds – 76% of the bedrooms will be single-occupancy, with the remaining doubles providing a lower price point option. Every unit will include a full kitchen, dining area, living room, washer/dryer, two bathrooms, and durable, high quality finishes, making it competitive with market housing. Dick explained that additionally, residents will receive free utilities, internet, cable television, a meal plan, security, student programming, and access to collaborative work/meeting spaces within the building. At a rate of \$12,000 for the academic year, Dick compared this to \$14,000 for 9-months of market rate housing, and \$18,000 for a typical 12-month lease. Dick added that it will be a “next generation” Wentworth building, using similar materials and contexts, but in a much more modern application. Dick introduced Michael Coleman to speak more about the design and configuration.

Michael described the triangular site, bounded by Huntington Avenue, Louis Prang and Vancouver Street. He reviewed the site plan and floor and unit layouts, and spoke briefly about the design and massing.

Jamie Fay introduced himself, and acknowledged Judy Kohn for her assistance in putting together the PNF document. He explained that Fort Point’s role in this process is to present the project information to the public in a way that’s understandable, facilitate public dialogue about the project, and present comments and feedback to the BRA. Jamie described the environmental impacts of the project, focusing on Wentworth’s commitment to sustainability. He highlighted a number of the public benefits to the project, such as bringing students onto campus, blending the campus with the surrounding neighborhoods, the sustainability of the project, and the overall impact on jobs and the local economy.

Jamie concluded by reviewing the project schedule.

- Project Notification Form filed July 13, 2012
- Comment Period Ends August 13, 2012
- BRA Scoping Session August 7, 2012
- Scoping Determination Issued by BRA August 28, 2012
- WIT Community Task Force Meeting September 11, 2012
- File Draft/Final Project Impact Report late September, 2012
- Community Meeting at WIT October 16, 2012
- BRA Adequacy Determination November/December 2012
- Construction Drawings to bidders late December, 2012
- Commence construction early February, 2013
- Certificate of Occupancy late July, 2014

He noted that it is a very tight schedule, and looks forward to working with the community to make sure it happens.

Dick reminded everyone that Wentworth committed to doing this project within the first five years of the master plan, and was now seeking to bring this project online just 3 and one half years into the IMP period. He added, however, that it does require an aggressive schedule. At this point, Dick asked for any questions.

A member of the community, who noted she lives on Vancouver Street, asked whether Wentworth was concerned about students crossing directly across Huntington Avenue. She noted that the placement of the door does not lend itself to students using the crosswalks, and voiced her concern about this as a safety hazard for students. Dick responded that there are

two crosswalks near the site that connect to campus, and that hopefully this will not be an issue with the residents being older students. He explained that there are already issues crossing Huntington Avenue, and that safety is something Wentworth takes seriously. He added that the natural direction to the project should take them to the crosswalks. The community members responded that if the students are in a hurry, they will take the shortest route, adding that they already see it happening. Dicks said the door is fairly close to corner, and should provide easy access to the crosswalks, adding that as Wentworth will certainly examine the pedestrian patterns when studying the traffic impacts of the project.

The community member asked whether Wentworth will help maintain Vancouver Street in the winter. She noted that when the building is up, the street will be completely shaded from the sun, preventing the snow from melting. Dick responded that Wentworth will address any issues caused by snow accumulation, on the street and the sidewalks, to maintain the safety of the street as well as the safety of the students.

The community member asked about trash removal on Vancouver Street, and whether parking spots will be lost to accommodate large trucks down the narrow, one way street. Dick responded that the arrangement will be to use a small truck, but that he possibly anticipates losing 4 to 5 spots immediately abutting the building. Jamie Fay reiterated that they will be able to use smaller vehicles and smaller compactors, and try to limit the number of parking spaces used. Dick added that they do not want to congest an already congested street, and they will likely use smaller trucks, and have more pickups, adding that they will be mindful of the hours this is happening.

Questions/Comments

With no further questions, Katelyn reiterated that all comments should be sent to her by August 13th. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10pm.