

ZONING COMMISSION, CITY OF BOSTON

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Room 900, City Hall, Boston

Attendance

Commissioners

Mr. David Marr	
Building Trade Employers' Association	Absent
Mr. Robert L. Fondren, Chairman	
Boston Society of Architects	Present
Mr. Jay Hurley	
Greater Boston Massachusetts Labor Council AFL-CIO	Absent
Ms. Jane Cooper Brayton	
Neighborhood Representative –	
Blackstone/Franklin Square Neighborhood	Present
Ms. Joanne Keith	
Mount Pleasant, Vine, and Forest Street	
Neighborhood Association	Present
Ms. Annaise Foureau	
Mayor's Selection	Absent
Mr. Michael DiMella	
Greater Boston Real Estate Board	Absent
Mr. Michael Nichols	
Mayor's Selection	Present
Ms. Jill Hatton	
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce	Present
Ms. Catherine McDonnell	
Mayor's Selection	Present
Mr. John M. Arroyo	
Mayor's Selection	Absent

Staff

Mr. Jeffery M. Hampton	
Deputy Director for Zoning/Advisor to the Commission	Present
Ms. Marybeth Pyles	
Senior Land Use Counsel	Present

Ms. Kathleen R. Pedersen
Secretary to the Commission

Present

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman Fondren opened by stating that there were too few Zoning Commissioners to take a vote but, enough to hold the Public Hearing. He further stated that a Business Meeting would be scheduled, at which time a vote would be taken.

1. First Amendment to the 2010-2020 Wentworth Institute of Technology Institutional Master Plan

The following spoke in favor of the petition:

Mr. Minor Perez, Carpenters Union

The following spoke in opposition of the petition:

None

Mr. Jeffrey Hampton, Deputy Director for Zoning/Advisor to the Commission at the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), stated that petition would relocate and increase the size of one (1) of the five (5) identified Proposed Institutional Projects, which was the Center for Engineering and Technology and which will become the proposed Wentworth Multipurpose Academic Building, located at 555 Parker Street.

Mr. David Wahlstrom, Vice President for Business at Wentworth Institute of Technology, provided a historical context for the petition as well as a description of the future plans.

Wentworth Institute of Technology (“Wentworth” or the “Institute”) filed its first Institutional Master Plan (the “Original IMP”) in 1999. The Original IMP was reviewed over the next year and approved in April of 2000. The Original IMP covered the years 2000 through 2008 and included one proposed project for the development of a new dormitory as an addition to Baker Hall located at 610 Huntington Avenue. The Original IMP was amended twice. The first amendment in April of 2003 allowed for the development of a second new student residence at 555 Huntington Avenue and the incorporation of an existing 12-person dormitory located at 66 Louis Prang Street into the Original IMP; the second amendment filed in June of 2007 was to approve the addition of property located at 525 and 634 Huntington Avenue to the Original IMP as interim open space.

In April of 2009, Wentworth submitted an IMPNF for its next ten-year IMP. The IMP now in effect (the “2010-2020 IMP” or “IMP”) was approved by the (then) BRA on December 14, 2010, by the Boston Zoning Commission on January 19, 2011 and by Mayor Thomas M. Menino on January 20, 2011. The 2010-2020 IMP has a term of ten (10) years and includes five

projects that were anticipated to be undertaken during the current term (the “IMP Projects”). Those five projects are:

- the Flanagan Campus Center at Beatty Hall;
- the 18,000 sf academic addition to the Ira Allen Building at 540 Parker Street;
- The Student Apartments @ 525 Huntington Avenue;
- a proposed new soccer field above 330 surface parking spaces (“New Sweeney Field”); and
- a new 45,000 sf academic facility to be located on the Campus Quadrangle at the site of Willson Hall (the “Center for Engineering and Technology”).

The Project will not result in additional enrollment, no additional off-street parking will be constructed to support the Project and instead parking needs will continue to be managed through campus-wide parking management programs.

Mr. Josiah Stevenson, Principal at Leers Weinzapfel Associates, provided a comprehensive description of the proposed Multipurpose Academic Building (the “MpA Building”).

The MpA Building will be located on the Wentworth Campus, an urban setting with various density and building heights ranging from high-rises and large institutional buildings along Huntington Avenue to smaller, residential buildings in the Mission Hill and Fenway neighborhoods. Within the Wentworth Campus, adjacent to the Site, there are mid-scale academic buildings ranging from three stories to four stories in height.

The MpA Building is proposed to be 64 feet in height, contain approximately 78,000 gross square feet, surrounded by open space, with a minimum setback of 30 feet from adjacent buildings and be 25-32 feet from the edge of Parker Street. On the building’s south elevation adjacent to the Pike, the walkway will be widened onto Wentworth’s property, and incorporated with the entry areas of the building. On the east elevation adjacent to Parker Street the ground floor of the MpA Building will be set back from the property line, and thus the sidewalk area will be widened and incorporated with the entry plaza area of the MpA Building to improve the streetscape.

