Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 27, 2007
Honan-Allston Library
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance

Harvard Allston Task Force

John Bruno
John Cusack
Paul Berkeley
Bruce Houghton
Michael Hanlon
Rita DiGesse
Harry Mattison
Millie Hollum McLaughlin
Ray Mellone, Chair

Harvard University
Chris Gordon
Kathy Spiegelman
Mike McBride
Will Donham
Cameron Smith, URS
Ted Sandstra, Behnisch Architekten
Matt Noblett, Behnisch Architekten

City of Boston
Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Linda Kowalcky, BRA
Bill Conroy, BTD
Bryan Glascock, Director, City of Boston Environment Department

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Briony Angus, MEPA Office

Harvard Allston Task Force chair Ray Mellone began the meeting at 6:40 pm. Ray made several announcements about upcoming meetings, which were:

1. Tomorrow, August 28 – the Boston Civic Design Commission will be reviewing the model of the Science Complex at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in Cambridge.

2. September 10 – Task force meeting at the Honan-Allston library, and Kairos Shen of the BRA will be here to give an update. This is the end of the public comment period for the DPIR.
3. September 17 – There is a tentative Allston Task Force Meeting.
4. September 27 – BRA Board meeting - The BRA meets to decide whether Harvard has met the scoping requirements and if the DPIR is adequate. If so, then Harvard may be able to present to the Zoning Commission on the IMP Amendment.

Ray then turned the meeting over to Gerald Autler who introduced Briony Angus of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office. Briony Angus made a presentation on "MEPA 101" which is summarized in the attached document.

Harvard has submitted an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) to the MEPA office as well as a Phase One Waiver Request for the Science Complex.

The Task Force had questioned Briony on the meaning that "the potential environmental impacts of Phase One are insignificant." The meaning of "insignificance" was discussed. Briony explained that if the project is permittable, it is considered insignificant. The potential environmental impacts are defined by the limitations of the required state permits. The Science Complex requires three state permits: a Sewer Connection/Extension Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection, a Limited Plan Air Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection, and an Industrial Waste Discharge Permit from the MWRA. MEPA's review is limited to the impacts that relate to the required permits.

As explained on the attached handout, the second criterion for meeting a Phase One waiver is that "ample and unconstrained infrastructure and services exist to support Phase One." Briony explained that there needs to be enough capacity to adequately support, along with mitigation, a project. However, it was reinforced that MEPA does not play a role in whether or not state permits are issued, nor does it issue permits itself. MEPA cannot step outside of its jurisdiction.

Briony also explained that the Science Complex is not dependent on future phases of the Master Plan, and therefore the Science Complex is deemed severable.

As is the case with all MEPA review processes, the MEPA review process for Harvard is expedited. It is a 30 day review process. As is reiterated in the attached document, the important dates are as follows:

August 8, 2007 – The EENF was published in the Environmental Monitor.
September 7, 2007 – End of public comment period on the EENF/Phase One Waiver Request.
September 14, 2007 – Certificate on the EENF including the Scope of the EIR issued if Secretary accepts as favorable. Draft Record of Decision (DROD) Issued.
September 25, 2007 – DROD published in the Environmental Monitor.
October 9, 2007 – End of 14-day comment period on the DROD.
October 16, 2007 – Within 7 days of the close of comments on the DROD, the Secretary will issue a Final Record of Decision (FROD) if the waiver is to be granted, or will amend the Scope for the Draft EIR if the waiver request is denied.

The formal way to get comments to MEPA is in writing. They will accept fax, e-mail or mail. Comments on the EENF can be addressed to:

Secretary Ian A. Bowles
MEPA, Attn. Briony Angus EEA #14069
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Comments can also be faxed to (617) 626-1181 or sent via e-mail to briony.angus@state.ma.us.

Briony then discussed some further information that was not included on the attached handout. She noted that the information that has been submitted for MEPA review is basically the same information that has been submitted to the BRA. It is important to note, however, that there are no formal linkages between the two. The MEPA process reviews the potential environmental impacts to the state infrastructure.

Brent Whelan questioned the definition of significant versus insignificant. Briony agreed that the statement that "projects are insignificant" is a very odd definition. Although the BRA and MEPA review process are not dependent on one another, it was stated that no state permits will be issued unless the MEPA waiver is granted. The City of Boston Environmental and other agencies will be commenting to MEPA.

