



Task Force Working Meeting #7
Thursday, July 10th, 2008
Location: Boston College High School,
150 Morrissey Boulevard, Dorchester, MA

Task Force Attendees:

Fr. George Carrigg, St. Christopher's Church
Bill Cotter, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association (CSHCA)
Annissa Essaibi-George, McCormack Civic Association
Matt Gordy, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association
Sherina Hendrix, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation (DBEDC)
John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association
Victoria Maguire, Graduate of UMass Boston
Paul Nutting, CSHCA
Joe Sammons, Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center
Esther Santos, Harbor Point Community Task Force
Phil Strazzula, Phillips Family Hospitality
Don Walsh, CSHCA/DBEDC, Chair

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Mike Christopher, Office of Representative Martin Walsh
Justin Holmes, Office of Council President Maureen Feeney
Jane Lindsay, John F. Kennedy Library and Presidential Museum
Brian Maher, Boston College High School

City of Boston Attendees:

Patrick Hoey, BTB
Tad Read, BRA
Carole Schlessinger, Crosby, Schlessinger & Smallridge
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Lauren Smyth, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services

Members of the Public:

Mark Boyle, MBTA
Catherine Davis, St. Christopher's Church/Resident of Harbor Point
Eileen Fenton, CSHCA
Jim Gribaudo, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Valerie Harms, Resident of Harbor Point
Gail Hobin, UMass Boston
Mary Hogan, CSHCA/Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta Parish
Sean Keohan, Boston Globe
DeWayne Lehman, UMass Boston
Kathryn Mailett, CSHCA/Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta Parish
Catherine O'Neill, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Rosemary Powers, Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)
Seth Riseman, Utile, Inc.
Peter Rogers, Corcoran Jennison Companies
Pete Stidman, Dorchester Reporter

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, July 10th, 2008, the seventh meeting of the Columbia Point Master Plan Task Force was called to order at approximately 5:10 p.m. in the Loyola Function Room at Boston College High School by Tad Read, BRA Senior Planner.

Tad announced that the next Task Force meeting will be held on August 7th, noting that a number of different conceptual alternatives for Columbia Point will be presented at the meeting. These concepts will be visually mapped out in the form of a site plan, and will represent many of the ideas received at public meetings.

Tad continued with a review of the role and schedule of the Impact Advisory Group (IAG) for the Bayside redevelopment project. He added that even though some issues and responsibilities will overlap, each role will remain separate and distinct. The IAG will determine the appropriate mitigation for the project and also discuss its impacts. Jay Rourke, BRA Project Manager, will lead these meetings, which will be held on July 21st and August 4th.

He also noted that the project's Scoping meeting will be held at the BRA on July 21st.

Questions and comments in response to Tad's overview of the IAG process included:

- Lauren Smyth, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, added that she will be attending the meetings.
- In response to a question from Joe Sammons, Geiger-Gibson Community Health Center, Tad indicated that the IAG will focus solely on the Bayside project.
- In response to a question from Don Walsh, CSHCA/DBEDC and Chair of the Task Force, Tad indicated that the Bayside project will require zoning relief and will therefore need BRA Board approval. The Board will take the Columbia Point Master Plan's considerations into account. Tad noted that there are two stages of review: the first being the Project Notification Form (PNF), for which comments are due by August 15, after which the BRA then issues a Scoping Determination. The second stage involves preparing a more detailed document that will also be available for public review, called a Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR), which has 75-day comment period, which will not close before the winter holidays. Tad estimated that the Master Plan will be complete by that point.
- In response to a question from Bill Cotter, CSHCA, concerning the timing of the Bayside project's filing of the PNF, Tad explained that any proponent may file at any time. The BRA asked Corcoran Jennison to wait for the Master Plan to start up, and they have been patient in waiting a year to do so.
- Joe Sammons expressed concern about Corcoran Jennison moving forward separately, however, he noted that they have been good neighbors on Columbia Point, and are entitled to file at their discretion.
- John Lowe, McCormack Civic Association, stated that since the IAG, like the Task Force, was appointed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, everyone must try and find the best outcome possible.

Discussion then shifted to the next agenda item, a debriefing and discussion of the June 14th public meeting, which served as a visioning session. Tad passed around a summary of the meeting, and asked if there any comments were missing. He noted that the three themes stood out in particular and were offered many times:

- Separation of local from regional traffic

- Resolve Kosciuszko Circle
- Pedestrian connections and crossings on Morrissey Boulevard, Mt. Vernon Street, etc.

The following comments were raised by the Task Force regarding the second public meeting:

- Fr. George Carrigg, St. Christopher’s Church, asked whether a street crossing linking Morrissey Boulevard to Mt. Vernon Street would traverse through St. Christopher’s Church property. Tad responded that at this point, the planning process has not addressed movement through parcels.
- John Lowe commented that it is worth exploring water transportation as a commuter route.
- Joe Sammons stated that a neighbor of his had asked him about the participation of citizen groups & youth-oriented organizations, and asked whether there was a way to involve more groups in the Master Plan process. Tad offered to share the BRA’s list of organizations with the Task Force in order to ascertain who is missing from the list.

