

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

**Tuesday, January 8, 2013**

**Minutes**

- Moderator:** Katelyn Sullivan, Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”)
- Task Force:** Patricia Flaherty, Mission Hill, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services  
Bill Kantaros, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England  
James Kasida, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England  
Judie Mercer, Alice Heyward Taylor  
Sheneal Parker, Fenway, Fenway CDC  
Susan St. Clair, Mission Hill Resident, Problem Properties Task Force  
Adeline Stallings, Mission Main  
David Welch, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services
- Wentworth:** Robert Brown, Design Consultant, Perkins+Will  
Jamie Fay, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates  
Jamie Kelly, Associate Vice President, Public Affairs  
Edward King, Design Consultant, Perkins+Will  
Judy Kohn, Permitting Consultant, Fort Point Associates  
Erik Miller, Assistant Director, Center for Community & Learning Partnerships  
Howard Muise, Transportation Consultant, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin  
Mary Ollinger, Budget & Office Manager, Business & Finance  
Sandy Pascal, Associate VP, Community Relations & External Affairs  
Kevin Smith, Clerk of the Works, Planning & Construction  
Dick Towle, Master Plan Consultant, Towle & Associates  
David A. Wahlstrom, Vice President, Business
- Public:** Shaina Aubourg, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Matthew Brooks, Fenway Civic Association  
Aurora Cammarata, Spagnolo Gisness & Associates  
Steve Cunningham, Spagnolo Gisness & Associates  
Jim Hoffman, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services  
Lilly Jacobson, Fenway CDC  
Johanna Kaiser, Boston.com  
Katie Lauretano, Representative Sanchez’s Office  
Joyce Phillips, Vancouver Street resident  
Alison Pultinas, Mission Hill resident  
Johanna Sena, Councilor Ross’s Office  
Nathanael Shea, Senator Sonia-Chang-Diaz  
Eddie Small, Boston Courant  
Ester Wong, Vancouver Street resident

**Welcome**

Katelyn Sullivan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Task Force members introduced themselves and Sandy Pascal introduced the Wentworth staff members and consultants in attendance, as well as a number of government representatives present.

## Article 80 Process

Katelyn explained that the proposed project on Sweeney Field will need to go through an IMP amendment process and a Planned Development Area (PDA) approval process. She directed everyone's attention to the handout, an excerpt from the *Citizen's Guide to Article 80*, and explained the process:

### **Step 1. BRA Approval**

- Applicant files a PDA Development Plan with BRA, together with fact sheet and map of PDA area. Notice published within 5 days.
- Public comment period runs for 45 days after Development Plan is filed. The BRA will hold a community meeting during this period.
- Within 60 days after Development Plan is filed, BRA Board holds hearing and votes on Development Plan (and Zoning Map Amendment, if establishing a new PDA).

### **Step 2. Zoning Commission Approval**

- BRA petitions Zoning Commission for approval of Development Plan (and map Amendment, if applicable).
- Zoning Commission publishes notice of hearing at least 20 days before hearing.
- Zoning Commission holds hearing and votes on Development Plan and Map Amendment. If approved, Development Plan and Map Amendment go to Mayor for approval.

## **IMP Projects Overview and Update** (*PowerPoint presentation available at [www.wit.edu/imp](http://www.wit.edu/imp)*)

Dave Wahlstrom introduced himself and welcomed the new Task Force members, David Welch and Susan St. Clair. He gave a brief overview of Wentworth's campus, academic programs and the state of its facilities, and then provided an update on the Campus Master Plan projects. 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. He emphasized that the current Master Plan is focused on upgrading the campus amenities to support a residential campus.

- A) Flanagan Campus Center:** 8,500 square-foot addition plus 48,000 square feet of renovation to Beatty Hall; Dave provided images of the completed facility.
- B) Center for Sciences & Biomedical Engineering:** 19,000 square-foot addition plus 19,000 square feet of renovation to Ira Allen; Dave provided images of the completed facility.
- C) Student Apartments @ 525 Huntington Avenue:** 110,000 square feet, 71 apartments, 305 beds. With in-unit laundry, granite countertops, dishwashers, and other amenities, Dave explained that this apartment-style building was designed specifically for Wentworth's older students; to encourage them to stay in on-campus housing and from moving into the neighborhood. Dave provided renderings and elevations of the future facility, and noted that the project was approved by the BRA Board in November.
- D) Center for Engineering & Technology:** Anticipated for 2017-2018, this 45,000 square-foot building would be located in the West Lot. Willson Hall (built in 1962) would come down, and extend along the Pedestrian Pike. As part of this project, the Pedestrian Pike will be straightened out. Wentworth recently reached an agreement with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) to use a little over 3,000 square feet of their land to eliminate the pinch point in the Pedestrian Pike. Anticipate starting this project spring summer 2013. Dave provided renderings of the future project and plans for the Pedestrian Pike.

