

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 28, 2007
St. Anthony Elementary School
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Paul Berkeley
Mary-Helen Black
John Bruno
Cathy Campbell
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Mike Hanlon
Millie Hollum McClaughlin
Bruce Houghton
Harry Mattison
Ray Mellone, Chair
Brent Whelan

Harvard University

Harris Band
Will Donham
Chris Gordon
Lauren Marshall
Kevin McCluskey
Dan Rabinovitz
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman
Maile Takahashi

City of Boston

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Linda Kowalcky, Boston Redevelopment Authority

The meeting started at 6:40 p.m.

Linda Kowalcky from the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) introduced herself and started the meeting on behalf of Gerald Autler. Linda turned the meeting over to Ray Mellone, chair of the Harvard Allston Task Force.

Ray said that these meetings are Task Force meetings and are run by the BRA. The Task Force members will continue to sit at the front of the room and be the primary group to discuss agenda items. Ray said he is not happy with the review process for Harvard's proposals and it has been overwhelming for the community to review the multiple documents Harvard has filed and responding to overlapping deadlines. He said Harvard's master plan is also a vague document and in his opinion is impossible to scope without more information.

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Ray also mentioned political issues including a proposal for a moratorium on university expansion in Boston and the creation of a new agency to oversee university expansion proposals. Ray thought this was a bad idea and said this kind of review board existed in the 1980s and didn't work. He said the BRA is a good entity for helping the community review proposals and negotiate community benefits. Ray said he was also opposed to establishing a central community benefits fund from the Universities because it would not allow the community to achieve its goals.

He said there is also a flawed perception of the community master plan, the North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning (NASFP), which is a relatively vague document. He said the document left open special study areas to allow the community to further study plans for these areas and different opportunities. He said the NASFP is not a final product or a strict blue print to adhere to and the people who worked on the plan never supported that kind of thinking.

Ray said that because the community review process has been overwhelmed, the Task Force asked Harvard to do the following things:

1. Put the review of the Art Center Project Notification Form (PNF) on hold
2. Focus on the review of the Allston Science Complex
3. Put the review of the new Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP NF) on hold
4. Continue to meet with abutters of the two proposed projects

Ray said he will run all future meetings and he will give Task Force members the opportunity to speak first. He said he would end each meeting with audience participation. He said the audience would be part of the process but would have a limited role in order to make progress at the meetings.

Gerald Autler, BRA, introduced himself. He said both the BRA and Harvard heard the community's concerns and understood community members wanted more time to absorb the proposals. Gerald introduced Chris Gordon, Chief Operating Officer for the Allston Development Group at Harvard University.

Chris said Harvard has also been disappointed about the process and tension that has developed between the community and Harvard. Chris said Harvard would like to reaffirm its partnership with the neighborhood. He said Harvard is not a quick hit developer and because it is a long-term Harvard is willing to take whatever steps it can to allow the community to fully participate in the review process. Chris said Harvard would try and prioritize what projects it would like to focus on in the review process over the next few months. Harvard feels the proposed science complex is a very important project to both Harvard and the greater population because of the science initiatives for the building and therefore Harvard would like to focus on this project for the next couple of months. He said Harvard will delay the comment period for the art center project but continue to work with the abutters to get their feedback. He said Harvard would also delay the comment period for the new master plan but hoped to continue discussions on it over the next couple of months. Harvard would like to schedule smaller working sessions with the community members who live adjacent to the proposed projects.

Harry Mattison asked for clarification if the art center project would be withdrawn from the Institutional Master Plan Amendment (IMPA) that was filed in December 2006 in order to

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continue with the review of the science complex. Gerald said that there were a few options that could be discussed about de-coupling the art center project from the IMPA and that it could be discussed once the Task Force resumes focus on the review of the art center project. Gerald said the BRA is holding on the review of the IMPA and will discuss with the Task Force the procedural options for moving the IMPA forward. Gerald said the next few months will be focused on outstanding issues related to the science complex and procedural matters would be discussed at a later date with the Task Force.

