



Copley Place Expansion Project
CAC Meeting #18
Wednesday, October 26, 2011
Location: Copley Place – 4th Floor Office Level

CAC Attendees:

David Berarducci, Resident of the South End
John Connolly, Back Bay Association
Nikki Fortes, Tent City Corporation
Dan d'Heilly, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association (SBNA)
Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association
Zeina Grinnell, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Ted Pietras, South End Business Alliance (SEBA)
Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
David Blaisdell, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Marty Walz
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
Elizabeth Nolan, Office of Massachusetts State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
John Fitzgerald, BRA
Andrew Grace, BRA
Vineet Gupta, BTB
Mary Knasas, BRA
Cecilia Nardi, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Robin Blatt, MassDOT
Martin Polera, MassDOT
Bill Tuttle, MassDOT

Simon Property Group Attendees:

Guy Busa, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates
Donna Camiolo, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Kristi Dowd, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Rob Halter, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Bill Kenney, Simon Property Group

Members of the Public:

Kevin Ahearn, Otis & Ahearn
Cathy Angelini, Related Companies

Kathy Bianchi, Residences at Copley Place
Don Carlson, NABB
George Cramer, Cramer's Hair Salon
Karilyn Crochett, Copley Neighbors
Ann Hershfang, WalkBoston
Janet Hunkel, Southwest Corridor Park Parkland Management Advisory Board (PMAC)
Mel King
Susan Klumzak, South End Technology Center at Tent City
Ken Kruckemeyer
Sandra Larson, South End News
Jennifer Leonard, Southwest Corridor Park Conservatory/Copley Neighbors
Susan Mann, Copley Neighbors
Shelia Randolph, Resident of Tent City
Sheila Pelosi, Tent City Resident Alliance
Emanuela Saporito, Harvard Graduate School of Design
Jane Siegel, Copley Neighbors
Marvin Wool, NABB
Jackie Yessian, NABB
Norma Zach

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, October 26th, 2011, the eighteenth working session of the Copley Place Expansion Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:00 a.m. at Copley Place by Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association and CAC Chairperson.

Judith indicated that the CAC should elect a Vice Chairperson that will be able to Chair the meetings should the CAC meet during the months of January or February 2012, since Judith will be unavailable. Ted Pietras, SEBA, was then selected by the CAC to be the Vice Chairperson.

Judith then turned the meeting over to Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Project Management, who introduced Guy Busa, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, the proponent's transportation and traffic consultant. Guy provided an overview of Option B3, the final option presented by the CAC for the Turnpike Exit 22 Ramp. This idea was originally put forward by David Berarducci, Resident of the South End, at last week's CAC meeting. It would involve a mid-block pedestrian crossing by the Westin Hotel's loading dock, with a Yield sign for drivers.

Guy explained that this option would result in very long queue lengths on Stuart Street up to Exeter Street (the queues would grow to approximately 700' long). In addition, in order to install a Yield sign, there would have to be several hundred pedestrians an hour in this location. The number of pedestrians who would use this move is likely to be less than that, though there is no way to effectively predict this.

The following questions or comments were raised by the CAC following Guy's overview:

- Zeina Grinnell, NABB, responded that any change made to this portion of the roadway will involve queuing. Guy replied in the affirmative, but stressed that this location serves as the only Exit Ramp from the Turnpike to the Back Bay.

- Vineet Gupta, Director of Planning for the Boston Transportation Department (BTD), stated that if a pedestrian is coming from the direction of the Marriott Hotel down Stuart Street, they will want to cross Stuart Street earlier than this option allows.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, informed the CAC that she had talked to the Westin Hotel's management about their loading dock and its issues, as promised at the last CAC meeting. She indicated that the hotel's manager was completely open to talking with BTD and modifying their loading dock functions in order to make it more efficient for the traffic along Stuart Street and safer for pedestrians. Part of the issue with the current situation is that a portion of their loading dock area is used for commercial parking.
- In a follow-up question, Meg Mainzer-Cohen asked if the traffic island in the middle of Stuart Street (where pedestrians would cross to the northern sidewalk) would have traffic traveling on both sides of it. Guy replied that this would be the case.
- Dan d'Heilly, SBNA, asked if removing the left turn off of Huntington Avenue that functions as a U-Turn would help. Guy replied that this turning lane will already be reduced to one lane in this location (it is currently two lanes wide), and that removing it entirely would only cause other problems.
- In a follow-up comment, Dan added that based on the queue lengths, none of the options proposed seem worthwhile.
- Judith Wright commented that Boston is a walking city, and therefore pedestrians should be given precedence over vehicles.
- David Berarducci added that the CAC reviewed many options at the last meeting, and none of them worked well.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen stated that increased traffic resulting from any of these options would become a problem for every business in the area, as well as the residents, particularly when you consider how few people this pedestrian condition would actually serve.
- Dan d'Heilly reminded the group that the changes proposed by the proponent earlier would result in improvements to the pedestrian condition already.
- Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association, expressed his concern that the traffic engineers working on this problem are not committed to finding a solution.

After a lengthy discussion, the CAC decided that they will put their preferred scenario for Stuart Street in their Comment Letter.

Next, Lauren Shurtleff, BRA Planner, provided the CAC with a Projected Timeline moving forward, emphasizing that the CAC's involvement will continue into next year:

Projected Timeline as of 10/26/2011

All dates are subject to change.

Monday, October 31st: Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) and Planned Development Area (PDA) Development Plan Comment Period Closes

Tuesday, November 1st, 5:15 p.m.: Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) – Vote on the project (Room 900, Boston City Hall)

Thursday, November 17th, 5:45 p.m.: BRA Board Meeting – Public Hearing – Present DPIR & PDA Development Plan (Room 900, Boston City Hall)

Wednesday, December 14th, 9:00 a.m.: Zoning Commission – Public Hearing – Present PDA Development Plan (Room 900, Boston City Hall)

CAC involvement continuing into 2012:

- Continued development of project design/public realm improvements
- Affordable Housing
- Public Art Advisory Group
- Cooperation Agreement – codifies Public Benefits associated with the project
- Construction Management Plan
- Transportation Access Plan Agreement

Finally, the CAC decided to move on to a discussion of their draft Comment Letter, which was drafted last week and distributed to the remainder of the CAC for their review prior to today's CAC meeting. A lengthy discussion ensued.

After the meeting, Representative Rushing asked that the following statement be added to the notes, which was made during the CAC's discussion of their Comment Letter: We value income diversity as part of the overall diversity of our surrounding neighborhoods. We support the 15% affordable housing requirement on developers and the CAC has already urged the BRA to insist that Simon not be given the option to satisfy this requirement by making a contribution to the general fund for affordable housing. As part of the neighborhood benefits for this project, the CAC should urge the BRA to insist that the developer provide an additional 10% affordable housing. This total of 25% affordable housing would reflect the plan in the original lease and the percentage in the Harcourt Street housing presently on the site. We should encourage the developer to work with local community development corporations on finding a solution to satisfy this affordable housing provision. We should urge the BRA to insist that Simon build the total affordable housing in the South End and/or Back Bay neighborhoods or onsite.

The CAC made a request to ask the proponent if they will extend the Comment Period for the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) and the Planned Development Area (PDA) Development Plan, which is set to end on Monday, October 31st. The proponent replied that there has already been a lengthy comment period of 75 days, and as such, they will not extend the Comment Period further.

It was then determined by the CAC that they will all have a conference call on Friday, October 28th, to continue discussing their revisions to the Comment Letter, which they will submit the following Monday.

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

- Ken Kruckemeyer suggested that the CAC visit Huntington Avenue in front of the Shaw's Supermarket and visualize the conditions for the front entry of Copley Place by the Winter Garden at the intersection of Stuart and Dartmouth Streets, since that will also rise in height

as the Shaw's does from the street. He also stated that a bike lane on Dartmouth Street will not be possible. Furthermore, he added that the proponent should be made to build 25% of the units in the building as Affordable units, since that was the agreement for the original Copley Place.

- Don Carlson, NABB, commented that this area lacks diversity, and as such, the proponent should be made to build 25% of the units in the building as Affordable units on-site.
- Marvin Wool, NABB, commented that since two other recently constructed luxury buildings, the Mandarin Oriental and the Clarendon, managed to build all of their Affordable housing on-site, Simon Property Group should do the same here. He also asked to see a copy of the new lease that was negotiated between Simon Property Group and MassDOT this summer.
- Bill Kenney, Simon Property Group, stated that the Affordable units that were built as part of the original project are located on Harcourt Street.
- Jane Siegel, Copley Neighbors, stated that it seems to her that there has been little discussion of the benefits to the community. She added that she is surprised the proponent will not extend the Comment Period by one week. In a further comment, she expressed concern about the impact to the traffic conditions on Dartmouth Street, which are already congested.
- Janet Hunkel, PMAC, stated her opinion that area residents only support the project because they believe that there will be remediation by Simon Property Group of the entire Southwest Corridor Park. She added that Simon Property Group does not have a good track record when it comes to maintenance of the Corridor, and asked that a maintenance plan that is bonded be established.
- Jackie Yessian, NABB, commented that the Commission for Persons with Disabilities must weigh in on the plan. Heather Campisano, BRA Deputy Director for Development Review, replied that the Commissioner, Kristen McCosh, received a copy of the DPIR, and will continue to be engaged in the design process as the design evolves further.
- George Cramer, Cramer's Hair Salon, commented that the CAC should discuss the minority businesses located in Copley Place, and asked that the program be expanded.
- Susan Mann, Copley Neighbors, noted that guests staying in the Marriott Hotel wishing to travel to Back Bay Station but not walk through the mall should use Harcourt Street and then the Southwest Corridor Park, which is an existing thoroughfare that is safe and eliminates the need for people to travel along the Turnpike Exit Ramp on Stuart Street.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 a.m.

It was determined after the end of the CAC meeting that another CAC working session will be held on Wednesday, November 9th at 8:00 a.m. at Copley Place so that the CAC may prepare for the BRA Board meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 17th at 5:45 p.m.