- E) New Sweeney Field with Parking Below:** Anticipated for 2019-2020. To accommodate the development of Sweeney Field, Wentworth needs to relocate the existing Sweeney Field to a deck above a 330-parking space lot at the current location of the Parker Street parking lot. Dave stressed the potential for community involvement with the fields.

Dave briefly introduced the proposed Sweeney Field project. He noted that it was introduced in the Institutional Master Plan – but with very little detail – and explained that Wentworth wanted to keep it separate since they did not know whether it would be part of the Master Plan. Dave explained that the project would provide an economic engine for the City of Boston and would really enable Wentworth to utilize its physical resources to strengthen the campus and its mission. He added that the selection of the tenant – preferably a technology firm – would be important for Wentworth as far as developing relationships for collaboration, coop opportunities and internships for faculty and students. He stressed the importance of interdisciplinary learning and the value of developing relationships with the outside. He stressed that the project is *NOT* an extension of the LMA, and that this would be a Wentworth development.

- A task force member asked Dave for clarification about his statement regarding the project not being an LMA project, and whether Wentworth would be open to a drug firm (i.e., Merck or Genetech). Dave explained that Wentworth is looking at more of a technology firm, but as they offer a program in biomedical engineering, they would not be opposed to a biomedical firm. He clarified his comment, explaining that Wentworth is not courting Brigham & Women's or another Longwood institution. He stressed that Wentworth is looking for a tenant that would provide a good relationship – and a good partnership – with Wentworth and what they do.

### **Proposed Sweeney Field Project**

Jamie Fay introduced himself and explained that Ft. Point has been helping Wentworth move forward with a number of planning and development plans. He noted that the project was not specifically approved as part of the IMP process, and that tonight would begin the process of approvals for that site.

Jamie described the project – approximately 650,000 square feet of development on the 3-acre Sweeney Field site – which would be used for both private technology uses and the Institute's innovation center. He explained that the site would be developed through a long-term ground lease – with either a third-party developer or a long-term tenant – so the site development would take place through private parties, but Wentworth would maintain ownership of the site. He described the benefits of the location and the economic impact the project would have on the City. He noted the direct benefits to the Institute, explaining that the partnership would create opportunities for student coop placements and faculty opportunities for academic planning and research. He added that there would likely be significant employment opportunities for neighborhood residents as well.

The site – 500 Huntington Avenue – will consist of three buildings: two low rise (6 stories) buildings on Huntington and one taller (18 story) building set back on Parker Street. Approximately 80,000 square feet would be occupied by Wentworth's *Center for Innovation and Engineering and Technology*, an entrepreneurial center where students can interface with private industry and learn some of the skills they'll need once they graduate. Another 550,000 square feet would be occupied by laboratory research and development space, which would be privately occupied by some kind of technology company. The ground floors would be retail and commercial space, which would activate the space and serve the people living and working in the neighborhood. To support the project, there would be approximately 490 spaces of underground parking, accessed off Parker Street. The floor-to-area ratio (building square footage divided by lot size) would be 5, which is relatively modest for an urban area, and approximately half the site would remain as landscaped plaza space, open to the public.

- A task force member asked whether the zoning would need to be changed to accommodate this project. Katelyn explained that yes, there would be a rezoning process in addition to the PDA process, and Jamie noted it would be covered later in the presentation.
- A task force member asked whether the project depends on having a commitment by a tenant. Jamie responded that it is uncertain how that would work, as a developer or third-party would actually be building the building, but that it is pretty certain the building would not be built without some significant commitments by tenants. Another task force explained that the zoning approvals would still go forward before there are tenants there. Katelyn explained that, as with the Master Plan, Wentworth went forward with the approvals before the projects were built, but a task force member noted in that case Wentworth was the tenant; in this case the primary tenant is unknown.

Jamie described the public benefits of the project and introduced Robert Brown to, and the impact the project will have of strengthening pedestrian connections between Ruggles station and the Fenway. He introduced Robert Brown from Perkins+Will to discuss design and development.

Robert introduced himself and expressed his excitement for the project. He provided a number of renderings and described the site, stressing the open space and the connectivity between Ruggles and the Fenway. He described each of the three buildings as well as the underground parking facility accessed off Parker Street. Wentworth would occupy one building – *the Center for Innovation in Engineering and Technology* – and the other two buildings would be occupied by outside tenants, with retail on the ground floor. He described each of the buildings and walked the group through renderings and floor plans. He introduced Howard Muise from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin to discuss transportation.

