

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 9, 2007
St. Anthony Elementary School
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Paul Berkeley
Mary-Helen Black
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
Kevin McCluskey
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman
Maile Takahashi
Stefan Behnisch, Behnisch Architekten

City of Boston

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Ray Mellone, chair of the Task Force, started the meeting at 6:35 p.m. He said the agenda was a recap of the sub-committee meetings held throughout March. He asked audience members to hold their questions until the end of all the sub-committee reports.

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), provided more information on the regulatory review process. He said at the last Task Force meeting on February 28th the Task Force, Harvard and the BRA decided to focus on the review of the science building and the unresolved issues associated with the project. He said since that time Harvard has made an official request to the BRA for the following things:

1. Harvard officially requested the BRA separate the approval of the science project from the review of the art center project in the Institutional Master Plan Amendment (IMPA) submitted to the BRA in December 2006
2. Harvard requested the public comment period for the art center be extended until June 4, 2007.
3. Harvard requested the public comment period for the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPNF) for the new master plan, that was submitted in January 2007, be extended until June 4, 2007.

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

Harvard anticipates that it will file the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) for the science project in May. Then there will be a required 30 day public comment period and the BRA anticipates that in June it will make a determination on the science project. (note: there will actually be a 75 day review period and a determination in early August).

Paul Berkeley, Task Force member, provided a report on the Harvard Allston Science Complex design meeting that was held on March 20, 2007. Paul's report included modifications that Stefan Behnisch has made to the design:

- Buildings II and III have been combined (these are the buildings along the new Rena Street)
- 2 of the buildings have been reduced by a floor each
- Academic Way access (pedestrian walkway) off of Rena Street has been widened
- The loading dock and parking garage entrances have been separated on Rena Street.
- The landscape in the courtyard has been simplified.
- There has been a reduction in number of bridges between buildings.

Paul said the neighborhood asked Harvard and Behnisch to provide additional renderings of what the buildings will look like from the neighborhood. He said one question raised was whether the community master plan, the North Allston Strategic Framework for Planning (NASFP), restricted heights of buildings. Paul said he read through the NASFP and it does have some tall renderings, around 7 stories, on North Harvard Street. He said the NASFP proposes buildings of 55-95 feet tall East of North Harvard Street but that the heights of the buildings are subject to review and could be offset by a community benefits package. He said it was written that way with the intent to consider the possibility of taller buildings. Paul referred people to pages 25-40 of the NASFP if they had further questions.

Paul said other questions raised were about the risk level/bio labs within the buildings, whether geotechnical testing was being done on the property right now, and security. Paul said that the issues of traffic and parking associated with the project would be addressed at a separate meeting but tonight's discussion was to focus on the design of the building.

Stefan Behnisch, architect for the Harvard Allston Science Complex, said that since the meeting with the community on March 20th, his team has been studying the streetscape, public functions, accessibility to the site and views of the site from the neighborhood. Highlights from Stefan's presentation included:

1. Stefan showed information about how the science complex could be connected and developed to future academic buildings at the site adjacent to the science complex. He demonstrated how interior courtyards could be developed and how it was designed to be as pedestrian friendly as possible. The courtyards will provide public spaces in between the buildings; establish east-west, north-south connections; and provide different public walkways to connect through the neighborhood and to future development.
2. The corner of Western Avenue and the new proposed road "Stadium Way" will be a significant place along Western Avenue, currently being called "Science Square". He said Western Avenue will be developed with a succession of interesting places.

