



Meeting Notes
October 21, 2013
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Central Boston Elders Service
2315 Washington Street, Roxbury

RSMPOC Members Present: Darnell Williams, Dorothea Jones, Jorge Martinez, Norm Stembridge, Bing Broderick, Charlene Nelson, Kenneth Smith; Notes: Kijana Rose; BTD: Patrick Hoey; BRA: Jim FitzGerald, Hugues Monestime

Norman Stembridge calls the meeting to order at 6:07 PM. He welcomes everyone to the meeting and thanks them for coming. There will be a Douglas Square parking study review, and he asks Hugues Monestime where they are with that process?

Hugues Monestime introduces Jim FitzGerald from the BRA.

Jim FitzGerald state that in the spring he attended one of the Dudley Vision meetings and parking came up as an important topic in Dudley Square, and it has always been an important topic that needs more attention. The BRA staff is working with Pat Hoey and the BTD to do a comprehensive parking analysis for Dudley Square. That kicked off the efforts that they're just now getting underway, looking at Dudley Square and essentially the BRA was able to find some financing and hire a consulting team, VHB. Sean Manning is here tonight and will the BRA do some data collection and bring their findings to the table. The goal is to develop strategic parking management over time in Dudley that will adjust to all the changes being made.

Sean Manning explains that VHB is a consulting firm in Boston that has done a ton of work in Roxbury and the neighborhoods surrounding it. They are charged with a multi step task, step 1 being to figure out exactly what is going on; which they are doing two things to answer that. One is a complete inventory of parking in Roxbury, including street spaces and off street spaces. Next they will look at how they're used, and how they turn over, and it will take about a week or two weeks to gather than information and download it into a presentable manner. Step two will take the information and understand what it means, and how different projects, like the Ferdinand building and other projects proposed for the area, will impact the neighborhood. The BRA and BTD will review some smart and strategic planning about parking aspects considered appropriate so that businesses and projects aren't put in place that cant sustain themselves.

Jim FitzGerald thanks Sean, and mentions the goals of the study and how it will progress. First, they would like to develop an accurate picture of parking conditions in Dudley, on and off the street. then to build on past efforts they will look at parking past

back to 2001 with a transportation and air quality study, and more recently took a more comprehensive look at all transportation issues in the BTD access plan in 2009, and most recently the Dudley Main Streets did some analyses looking at some of their issues with parking as it relates to businesses in Dudley Square. The goal is to build on those and since there are a lot of things changing in Dudley Square, it is important to get out there and do current and accurate data collection, particularly considering the numbers of on and off street spaces, how frequently they turn over, occupancy during the day by time of day, and then obviously there's a lot of development currently taking place and planned in the area, so all these landings will eventually start changing. New developments have new pressures, so the study will consider how all these changes of land use will affect the crunches for parking and where they will be, to come up with a set of solutions. As parking needs change over time, how do curbside regulations become better and more efficient? Some stretches are completely unregulated – how do those help get to some of the answers? Additionally there are some opportunities within private buildings – can they provide some sort of public parking piece or give businesses other opportunities to progress and find creative solutions? One progressive strategy is to share parking – so to build a parking supply to share between office workers, residents, customers, and business owners. [On a screen he shows] There have been a total of 27 parking lots identified within the geography, and now they are collecting data on those to present accurate supply information, and also an accurate view of occupancy. Sean's team will be collecting all of this information; he had some team members out there today collecting data. The yellow highlights [on screen] show main areas: Washington, Warren, Dudley, Harrison, Shawmut, and smaller areas are where they will collect data and map out every inch of the curb as far as loading parking restrictions, and a lot of the regulated two hour spaces, and some of the resident only areas. There is a lot of development down the pipeline, so the BRA will want to know how those changes impact parking, and how they can make sure they're meeting parking needs not just of those new developments, but all the parking needs of Dudley Square. This is just getting started. VHB was out there today, and will be out there for the next week and a half. They were hired just last month and have essentially spent the past few weeks collecting different efforts and studies of the past, and synthesizing that information, as well as doing on street surveys and off street space analysis to see how full lots are and how much turnover there is of on street spaces. By the end of this month the data collection will wrap up, and November and December will be spent looking at the data and organizing it. Hopefully by early January the BRA can come back out to present the findings and come up with some recommendations to address the needs today and future needs as the landings change. After the feedback period, the BRA is hoping that by February the package can be wrapped up with several good recommendations, of which there are certainly many. Tonight the goal is to just inform the community that this is finally being kicked off, the data collection is underway, and to get feedback on issues that should be relayed to the BRA and VHB to help the process moving forward.

