

**Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 25th, 2009
Honan-Allston Library
6:30 p.m.**

I. Attendance

Harvard Allston Task Force

John Bruno
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Michael Hanlon
Bruce Houghton
Harry Mattison
Ray Mellone

Harvard University

Monika Bankowski
Joe Beggan
Will Donham
Chris Gordon
Peggy Hayes
Kevin McCluskey
Joshua Poupore
Dan Rabinovitz
David Raszmann
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman
Dennis Swinford
Maile Takahashi

City of Boston

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Michael Glavin, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Mary Knasas, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Linda Kowalcky, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Carlos Montanez, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Kairos Shen, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Harvard Allston Task Force Chair Ray Mellone began the meeting at 6:37pm.

Michael Glavin, BRA addressed the Task Force and the audience saying that Mayor's letter to President Faust was a letter consisting of questions and concerns and not a letter of frustration. The idea is to figure out how the City, Harvard, and the community can move forward together. He explained that Harvard will be responding to Mayor's letter partially at tonight's meeting.

Ray Mellone gave a brief overview of the timelines included in the letter from Mayor Menino.

Kathy Spiegelman introduced Dave Raszmann, Director of Property Development at Harvard University. She explained the talking points of her presentation. The presentation topic was an Update on Harvard's Allston Properties. She said that the idea is to discuss the progress that Harvard, the Task Force and the BRA have made so far and the progress that could be made in the future. She gave a brief update about the Allston Partnership Fund.

John Bruno gave an update about the Allston Partnership Fund meeting that took place on Monday, March 23rd at the Harvard Allston Education Portal. He said that the meeting was very productive. He briefly explained the structure and how the decisions will be made in regards to the fund. He said that the application process is starting next week (the week of March 30th) and the process. Updates will be given at the Task Force meeting.

Linda Kowalcky, BRA, added that everyone will be informed about the availability of the funds.

Harry Mattison addressed the issue of deadlines included in the Mayor Menino's letter to President Faust.

Taking points from the discussion of the Mayor's letter are as follows:

- Michael Glavin said that the schedule was very aggressive
- BRA and Harvard are working together to address the issues and progress is being made
- Will leave to Mayor's discretion as to the flexibility of the dates (deadlines)
- BRA is satisfied that Harvard and President Faust are addressing the issues
- Kathy Spiegelman said that Mayor Menino and President Faust have communicated with each other directly
- President Faust has asked staff to work aggressively on addressing the issues
- Ray Mellone said that the compliances will be met
- Michael Glavin said that the process is in progress regardless of the deadlines
- Kathy Spiegelman said that the Community Benefits report is due on March 31st, 2009; she also added that the reality is that the focus is not on specific deadlines but on the issues that need to be addressed

- Harry Mattison was disappointed that the Mayor is backtracking from the deadlines included in the letter
- Audience members voiced their opinion that two of the deadlines have already passed and that Harvard needs to respond to specific times
- Michael Glavin explained that it is a continuous process
- Harry Mattison asked if Harvard had requested an extension
- Audience member asked whether or not the workforce reduction plan had been addressed (even verbally)
- Michael Glavin said that the dates have been met in regards to starting the conversation with Harvard and the City
- Audience member said that the community has not been given extensions to the deadlines and asked why Harvard is allowed to be flexible with dates; requested a specific timeline to be met

Kathy Spiegelman and David Raszmann gave a presentation on Harvard's Allston properties.

Presentation Q&A:

- Bruce Houghton wanted to know how many square feet of space Harvard is trying to lease
 - Harvard to get back to the Task Force with the exact number
- Audience member asked how long the Citgo building could be leased for
 - 5-10 years depending on the tenant
- Harry Mattison asked for an explanation of the term "food service"
 - store front, food retail space
- Ray Mellone asked if the potential leases are conforming with current zoning or will the tenants have to undergo a variance process
 - In many instances tenants will have to go through the variance process to change the current zoning
- Audience member voiced that the community does not want to see any more liquor licenses or noisy tenants in the neighborhood
- Audience member (Paul) asked how many pieces of property Harvard owns in Allston/Brighton
 - Harvard to bring a list of Harvard owned lots, and square footage in Allston/Brighton
- Audience member (Paul Alford) wanted to know where the 48K sq. ft. that are considered active leasing proposals, located
 - 1284, 1380 and 1340 Western Avenue
- Kevin McCluskey explained that some previously leased spaces cannot be leased at this time because of the environmental issues; Harvard is addressing the contamination issues and sites will have to undergo extensive cleaning before they can be rented again
- Audience member (Lenny Kelliher) asked who would be willing to establish the food service business at the former Citgo space if the lease is only for 5 years?

- Kathy Spiegelman said that if there was an agreement with the community as to what they are looking for in terms of potential tenants and what the principles are, it would be easier for Harvard to understand what type of tenant those buildings should be marketed to
- John Bruno said that it should not take 18 months to rent residential units
- Kathy Spiegelman said that given the condition of some of the properties, some properties may not be feasible for renting; also there is an uncertainty as to what the future plan is for some of the properties
- Rita DiGeese asked if Mahoney's will be expanding (proposed greenhouse)
- Audience member (Paul Alford) asked if Harvard had evicted tenants from the residential properties after the properties had been purchased
- Audience member (Tom Lally) asked Harvard in addition to listing the number of buildings, number of lots and square footage to also explain why Harvard bought a specific property and what Harvard is planning to do with it;
- Audience member (Tim McHale) asked if the billboards will be taken down
 - Kathy Spiegelman explained that the contract with the billboard owners was renegotiated and both billboards will be taken down at the same time
- Audience member (Tim McHale) said that Western Avenue and Holton Street corridor are both essential in the community life; he said that it is a great idea to have the Community Wide Planning efforts in the forefront, because the community will benefit from it; asked if Harvard could work with the City to rent the vacant properties; asked where the Charlesview deal is at this point in time
 - Kathy Spiegelman said that Harvard is still committed to the Charlesview agreement
- Audience member concerned with the fact that former K-Mart building used to be the main commercial space in Allston/Brighton that bonded the community together; said that every community needs a large commercial space in order to survive
- Harry Mattison said that the Strategic Framework calls for neighborhood serving retail; the question is how much of that retail can Harvard bring to the community?
 - Kathy Spiegelman explained that the community, Harvard and BRA have to decide what needs to go into the commercial spaces; she said that the agreement to extend leases was in response to the community saying that no retail would be willing to move into the commercial spaces for a short period of time
- Gerald Autler said that the decision has to be made which properties would accommodate neighborhood serving retail; the number of properties should be narrowed down and the leasing process should not be rushed

Kairos Shen gave a brief presentation on the Community Wide Planning process.

Presentation talking points and Q&A:

- Kairos Shen said that he was asked by the Task Force to give a sense of what the City was doing
- There are issues with major pieces of property that Harvard owns

- He suggested to quickly look at the properties owned by Harvard that are under immediate consideration (Teleford St., Everett St. corridor)
- He said that the City has scoped Charlesview – a draft project impact report is expected to be filed soon
- Wants to get an idea if for example, Brighton Mills site could bond the community together again
- Where should the shopping go? Barry’s Corner?
- The CWP will address the properties at the edges of the campus that are not a part of the IMP
- He said that Harvard has agreed to be in a dialogue with BRA and the community to brainstorm ideas through a series of meetings and develop ideas that can later be passed on to the consultants
- He explained the proposed modules:
 - Module I “The Core”
 - Holton Street Corridor & Western Avenue Riverfront
 - Module II “The Core”
 - Mills – Barry’s Concourse
 - Module III “Edges”
 - Campus Edges, Riverview Triangle, Cambridge & Lincoln Streets
- Kairos Shen said that there will be agreements put together at the end of each session – commitments to the use
- BRA has started preparing the materials for the discussions
- Audience member (Harry Mattison) asked what is the responsibility of the BRA to the neighborhood? ; he said that people in the community are upset at how the Task Force is running the meetings; said that 2.5 years later the same questions are being asked in regards to the nature of retail that is needed in the neighborhood
- Kairos Shen said that the retail had a strong presence in the neighborhood in the past; He said that there is an opportunity to rebuild Charlesview on the Brighton Mills site; he said that when there are more residents in the neighborhood, there will be a need for a park; there is an opportunity to bring new streets and new housing that in the long run will create an opportunity for a beautiful neighborhood with new streets, new open space and new housing
- Harry Mattison said that the neighborhood needs retail

Carlos Montanez, BRA Planner gave a brief presentation of the timeline of the CWP process.

