

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 27, 2006
Honan-Allston Library
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Mary Helen Black
John Bruno
Cathy Campbell
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Brian Gibbons
Millie Hollum McLaughlin
Bruce Houghton
Harry Mattison

Harvard University

Harris Band
Will Donham
Dave Moffat
Andy O'Brien
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman
Maile Takahashi

Boston Transportation Department

Vineet Gupta
Dick Hardy
Adam Schulman

The meeting began at 6:35 p.m.

Gerald introduced Vineet Gupta of the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) to present its proposal for parking regulations on North Harvard Street and Western Avenue.

Vineet introduced Adam Schulman and Dick Hardy from the BTD. Vineet said that after the presentation he would like the Task Force and community members' feedback on the proposed curb-side regulations for North Harvard Street and Western Avenue. He hoped a consensus could be reached so that he could take it back to BTD for an in-house review and then implemented. In order to enforce the implemented plan, BTD will send out flyers alerting people of the changes one week before the regulations are implemented and put up the appropriate street signs. For the first week there will not be any ticketing and then the area will be heavily enforced for 2-3 weeks. This will help to create a behavioral change. After the 2-3 weeks, enforcement will depend on the amount of resources and enforcement power available.

Adam Schulman presented the BTD's plan. Summary points included:

- Curb-side regulations have to fit with the land uses for the streets. The changes BTD are proposing are short term regulations. As Harvard's Master Plan changes, the regulations will have to adapt and change for the different uses that occupy the land. For example, if more retail takes place at Barry's corner the plan may want to be changed to have parking meters at the curb-sides.

Harvard Allston Task Force
Monday, September, 27 2006

- The proposed North Harvard Street and Western Avenue regulations include:
 - No stopping at intersections.
 - No stopping zones during peak hours at the curb on both sides of the street as you approach the intersections (approx. 300 or more feet).
 - Install 2-hour parking limit, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.- 6 p.m., except for residential stickers.
 - Install crosswalk signs at mid-block cross-walks.
 - Increases enforcement.
 - Install bus shelters and ensure adequate bus stop length.
 - On North Harvard Street, stripe for 2 lane approach to Soldier's Field Road.
 - On Western Avenue, consolidate bus stops in front of the Charlesview apartments.

Questions and Comments:

Audience member: Why does the plan propose only having a no stopping zone during peak hours on the right side of the street as you approach the intersection at Barry's corner instead of both sides of the street?

Adam Schulman: On the other side of the street, traffic isn't approaching an intersection so we proposed leaving it 2-hour parking to keep more spots for residential parking.

Audience member: Do you have an assessment for who is parking on the streets now? People will just look for the next best place to park that isn't restricted which will bring cars deeper into the neighborhood. Do you have a plan for where cars can park once the new restrictions are in place?

Adam Schulman: A license plate study was conducted in 2002 as part of the North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Planning process and it concluded that only 16-17 percent of people parking on the street were residence of Allston-Brighton or Boston. Harvard has a significant amount of parking on its campus so it will be able to absorb any Harvard constituents who are parking there.

Harris Band: Harvard charges a fee to park in its parking lots but it's below the market rate. However parking will need to be regulated in broader zones within the neighborhood.

Mary Helen Black: The plan isn't comprehensive enough. It should go beyond parking problems/traffic created by Harvard constituents because it's more than that. What about having visitor parking passes? What about enforcement? Right now on Franklin Street we have to call the police to come ticket cars. BTS should also work with the MBTA to have trash barrels at every bus stop.

Adam Schulman: We will convey the message about trash barrels back to the MBTA and City Hall. The plan has to start somewhere and you should be assured BTS is looking at the entire neighborhood but this is the short-term piece that we wanted to implement right away. We do have a comprehensive analysis for the entire North Allston neighborhood.

Vineet Gupta: We have to be strategic about enforcement. For 2-3 weeks it will be very extensive and will catch the people who are consistently violating the regulations and this will prompt a behavioral change. Residential parking stickers are given only to residents whose car registration is tied to an address in the neighborhood. No cars with out of state plates are giving residential stickers.