Norman Stembridge asks if there are any questions.

Dorothea Jones explains that with the development of Ferdinand and so few parking spaces available and so many people going into that building, it is really very late and

absolutely ridiculous that after the building is almost ready for occupancy the BRA is just now coming and giving information that they're going to look at the parking that already exists. Now they're saying they'll come present their findings in January, which is the coldest time of the year, and there are no parking spaces for people to come to the meeting. This is something that should have been presented to the community when the weather was warm. She asked about shared parking with Tropical Foods specifically a couple of months ago and they said there would be none.

Jim FitzGerald offers that Tropical Foods is just one entity and they are hopeful that they can find other opportunities for off street parking. Obviously he cannot speak for them, but there will be other opportunities for off street parking. Certainly they will be looking at Ferdinand and how that will impact the area, and will try and project some ways to solve that looking at it as part of the big picture.

Pat Hoey comments on what DJ said, explaining that the Ferdinand was something that proceeded VHB and the consultants on that project did do a parking analysis but broke it down to the employees and who would be driving in versus who would be taking public transportation. They crunched out numbers and there is parking to be developed next to the Blair Lot that's proposed for use by Ferdinand employees and school department employees to use. That was done during the development and planning of that project. There is no garage, that's been out there for a while, though there will be a few spaces underneath the building. Given that Ferdinand didn't include a garage some solution had to be developed and it is true that this came up in the community before. David Blackman, a colleague at VHB, worked on an analysis for a number needed to support all the employees, and if you split the different modes of transit, they concluded that about 60+ spaces are needed to accommodate the Ferdinand building, which will possibly go in next to the Blair Lot.

Norman Stembridge asks if there are other questions?

Jorge Martinez points out that it was mentioned that groups who had done parking studies, and says it seems as if these studies are done primarily in the summer, as he is yet to see one done in the middle of the winter. The reality in Dudley is that business folks are having problems with customers parking in front of their businesses, but in the winter when you get one or two inches of snow then parking spaces are lost all over the place. So consider that of however many spaces you come up with in Dudley, the reality is that this is the Northeast, in the middle of Boston, and a large amount of that number is lost in the winter and it doesn't come back until halfway through the spring.

Jim FitzGerald states that that is a good point. Other neighborhoods have snow emergency routes, and in other locations of the city there have been some agreements with off street parking suppliers, so maybe that is something that can be considered as part of the effort to work with a private entity.

Sean Manning says that JM made a great point, and one of the goals is to support commercial entities, and to make sure there is enough commercial parking they want to

indicate demand and supply accurately. Ultimately they hope to come up with strategies, and they will take that point into order.

Darnell Williams thanks JF for sharing his presentation. He asks if there is any assessment of the capacity of the 27 existing lots right now?

Jim FitzGerald is not sure.

Pat Hoey offers that there are about 800 spaces categorized as off and on street city blocks.

Darnell Williams points out that some of those spaces are already dedicated to busses and other things, if he is not mistaken. He confirms that they are just taking inventory?

Jim FitzGerald explains that they are looking for every possible opportunity of parking.

Pat Hoey corrects his last statement, stating that it was actually 950 on and off street spaces that were counted, including everything within the zone basically between St. James and Melnea, and Shawmut and Harrison, which totaled 950. So this is larger and more comprehensive. They have dedicated a few resources and a few pages in the action plan, but nothing like this has ever been done before.

