



Meeting Notes
October 27, 2008
6:00pm-7:30 PM
Twelfth Baptist Church
150-160 Warren Street, Roxbury

RSMPOC Members Present: Marilyn Lynch, Norman Stembridge, Donovan Walker, Dan Richardson, Darnell Williams, Charlotte Nelson, Virginia Davis; BRA: John Dalzell, Hugues Monestime, Jonathan Greeley, Ted Schwartzberg

Darnell (OC), Hugues (BRA), Virginia Davis

Darnell Williams (OC) called the meeting to order. Since it was 6:10 and there were no voting items, he asked if the group could begin without quorum. No objections were voiced.

Hugues Monestime (BRA) gave a brief recap of the previous meeting. The community was asked for comments on the Parcels 9 & 10 RFP, none were received.

Darnell (OC) welcomed Virginia back to the Oversight Committee.

Jonathan Greeley (BRA) told the group that after comments from the night's meeting, his team will bring back a draft of the RFP for November's Executive Committee meeting for consideration and further comments. After that, it will be sent out for public comment for 30 days. He'll then come back after the holidays with a plan for addressing public comments. The final RFP will be issued in January.

Darnell (OC) asked if the mechanism for receiving public comments was discussed at the October 15th meeting.

John Dalzell (BRA) replied that during the public comment period, the draft RFP will be widely distributed, posted online and left at a variety of locations. Ted Schwartzberg will collect comments and file them in a spreadsheet. Some comments will likely address major issues, some comments will address more minor issues.

Darnell (OC) noted that the group hasn't listed specific dates for the public commentary timeline. He asked the committee for their thoughts on the issue.

Dan Richardson (OC) replied that the holidays will make it more difficult for members of the public to respond.

John D. (BRA) noted that a public comment period from mid-November to mid-December gets it in before the holidays.

Dan (OC) replied that November 15th is the start of a very busy season due to the holidays.

Hugues (BRA) stated that 60 days might be appropriate- given past experience, a lot of people travel during that time of year.

Darnell (OC) asked when the 60 day comment period would begin.

Norman (OC) stated that everyone needs to agree on a date when the process will be completed.

Darnell (OC) asked if the 2009 meeting schedule has been set.

Hugues (BRA) replied that it had.

Jonathan G. (BRA) noted that the first meeting of the new year is scheduled for January 5th. The January 5th meeting could be moved to January 26th.

Darnell (OC) replied that we should also take into account Martin Luther King Day. Given a January 26th meeting date we can work backward to establish a due date for comments, and based on that, a start date for the comment period.

Jonathan G. (BRA) suggested January 16th as the closing date for public commentary. It is a Friday, and it allows a 60 day comment period after the November meeting.

Darnell (OC) noted that November 16th is Sunday and suggest November 17th as the start date.

John D. (BRA) added that a start date of November 17th and an end date of January 16th would give a 60 day comment period because December has an extra day. Comments could be compiled after the end date and presented to the committee at the January 26th meeting.

Darnell (OC) asked if everyone was in agreement.

The group conquered.

Dan (OC) noted that the group hasn't discussed open space. It is a major issue for Parcel 9. There are some discussions about housing. We need to come to some unanimity on housing on Parcel 9 because I don't think there should necessarily be housing there. Additional comments on housing and open space need to be included in that part.

Darnell (OC) replied that the November 26th meeting will be dedicated to the RFP, including all comments that have been received. Is it correct that with exception of open space and housing that should be revised, everything else is in the summary of changes?

Norman Stembridge (OC) added that he is trying to flesh out the community benefits more, having not gotten far in discussing community benefits.

Jonathan G. (BRA) replied that the summary of changes sheet calls out some the more major changes to the RFP, including Dudley Square connections and the Lower Roxbury community. Changes are in red on the RFP. Further changes should be e-mailed to the group.

Darnell (OC) noted that from his perspective we have captured all of the comments to date. Now addressing the revised timeline of October: my suggestion was setting a sunset date to make sure everyone knows that there are only 60 days.

Dan (OC) added that it will be final after the sunset date.

Darnell (OC) continued that hopefully by then the debt and equity markets will improve. Now, given that January 26th is our final date to revise, is the RFP publishing date too early?

John D. (BRA) replied that we can discuss that deadline at the January 26th meeting. If changes are major, we can ask for more time to come back with a new RFP reflecting those changes. So we can leave it open for now: we should put February or March for the final date to give us flexibility.