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

3. The interior yard of the buildings will be an attractive, useable, green space for the university and the public.
4. Building heights- One floor was taken off of Building I. Originally Building I was 104 feet plus mechanical to bring it to a total of 131 feet. It is now 76 feet and with mechanical included it will be 103 feet. Buildings II and III are each 59.5 feet, and with mechanical are 86.5 and 88 feet respectively. Building IV is 74 feet and 111 feet with the mechanical. (note: At the Harvard-Allston Task Force meeting on April 25, 2007 Harvard announced that though the overall heights had been reduced the actual heights given were inaccurate and they will report back to the Task Force and the community when they have accurate heights).
5. Floor plans- Buildings II and III will have University uses from the ground floor up. Buildings I and IV will have mixed uses for the University and the public on the ground floor. Behnisch said the feasibility of different retail options is being studied. Building I will have a cafeteria on the ground floor that will be accessible to the public. The entire ground floor of Building I will be publicly accessible.
6. Mechanical penthouses- Lab buildings are highly installed so as a result, the mechanical penthouses have to be located on the top of the buildings. The façade of the mechanical penthouses hasn't been decided yet. The buildings will have stacks on them but the specific design and height still hasn't been decided. Harry Mattison asked what kind of substances will be coming out of the stacks and Stefan said that it would not be poisonous substances and there are strong regulations for lab buildings about what can be emitted from the stacks.
7. The façade of the buildings will likely be a limestone with sun shading devices, and light enhancements.

Ray Mellone provided a report on the construction mitigation meeting that took place on March 28, 2007. Ray said Harvard's construction mitigation plan includes the following things:

- Neighborhood Communications
 - o Full time Neighborhood Contact
 - o 24/7 hotline
 - o Routine meetings with neighbors
 - o Web page, e-mail and on-site bulletin board notices
- Truck Routes and Worker Parking- He said that Harvard doesn't have a mandatory work route finalized for its workers however, they are taking into consideration using Western Avenue as an entrance to the site for workers who aren't coming from the Mass Turnpike. The construction worker parking lot can hold 837 cars and Harvard is going to be studying the traffic patterns and how they will be affected.
- Noise and Vibration- Things such as the timing of work on site, idling trucks, and liability problems were discussed.
- Dust and Emission Control- including covering trucks and providing wheel washing stations.
- Rodent Control

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

- Construction Debris

Ray said Harvard was looking into the designs of different buffer options and would come back to the community to have a discussion about those options. Ray said Harvard was going to hold a construction mitigation meeting for the Charlesview tenants on Thursday, April 26th and a follow-up meeting on construction mitigation for the Allston community would be held on Monday, May 14th.

John Cusack provided a report on the three meetings that were held to discuss roadways: 1). Meeting with the Rena Street Area neighbors on March 14, 2007; Meeting with the Windom Street Area neighbors on March 15, 2007; and a meeting to discuss Stadium Way and Rena Street on March 29, 2007. John reviewed some of the general questions and concerns that were raised:

- Harvard's traffic studies- the current numbers only project the science complex traffic replacing the WGBH traffic and don't account for future development.
- Concerns about increased traffic on Travis Street.
- Concerns about traffic speed on the new roads.
- Questions about how traffic would be regulated and new traffic lights.
- Concerns about cars parking on neighborhood streets.

John reviewed the options that were discussed for a "New Rena Street" connection to the existing Rena Street.

1. Rena St. connected to New Rena St.
2. Rena St. separated from "New Rena St."/Bike Path/Gate shuttle and emergency vehicles only
3. Rena St. separated from "New Rena St."/Seattle St. extended to New Rena Street/Bike Path/Gate Shuttle and Emergency vehicles only
4. Rena St. separated from "New Rena St."/Cullinane St. (Academic Way) connects New Rena Street to Western Avenue/Bike Path
5. New Rena St. connected to Travis/ Rena St. and Kingsley St. become dead ends

The options that were discussed for the proposed "Stadium Way", a new road parallel to Windom Street running from Cambridge Street to Western Avenue, included:

6. Seattle St. extended to New Rena St/Extension is one-way
7. Hopedale St. extended to Stadium Way/Extension is one-way
8. Amboy St. extended to Stadium Way/Extension is one-way/Existing Amboy St. is made one-way
9. Windom St. connected to New Oxford St/New Oxford is one-way to Stadium Way
10. New Oxford St. and Amboy Extension connects to Stadium Way/ Both are one-way.
11. Stadium Way connects to New Rena St to Western Ave.