Ray asked Briony that if MEPA works with a large number of agencies during the comment period, will a lot of redundant information be submitted?

Briony responded that, yes, redundant information does come up very often. Approximately 90% of the information received by the state agencies versus the city agencies will be redundant.

MEPA makes sure that those state permits are granted do not require the city's approval. It does not, however, have an influence over city permits.

Briony does anticipate that comments will be received from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission regarding wastewater. She also explained that, generally speaking, if a city board was to bring something to MEPA's attention, it would warrant a closer look.

A member of the community thanked Briony for her overview and asked about the request for an extension of the review period. Many members of the community had asked for an extension of the review period at Thursday night's MEPA meeting (August 23, 2007 – MEPA Consultation Session).

Briony explained that the Secretary cannot grant an extension without the consent of the proponent. The community member explained that without answers to questions they've been asking for 18 months such as: "where are the trucks going to go?" and "where is the dust going to go", how can a waiver be granted? Briony mentioned the importance of construction period impacts versus infrastructure period impacts. It is important to understand that the MEPA

review is on the infrastructure period impacts only. There aren't any state permits issued dependent on the construction period impacts. If the Secretary does, in fact, grant the waiver, it will be conditioned on the construction period regulations, but there aren't any state requirements in regards to the construction period. The city permits are based on the construction period impacts. As Briony explained, MEPA does not "have a hook" in the construction period impacts. Briony explained that MEPA has received a number of requests for an extension of the review period, but that MEPA cannot force Harvard to extend this review period.

Harry Mattison asked "what types of conditions can be granted in the waiver?"

Briony explained that the conditions granted in the waiver will use the word MUST if it is something that MEPA has control over, while the words "strongly urge the proponent to" would be used if it is something outside of MEPA's jurisdiction. For instance, MEPA does not have control over the transportation infrastructure, unless it impacts state roadways. MEPA does not have jurisdiction over the noise of the trucks traveling past residences.

Harry explained that the community doesn't necessarily care about the noise on the site, but cares more about "the noise on Hopedale St. right past our homes." MEPA reiterated the fact that MEPA's regulations are specific to the site, inclusive of staging areas. Briony also explained that MEPA does not have the ability to address a construction impact that the city hasn't responded to, if it is out of their jurisdiction.

Briony stated that if the Secretary determines that the project requires a Special Review Procedure, that a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) is often part of that process. She described the role of a Citizen's Advisory Committee and explained that it is not the intent for the Citizen's Advisory Committee to create a new committee. Instead, MEPA may suggest the addition of a couple members to the Harvard Allston Task Force.

Brent asked that the MEPA Office should check with the Task Force to see if it (the Task Force) is interested in serving as the CAC. They already attend a considerable number of meetings and don't necessarily want to be committed to another process.

Bryan Glascock, Director, City of Boston Environment Department, was introduced. Bryan explained that his department is an umbrella agency. They oversee agencies such as the Conservation Commission, the Boston Landmarks Commission, and the Air Pollution Control Commission. It also provides environmental impact review comments for the MEPA review, the federal NEPA review, and for the BRA review process. His department is currently reviewing the DPIR. There are working groups dedicated to the impacts during the construction phase. As far as the construction noise, the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) reviews all of the construction management plans.

Glascock explained that an area of his office's regulation is air pollutants – air pollutants cannot leave the property. It is imperative that trucks exiting the site use wheel washes and commit to a minimum standard of construction best practices.

Bryan explained to the group for reassurance that large projects happen all over the city all of the time, therefore, his group is very familiar with most of the issues that could potentially come up during this project. There is most likely already a process in place to address any of these potential issues, including inspectors and remediation plans. Bryan and his group have completed fifteen years of experience with the Big Dig that went directly through the City of Boston and many neighborhoods.

Bryan's group also reviews longer term issues such as wind and shadow impacts. His group reviews how the buildings will "fit in" with the community. They will review the project and determine if some components may need to be revised and/or mitigated. He also explained that it is a straightforward process.

Ray asked if there were any applicable lessons from Bryan's experience with the Big Dig?

Bryan explained that it is always difficult to expect the unexpected. They will ensure that there is controlled access to the site. There will be inspection of the vehicles exiting the site to make sure they are using wheel washes so that mud is not tracked on the neighborhood streets. Bryan explained that with this project, there is only one entity (Harvard) controlling access to the site which makes it much easier to control in comparison to the Big Dig where there were multiple entities controlling access to the site.