Howard introduced himself and explained Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB)'s role in the process as far as transportation planning. He explained their inventory of existing conditions, emphasizing the site's access to public transportation. He then walked the Task Force through their future condition analysis, first without the project (no-build) and then with the project (build). He emphasized the site's access to public transportation.

- A task force member asked whether the parking meters on Parker Street would be removed, adding that she has a hard time visualizing Parker Street as a loading zone. Howard explained that some of the meters would need to be removed to provide the entrance to the garage and the loading dock, adding that the loading dock would be inside the building. He explained that trucks would drive in and maneuver inside the building to get to the loading docks to avoid interfering with traffic on the street.
- A task force member asked whether VHB studied the intersection of Parker and Ruggles during the evening commute, and whether it would be possible to widen that intersection to facilitate easier right hand turns. Howard explained that the next step is to take their analysis to the Transportation Department and talk about improvements that could be made to accommodate the traffic. He explained that with the study complete, they can begin those discussions. Dave added that Wentworth set the development back 40 feet to accommodate the possible future urban ring development.

With no further questions, Jamie discussed the process. He explained that Wentworth is proposing a site-specific zoning overlay district to allow for this project, known as a Planned Development Area (PDA). However in order to do so, Wentworth must first change the zoning bylaw to allow the PDA to be created and create a text and map zoning amendment. He outlined the following steps:

- Zoning Text and Map Amendment to create Wentworth Community Commercial CC-3 District on Sweeney Field approval by Boston Zoning Commission (BZC)

- Planned Development Area (PDA) Development Plan approval by Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)
- Institutional Master Plan (IMP) Amendment to allow College or University Uses in the Planned Development Area
- PDA approval by BZC
- Wentworth issues RFP to Developers/Developer Selected
- Developer initiates Article 80B Large Project Review with the BRA

Jamie walked the group through the process and asked for any questions.

- A task force member asked about the impact of the overlay on the underlying zoning. Katelyn explained that there's an underlying zoning and the IMP overlay; the IMP overlay would be taken away and the PDA overlay would be put on. The task force member said that in addition to the PDA, usually the baseline zoning changes as well, and asked whether Wentworth had the zoning text and map amendment language to share. Jamie noted that they are currently working on the text and map amendment language with the BRA. Katelyn explained that the Mission Hill zoning is Article 59, and that this project would technically change the underlying zoning with this as a PDA overlay. There was a brief discussion about zoning and Katelyn suggested the group move onto the schedule.

Jamie reviewed the process schedule. A task force member commented that she would like to see the community have a chance to review and comment on (1) the draft of the zoning text and map amendment before it goes to the BRA Board meeting; and (2) the draft of the PDA before it is filed with the BRA. She noted that this process sets a precedent for future projects and approvals, and there is a need to stick to the process given the number of institutions – and developers – interested in building in Mission Hill. There was a lengthy discussion about the process and the need for additional meetings. Katelyn stressed that Wentworth would not want to set a bad precedent and that she is open to having another meeting.

- A task force member spoke about his experience during the rezoning of Mission Hill, specifically recalling the weed-grown field on the triangle at the corner of Parker and Huntington. He noted that no one had any concept of what was possible back then, and that he's impressed with what he's seen.
- A task force member commented that it was all very new, and that the whole process is new to her, but that it seems the community meeting would come before Wentworth files the PDA.
- A task force member noted that, even earlier on the schedule, Wentworth was going to get approval for a zoning change before any community meetings to review the zoning change. She said there are a lot of private developers in Mission Hill who would like to change the zoning to allow for more development, and that it's important for the community to have the opportunity to comment on both the zoning and the PDA.

Katelyn explained that when Wentworth files on February 14<sup>th</sup>, there is a 45-day comment period. The community meeting fell during the 45-day comment period and would give people enough time to review the PDA but still allow adequate time for comment letters before the comment period ends.

- A task force member asked where she could review the document, and Katelyn responded that when Wentworth files, the BRA will send her a copy and it is available online on both the BRA and Wentworth websites. There was a brief discussion and the task force member noted that it did not make sense to her.

There was a brief discussion about holding additional community meetings – to review the zoning amendment and to review the draft PDA – and Katelyn agreed it would be beneficial, adding that she could invite someone from the Zoning Department to explain the process more clearly and answer any questions.