Darnell (OC) agreed.

Donovan suggested taking February out to allow more time for the committee to discuss proposed changes among themselves.

John D. (BRA) replied that the reasoning behind the timeline is to respond to the Oversight Committee's desire to keep the process moving.

Hugues (BRA) continued that the thought was also to see what the market will be by January. Also, we will need to discuss how long the RFP will be out there.

Darnell (OC) asked if this will be for one project or both Parcel 9 and Parcel 10.

Donovan Walker (OC) replied that it was intentionally left non-specific to leave options open to make development on the parcels easier.

Darnell (OC) stated that the group should wait to see where the market will be at the time of the January 26th meeting and make decisions on the length based on that assessment.

Donovan (OC) noted that we understand the fiscal situation for everyone, but let's not make that a determining factor in plans for what will be in our community.

Norman (OC) stated that he still thinks we need to wrap this thing up so we'll be ready whenever it's time to go. I think a simultaneous disposition will be best. We're not tying the parcels together: someone can speak for one or two.

Dan (OC) replied that the topic has already been extensively discussed- we decided this in unanimity. I'm expecting someone to come forward with a strong proposal for part of the combined parcels: Tropical Foods said they would be interested in Parcel 10. There are some other players that have not surfaced. One thing we should try to look at is what kind of creativity these folks will have. The market changes every day. The real question is: do we have, as a community, something that is attractive to developers or co-developers? For example, Ron Carrey indicated he would love help on that parcel. Part of the reason there was such a dampened response last time: the parcel was scary, there were other parcels out to bid and it was subject to political arm twisting. We should let the market run its course and put our best as a community out there.

Darnell (OC) cautioned our role is to produce a product, then determine which we want from what is out there: we keep ourselves neutral regarding thinking of specific potential developers. In January or February, someone independent in real estate should come in and give a snapshot of where the market is.

Dan (OC) replied, I want to make clear that my example was hypothetical. We should be encouraging joint ventures to move forward. But now we need to determine what the "expert" will need to tell us.

Charlotte Nelson (OC) added that we need to hone in on our task, which is based on our commitment to the community to get the RFP out.

Darnell (OC) noted that the timeline should be based on other, similar RFP's. Given this timeline we're likely to receive responses by the end of summer, 2009. The project would start in 3 or 4 years. Really we are dealing with a good time to be planning for what will be a different market.

Hugues (BRA) added that the RFP allows for joint ventures. It is already set up in the RFP that they can do this. In terms of housing, Parcel 3 has good examples of language stating that this is not appropriate. We can go back and look at previous RFP's for examples of precise language to make clear that housing is not necessary for that site.

Especially given the size of the lot, we have to be strategic about how we reach our employment goals on such small sites.

John D. (BRA) noted that he wants to hear comments about open space. He added that he would support simultaneous disposition- with the Oversight Committee's approval we could market it that way.

Darnell (OC) replied that the group should read the most up to date RFP first, then make a decision.

Dan (OC) added that in workshops he heard support for simultaneous disposition, among other plans. He thinks simultaneous disposition is a good way to go. On open space: it is important that we not plan for every inch of space. We don't have to get into a situation where everything is so jammed up it feels like you can't breathe. We need to think about open space and creative use of open space. We don't want to detract from everything else that is happening in Dudley Square.

Charlotte noted that the Urban Ring project is relevant to open space discussions. This should be on the table.

John D. (BRA) replied that his team will go back to make sure it's clearer.

Donovan (OC) asked if it would be OK for audience members to speak.

Norman (OC) noted that the group should put commentary on open space in the RFP.

John D. (BRA) replied that it will be addressed in the next draft.

Darnell (OC) asked if there were any further comments from the Oversight Committee, then asked if there were any comments from the audience.

Janine Dowling (audience member) stated she is concerned that language about sustainability is too vague.

Hugues (BRA) noted the concern and added that he will be sending update cards to members to update contact information.

Dan (OC) spoke next to announce that the Oversight Committee has retained council, for the following reasons: so the group can begin to talk about revenue sharing with the BRA. And so the body at some point will get legal status as 501c3.

Darnell (OC) added, we don't want to replicate efforts of existing social service agencies or technical assistance/incubation businesses.

Darnell (OC) next made a motion to adjourn.

Charlotte (OC) seconded.

Meeting adjourned.