Harry Mattison asked for clarification on the schedule of the science complex. He questioned the partnership between Harvard and the community if Harvard couldn't even provide a schedule for the science complex. Gerald Autler said that the schedule for projects is often largely dependent on the review process. Chris Gordon said that Harvard would love to break ground on the science complex as soon as possible but acknowledged that the regular review process will guide schedule decisions.

Harry Mattison asked for clarification on the demolition plan for the construction of the science complex and whether it would be done before a construction mitigation plan is reviewed and discussed. Chris said Harvard has to present a construction mitigation plan to the city in order to apply for demolition permits. Harry asked Harvard to withhold from filing for demolition permits until it had finalized a construction mitigation plan for the science complex with the community. Chris told Harry that before Harvard does any demolition it will come back to the community with a construction mitigation plan. Brent Whelan said the community wants to know that there is a partnership with Harvard and that it will have a voice to discuss and agree to a construction mitigation plan that it is comfortable with.

Brent Whelan said many people in the community think the proposed art center is the wrong building and also the wrong site. He asked what kind of process could take place to facilitate discussions between Harvard and the community now that the comment period for the art center has been extended. He asked whether Harvard would be receptive to looking at other sites and if the community would be able to be part of that discussion rather than just listening to Harvard. Chris Gordon said that Harvard was happy to hold work sessions with the community to talk about the proposed site. Brent suggested discussion should continue to take place even though the project is on hold. Chris said Harvard was happy to do this but wanted to hear from the Task Force about how it wanted to proceed because Harvard's understanding was that the focus should be on the science project right now and not both projects at the same time.

Gerald suggested Harvard, the BRA, and the community focus on the key issues surrounding the science project to give people time to focus on the unresolved issues. He thought smaller group discussions with the community focused on specific topics would be productive for the community and the task force. He said that in April the focus could go back to the larger issues. Once Harvard files the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) for the science building even more information will be available to the community. He proposed that the task force members would provide a report on the smaller group meetings to the community at the next Task Force meeting on April 9th.

Bruce Houghton suggested the smaller groups should function in support of the Task Force and be required to come back to the Task Force with recommendations for their topic. He said there are a

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lot of people in the community with different skills and resources who can be drawn upon for their expertise. He thought this would help to alleviate some the community's frustrations. He suggested that a Task Force member could chair each of the small group meetings so the Task Force could oversee the broad issues related to Harvard's development such as the construction mitigation plan and building heights rather than specific topics such as Stadium Way where the abutting residents should be more involved.

Brent Whelan said his two biggest issues with the science project were 1). Issues about the roadways associated with the science project are unresolved and 2). The science building does not include enough public uses. Brent said Harvard needs to rethink the design of the public uses for the building and allow the public to use those amenities. Chris said Harvard is at the point where it's starting to think more about the programs in the building and is happy to talk about it with the community as the design of the building progresses.

Harry Mattison asked for clarification about what was the agreed timeframe for extending the art center comment period. He asked whether it would be extended until at least May. Gerald said it still has to be discussed about when the comment period will end. He said for the next month the focus would be on the science project and the deadline for the art center project would be discussed. He said the BRA is holding on making a decision on Harvard's Institutional Master Plan Amendment (IMPA), and the comment period for the art center PNF and the new Institutional Master Plan (IMP) have been postponed. He said the BRA will sit down with the Task Force and Harvard to talk about the process. Harry said he thought Harvard would come a lot further to the middle of the road to compromise on the art center project and that it was important to put something in writing. He said he didn't think that extending the art center comment period by two months was a great gesture from Harvard. He thought the focus on the science building was just a distraction from the art center. He was disappointed the IMPA was being left on the table the way it was and didn't understand why the art center wasn't being decoupled from the IMPA.

Gerald thanked Representative Mike Moran, City Councilor Jerry McDermott, Representative Kevin Honan and Will Luzier from Senator Tolman's office for attending the meeting.