Brent asked if there is any enforcement "after the fact"?

Bryan explained that if the right plan is in place to begin with, things usually go smoothly. His group does, however, perform periodic inspections. If they get complaints, they'll know exactly who to go to. If necessary, fines of up to $25,000 per day can be assessed.

Paul Berkeley asked, "what happens to the fines?" that companies pay for non-compliance.

Bryan explained that fines aren't always the most productive technique, but if there are fines, they go into the city's general funds. However, since fines aren't always effective, the city will enforce other arrangements that will benefit the surrounding neighborhood, such as sweeping the surrounding streets.

Bryan then discussed the regulation of work hours. Regulations stipulate that construction hours are Monday-Friday from 7am – 6 pm. There is a process for requesting a variance from these hours. If the neighbors agree that they would rather the project be done quicker, then it is possible to extend the hours and/or days that construction is allowed to take place. Bryan explained that heavy construction tends to be much more noisy (such as driving piles, pouring concrete, etc), but there is also quiet construction work that can take place without any neighborhood impact (such as hanging drywall, installing finishes, etc.).

The variance for construction hours is granted by the Building Commissioner, but he would want to know from the neighborhood if this would be beneficial. A notice would go out in advance to all neighbors and it would be coordinated with the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services.

Michael Hanlon asked: How is construction noise monitored?

Bryan explained that noise on the surrounding streets is not regulated. They regulate the mechanical equipment on the actual construction site. This is usually measured at the affected property line.

Michael asked: How is air quality measured?

Bryan explained that if dust is coming off of the site, it will be visible. It will be enforced to have water trucks if there is an open unpaved area of dirt road, etc. There needs to be screening around the site, and other provisions so that there is no dust coming off of the site. Due to the fact that dust is visible, they will know very quickly if the appropriate steps aren't being taken.

Harry asked how they handle rodent control?

Bryan responded by saying that rodent control is taken care of by the Building Department.

Harry asked "What is meant by controlling shadows?"

Bryan said that they want to make sure that there aren't any situations that create an uncomfortable environment for neighbors. There is no exact science, but we want to know that the space is pedestrian friendly, making the area hospitable to all visitors.

Ray: What about sustainability issues?

Bryan explained that the city regulations stipulate that the project must meet the minimum requirements for a LEED certificate. Harvard, however, is reaching above and beyond what the city requires and has set LEED Gold as its target.

Paul: You have talked about air and water, but what about smell?

Bryan explained that if there is a particular smell, such as that of sulfur, there are ways that this smell can be controlled, such as with the addition of certain materials such as gypsum or lime. The base regulations are those determined by the Public Health Commission. If it was to become an issue, the Public Health Commission would have the capability of measuring the smell. Bryan, however, explained that it is hard to imagine that there will be a situation where the smell would be that bad as to disrupt the members of the community.

Harry Mattison: What are your thoughts on the shadow impacts?

Bryan could not give a definitive answer as this is currently still under review.

Harry asked how vibration is monitored and measured.

Bryan explained that there are no standards the City uses for vibration impacts, unless the project includes blasting. There are some vibrations from trucks and pile driving, but these are usually

limited to the site. If there were, however, vibrations felt by the surrounding homes, Inspectional Services Department (ISD) would look into it. Bryan stated that he hasn't seen this issue come up in the past. There are sometimes issues with pile driving near 19th century buildings, but most likely won't be an issue on this project.

Briony stood up to help bring clarity to the definition of insignificance. She explained that if the Science Complex were a stand-alone project, it wouldn't even require MEPA review.

Harry asked whether Harvard plans to request another MEPA waiver?

Chris Gordon of Harvard's Allston Development Group (ADG) explained that the Master Plan will go through the MEPA review process. It is Harvard's assumption that the MEPA review of the overall Master Plan will catch up before another specific project is proposed.

Mike Hanlon asked why Harvard is asking for a waiver?

Chris explained that it was all a timing issue. While the Master Plan is being reviewed, Phase One (the Science Complex) needs to begin.

Briony explained that the MEPA review process is very strict. It does not allow for piecemeal reviews.

Kathy Spiegelman explained that if the waiver is granted, the Special Review Procedures will explain how future projects will be reviewed if they are to begin prior to the approval of the Master Plan.

Kathy then introduced Harvard's presentation regarding sustainability and infrastructure. Will Donham and Mike McBride, both from Harvard's ADG, will make the presentation. Kathy explained that the issues of sustainability are extremely important to this project.

