

ZONING COMMISSION, CITY OF BOSTON

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 26, 2000

Room 900, City Hall, Boston

Attendance

Commissioners

Robert L. Marr, Chairman	
Building Trade Employers' Association	Present
Robert L. Fondren	
Boston Society of Architects	Present
John H. Bean	
Greater Boston Massachusetts Labor Council AFL/CIO	Absent
James C. Clark	
Mayor's Selection	Present
William Tarlow	
Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay	Absent
Denise Doyle	
Mayor's Selection	Present
Ralph Cooper	
Franklin Field South Neighborhood Association	Present
M. Pat Tierney	
Greater Boston Real Estate Board	Present
Enerio Barros	
Mayor's Selection	Present
Jill Hatton	
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce	Present
Vacancy	
Neighborhood Association	

Staff

Linda M. Haar	
Advisor to the Commission	Present
Jeffrey M. Hampton	
Secretary to the Commission	Present

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings scheduled.

BUSINESS MEETING

Susan Hannon, Project Manager for the BRA, was present at the business meeting.

Mr. Marr opened the Business Meeting at 9:20 AM and took up the issue regarding Map Amendment Application No. 429. Mr. Marr gave a review of the proceedings that occurred at the Public Hearing on April 5th. He stated that this business meeting was a continuation of the business meeting that also occurred on April 5th. Mr. Marr emphasized that this business meeting was an open meeting to the public but that no further public testimony would be allowed. Mr. Marr asked if the BRA had changed its original position on the petition.

Ms. Haar stated that the BRA still stands behind its original position.

9:25 – Mr. Cooper arrived.

Mr. Fondren stated that he had received numerous calls claiming that the project was “fast tracked.”

Ms. Haar stated that the Article 80 review process is clear and predictable and that this project was treated no differently than any other.

Ms. Hannon gave a brief overview of the public contacts and the neighborhood groups involved.

Mr. Fondren asked if the Park Plaza Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) reviews the project.

Ms. Hannon stated that they can review it, but they are not the neighborhood council with jurisdiction over this particular review process. The Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council has the Authority in this particular case.

Mr. Marr stated that the Commission had received a number of follow-up documentation both in support and opposition to the project.

Mr. Fondren said that it seemed that the comments from the general public had fallen on deaf ears.

Ms. Hannon disagreed stating the Article 80 review process is still ongoing and that the Scoping Determination that was issued contained the public comments.

Mr. Fondren stated that there is obviously major concern regarding the project from the public. He said maybe not so much the structure specifically, but concern that many people have not been heard on various issues. He respects the opinion of the CAC, regardless of its jurisdiction.

Ms. Hannon stated that the opinion expressed by Bernie Borman on CAC stationary was a personal opinion and not that of the CAC.

There was discussion among the Commissioners concerning the Commission's association with this project.

Ms. Tierney asked if there are any guarantees that the public comments would be heard.

Ms. Hannon stated that every step in the Article 80 review process requires a public comment period. The Scoping Determination was just one of many steps.

Ms. Tierney asked what in this project can and cannot be changed.

Ms. Haar stated that the project cannot exceed the relief granted to it "an outer envelope if you will."

Ms. Hatton said that the developer would not want to proceed if they are not given that outer envelope.

Ms. Haar stated that this is common, but other projects have come before the Commission that have been further along in the Article 80 review process.

Mr. Fondren stated that each approval given solidifies the project a little more. How does this project fit in with the plan of the area?

Ms. Hannon said that the Midtown Cultural Plan does allow a 300' building on this parcel.

Mr. Fondren asked what the boundaries of the District were.

Ms. Haar showed the Commissioners a copy of the zoning map for the area.

Ms. Hatton asked about the transportation component of the project.

Ms. Haar said that it has yet to be completed.

Mr. Fondren said that he was not against development of this site, but wanted to make sure that it was appropriate development. He also asked whether any other parcels could be designated a "U" district.

Ms. Hannon said that it was a possibility. There had been some in the past, but there are few parcels left to be developed.

Mr. Fondren said that if there are more, make sure that public is involved with the process.

Ms. Haar stated that the Article 80 review process requires public comment periods.

Mr. Fondren said that he wanted those comments to be heard.

Mr. Marr said that the trend in this area of the City is to build bigger and higher. The two and four story structures are disappearing and that the City must guard against over-massing.

Mr. Fondren agreed and said the fact that the Commission had approved "U" designations in the past affects the decision of City development.

Ms.. Doyle asked about the third level of parking discussed at the public hearing.

Ms. Hannon said that it was being looked at and that the Scoping Determination requested the possibility of going down another level.

Mr. Clark asked about the relationship between Loews and the Hotel Union.

Ms. Hannon stated that that was also being worked on but nothing had been agreed upon.

Mr. Fondren said that it was not a zoning issue and that the appropriate parties will work on it.

There was no further discussion.

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve Map Amendment Application No. 429 as submitted. Ms. Hatton seconded the motion. Mr. Marr put the motion to vote:

Yeas: 6

Ms. Hatton, Mr. Barros, Mr. Marr, Mr. Clark, Mr. Cooper, Ms. Doyle.

Nays: 2

Mr. Fondren, Ms. Tierney

The motion was declared not carried.

Mr. Marr adjourned the meeting at 10:16 AM