Representative Mike Moran's comments included:

- A lot of the tension has stemmed from the process, timelines and paperwork that has been imposed upon the community
- He and the other Allston-Brighton elected officials feel that the art center has been pushed too fast.
- The elected officials sent a letter to Harvard and the BRA asking that the art center be removed from the IMPA as a gesture from Harvard to create a better relationship with the community.
- He said he thought the proposed science project could be a building that the community and Harvard could all be proud of but there are still outstanding issues with the building that need to be addressed.

City Councilor Jerrey McDermott's comments included:

- The neighborhood's sentiments are shared by their elected delegation.

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- The Harvard expansion issues are a big priority for the community's elected officials and involve a great deal of their time too.
- The height of the science building is still a concern. He still thinks an agreement can be reached on this building because of the potential scientific breakthroughs that could happen in the building and the effect it will have on the local economy.
- The community and the BRA should take the time to focus on the science building now.
- He's not sold on the location of the proposed art center. He thinks it was a good step for Harvard to put that project on hold.

Representative Kevin Honan's comments included:

- The proposed development and projects have been time consuming and presented significant issues.
- He agrees with his colleague's thoughts.
- He is in favor of working through the issues with the science complex and putting the art center project on hold. The positive impacts the science complex could have are profound.
- The science project should adhere to specific height limits to protect the neighborhood and the working class community.

An audience member expressed concern that the meeting held the previous night with only the Task Force members violated the public meeting laws that require the meeting to be made public 48 hours in advance if there is going to be a quorum. He asked that in the future the Task Force abstain from holding unannounced public meetings. Ray said the Task Force would not abstain from holding meetings amongst itself because it gives them an opportunity to discuss process, not necessarily Harvard's plans. Cathy Campbell confirmed that because the Task Force is not a publicly elected group it doesn't fall under the public meeting law restrictions.

A representative from Felix Arroyo's office wanted to clarify the Councilors' proposed moratorium on institutional expansion. He encouraged community members to call Councilor Arroyo's office with questions and comments. He said the moratorium would not apply to Harvard's current proposed projects and that this process would still go forward as it is.

Questions and Comments from the audience:

- Praise for the community for coming together and getting engaged. Harvard's expansion is a community issue not just an issue for the abutters of the projects. Question about where the BRA's planning team is throughout this process and who will be an advocate for the community. A question was posed to Kevin McCluseky if Harvard had purchased any additional residential homes.

Kevin said that this was a false rumor. Harvard has not purchased any additional properties since the list was read at one of the last Task Force meetings. The few residential properties that Harvard does own are because the property is on a parcel that is otherwise zoned for industrial uses and the residential property sits within that zone.

Gerald Autler said the BRA is following through in engaging its planning team. Staff within the BRA has been identified to work with the Task Force and the community. Over the next few months the City planners will work with the community on the other planning

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projects in the neighborhood that fall outside of Harvard's development. This process is a different planning process than Harvard's but will overlap to some degree.

- An audience member asked about the non-institutional properties that Harvard owns and when the planning for those properties will take place. He said that the community would be less concerned about the public spaces in the science building if it knew what other kinds of public spaces were planned.
- Comment that the taxes for all of the residents in the neighborhood were going to increase. Harvard should not purchase residential homes at a price over what they are worth because then it will increase the residents' taxes.
- John Bruno said Harvard should focus on providing residential housing in the neighborhood. He is concerned about the depletion of affordable housing within the neighborhood. He said Harvard should provide opportunities for residents to purchase homes.

Gerald agreed and said the BRA looks forward to starting the housing planning process.

Gerald concluded the meeting and said over the course of the next month the discussions will focus on specific issues related to the science complex. The previously scheduled March Task Force meetings would be canceled and the next Task Force meeting would be on April 9th at 6:30 p.m at St. Anthony's Elementary School. The smaller groups will report back on their discussions to the rest of the community at the meeting.

Rita DiGesse made a motion to approve all of the formally unapproved Task Force meeting minutes. John Bruno second the motion and the meeting minutes were approved.

The meeting ended at approximately 8:05 p.m.