John Bruno: Enforcement should go as far down as Franklin Street and Everett Street. If the cost benefit to write tickets is significant enough to do on a daily basis then it should get done. There should be a strategic plan to come on a regular basis. Some of the bus stops should be consolidated to give the community more

Harvard Allston Task Force
Monday, September, 27 2006

residential parking spots. Can it be a no stopping any time zone beginning from Gordon Road to Soldier's Field Road?

Harry Mattison: What's the start date? Why not have 2 hour parking 7 days a week, 24 hours a day?

Vineet Gupta: Once we have consensus, I can let you know within a month when the time frame to get started will be.

Dick Hardy: When you develop restrictions, you also have to coordinate with enforcement. We typically don't have restrictions 7 days a week because we can't enforce it 7 days a week. Once we have consensus on the plan it shouldn't take too long to implement. We're trying to implement roving enforcement teams and coordinate with the Boston Police Department. The problem with taking parking off the street is that the street could become a raceway. There needs to be parking on the street at key locations.

Audience member: I don't understand why the BTM based their analysis and plan on old data.

Harry Mattison: Maybe before we implement the plan we should agree to do a study first of the current situation so we can have a better understanding if the new regulations are working.

John Cusack: I don't think resources should be put into doing a new study. We know the situation is bad and that it hasn't gotten any better since the previous studies. I think we should start with the short term solutions as soon as possible. We'll know if it's not working immediately.

Audience member: Once Harvard breaks ground there's going to be a lot of construction vehicles parked on Western Avenue. Will this affect the parking regulations?

Adam Schulman: The city requires that all construction vehicles be on site. Unless there is a safety issue, parking regulations will not change during Harvard's construction.

Cathy Campbell: Can the right hand lane at the intersection of North Harvard Street and Soldier's Field Road be for turning right only?

Vineet Gupta: BTM understands that there needs to be a broader, comprehensive plan but these are the short-term solutions that can be addressed. If we have consensus we can take the plan back to BTM and move forward. We will look into changing the zone from Gordon Road to Soldier's Field Road to a no stopping any time zone. At the October 11th meeting I will try to give you an update on the time line and a better understanding for how we're going to deal with a more comprehensive plan.

Gerald asked Task Force members and audience members to send all further comments and questions to him.

Maile Takahashi presented Harvard's proposed interim land use approach for its land holdings in Allston. The plan is based on the immediate and future needs for the development of Harvard's Master Plan. It was developed as a result of the BRA's and neighborhood's request that an interim use planning process be included in Harvard's Phase 1A Institutional Master Plan (IMP) Amendment. The plan will also help to manage Harvard's internal and external requests for permanent and swing space and to provide guidelines to Harvard Real Estate Services (HRES) for leasing properties. Summary points in the presentation include:

- Harvard's land east of Barry's Corner will be constrained by construction needs and Harvard's need to have as much flexibility for its Master Plan as possible.

Harvard Allston Task Force
Monday, September, 27 2006

- Harvard's land on Western Avenue (west of Barry's Corner) and the Holton Street corridor is less constrained and there are no current plans for the land.
- The Interim Land Use Policy for the Western Avenue Corridor includes:
 - Offering lease lengths of 5 years or more
 - Encourage public uses on the first floor of the buildings such as bakeries, bookstores, garden shops, local owned businesses, etc. and reserving the upper floors for offices.
 - Identifying select buildings that need significant investment to be rented or for possible demolition.
 - Implementing improvements to the property including landscaping, removing fencing and allowing the installation of windows on Western Avenue.
- The Interim Land Use Policy for the Holton Street Corridor includes:
 - Offering lease lengths of up to 5 years
 - Implementing uses such as retail, artists studios, small local industrial businesses, etc.
 - Conducting property assessments
 - Implementing improvements to property including landscaping, removing fencing and allowing the installation of windows.
- The schedule for immediate physical improvements is:
 - Fall 2006- general clean up, painting, maintenance, fence removal
 - Fall 2006/Winter 2007- fence replacement
 - Spring 2007- landscape improvements and demolition

Questions/Comments:

Millie Hollum McLaughlin: Harvard should consider senior friendly activities and occupants for the buildings on Holton Street. Could the time line for landscape improvements be moved up to the fall?

Kathy Spiegelman: Fall would be a good time to deal with landscaping so that it can be ready for the spring but we haven't hired a landscape architect yet.