John said that a big change would be that with the development of Stadium Way, traffic would no longer be able to make a right to go onto Cambridge Street. Stadium Way would be a four lane street with 2 lanes dedicated for car traffic and two lanes dedicated for shuttle traffic. John said there were still some issues that were unclear including:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

- Whether Stadium Way would be privately owned or owned by the City of Boston.
- How the shuttle lanes would be enforced to remain for shuttle traffic only so the street doesn't turn into a four lane street for car traffic.
- How the access would work from Stadium Way to the proposed graduate student houses on Stadium Way.
- Why Stadium Way is needed right away when all of Harvard's plans haven't been finalized.

Ray opened the meeting up to questions and comments from the audience.

Audience Member (Patrick, Arden Street resident): The meeting minutes from the science design meeting on March 20th mention that Harvard would get back to the community about geotechnical testing on the site and the bio level of the buildings.

Kathy Spiegelman said the geotechnical testing on the site right now is to test the quality of the soil to provide planning analysis for the foundation work. Kathy said Harvard was happy to hold a meeting between the community and the scientists to share more information about the work that they will be doing in the buildings but in the past it didn't seem like the community was very interested in this. Kathy said the labs being built in the science building would be similar and flexible to the labs in Harvard's Cambridge and Longwood facilities. The labs will be built to accommodate bio-safety levels 1, 2, and 3 but it was unclear still whether any of the labs would be used as bio-safety level 3. Kathy said Harvard could have members from its Environmental Health and Safety department come to a community meeting to talk more about it if the community was interested. The Environmental Health and Safety department monitors all of Harvard's labs and are the technical experts. Kathy said most of Harvard's clinical research takes place near or in the hospitals. She said there was no plan for clinical research to take place at Harvard's Allston Science Complex.

Audience Member: How many construction workers does Harvard plan to hire if there are 837 construction worker parking spaces available?

Kathy said this was the most number of spaces that could fit in the construction worker parking lot. Harvard doesn't have an exact projection of the workforce yet and it will also change throughout the project. Harvard is going to provide incentives such as shuttles and perks for those who carpool. Ray added that Harvard has agreed to try and hire a percentage of the workers from the Boston/Allston/Brighton area.

John Cusack: What will the height of the stacks be on the science building?

Behnisch said they are drawn at 28 feet above the mechanical penthouse but the height hasn't been finalized and is still dependent on other factors such as the wind. Behnisch said the stacks wouldn't be visible from the sidewalks.

Brent Whelan: The height of the science building is in violation of the NASFP which specifies heights of 55 feet and acknowledges 75-90 feet could be allowed. The science building will be 130 feet and it will be 100 yards from his backyard. Brent asked the BRA to require consistency with the community master plan and asked how the building could still be considered when it

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

doesn't conform to the agreements within the NASFP. He also said the building is pointing south directly toward the abutting neighborhood. Brent said the building is even higher than the neighborhood thought with the mechanicals and stacks.

Gerald Autler said the issue of height would continue to be discussed. He said the NASFP is not a zoning document and was intended to provide guidelines for the kind of atmosphere that should be created along Western Avenue.

Ray said that the height of the building might be something the neighborhood and Harvard have to compromise on. He said that in the scope of things if taller stacks mean it helps to diminish the emission of greenhouse gases then maybe it is something that should be considered. Ray suggested that the project shouldn't be dismissed on height alone and that there were other factors to consider. He said that when the NASFP was created it didn't consider the different things that could be done in the future for green buildings.

An audience member said she spoke with Mayor Menino at a community event and she was pleased because he said he expects Harvard's development to follow the character of the neighborhood and the current zoning. Harvard has more than enough land to building the buildings horizontally rather than vertically and a building doesn't have to be tall to be a green building. She also said that one-way street signs are often not followed and questioned whether this would work to regulate traffic.

