



Meeting Notes
October 15, 2008
6:00pm-7:30 PM
Boston Connect, Inc.
2201 Washington Street, Roxbury

RSMPOC Members Present: Marilyn Lynch, Norman Stembridge, Donovan Walker, Dan Richardson, Virginia Davis, Beverly Adams; RNC: Julio Henriquez; BRA: Hugues Monestime, Jonathan Greeley, Jeong Ju, Ted Schwartzberg;

Dan Richardson (OC) called the meeting to order and explained that the group will go over the Draft RFP for Parcels 9 & 10. There is low attendance at tonight's meeting because people are also attending a Dudley Vision meeting and Haitian Community disaster relief fundraiser.

Marilyn Lynch (OC) asks Ted to add her name to the attendance record of the previous meeting.

Jonathan Greeley (BRA) tells the group that there have been no changes to the RFP since the first draft was put out. He is looking to get feedback tonight.

Dan (OC) commented that there is a lot of local knowledge and intelligence in the room.

Hugues (BRA) noted that the small size of the group attending will allow everyone to look closely at what is in the RFP. Adding he is interested in soliciting more input from residents of Lower Roxbury. He will coordinate with Reggie to get people on the PRC so they may already be familiar with the process by the time proposals are submitted. Hugues then explained the PRC nomination and formation process.

Bob Terrell (RNC) noted that the RNC has already started the process of making a recommendation list for the PRC. He asked the group to send him the names of anyone they would like to nominate.

Marilyn Lynch (OC) asked how the neighborhood has been involved- how are they were brought into the process? Many of the people on the committee are development industry professionals. How do we involve people in these meetings that have concerns but not

this background? This is especially important in Lower Roxbury where people are impacted by their proximity to Parcels 8, 9 & 10, as well as Northeastern. It would be a tragedy if they weren't involved. She mentioned that zoning issues, height constraints and jobs are also concerns.

Dan (OC) asked Marilyn to clarify her zoning concerns.

Marilyn (OC) stated that we shouldn't be trying to add more height to a neighborhood where that's not as important as many other issues. We are concerned about use and green space. It is more difficult for those spaces to thrive with height. The higher a building you have on a smaller lot the more it exacerbates parking and traffic issues.

Jonathan (BRA) stated that these are all good points, particularly the issue about open space. Section 4 of the RFP addresses this: we need to specify open spaces and who uses what. Resident participation is important: workshops in the past have played a successful role. The point about participation is well taken: how do we get residents that will be most directly impacted at this table for this discussion?

Beverly Adams (OC) stated that outreach has been good, but could be even better. The people at the table: developers, institutional groups and business owners have been well represented, but it is not enough. She suggested using newspaper ads, recorded phone calls and leafleting to attract more interest from local residents.

Jonathan (BRA) agreed that the group needs to try a range of different strategies. In the past we've used Donovan's kids to flyer the neighborhood. We should always strive to have more people at the meetings.

Virginia Davis (OC) suggested that flyers should be given to the managers of large housing developments for distribution to residents.

Donovan Walker (OC) added that while flyering in the neighborhood he found that a lot of people didn't know about the meetings. He noted that there is a set perspective that you can't speak at these meeting. We need to set up a meeting for abutters to come to us, for us to listen to them. We also need to reach out to abutting businesses. Some examples include the young man who bought a T-Mobile franchise a year ago who will soon face competition from a nearby company-owned T-Mobile store, and other stores with a large volume of sales and economic activity, specifically Tropical Market.

Dan (OC) stated that he doesn't want to put down past outreach efforts: the point is that we need to do better in the future.

Nataka Crayton (United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury) stated that language is important in attracting new community members to meetings. The language should be more familiar to people who are not in development than what is currently used in outreach materials. Another challenged faced by her own community group is attracting a

representative group of participants. To a large extent it is homeowners – not renters – who attend her group’s meetings.

Julio Henriquez (RNC) stated, some of us have been here since the beginning building outreach. It is a difficult task to just keep people that are already at the table involved, let alone new people, especially because people can’t speak at meetings and become cynical about attending future meetings.