Will explained that in prior meetings, Stefan Behnisch has made presentations depicting the key issues of environmental sustainability in the past. Harvard is targeting a LEED Gold rating for the building. This, in essence, means that the mechanical systems are designed in order to create a building with very low energy demand and very high efficiency. The Science Complex has a stormwater management system that utilizes bioswales and water retention. This allows for the protection of ground water and the Charles River. The Science Complex will have a decreased demand for water.

There are many sustainability features of this building such as wintergardens, natural daylighting, earth ducts, ground source heat pumps, solar chimneys, and wastewater treatment.

Will introduced Mike McBride, Program Manager for Infrastructure at Harvard's ADG. His main responsibility is the overall utilities for the entire Master Plan. His focus is on Chapter 8 of the DPIR.

Mike explained that the current sewer lines (including the MWRA line running directly through the Science Complex site) were analyzed for capacity. There is enough capacity for the building's wastewater although the building site will generate as little wastewater as possible.

Mike described the systems supporting potable water and the water for the building's fire protection system. First Science will tap into the existing systems to which the current buildings on the site are connected. There are also plans to run an additional water main down Stadium Way, which will also eventually be the connection for Second Science. The existing systems have been analyzed and there is enough water in the system for all of the Science Complex's potable and fire protection needs.

The entire site design minimizes the uses of water. There won't be any irrigation that utilizes potable water. Instead, there will be a stormwater management system along with special plantings that minimize water use. The stormwater management will enhance the current system and shed the rain water as quickly as possible.

The new design has landscaping to collect the water runoff from the roof. There will also be roof leaders that will discharge onto the actual site. The site acts as a treatment system, including a bioswale, which will improve the water quality and allow the water to infiltrate into the ground. The design also slows down the water movement, providing the entire site as a rainwater storage system. No rainwater will be leaving the site for approximately 90% of the storms. If there is a big storm, the water will overflow into the storm drains.

The current system is a 36" storm drain west of the site. This storm drain will be relocated, and intercepted and replaced with a 72" storm drain. This will go around the entire facility and eventually be tied back into the existing system. This provides the ultimate infrastructure of the complex and will minimize the rain water extending to the river as infiltration will be increased.

John Cusack: Has the Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) suggested 72" to the east of the site in lieu of to the west due to the fact that there is a flooding issue of 3" – 6" at times along Rotterdam Street?

Mike explained that Harvard has not been informed of this issue, but it will be looked into along with the grading, especially when it comes to the design for Second Science and Rena Park.

The 32" may eventually be replaced with a 66" line. The relocation of the pipe is going to take place as soon as possible, prior to the excavation. This relocation will begin within the next couple of weeks.

Mike explained that the current capacity of the 32" storm drain is designed for a 1 in 1-year storm. The 72" line, however, is designed for a 1 in 25 year storm. The BWSC has increased its regulations asking for new systems to have increased pipe size to handle much larger storms. The increase in the size of the pipe to a 72" line was at the request of BWSC.

Roof runoff will run down rain leaders. Ted Sandstra of Behnisch Architekten explained that the current design has both internal and external rain leaders.

Paul: Sometimes, when roof runoff goes down external rain leaders, there is ice hanging off of the buildings.

Matt Noblett of Behnisch Architekten explained that this will be taken into consideration, and most likely the external rain leaders will be heat traced.

Mike also explained that the design has some areas of green roofs. Green roofs help act as a treatment medium, slowing down the flow and increasing infiltration.

Audience member: Is there anything toxic in the sewer line under Stadium Way?

The sanitary lines will be controlled under the MWRA Toxic Reduction and Control (TRAC) permit. There are two different systems – sanitary vs. storm. All of the lab sanitary waste will be permit regulated and will flow to the treatment plant at Deer Island. All of this waste will be within permit parameters and will not be toxic.

The relocation of the 36" line will not have any negative impacts to the community. If anything, it will help the current situation for neighbors. It will take approximately six weeks to complete the relocation.

Q: If there is water in the land now, during excavation, where will the leakage go?

A: During excavation, the sheeting or slurry wall will act as a barrier. If there is any leakage, this is regulated by a NPDES permit. Before any groundwater discharge is let into the stormwater drainage system, it must meet the requirements of the federal permit issued by the BWSC.