Darnell Williams states that another group he serves on took a map just like the one shown and super imposed the Back Bay and Fenway and came up with a formula to determine that with 500 employees coming in to the area daily. He mentions that PH indicated that the study was done by his group, but didn't factor in the visitors who will be coming to Ferdinand. This group will come back in February, and Ferdinand is set to go online in January of 2015, so that gives the Committee and the city 10 months to put something in place. The 60 or some odd spots for employees off the land of Blair is fine, but it's unclear whether or not visitors of the building are being taken into account. If the hotel and Tropical Foods go online soon thereafter, there is going to be an even greater increase. Parking is behind the curb, but we needed a parking lot built there yesterday.

Jim FitzGerald explains that they aren't just going to look at today's issues, they will project into the future, considering the additional parking demand not necessarily on a time line, but as large developments are set to go online they will take a snap shot of that to see what shortages are upcoming, not just existing today.

Darnell Williams explains that the challenge is that for events at Hibernian Hall that 200+ people are planning to attend, there is no parking. Folks park in Dudley all day and don't pay because there is no parking regulation. So the businesses around here see the same cars parked all day because people drive here and take public transportation because they don't want to pay for parking when they can park in Dudley for free. There could be a parking meter as opposed to a central machine, as individual meters will limit the number of cars that do this. Parking enhancement should include progressive

strategies to improve it right now. If someone began enforcing parking today, then the parking footprint would be immediately improved.

Jim FitzGerald agrees that some intermediate, short-term regulations, especially to address that in particular, would be useful. People parking in the morning and staying for 7 hours or more is a problem.

Darnell Williams concludes by saying that the timing of the lights in Dudley needs to be changed.

Norman Stembridge agrees and points out that not many would disagree.

Darnell Williams explains that it is very important and it doesn't make logical sense. The timing of the lights really needs to be fixed and parking regulations should be enforced now so they can take an accurate snap shot of the situation. From Tremont to Mass Ave there is a serious, serious, parking shortage. Between enforcement and the timing of lights – if those incremental rapid improvements are made it is likely that an immediate change will be seen.

Norman Stembridge comments that in terms of parking that people look for, the lights are going to affect the traffic and flow, and that is influenced by design. Looking at it literally it is hard to separate parking and traffic from design because once five people are trying to get into a particular spot or space, everything else is backed up in that immediate area. In terms of traffic lights, traffic, timing, and flow – that all has to be considered. This is geographically the center of the city, so people are coming from every direction.

Dorothea Jones asks if the parking lost proposed to be developed for the employees of the Ferdinand building will be paid? And who will get the money from the parking there, because it seems like a perfect opportunity for community benefits. She suggests that all Committee members go on a bus ride that the city provides to look at the parameter where they are saying these lots exist and they can together determine at one time which are residential, and which are not. There is no parking in lower Roxbury, so it would be good if the city provides the opportunity to get on a bus with them and look at the space and all the locations where they claim parking exists.

Kenneth Smith asks what they foresee for outcomes of this study?

Sean Manning is not prepared to say what they will ultimately go with, but the plan today was to come and listen to everyone so they could go back and develop materials geared towards the questions and concerns that have been risen today. Between now and when they come back he will respond to the discrete list of questions that he has heard today, regarding on street and commercial parking, what happens with the Ferdinand parking, immediate developments, longer term developments, and the parcels out on Melnea Cass Blvd and the impacts of those as they come online. He doesn't want to say, "here's the area parking demand and supply." Instead, they will consider smaller areas

within the entire study area that will help understand problems and devise a strategy and solutions to those problems.

Darnell Williams asks how they will characterize the turnovers?

Sean Manning explains that they won't look at every single one, but will look at on street parking and public lots. They believe the private lots are all day employee parking, and probably not worth the study time. The other ones will be studied on an hourly basis.

Jim FitzGerald states that protecting resident parking is a priority for the BRA.

Sean Manning offers that metered parking is an obvious strategy.

Pat Hoey states that, as he understands it, because the Ferdinand did not have a garage component to house a certain number of spots, there had to be a Plan B considering what could be done to offset the impact. The development team and others devised this off street facility, as far as he knows, and it won't be paid, as it will only be for employees to come and go so that they won't be parking in the neighborhood and so they don't take up residential spots.