In regards to Tropical Foods and Mr. Garry, the supermarket is the anchor tenant of Dudley Square. Not only in terms of volume of business, but also because he hires in the local community and contributes to it. He deserves a voice.

Jobs are important, but especially important is job training to get people from the community to have the skills to get the jobs that will come with development. He states that he wants to see that companies will come with jobs for the community and training. Training should be emphasized.

Jonathan (BRA) thanked Julio, noting that this is the kind of comment that is very helpful to the process.

Bob (RNC) directed the group to page 12 of the draft RFP, to the 50% local construction jobs requirement. He states it should be 60% for local hire and 60% of permanent jobs should also be local. We can pull the exact language from Parcel P-3.

Page 8 discusses height requirements and FAR requirements. We want to pull out the language that says it is PDA eligible. And on pages 19 and 21, street orientation is discussed. On corners, which side is the street side?

Jonathan (BRA) replied that the focus is on Washington and Melnea Cass. The purpose of that requirement is to ensure buildings fronts those two streets. In the case of Melnea Cass, the purpose is to make that street more pedestrian friendly. We can clarify the intention of that requirement.

Bob (RNC) stated that there is not a section on community benefits in the draft RFP.

Norman Stembridge (OC) added that there are a number of community benefits he is looking for: housing and wealth generation, with specific requirements that would be in the RFP.

He added on the topic of outreach, if we need to ask every person from here to eternity for their input and comments, we would never get anywhere. One specific place we could hand out flyers is Tropical Foods.

Bob (RNC) pointed to page 3 of the draft RFP where there is a reference to the Urban Ring: as a community we need to be a lot more aggressive about how that project is taking shape.

Donovan (OC) noted that the bike path has been switched from 9 to 10, which he states doesn't make sense.

Hugues (BRA) replies that his team went back and fixed that.

Donovan (OC) returns to community benefits: I don't think we should send money to people who have been taking it for 25 years. On outreach: we need to change how we meet and how we run our meetings. The audience watches us bickering and then doesn't have the chance to talk. Until you find a better way to have everyone participate, people won't come.

Hugues (BRA) addresses the questions of a PDA and community benefits. PDA's have limits. The underlying zoning allows a maximum height of 55 feet while under the PDA the maximum allowable height does not exceed 65 feet. Northeastern's recent development was probably approved through their Institutional Master Plan. Washington Street corridor serves as a good example in terms of height.

Regarding community benefits, we cannot specifically mandate that benefits be directed to any specific group. We can however recommend that the respondents identifies areas within the community that can benefit from the project.

Jonathan (BRA) added that identifying areas – as opposed to groups – that will get benefits is something you can do. This helps bidders identify different groups that they should contact as they develop their proposal.

Julio (RNC) noted that community benefits should not be assigned to any specific individuals or organizations, but community benefits should accrue to immediate abutters. The Reggie Lewis Center is an example of failure, since every time it is used there is a fee. It shows that community benefits should be clearly embedded in the document.

Dan (OC) added, at this point United Neighbors of Roxbury becomes very important. People coming in the neighborhood should be involved in all zoning decisions in the neighborhood.

Norman (OC) stated that when you get specific about community benefits, you get people who say I'm going to specifically deal with certain people in the community and you get butting heads: the old divide and conquer.

Marilyn (OC) noted that a long time ago, a part of Parcel 10 was supposed to be for Tropical Foods. I am very concerned that the BRA follows through on its promises.

Bob (RNC) asked how we can frame the language about benefits without being too specific. How do we hone the language?

Dan (OC) suggested having meetings that put that question on the table. Maybe we should have smaller meetings to work on this.

Donovan (OC) spoke next, noting that he would like to address six points:

1. I recently read that there is a state law which requires 20% affordable units in new housing developments. Is this correct?

Jonathan (BRA) replied that the rule is a component of Chapter 40B regulations for certain types of developments. These Chapter 40B regulations do not apply to the City of Boston because it is already above the 40B minimum affordable unit threshold.

Donovan (OC) thanked Jonathan and continues:

2. Community benefits were specifically excluded from the meeting notes for the previous meeting. The note taker, Ted, should correct this specific omission from the October 6th meeting notes and make sure that the comments I am saying now about omitting community benefits are not excluded from the notes for today's meeting.