Mary Helen Black: Harvard should install new, appealing fencing.

Cathy Campbell: Can you let us know which buildings you have identified for demolition?

Maile Takahashi: We're not sure yet because the assessments have not been done but we will update the Task Force as soon as we know.

John Bruno: A good industry to bring in is the media, movies and film. This industry creates minimum impact and also generates money into the economy.

Maile Takahashi: There are some properties on Holton Street that have been set aside for production related occupants.

Mary Helen Black: What kind of real estate opportunities are realistic? I would like a Starbucks, or another coffee shop, a breakfast place or a toy and clothing store but I don't know if these kinds of stores could survive or if there is enough pedestrian traffic. The Charles Bank property would be a good spot for another coffee shop.

Kathy Spiegelman: To some extent potential tenants seek us out and to some extent Harvard seeks out potential tenants. Since we get together every two weeks, I can update you every meeting on our progress.

Harvard Allston Task Force
Monday, September, 27 2006

John Bruno: Is Harvard working with the Allston-Brighton Board of Trade? We should try and develop opportunities for small business owners.

Kathy Spiegelman: I agree. We also have to bring in retail that we know will work.

Audience member: I thought in the NANSP there were plans for a green corridor near Everett Street and Holton Street?

Maile Takahashi: That was proposed in the NANSP which is why we are limiting leases to only 5 years in this area. I anticipate that in the next 6 months the Task Force will enter into deeper discussions about the Holton Street corridor.

Audience Member: What about having a free parking lot for residence to be able to park their cars?

Harry Mattison: Is there flexibility to offer low-mid rental rates?

Maile Takahashi: Harvard is trying to make the properties economically viable for the businesses that occupy the buildings. Rental rates will be considered on a case by case basis.

Audience member: How would a business owner approach Harvard if he or she were interested in renting one of Harvard's buildings?

Maile Takahashi: Harvard works with the City's economic development initiatives to seek out business owners.

Harry Mattison: Can there be something on the HRES web site with updated property information and descriptions of the different spaces?

Kathy Spiegelman: We can make sure HRES has adequate contact information listed on their web site.

Gerald Autler: If the neighborhood has ideas about the kinds of uses they want to see in the buildings then the BRA can play a more effective role in trying to find those types of businesses.

There was a discussion regarding whether Harvard and the Task Force should set occupancy goals and targets to serve as benchmarks to measure Harvard's progress.

Harry Mattison: There should be a shared expectation for when Harvard will occupy some of the vacant buildings. I think Harvard and the Task Force should agree on goals for implementation.

Millie Hollum McLaughlin: What would be a reasonable expectation for us to have?

Kathy Spiegelman: I am hesitant to set specific time frames to reach specific occupancy rates. I would rather be able to have the flexibility to make sure we bring in the right tenants who will be successful. If we endorse the proposed plan, we can work with HRES and try to figure out a better target after some of the initial ground work is completed.

Cathy Campbell: Can we put this topic back on the agenda two-months from now?

Kathy Spiegelman: We can definitely do that and we can also make an update at each meeting.

Harvard Allston Task Force
Monday, September, 27 2006

Gerald and the Task Force discussed agenda items for the upcoming meetings. It was agreed upon that at the next meeting on October 11th Vineet will give a brief update on the parking regulations for North Harvard Street and Western Avenue, Harvard will make a presentation on transportation impacts that will result from the Phase 1 A Institutional Master Plan amendment, and the BRA will present the City's strategy for implementing the NANSP.

At the 10/23 meeting Gerald will bring in representatives from the City's different economic initiatives and tie this into Harvard's Interim Use plan. The City will also present its response to the Task Force's open space plan.

An audience member expressed respect for the Task Force members who continually attend the bi-monthly task force meetings but expressed concern about Task Force members who don't attend the meetings on a regular basis. He questioned whether the community was being properly represented. John Bruno said the process to appoint and remove Task Force members wasn't an easy process and should be added as an agenda item for an upcoming meeting. John Cusack said that the time commitment and obligation was made very clear to the Task Force members prior to them joining the Task Force.

John Bruno made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the September 11th meeting. John Cusack second the motion and the minutes were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.