Norman Stenbridge offers an opportunity for community folks to ask questions, as there are still other presentations scheduled for tonight.

Shariff(community member) points out that where the former police station and the library is, there is a 2 hour parking area and then a zone for a food truck, which no food trucks are ever parked in. As you come around the curb there is a cab stand where no cabs park, but people can't park there, even though no cabs are ever parked there. Across the street you have gypsy cabs providing service that regular cabs don't provide because they don't show up, but those are illegal. So there's no parking on both sides of the street. Now busses are parking all the way up the street, so the lot is always full. To get to the point that Darnell was talking about in terms of traffic, Mass Ave is a very busy street, but the traffic flows. Whoever did the Mass Ave study should do another study from Dudley to Shawmut street and Washington Street. There's no need for the traffic to be jammed at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on Shawmut Street to MLK Boulevard – it's a matter of just tagging the lights. They did put a left lane on Dale Street, but somebody needs to care about this issue. The job can be done better.

Jim FitzGerald responds that the issue of curbside management will be looked into and recommended for improvements.

Shariff (community member) repeats that the gypsy cabs are providing service, but something still must be done about them. There should be a place for them to provide service, because the cabs don't come in this area, but the community still needs cabs to provide service.

Jim FitzGerald reiterates that the bigger traffic picture in Dudley calls for redesigning the streets, and a larger improvement in the retiming of signals.

Sharif (community member) points out another issue with the post office on Malcolm X Blvd. The post office itself sits way back, so why can't they put in parallel parking right there? One can't even park to put their mail in the box, even if they're handicapped. There is a lot of green space there so there is enough room to put in a car to park on both sides, and then exit comfortably so you don't have to worry about people parking and running into the post office. These studies have been done in the past but the result is always the same. A better job could be done if someone just cared.

Joyce Stanley (community member) points out that the reason the post office is set back is because the space was supposed to be for parking, but that was eliminated to put in green space which the post office refuses to take care of. The BRA didn't like the original design that included parking because they felt it didn't look good to have parking. This study that Cairos promised [her] was not supposed to be all about the buildings, and not the staples in the district. There's a need for a 200-car garage and when Ferdinand started, that was upped to a 500-car garage, and the plan was nixed and they gave the spot to the police station. Employees parking all day will not stop; people work at BMC and drive in from Quincy and park at Orchard Gardens. We need a study to look at existing employment. Paid parking is starting to exist, but in the meantime the study [she] completed last year said that 260 employees have no parking in Dudley, and that doesn't include the 500 employees that will be here when the school department arrives, and City on a Hill is coming. So there is already a demand for the employees, who wanted to use the old police station, but instead they're doing the Ferdinand building and they gave that area to construction workers to park. But the construction workers are parking on Washington Street, so no customers can park. So that's what needs to be studied, not the new things coming but people here now that are hurting and businesses that are leaving because of these conditions. Construction workers are parking everywhere, and the traffic light that Sharif was talking about from Shawmut to Dudley has been a problem. This is the 10th study done since 1997, so to [her] that area should be the scope, not the school department or parcel 9 or parcel 10, as they factor into it but there's already 2-3 thousand employees and customers trying to park everyday. The post office told me that in their worst month they have 700 people in a week that buy something, and all of those people have to come and most park illegally and some get tickets now. Look at the stakeholders, get rid of the stupid design rules from the BRA and put parking in front of the post office like they do every where else in the city.

Barry Gaither states that he lives on Williams Street, which is hopeless for parking so the residents end up using the market across the street as parking, which is going to go offline. In the best case scenario the street would have just enough parking for the residents, but a lot of people park there and go other places. It is a very desperate problem. On that account of potential available parking spaces, isn't it the case that some of those lots counted in the inventory are likely to be developed to otherwise in the relatively near future? So they don't really represent a solution that's viable for very long,

and it would be interesting to see as to what percentage of those are going to disappear due to vitalization of the community, i.e. Blair's Lot.

Norman Stembridge asks for additional comments?

