

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION FALL WORKSHOP

October 18, 2022

5:00pm, Held virtually via Zoom

Commissioners present: Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, David Hacin, Andrea Leers, Mimi Love, Anne-Marie Lubenau, David Manfredi, Kirk Sykes, and William Rawn
BPDA Staff in attendance: Michael Cannizzo, Adam Johnson, Prataap Patrose, Elizabeth Stifel

DISCUSSION:

The meeting began with introductions from Chief Arthur Jemison, Deputy Chief Diana Fernandez, and the Mayor's Chief of Staff Tiffany Chu. The Commissioners were then invited to introduce themselves and describe how they joined the BCDC. Each spoke briefly about how they joined the Commission, and gave some thoughts about what the Commission does. Common themes included a focus on public realm in Boston, community building, learning from proponents and colleagues about the city and neighborhoods, and the idea that the commission is a place to have a positive impact on the public realm and open space.

The discussion then moved onto a discussion of Article 28 and the project review process, beginning with when the BCDC should see projects. There was a consensus among the Commissioners that they want to see projects as soon as possible, especially for large, neighborhood creating projects, with the largest projects being presented even as early as pre-file.

Next, the commissioners were asked about the relationship to BPDA staff review. They stressed the need for context, and asked for more information about area guidelines (PLANS) and other projects in the area. It was noted that the BCDC wants to be a partner with BPDA staff and not the place problem projects go to get fixed. They emphasized that BPDA staff should be empowered to be tougher with proponents earlier to prevent problems later. Several Commissioners suggested an early meeting to coordinate with staff, to then later be followed up on when the project is more developed. They also indicated interest in hearing more about the values the city is trying to address including climate change, equity, affordability, energy innovation.

Diana Fernandez presented the proposal for the Design Vision for Boston. The Commissioners asked that updates about the process be shared as the project further develops. They also asked about community feedback, and recommended that the project reinforce the idea of Boston as a place using design, and specifically how the city works at the neighborhood scale and at the seams and edges of neighborhoods.

Finally, the Commissioners were invited to talk about how the BCDC can adjust and change to meet the new challenges of the Design Vision and changing development. They were interested in learning more from the City about various plans and reports that impact their review. They also were interested in going over projects that they had previously reviewed that are now complete to see what has worked and what has not. They finished by requesting more opportunities for similar workshops and internal discussion in the future.