Commissioner Hatton asked if there is an intention to include a coffee shop, as it is to be located on the Quad but, Mr. Setevenson stated that the space will be exclusively lab space. She further asked if there would be underground parking and was informed that there would not be.

Chairman Fondren asked if that concluded the presentation and Ms. Katelyn Sullivan, Senior Project Manager at the BPDA, confirmed that it did.

Chairman Fondren declared the Petitioner’s case closed.

Chairman Fondren asked if anyone wanted to speak in favor of the petition:

Mr. Perez, Carpenters Union

Chairman Fondren asked if anyone wanted to speak in opposition of the petition:

None

Chairman Fondren declared the Public Hearing closed and stated the Business Meeting would not take place today but, will likely be held on June 21, 2017.

2. Text Amendment Application No. 471
Map Amendment Application No. 698
St. Gabriel's Monastery CPS
Map 7A/7B/7C/7D, Allston-Brighton Neighborhood District

The following spoke in favor of the petition:

Ms. Allison Frazee, Director of Advocacy at Boston Preservation Alliance and Mr. Perez (Carpenters Union)

The following spoke in opposition of the petition:

Ms. Joanne D'Alcomo, Ms. Athena Lanes, Carol Ridge Martinez, Eileen Human

Mr. Hampton stated that said petition is for the map and text amendments to Zoning Map 7A/7B/7C/7D and Article 51, Allston-Brighton Neighborhood District, of the Boston Zoning Code ("Code") with respect to the Saint Gabriel's Monastery Conservation Protection Subdistrict ("CPS").

Within the Allston-Brighton Neighborhood District ("Article 51"), there were eleven (11) Conservation Protection Subdistricts established to promote the most desirable use of land and siting of development in areas with special natural or scenic features in accordance with a well-considered plan, and to protect and enhance the natural and scenic features of Allston-Brighton. The CPS zoning also allows for Planned Development Areas ("PDAs") to be located where the site is at least one acre in size.

In response to the Archdiocese of Boston selling off properties in recent years, there has been a great deal of interest in developing in and around the former Saint Gabriel's Monastery and Church site along Washington Street in Brighton. Specifically, Avalon and Cabot, Cabot and Forbes ("CC&F") are awaiting to submit proposals for development. Both have expressed interest in using the PDA tool to move their proposals forward. In order for this to happen, and to allow for any proposed development plan to govern the development sites, amendments to the existing map and zoning must take place.

Article 51 allows for PDAs to be used as a zoning and development tool within the CPS zoning. However, there are limitations on the maximum building height (45 feet), floor area ratio (0.5) and number of units per acre (6 units per acre if the Lot contains 15 or more acres) within a PDA. The proposed amendment would exempt the Saint Gabriel's CPS from these requirements to allow for an approved development plan to establish the allowable dimensional requirements. This will also allow for the approved development plan to establish where the proposed buildings would be located thus maintaining as much of the CPS zoning as open space as has been one of the major concerns of the Allston-Brighton community.

Commissioner Hatton asked Mr. Hampton to confirm that the filing of a PDA requires a 45 comment period, which he did.

Chairman Fondren stated that it was his understanding that a PDA is appropriate for large sites and further expressed his desire to have a better understanding of the requirements and Mr. Hampton stated that the proposed amendment would exempt the Saint Gabriel's CPS from the discussed requirements to allow for an approved development plan to establish the allowable dimensional requirements, allowing for a greater amount of open space.

Commissioner Hatton asked if St. Gabriel's is designated as a historic site and Mr. Hampton confirmed that it is not.

Ms. Viktorija Abolina, Senior Planner at the BPDA, provided a brief summary of the discussions that took place during recent community meetings. She further stated that the questions relating to the overall PDA process its application to the site were answered.

Chairman Robert Fondren asked Mr. Hampton if that concluded the presentation and Mr. Hampton confirmed that it did.

Chairman Fondren declared the Petitioner's case closed.

Chairman Fondren asked if anyone wanted to speak in favor of the petition:

Ms. Allison Frazee, Director of Advocacy at Boston Preservation Alliance and Mr. Minor Perez, Carpenters Union

Chairman Fondren asked if anyone wanted to speak in opposition of the petition:

Ms. Joanne D'Alcomo, Allston-Brighton resident asked that the Zoning Commission not approve the petition and instead defer until the residents were able to gain a better understanding of the petition. She further stated that, in general, she does not oppose the petition just simply the timing of it and feels that it is developer driven.

Ms. D'Alcomo stated that the petition lacks community support and will remove the CPS designation (to the community's detriment) which she feels will result in a lack of underlying zoning. She restated the fact that the community lacked an understanding of the implications and requested that the Zoning Commission afford more time for community review.

Ms. D'Alcomo believes that the BPDA misspoke at the March 2017 Board Meeting in stating that the petition has strong community support, as she believes that there is no evidence of such support. She provided a list of community members who oppose the petition and in conclusion asked that the vote be postponed until the Zoning Commissioners have been afforded more substantive information.