We should have meetings to determine a specific percentage community benefits. This conversation should be in the Oversight Committee meeting, not the Executive Committee meeting. My comments about this were not in the notes from the last meeting.

3. We should meet in a place where we don't have to leave by 7:45.
4. We should have more than 10 minutes for community member comments. The community needs an hour to speak.
5. We need to address the situation of our Chairman and his attendance record. The BRA and the Oversight Committee need to have a meeting to address that issue. This comment should be in the meeting notes.
6. The community needs to know how hard we've been working on this and recognizes our work. The first charge we put on has fallen off the list: community benefits. We need to establish: what is the benefit to the community over the next 65 years in terms of ground lease fees.

Ron Garry (Tropical Foods) stated that from the perspective of an abutter, how the RFP is written will determine what gets developed on the site.

Donovan (OC) replies that there is a PRC.

Hugues (BRA) noted that the sites will be disposed through an RFP process. A project review committee will review each proposal and determine which project best meets the goals of the RFP.

Dan (OC) added that had we simply gone with the highest bidder on Parcel P-3 we wouldn't be sitting in this room here today. It's not easy, but the reality is this is a dicey process. No one in the country has done what we're doing here, so there is risk here.

Ron (TF) noted that his business wants to expand. The expansion plan would leave a 40,000 SF parcel that we wouldn't need if we were to win. My concern from a supermarket perspective isn't as much density which is what I heard in earlier meetings.

Julio (RNC) stated the Master Plan calls for mixed-use development.

Dan (OC) noted that we could be hurting the community if the RFP goes out and no one bids.

Jonathan (BRA) stated that he's aware of a genuine affection for Tropical Foods. It would be foolish to think of bringing someone in without engaging them in the process. We should think of existing mixed-use developments that include supermarkets- there are examples.

Norman (OC) added that we should settle parameters that include mixed-use and the best use for the surrounding community, and then have people come to us with ideas.

Ron (TF) noted that his concern is still about density. If we were to win, we wouldn't necessarily be able to take up the whole parcel.

Julio (OC) replied that there are a lot of compatible uses that go along with a supermarket. There are many creative ways to mix and match what can go with a supermarket.

Jeong Ju (BRA) asked if a Tropical Foods expansion proposal would include the existing structure.

Ron (TF) replied that he would sell the existing Tropical Foods building and use the equity for the deal with the new parcel.

Virginia Davis (OC) next asked if there will be language in the RFP on where to create open space, to make sure they go along with the RSMP's guidelines. How will they be enforced?

Dan (OC) replied that there will be language to this effect in the RFP. We're looking for the best possible outcomes and will certainly try. Regarding outreach, abutters on Williams Street should receive flyers and an explanation in terms understandable to everyone that air space will be gone when there is development. It is clear that there are who people don't understand this or are not aware of it.

Darnell (OC) added that the lack of knowledge/understanding is consistent with what he saw when interacting with community members during previous flyer drops.

Hugues (BRA) noted the importance of such outreach: there needs to be language in the RFP that commits developers to programming and job training. Regarding the disposition of properties: page 24 of RFP states it will be a ground lease based on assessed value of the lot at build-out.

Julio (RNC) stated that people have disagreed with the BRA's appraisal methods in the past. Similar abutters have been appraised for much less than the BRA's appraisal for Parcel 3 and Bartlett Yard. We have a right to question their process and method for doing that.

Dan (OC) added that appraisals vary significantly from neighborhood to neighborhood. But it is reasonable to assume that if everything we say will happen, happens the developer will be sitting on a gold mine in the future. That's why the BRA should pay us. They should give us a part of those leases.

Donovan (OC) stated that we've come a long way deducing our perspective on Parcels 9 and 10. I would like a presentation and clarification on Parcel 8. Not tonight, but at some point. Madison Park had 3 charettes on Parcel 10, but David Price who led them is now at Nuestra, so I don't know what will happen.

Julio (RNC) agreed with Donovan's comment and adds that this has been a good meeting.

Dan (OC) asked if there are any other comments, then thanked the group.

Julio (RNC) moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was seconded. Meeting adjourned.