An audience member said he was offended that the chairman of the Task Force was suggesting that the community should accept the height of the science building and said the Task Force members all signed and submitted a letter to Harvard saying the building was too high. Ray said the NASFP does not require total compliance.

John Cusack said he thought this was the first time the heights were given with the mechanicals listed and he hadn't seen there would be stacks on the buildings until now. He said this didn't come up at the design meeting on March 20th. He said the zoning for buildings is to the roof line but the height of the building can appear different if it has huge mechanicals.

Audience member: Harvard should build higher buildings further east and smaller buildings closer to the neighborhood. The community still hasn't heard anything about the community benefits package. Harvard should stagger the construction workers' hours. Harvard should build a ramp from the turnpike to the construction worker parking site so the cars don't have to go through the neighborhood. Stadium Way should be a narrower, community friendly street so the connection between people doesn't get lost.

Audience member: What kinds of benefits is Harvard going to bring to the community now? Harvard is leaving so many of its properties vacant and it needs to start finding uses for its properties on Western Avenue.

Maile Takahashi said Harvard is working on an interim-landscaping and leasing plan for its properties west of Barry's Corner. She said the Task Force interim sub-committee is waiting for information from Harvard to continue discussions and planning. She hopes that in the next month the planning will advance.

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

Audience member: Does Harvard own the Citgo property?

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard does not own the Citgo property. The work being performed on the site is related to the possible transfer of the property. At this time Harvard doesn't have anything else to announce.

Audience member: What is the status of the Charlesview negotiations?

Kathy Spiegelman: The Charlesview board and Harvard signed a Letter of Intent in 2006. We're working hard on a purchase and sales agreement. We hope this will be finalized in the next 30-60 days. She also said that Harvard has heard that the community thinks the height of the science building is too tall.

Mike Hanlon: What will be released from the stacks on the science building?

Stefan Behnisch: I don't know the specific details but it is strictly regulated. We will be doing wind tunnel testing to make sure it's not coming down on the neighborhood but it is regulated and harmful materials are not allowed to be emitted. We do already know the directions of the winds but we don't know exactly the flow from the stacks. We're working on this and will share the information when we have it.

An audience member asked the Task Force to go around and say how they felt about the height of the science building.

Ray said the Task Force members weren't going to go around and have a vote on the building. He said his role on the Task Force is to lead the community to be objective. He said the NASFP does not require strict compliance and is only a vision. He said regardless he thinks the science building is a good project. He objected to being accused of not being faithful to community and said his work on behalf of the community for the last 20 years is a testament to his loyalty to the community.

Millie Hollum McLaughlin said the Task Force members are also community members and they are trying to hear all the discussions and presentations and weigh the pros and cons. She also said that the design of the science building was only at the 30 % stage and would continue to change.

Audience member: In the future is Harvard going to shut down Western Avenue?

Kathy Spiegelman: Western Avenue is a public street. Harvard wants to work with the city to provide improvements to the sidewalks and landscaping but all of those proposals would need to be reviewed and improved by the city and the community. Harvard has no intention of closing Western Avenue.

Harry Mattison said this is the first time the community is being made aware of the smoke stacks and mechanical penthouses. He said the community needs to see more realistic renderings about what the building will look like from the neighborhood, he said the current renderings are far removed from reality.

Harvard Allston Task Force

Monday, April 9, 2007

Gerald Autler agreed and said there clearly needs to be further discussion on the heights of the buildings. He said more information would be available in the DPIR. He also said that in the Project Notification Form (PNF) for the science building that was filed in October 2006 the mechanical penthouses and stacks were shown. He said it was unfortunate that the discussion was just taking place now and there will be further discussion at future meetings.

Gerald said the next Task Force meeting is on Wednesday, April 25th at 6:30 p.m. at St. Anthony's Elementary School and the agenda was tentatively set to be a discussion on community benefits.