Jim FitzGerald goes back to his first slide, which was trying to highlight the scope of the immediate present issues that will certainly be looked at and addressed. A big component is land use changes, and some lots will be developed and how that is going to impact demand and supply. They will make a recommendation on the development timeline and how that is going to affect what can be some remediation's to address immediately and in the future.

Charlene Nelson asks what will be the next steps for the Committee?

Hugues Monestime says they will wait and continue to work with the community to keep it on the front burner and move as was recommended on Parcel 8 and Blair's Lot. That is the next step, though he doesn't know if they will start in November or December.

Bing Broderick follows up on Barry's point, and asks how they can propose that the findings and recommendations presented in February will be different from the last thing they were told?

Jim FitzGerald explains that he meant to suggest that in January they present findings and strategies to the community for review and input, and in February they present the recommendations and implementation strategy to the community. They'll present ideas, get feedback, synthesize those comments, and then return again.

Hugues Monestime explains that to address this issue in the past, there were no specific goals, and they didn't have the Ferdinand building or other parcels of the master plan designated. Now so many great projects in the timeline have created a demand that they must respond to immediately. It is good that the study is being done now when they can really use it, unlike past studies, which they've also consolidated and incorporated into this assessment of current and future needs.

Kenneth Smith asks how flexible the scheduled date in February is? It may not be conducive with community input that will change the approach and timeline.

Sean Manning states that from his standpoint, the schedule was designed solely to get information to the community as soon as possible, and for the group to do that any faster is going to be difficult. This will be a back and forth process. VHB is going to present information to the community and Committee, they will comment on it, and then VHB will tighten it up. Issues as they relate to bad weather and access, those are for the BRA to answer and more time is great, but the Ferdinand building is opening in a year so that's the amount of time had to come up with additional solutions.

Jorge Martinez asks if they are hitting for February because of capital improvements or the city's budget?

Sean Manning explains that that is the time it will take to complete the study.

Jorge Martinez says the answer then is no.

Norman Stembridge moves to the next item on the agenda, which is the design plans for Dudley Square.

Patrick Hoey says that a year ago tomorrow the BTM began developing design plans, as Sharrif was talking about, around the issues with traffic and timing. BTM took action to into design for the district, to rebuild intersections with new signals and new equipment to help aid and manage traffic. The timing of lights can be adjusted with more green time, depending on if they get a call from someone in the field, but given the volume it can only go so far with just tweaking the signal timing. Larger issues are with the volumes in the city at different times of day, and going back to last year, the city wanted to take action to get into design, construction, and rebuilding. Dudley Square calls for improvements not just for vehicular traffic, but pedestrians, inadequate ramps, etc. have all been categorized, quantified, and will be addressed. Outreach started with the first public meeting in October of 2012, and they met twice after that in March of 2013 and May of 2013, to go over the traffic alternatives for design in Dudley Square in terms of traffic circulation. At the last meeting in July they discussed streetscape and urban design, the removal of uneven bricks, swapping out some outdated streetlights, and handicap accessibility. Green space, landscape, and the greening of Dudley Square are important components as well, but the maintenance and agreements are very difficult. Self-sustaining design elements are proposed, so if something needs to be irrigated it can channel water through the landscaping design and expect the rain to flourish it. It is a public process, with 4 public meetings, and the 5th one is planned for November or December to talk about where the BTM is now, which is at 25% of design completion. Ultimately the goal is to advertise for construction in the spring of 2014 so they can be underway within the calendar year so that at least phase 1 will be completed in 2015. 100% of the design should be completed after the new year, and in early 2014 they should be able to put it out to bid and get a contractor in to break down and start construction. So with the northern piece they will phase it, and the key intersection is opposite the Ferdinand building, and should be complete by the end of 2014 so that when Ferdinand opens in 2015 that whole field is open.

Darnell Williams states that the aesthetics are fine but the biggest issue is the timing of the lights incorporated in the sequencing of the lights with the beautification plan.

Pat Hoey states that circulation and traffic are priority number 1.

Darnell Williams states that he has come back with schematic talks about implementation in 2014, but needs somewhere to layout where the timing of lights will

be incorporated. He's not suggesting that it is being ignored, but would rather have the presentation tethered to what the real needs/concerns are.