- A task force member asked about the status of the Parcel 25 development. Pat Flaherty explained that Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services bought it in 2012 from the MBTA. She added that the senior housing project planned for the parcel across the street on Gurney has most of its funding in place; they are waiting for state funding but construction could get underway this year.
- When asked for comments on the building, a task force member said she was just “letting it marinate” adding that the new building has her a little puzzled. She noted, as an Alice Taylor resident, it seems like every time she turns around there’s a new building going up somewhere. She added the building is beautiful and she’s excited about Sweeney Field moving up the street. She also voiced her concern about the impact on traffic.

There was a brief conversation about the tall buildings in the neighborhood blocking views of the park and the fireworks.

- A task force member asked about building materials. Robert Brown explained that they were still at a very preliminary level, but that the building would have a strong connection to the outdoors, primarily glass, covered by louvers to protect the glass and capitalize on the sun’s energy (absorbing sunlight in the winter and blocking it in the summer). He noted that the building on Huntington would have more masonry-material to tie it into the Huntington facade.

## Questions/Comments

- A member of the public said she agreed with what was said about the schedule, pointing out there was actually more time between the filing and the meeting than between the meeting and the end of the comment period. Katelyn explained that they picked March 12<sup>th</sup> because the Task Force typically meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month, adding that the schedule could be adjusted based on tonight’s feedback.
- A member of the public asked for clarification about development proposal and the building design process, noting that Perkins+Will seems to be designing the building but that it had also been mentioned that the developer would be hiring another architect. Jamie explained that Perkins+Will would be helping out the Institute at a conceptual level, and that the final designer for the building had not yet been selected. In response to a follow-up question from the public, Jamie noted that the entire site – and all three buildings – would be developed as a single development, and likely handled by one architectural firm. The member of the public asked for further clarification and Katelyn explained that, while Perkins+Will was doing the preliminary work – and the developer would ultimately hire the architect for the final building design – the final design would have to adhere to the height massing and density approved in the PDA.
- A member of the public voiced her concern about the pedestrian crossing on Parker Street. She noted that the design encourages pedestrians to cross the street at a dangerous, un-signalized intersection, and that she would rather see pedestrians routed along Ruggles and have the Ruggles sidewalk widened. Jamie responded that that is something that could be looked at in more detail as the project moves forward. He stressed that pedestrian routing is a major priority for this area, and working with the Boston Transportation Department, they would come up with a pedestrian route that was safe. The member of the public added that it may not be feasible to add a light on Parker Street and it may be safer to route pedestrians to the crosswalk.

- A member of the public asked whether Wentworth had been contacted by a third party developer or a long-term tenant about the possibility of taking on the project, restating Wentworth's earlier comment that the project would not move forward without a developer or tenant committed to the project. Jamie responded that there is interest, but that it is too early to have any discussions without the zoning in place. Dick added that there would be a formal RFP process, and that Wentworth would select the firm best in line with the goals they identify. He added that people have expressed interest since the project was first mentioned, but until the zoning envelope is vetted and approved by the community and the BRA, there is nothing to talk to people about. Jamie noted that the only legal use on that site today is to play soccer, and that it is hard to convince a developer to come forward until the zoning is modified to allow for something else. Dave Wahlstrom added that, in response to the original question, Wentworth has been approached, but it has not been the fit they are looking for.
- A member of the public voiced his concern about the need for such a large garage, when the area is so well served by public transportation. He noted that there would be a significant increase in trip generation because of the parking spaces. He asked that further studies be done to look at the impacts along the other major corridors besides Ruggles and, such as The Fenway and Hemenway. Jamie responded that those would be the kinds of issues looked at in more detail as part of the traffic study, including parking ratios, mode shares, and how far they could be pushed to encourage modes of transportation other than automobiles.
- A task force member asked what is currently under Sweeney Field. Dave Wahlstrom responded, saying he thinks it is traditional fill. He explained that prior to Wentworth acquiring the property, it was owned by the Sewall and Day Cordage Company, who made rope for sailing ships. He noted that their buildings were built on fill but it was just over the marsh. They owned nearly the entire campus – from Ward Street to Huntington Avenue. Dave said he imagined they would find some pile remains and building debris, but mostly fill.
- A member of the public asked if Wentworth had been in conversation with Northeastern and the Museum of Fine Arts about the site, and whether there was any interest in sharing development. Dave said Wentworth has met with Northeastern to talk about Master Plans and Development Plans, and at the present they are not interested in going in on the development. He said Wentworth had conversations with the MFA a few years ago about this potential development but not recently.

Katelyn adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:00pm. She explained that she would use the contact information from the sign in sheet to notify attendees of the additional community meeting and pointed out her contact information at the bottom of the agenda in case anyone had any questions.