

DRAFT MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, December 1, 2009, starting in the BRA Board Room, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall, beginning at 5:19 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Michael Davis, Co-Vice-Chair; Linda Eastley, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough (Co-Vice-Chair), William Rawn, and Daniel St. Clair. Absent were: Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Kirk Sykes, and Lynn Wolff. Also present was David Carlson, Executive Director of the Commission. Representatives of the BSA were present. Katelyn Sullivan was present for the BRA.

The Co-Vice-Chair, Michael Davis (MD), announced that this was the meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission that normally meets the first Tuesday of every month and welcomed all persons interested in attending. He added thanks to the Commissioners for the contribution of their time to the betterment of the City and its Public Realm. This hearing was duly advertised.

The first item was the approval of the November 10, 2009 Meeting Minutes. A motion was made, seconded and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the November 10, 2009 Boston Civic Design Commission Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a continuation of the discussion reported out of Design Committee on the **Massachusetts Mental Health Center Redevelopment Project**. MD noted that the MMHC team was here to continue the discussion, to present changes made pursuant to comments from last month, and for a vote. Michael Liu (ML) of The Architectural Team started with a diagram of the issues and constraints, including the Riverway buffer, the old tree protection area, the Binney Street view corridor, the setback 'shelf' established by the Shapiro Center, and the adjacency to Neville House. The overall SF required is fixed. The more recent issues included one of scale, the blank facade facing the Neville House, and the tension of the Riverway setback/residential tower buffer vs. Binney Street. ML showed new changes with clear toggles back and forth, addressing each issue. The shelf along Vining now continues as per Shapiro; a bay on the BWH building faces Neville and that facade is shortened (less wide); a Riverway perspective analysis of a shifted position on the RTH building shows virtually no change from that point of view, but a significant one from Binney Street with a clear sense of light and air entering into Binney's corridor. (ML shows site plan.) The RTH residential building has shifted, though - it is tighter on the site, the nose of the wedge is now further from the intersection, and it varies from 40-50' back from the Riverway.

John Copley (JC) of Copley Wolff Design Group presented the site plan, noting the

overall streetscape strategy is to make connections across the site, while continuing the trees of the area. There is an extension of (the sense of) the Riverway going *into* the development, real simple, with an Olmstedian curved path. It has the character of large trees, simple paths, and understory plantings. The interior residential landscaping, actually lower than the landscaped connection to Binney Street, includes a patio, a tot lot and play area, and more, and will maintain the historic fence. We gave access for the other RTH tenants coming from other areas. The parking remains under the Mission Garage (at Vining's corner - Peter Munckenbeck).

David Manfredi (DM): So this is the same SF, same height - simply reconfigured. Bill Rawn (WR) asked to see the view coming down (inbound) along the Riverway. WR: It's an Olmstedian road. I feel that our role in the City will be questioned if this is considered. This spot was held out from the LMA - this seems wrong. Who would give the reason why? Andrea Leers (AL): I will speak for the Project...I appreciate the changes. The setback, and the projection out - are far more gracious. All of the things we have spoken about have been addressed. I am less concerned than Bill about the height (along the Riverway). There are other high buildings there, some residential. The space is better and has been adjusted. It is part of larger ensemble, more allied to the larger rather than the smaller. As far as the massing goes, it is now a consistent proposal. I am concerned about the amount of privatization - the grade separation, i.e. The persuasive part about the nature of the landscape coming *in*, should also continue *along*. I feel the height is trumped by the sense of belonging to a group.

Linda Eastley (LE): I'm asking about the historic fence, because a sweet little garden isn't really a part of the picture. MD: This is a net gain - if the landscape treatment continues so that it's a part of the experienced public realm. If it is privatized that may not work. Daniel St. Clair (DS): Perhaps a continuation or shift of the fence. Peter: We can easily shift the bounds of the fence - your points are well taken - but that won't be resolved in the vote tonight. DS: What is the zoning? What are your property rights? The height suggests a public aspect below. David Carlson (DAC): The actual zoning is not noted in the fact sheet. Peter: FAR 2, I think. DS: I am still of the camp that feels that a large building should have a rationalization embedded in the zoning - why one can do this, what is the payback/exchange. Peter: Affordable housing is a major desire of the City, as well as residential uses in or adjacent to the LMA. And the only driver here is the 300,000 SF of the BWH building. There are a number of other large buildings in the area.