Pat Hoey offers that to his point, only 25% of the design is complete, so it might not yet include the new timing plans for all intersections. BTD just had a consultant sit down with them and spent hours going page by page over every approach and how many seconds each light gets, and the complexities of all that. Just at 5 PM this evening a design was resubmitted to satisfy the engineers. Only 25% has been completed because they first want to make sure everyone is on board, as people have concerns. The point is still well taken, and it is included and real. The plans are under review right now. BTD commented on them, and they are going to take a second look after follow up. While this is going on, they want to come in and update the larger community, similar to what they've already been doing, every 3 months or so. There is a lot of coordination with everything; Ferdinand is the big elephant in the room but the Dudley Branch Library has plans to improve their façade as well, so BTD is working closely with them to make sure things match up. Hugues is leading a group on ways to elevate Gourdin Park, and there is an artist on board that has amazing ideas for what could happen. BTD would like to make sure that when the design clears, the park is more accessible. They are considering cutting out on the Shawmut extension to allow people to pull up and park. They are working with the Gourdin stakeholders, area stakeholders, business communities, and the Main Streets – as they want to make sure all voices are heard. They want to recognize not just evening residents, but interface with the daytime and business folks as well. The proposal for cycle traffic on Malcolm X Blvd is in design right now, and there will be a public process for that to make sure it matches up with plans for Dudley Square. The good news on utilities is the work is getting done. Water and sewer was here but is moving on, now National Grid is here but they'll finish up soon. So to repave the streets, timing wise it is best to have the utilities work out of the way for sequencing. BTD met with the MBTA today to go over a circulation plan for the busses exiting the station, and they want to be on the same page for internal changes in the station to accommodate what is happening outside the station. From the study to design to construction, it will be a max of 9 million for construction and to pay for new signals, resurfacing streetlights, landscaping, etc. 100% of the design will be complete by spring 2014, then they will advertise for construction. The idea was to phase the project because of everything else that is happening. Phase one will be completed by the fall of 2015; phase two will be finished by the fall of 2016. There will be a couple more years of construction to endure, but its very important for commerce for people to have access to this, and it is a worthwhile project that the city will get through together. He asks if there are any questions?

Someone asks what the impact of the mayoral race will be to this project?

Pat Hoey responds that the project is funded so regardless of whom the new mayor is it is in the capital budget, and he would hope that either candidate wouldn't decide to pull this necessary project, especially if they expect to stay mayor.

Dorothea Jones asks if the Committee can receive the past transportation studies that have been done?

Jim FitzGerald offers that they have the ones previously referenced.

Charlene Nelson asks how this relates to the project on Melnea Cass?

Pat Hoey explains that BTD is still in design for Melnea Cass Blvd, and hopefully there will be a design in the near future that links Melnea Cass with Dudley Square.

Norman Stembridge asks if there are any other questions? With none, he introduces Mr. Williams from TAP.

Darnell Williams explains that TAP has offered to voluntarily put together a schematic of what the layout of the new Roxbury will be after the developments and parking and traffic projects are completed. He recommends that the Committee take them up on the offer, and at the next meeting they want to offer their services at no cost.

Hugues Monestime explains that they will introduce Mr. Williams to the larger community and at one point there will need to be a meeting.

Darnell Williams asks if TAP could initially construct a one or two pager that will give Committee and community members an idea of what is in the queue right now so they will have an idea of what Roxbury will look like.

Hugues Monestime states that this is something the community already has.

Christian Williams states that he will come back to the next regular meeting.

Norman Stembridge asks if CW has anything else he would like to add?

Christian Williams states that he was thinking as he was watching the presentation of parking that a lot of the work that TAP has proposed to do for the RSMPOC is based on work they've already done, and a lot of that work can possibly inform this parking study and maybe help to think of solutions for the future, as well as future development opportunities that are going to be available. He suggests that the number of housing units is something that should be considered right now and in the future.

Jim FitzGerald agrees that that will absolutely be done.

Norman Stembridge asks if there are any other questions.

Darnell Williams motions to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM.