

**Harvard Allston Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, July 8, 2009  
Honan-Allston Library  
6:00 p.m.**

**I. Attendance**

**Harvard Allston Task Force**

Paul Berkeley  
John Cusack  
Rita DiGesse  
Mike Hanlon  
Harry Mattison  
Ray Mellone  
Millie Hollum McLaughlin  
Brent Whelan

**Harvard University**

Alison Brissette  
Peggy Hayes  
Kevin McCluskey  
Dennis Swinford  
Kathy Spiegelman  
Maile Takahashi

**City of Boston**

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Michael Glavin, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Linda Kowalcky, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Kairos Shen, Boston Redevelopment Authority

The meeting began with an announcement from Kevin McCluskey, Harvard University, to remind attendees that the deadline for applications for the Allston-Brighton Community Scholars program is July 13, 2009. Applications are available at the Honan-Allston Library.

Dennis Swinford, a planner for Harvard University and the project manager for Library Park, presented an update on the design plans for Library Park. The presentation is available on Harvard's Allston Initiative website located here: [http://www.allston.harvard.edu/community/Library\\_Park.html](http://www.allston.harvard.edu/community/Library_Park.html) and entitled Library Park Presentation (July 8, 2009).

The design process for Library Park began in the summer of 2008. Dennis emphasized that while the design has come to an important point in the process, the design is not near done yet, there is more work to do, and the community's continued input into the design is important.

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) was hired to design the park. Dennis introduced Laura Solano, a principal for MVVA, to provide an overview of the current design plans. MVVA is designing the park by incorporating community input that has been given throughout the design process.

Some of MVVA's observations and guiding principles for the park include:

- Creating a Library within a park
- Creating a park for the whole community
- Extending the presence of the park onto North Harvard Street
- Creating a foreground to the back of the Library building
- Extending Library programming into the park
- Mediating the impact of parking
- Respecting public and private boundaries
- Creating a variety of places with topography and plants
- Acknowledging the historic ecological context of the park
- Collecting stormwater runoff to reintroduce water into the site

One of the design features of the park is to create a hilltop as a way to allow visitors to experience the whole park from one particular point. The hilltop would have accessible pathways and could be used for Library programs and other programming. Audience members at the meeting suggested to make sure the hill would not be used for skateboarding. Another comment was to make sure the hill is properly landscaped and taken care of. Residents don't want to see the hill unkempt and improperly maintained. Another comment about the hilltop was that it looked a little unnatural and out of place and that it looked too steep and small at the top. MVVA said that the space at the top of the hill is actually quite big and is approximately 26x60 feet.

Audience members commented that they had hoped that some water features would be incorporated into the design of the park and that this suggestion had been made throughout the design planning process.

Comment that the varying heights of the topography and different plant types look very nice. When picking plant types, the designers should consider plants that stay green all year round, including the winter. There was support for putting vines on the back of the library or installing a trellis to help prevent graffiti on the library.

Some suggestions were made about the sustainability aspects of the park including that collecting stormwater was a good idea and that the design should consider permeable pavement options for the parking lot, the paths within the park, and the streets surrounding the park. The designers should also look into collecting rainwater from the roof of the library. Other suggestions were to install BigBelly trash barrels in the park

and to do something like the sustainability mock-ups that are on Rotterdam Street in the neighborhood.

Questions were asked about the extension of Oxford Street and the possibility of putting up new housing off of the extended Oxford Street. Dennis said that the extended Oxford Street is primarily there for safety and access purposes into that park. It is not a street that goes any place. Harvard is leaving the possibility open for housing on the proposed extended Oxford Street as a way to provide more “eyes on the park” during the evening hours but that the issue of housing is a larger discussion and should be a part of Harvard’s master plan discussions.

An audience member asked if the design team could consider putting some place markers on the site so it would be easier to visualize things like where Oxford Street would be extended and how high the hilltop would be.

The question was raised regarding who would own the park. Dennis said that it was still a complicated decision and that discussions between the city and Harvard were taking place. Dennis said that no matter what the outcome, Harvard is committed for Library Park to be open space land in perpetuity. Harvard’s commitment to open space is well documented. Some residents suggested that Harvard should own the park because they do a good job maintaining parks and have already proven this with other parks in the community.

Kevin McCluskey made a few more Harvard updates following the discussion of Library Park:

- Special thanks to the Harvard Allston Partnership Fund advisory board for helping to distribute \$100,000 in grants to six Allston-Brighton non-profit organizations.
- 29 Allston-Brighton children were awarded scholarships to attend sports camps at Harvard over the summer.
- Residents can swim in Harvard’s Blodgett pool Monday-Friday from 5:00-8:00 p.m. Residents need to become an Ed Portal member to get access to the pool.
- The Harvard Allston Summer Corps has 20 students working in non-profit organizations in Allston-Brighton.
- Harvard hosted the Allston Village Main Streets “Taste of Allston” event at the end of June.
- 10 scholarships were given to Allston-Brighton children to attend the Harvard Museum of Natural History’s summer camps.
- Harvard hosted Mayor Menino’s All-City Baseball classic event.

Resident Ed Kotomori, chair of the Allston Science Complex Construction Mitigation sub-committee, gave his report on the earlier construction mitigation sub-committee meeting:

- Harvard has been doing a good job addressing the concerns of the sub-committee

- If the science complex project is stopped, the sub-committee will work the City and Harvard to try and have the appropriate mitigation measures taken to, and around, the site.
- Harvard University police do a good job patrolling the area.
- The rat problem in the neighborhood is not a result of construction at the science complex. The construction mitigation sub-committee is working with Harvard and the city to try and address rodent problems in the neighborhood. More information will be available in the future.

Gerald Autler passed out a summary document detailing information about the amount of money that has been spent against the Cooperation Agreement between Harvard and the City. Tracking the benefits is an ongoing process. Harvard provides an annual report on its activities in the Cooperation Agreement and provides semi-annual presentations.

The next Library Park drop-in information session is scheduled for July 22, 2009 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Library.