Commissioner Hatton asked Ms. D'Alcomo if she was aware of the ongoing BPDA project specific review process, including the PDA review process. Additionally, Commissioner Hatton stated that Ms. D'Alcomo mischaracterized the weight the at the Zoning Commission gives to the review of PDAs, inclusive of listening to community members.

Ms. D'Alcomo stated that it is her belief that the only reason that the petition is being brought before the Zoning Commission is to assist the developer and that it is not fair. She concluded by submitting emails, from community members, expressing their opposition to the petition. Mr. Hampton responded by saying that Ms. D'Alcomo's statement re: giving the developer assistance is not true and not what the petition is for.

Ms. D'Alcomo responded to Mr. Hampton, stating that Mr. Hampton's statements conflict with what was shared with community members (via BPDA PowerPoint presentation) at the last community meeting. In response, Mr. Hampton stated that the Zoning Commissioners were not being asked to adopt the contents of the previously described PowerPoint presentation. Ms. D'Alcomo informed the Zoning Commissioners that the sole reason that the petition was before the Zoning Commission was to wipe out the CPS zoning designation.

Commissioner Brayton asked if Cabot, Cabot and Forbes was present and they acknowledged their presence.

Ms. Athena Lanes, member of the Allston-Brighton Neighborhood Association expressed her opposition of the petition. In particular she is upset that St. Elizabeth's Hospital sold land without consulting the community and without a plan as to where the parking would be relocated. She further stated that if the petition were to be approved it would set a bad precedent, as it would be approved without community support.

Commissioner Hatton stated that the petition's approval is separate and distinct from the parking relocation issue and restated that the Zoning Commission values the community's input. She concluded by saying that she had recently been in China, where the government controls the all land and that Americans are fortunate to have the ability to sell property without the input of the government.

Ms. Lanes concluded by saying that St. Elizabeth's Master Plan did not include the sale of the property nor did it include the relocation of the parking and feels that the Master Plan is of no value.

Ms. Carol Ridge Martinez, an IAG member, stated that she is not opposed to the PDA process but, feels that Boston zoning is very confusing, despite being familiar with zoning in

other jurisdictions. She further stated that the Impact Advisory Group (the “IAG”) just completed the review process with work the Avalon Bay project development team and desires to have all BPDA processes be handled in the same manner.

Ms. Eileen Human, member of the Corey Road Homeowners Association, stated that it is her belief that the petition is prematurely being brought before the Zoning Commission, as only two community meetings have been held to date. Ms. Human further stated that it is her belief that the community is being steamrolled.

Mr. Tommy Desolaroa, Allston-Brighton resident and member of many community associations in the Allston-Brighton neighborhoods, stated that he feels that the Allston-Brighton neighborhoods have been adversely effected by the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s plans over the years, beginning with Urban Renewal, citing Barry’s Corner. He further stated that all were done without the support of the community. As a result, he requests that moving forward, the community be actively involved in all processes. He concluded by stating, that in relation to the current proposal he does not oppose it and instead is just skeptical of the process.

Chairman Fondren asked if anyone else wanted to speak in opposition of the petition.

None

Chairman Fondren stated that the BPDA would offer a rebuttal.

Mr. Jonathan Greeley, Director of Development Review at the BPDA, stated that contrary to what had been said, the petition has community support and further that the site is PDA eligible, as are other areas of Allston-Brighton, citing the New Balance Campus.

Mr. Greeley shared the BPDA’s desire to preserve open space, add public benefits and allow for the construction of an “as of right” project. He further stated that in order for a site to be deemed PDA eligible, it needs to be one acre in size and does not need to be fully supported by the community.

Commissioner Keith asked Mr. Hampton to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the petition.

Mr. Hampton stated that a CPS is very restrictive tool, one which affords a lot of protection, which is not appropriate for this particular subdistrict.

Chairman Fondren asked the Zoning Commissioners had additional questions.

Commissioner Hatton expressed her belief that the community plays a very important role in the process.

Mr. Hampton stated that if changes were to be made to the PDA, a new review process would occur.

Mr. Greeley stated that the current petition is not driven by the developer. Instead, that the BPDA desires to preserve and enhance the existing landscaped spaces and create new public open spaces throughout the site and believes that a PDA is the most appropriate mechanism to accomplish that goal.

Mr. Greeley stated that BPDA is frustrated with St. Elizabeth's Hospital in regards to the sale of the parking lot and have already begun to work with them in updating their Institutional Master Plan. He further stated that all issues related to the decrease in parking spaces will be addressed before projects move forward.

Mr. Greeley concluded by stating that the community process started a year ago and that just last week, BPDA Director Golden and BPDA staff held a 2.5 hour meeting with the Allston-Brighton community members, stressing the fact that the BPDA values the community's input.

Chairman Fondren declared the Public Hearing closed and stated the Business Meeting would like be held on June 21, 2017 but once determined, would be officially confirmed.