Mike explained that the Science Complex has a component called a Distributed Energy Facility (DEF). This facility produces all of the hot water, chilled water, and steam for the building. The facility will burn natural gas with a combustion turbine generator in order to generate electricity. Cogeneration will be used creating free steam and free hot water to heat the building. This is a very sustainable method which also includes absorption chillers for the air conditioning of the building.

To back up the DEF, Harvard will bring power from two feeders from the NSTAR substation. There is the potential that an existing feeder will be pulled along Lincoln Street (as shown in drawing in Chapter 8 of the DPIR). NSTAR has analyzed the capacity for bringing power to the Science Complex, and there is currently enough. Initially, Harvard will have the ability to sell any additional electricity produced by the DEF back to NSTAR. However, the demand of the building at peak will use the majority of the electricity it generates. NSTAR has the requirement to buy back any additional electricity.

Audience member Tom Lally: At Genzyme, NSTAR wouldn't buy the electricity back – are you aware of this?

Mike explained that this was contrary to what Mike knows. NSTAR encourages the use of cogeneration and as far as he knows, is required to buy back the additional electricity.

A member of the community suggested that instead of digging up Lincoln Street to put in an additional feeder from NSTAR, they should use Harvard's own land. Mike explained that it is NSTAR that designs its additional feeders and routing and usually prefers to use public land rather than private.

Q: Where is this cogeneration plant located?

A: Under Building IV. Its exhaust is integrated into the building and its exhaust stacks are located at the mechanical penthouse.

The DEF will produce enough steam and hot water for both First and Second Science. Electrically, Second Science will come off of the same grid as First Science.

Ray asked about traffic circulation during the installation of the NSTAR feeder.

Mike explained that it is Harvard's goal to do all of the utility work at the same time as the renovation of the streets. The utilities and the roadway upgrades are designed together.

Mike also explained that the impact won't be much different than the current situation along Western Avenue where the utility work known as "cut and caps" are taking place. The traffic pattern will be very similar. Traffic will still be able to move in both directions and construction will be phased for limited impacts.

Mike agreed that Harvard does have quite a challenge in front of them due to the fact that the existing utilities are located throughout the area of the Master Plan.

Representative Mike Moran noted that there has been a problem over the last couple years with a number of blackouts over long periods of time. It would behoove Harvard to ask NSTAR about this to make sure there truly is enough power available to meets its needs.

Mike agreed that Harvard is NSTAR's customer as well and it is critical that the power is reliable. NSTAR is currently working on a plan, and Harvard will review this plan and reinforce this fact at their meeting in September.

Harry asked what Harvard will do with the excess hot water?

Mike explained that Harvard will only produce the hot water that is needed for the building. He added that there is enough capacity for Second Science as well.

Harry asked how many days of street closure will there be for the relocation of the 72" drain?

Mike stated that there will be maybe only 1 or 2 days on North Harvard Street, but Harvard is not sure as far as Western Ave is concerned as the construction sequencing is still being developed.

Mike explained that NSTAR has explained that the substation only has enough capacity for the Science Complex. A member of the Task Force questioned that even though NSTAR doesn't have enough capacity past the first Science Complex, why they would want to run five more conduit feeders from the substation.

Harry asked if the goal is to put in adequate capacity for the entire program every time an area (such as a street) is dug up?

Mike stated that the hope is to only go under an area once and put in an electrical duct bank with adequate capacity for the whole program.

Ray - What about using the fiber optics along the Massachusetts Turnpike?

Mike responded that the fiber optics for the Science Complex are part of a complete Harvard network that connects the Cambridge campus with Allston and the Longwood Medical Area. In Allston, it begins at the Business School and the goal is to eventually create one large loop to serve the entire Master Plan.

Pallavi Mande of the Charles River Watershed Association commended Harvard for its sustainability goals and hopes that this will set a good example for all future projects. She added that she would like to see Harvard go further, as she feels that the existing plans don't do enough to protect the Charles River.

Harry explained that he has been disappointed by the process because of the fact that they haven't been told what is exactly going to be done as far as mitigation for the impact on public streets during infrastructure construction

Mike explained that throughout the project, as far as street impacts, it won't be much different than the way the traffic has been set up on Western Ave. for the cut and cap portion of work. Harvard does not anticipate any full road closures.

In response to an audience comment, Mike noted that he is personally reviewing all the traffic plans around Genzyme along with those for the Science Complex to ensure they are coordinated.

Ray adjourned the meeting.