Chair Walsh asked Task Force members to collectively signal what they considered to be the most important issues identified by the community in the June 14 community “Visioning” meeting relative to each of the four major discussion topic areas (multi-modal transportation, land use & open space, urban design & placemaking, and sustainability). For each topic area, the following issues emerged as having the highest priority for Task Force members at this point in time:

Multi-modal Transportation

- Resolve congestion and circulation problems at Kosciuszko Circle
- Linkages and connections are important—for example, connections to the “T” station, to the water, and between different parts of Columbia Point.

Land Use & Placemaking

- Create a “main street” on Columbia Point: a place to shop, run errands, enjoy a cup of coffee, dine out, and maybe even see a movie.
- Provide a mix of housing, including affordable ownership housing.

Urban Design & Placemaking

- Activate building edges and street frontages wherever possible.
- Improve connections to Dorchester.

Sustainability

- Make Columbia Point a model and leader in sustainable development.
- Utilize expertise at UMass Boston to promote sustainability.

Chair Walsh and Task Force members acknowledged that these priorities are preliminary and could shift as the planning process progresses.

Next, Rosemary Powers, DCR, gave a presentation on the agency’s planning and improvement projects in the vicinity of the Columbia Point Master Plan study area. Rosemary outlined a number of major plans, both past and present, including:

- A Dorchester Waterfront Study, prepared by Sasaki Associates

- The Lower Neponset River Plan
- Public Access to Dorchester Beaches
- The Back to the Beaches Program

Rosemary described in detail a Morrissey Boulevard parkway improvement and restoration plan, prepared by DCR with the help of a Community Advisory Committee in the mid-1990s. The plan is designed to take two to three years, and includes bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well as a reconfigured Dominic J. Bianculli Boulevard (UMass Boston's entranceway) intersection, new street trees, and historic streetlights. At the time of the plan's creation, the plan would have required \$2 million for a full design and \$25 million to execute; now, the plan will require \$3 million for a full design and approximately \$37.5 million to implement. Rosemary emphasized that the new administration sees the Morrissey Boulevard project as a priority, and if the Transportation Bond Bill passes this month, the project could begin in 2010, with construction commencing in 2012. Despite the focus on Morrissey Boulevard, the project would not alter Kosciuszko Circle. She added that there is separate funding for a study of the Circle in the Transportation Bond Bill.

Questions and comments raised in response to Rosemary's overview included:

- Chair Walsh observed that Kosciuszko Circle is a prime congestion point, and some sort of resolution is necessary. Rosemary agreed, noting that nevertheless there are constraints to what can be done given the dual responsibilities of DCR.
- In response to a question from Paul Nutting, CSHCA, Rosemary responded that changing the layout of Morrissey Boulevard is much more complicated than merely making improvements.
- Joe Sammons expressed his concern that no matter what improvements are made, the traffic problems at the Kosciuszko Circle will worsen. He added his opinion that the Circle is a bigger issue than Morrissey Boulevard.
- In response to a question from Brian Maher, Boston College High School, Rosemary responded that the United States Coast Guard is responsible for the drawbridge at Savin Hill Cove, and noted that it must retain its function as it is today.
- Chair Walsh reemphasized that the area's great potential for development is somewhat hindered by Kosciuszko Circle. He added that it is positive that DCR attends Task Force meetings.
- In response to a question from Joe Sammons about a crosswalk to Moakley Park across Day Boulevard that ends in an electric box, Rosemary replied that it is a City responsibility.
- Brian Maher asked whether Kosciuszko Circle and the State Police building are on the National Register of Historic Places. Rosemary indicated that while these areas are located on state land, she is uncertain of their status on the Register, adding that there is also the issue of the ramp leading to the Circle being on the list.
- Paul Nutting asked about the MEPA process, suggesting that the necessity of having the Secretary of Environmental Affairs sign off could put serious burden on developers. Joe Sammons agreed, noting that it would not be fair to put all mitigation responsibilities on one developer. Chair Walsh noted that the other three proponents have been attending Task Force meetings regularly, and added that the Task Force should continue to encourage them to participate in the process.

General questions and comments from the Task Force included:

- Victoria Maguire, Graduate of UMass Boston, suggested that the Task Force could make recommendations for increased service on the MBTA.
- Paul Nutting added that he had noticed an increase in MBTA ridership recently as a result of gas price increases.
- Sherina Hendrix, DBEDC, expressed her concern about the affordability of units, given that waterfront housing automatically has a higher price point. In response to a follow-up question, Tad responded that he will provide a primer on affordable housing, including a breakdown of the Area Median Income (AMI) indexes. He added that market rate housing changes based on location.
- Chair Walsh commented that Morrissey Boulevard could be a location for life sciences industries such as Genzyme.

Public comments and questions in response to the Task Force's discussion are summarized below:

- Catherine O'Neill, Corcoran Jennison Companies, announced that a website has been set up for the Bayside Redevelopment Project: <http://www.baysideonthepoint.com>. The PNF and all of its appendices are located on this website.
- Mary Hogan, CSHCA/Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta Parish, asked if any thought has been given to existing utility capacity on Columbia Point, especially if the population is expected to rise as a result of development. Tad responded that such scenarios will be reviewed in the Master Plan.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, August 7, 2008, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Boston College High School – Loyola Function Room, 150 Morrissey Boulevard, Dorchester.**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m.