Presentation talking points and Q&A:

- Proposed meeting timeline:
 - EOT Update (1 meeting)
 - Armature (1 meeting) – CWP
 - Module I (3 meetings) – CWP – recommendations from the community
 - Harvard IMP (2 meetings)
 - Community Benefits (1 meeting)
 - Module II (4 meetings) – CWP – creating new “Main Street”

- Community Benefits (1 meeting)
 - Module III (3 meetings) – CWP – discussion about the “Edges” of the campus
 - Community Benefits (1 meeting)
 - Final Plan (2 meetings) – CWP
- Ray Mellone asked if the final plan would be going to the zoning board?
 - Kairos Shen said that the goal is to work with Harvard’s team and develop a commitment as to what Harvard needs to do with some of the properties; he said that zoning changes are not the goal of the CWP process; he said that in some cases commercial properties may change to residential usage; some properties cannot be used for institutional use
 - Ray Mellone said that there should be a “memorandum of understanding” created that is not tied to any specific community benefits
 - Kairos Shen said that it may be beneficial for some of the community benefits to be linked to the IMP; he said that they need to look at a 5-10 year plan
 - Kairos Shen said that there should be a companion piece created to allow actual enforcement of the plan
 - Harry Mattison asked if Charlesview is prepared to submit DPIR; he said that the DPIR should be consistent with the CWP plan and that it should not be submitted prior to the CWP discussion
 - Kairos Shen had suggested that CWP should develop a plan that the Community Builders should respond to
 - Kairos Shen explained that the proponent has the right to file what they want and when they want; there was advice given to the Community Builders not to submit the DPIR before the CWP discussion; the Mayor’s advice in this matter was even stronger; this is a hot button issue; he said that Harvard has to be a part of the conversation to craft the long-term plan for the Charlesview site and Brighton Mills
 - Ray Mellone said that it was Mayor’s requirement to increase Harvard’s involvement with the community
 - Audience member said that it is a great idea to bring the community into the planning process; she asked about the outreach to the community in terms of advertising the meetings and distributing information
 - Kairos Shen explained that in the previous years, BRA had spent a lot of effort doing the community outreach; there were door-to-door visits and mailings to the community
 - Harry Mattison suggested to include CWP meeting announcements in the mailing pieces that Harvard is doing to the community
 - Audience member asked what does “consensus” mean?
 - Carlos Montanez explained that the meetings are divided into smaller groups; all comments are taken under consideration
 - Kairos Shen suggested that the community members have to join the meetings and participate; each group will have a member of the BRA staff and another member specifically knowledgeable in a given subject;

at the following meeting there will be a summary of outcomes discussed at the smaller group level; more time needs to be spent synthesizing the ideas (keep in mind that 100% consensus is never reached); compromises will need to be made; the idea is to learn what can be done and learn what people are interested in;

- Audience member concerned with trading the retail space for a park in Brighton Mills
 - Kairos Shen said that he has seen communities trading surface parking for creating parks and developing more “urban looking” retail with parking underneath the building;
 - He said that Harvard needs ideas on how to make good use of those properties
- Representative Moran said to be careful with adding too many meetings to the community’s life; he said that with too many meetings peoples’ voices are not being heard; he hopes that Harvard will come to the meetings and will answer questions that are brought up by the community;
- Audience member said that the CWP meetings in the past were very good ; neighborhood is open to the change; can the community be assured that things will happen according to the plan?
- Audience member asked whether or not contaminated sites had to be cleaned before anything is built in those areas
 - Kairos Shen said that Harvard has to meet state guidelines and there are minimum requirements for specific sites
- Harry Mattison said that there were lots of planning meetings over the past 5 years; he said that the community needs a plan in place to see some progress made this year; the plan should include things that do not require years of planning and that are under City’s or Harvard’s control
- Kairos Shen said that the City received 39 million dollars in stimulus money; Mayor and the City are looking into a plan to resurface streets within the next 18 months; he said that some of that money will most likely go to the Allston/Brighton neighborhood
- Harry Mattison said that he was not talking about the stimulus money; he asked to make streets safer for pedestrians, create parks, plant trees, etc.

Rita DiGeese made an announcement about an event at the St. Anthony’s Church.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.