AL: For me, the building is entirely linked to the treatment of the Riverway; privatization is completely at odds with that. It's not a detail to be worked out later. The model, i.e., is compelling - we see it as an extension of that landscape. RTH Director: All the landscaping you see is open to the community. All the green space - consider it a community benefit. Yes, it is reserved for the residential building, but it is still open to the larger community. The space for social services and the tot lot has to be secure. Peter used an aerial photo to show the nature of

the Riverway, which everywhere else does *not* allow penetration, and gives a passive sense of green. Peter: I hope we can work together to achieve the right balance...and make this also consistent with RTH needs. The fence has been there since 1912. We have been asked to preserve/replicate it by the MHC. DM: The prevailing question is the residential tower. I want to reiterate what Andrea said. This is far better; how do we know this is enshrined in the future? MD: It will be set in the IMP and PDA.

Alison Pultinas (AP): This is advisory, and not a vote? (MD: A vote.) Our concern is the massing, the BWH building garage, and the bridge. The residential tower seems a lot like the urban renewal towers elsewhere. MASCO has been advocating for a right-turn lane...the LMA issues are too great for you to give this one away. MD: This is a typical approach. AP: The research building is 10 years away, the residential building 3-5. John Messervy (JM): We need this to sign the ground lease with the State. DS: Tell me one more time about the amount of residential. Peter: We are keeping a ratio of about 2:1 SF, based on long-term neighborhood decisions so that one use doesn't dwarf another, so, a *fair* relationship. We don't think there will be other opportunities...not a satisfactory architectural argument. Elizabeth Cumford: It's not a satisfactory historical argument either. I was here when the agreement was made which drew the line between the neighborhood and the hospitals. We *and* RTH were signatories. We are being nibbled away; we can't enter RTH property; we are dying as a neighborhood of 1000 cuts. I would be the first to jump into an affordable tank, but one should first be making the existing units affordable.

MD: We need a motion. WR: Can we separate the projects? DAC: No, they need all the pieces for the ground lease, as stated. But the major buildings will return; all will be set in the massing, etc. The site plan, despite what was presented, is general - it will be resolved (including privatization issues) when the RTH building returns, which has the site at issue. With that, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: **That the Commission recommends approval of the schematic**

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The next item was a return of the **CNY Parcel 6 Spaulding Hospital Project** to focus on the treatment of its **First Avenue View Corridor** area. MD noted that this was a requirement of the vote; the Commission approved the building in June, with the proviso that the 1st Avenue View Corridor treatment return for an updated presentation and vote. DAC noted the suggested vote was simply a clean version for the overall Project. JM: We have been given leave to proceed to construction as of about two weeks ago. We are very pleased, and look forward to showing you this as required. Sean Sanger (SS) of Copley Wolff then showed some variations of the First Avenue treatment. One had trees defining a more literally open swath along the Corridor; another had trees set in what read as a space-defining bosk but also, per a rendering, reading clearly as an allee, with a water feature as a terminus, a fountain and art piece. The fountain (per a DM query) would be set in the paving, which is slightly sloped, with benches (per a WR query) added later to define the edges. AL: What are the lines? SS: They are ten paving markers. For therapeutic purposes, we felt it might be good to do that. It's measured in 50' increments. LE: And the ellipse? JM: It's an oxygen tank.

WR: I think you've done exactly what we asked for in an elegant way. It allows public use as appropriate, but meets your needs. LE: My concern is the amount of paving - do you need all that hardscape? Could you add crushed stone, gravel, or something, to add texture? JM: The concern is the amount of people in wheelchairs, and the usability of the space, its flexibility. LE: It still seems like a lot. I miss the green in the earlier version. SS: Actually, we moved the green to the edge along the water to form the Harborwalk corridor, so the amount of green has remained fairly even. MD: Actually, I like the idea that it is an elevated material, granite; we are getting past an office park plaza. This feels much better. LE: The winter months will be bleak...just a concern.

It was duly moved, seconded and

VOTED: That the Commission recommends unconditioned approval of the schematic design for the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Project on Parcel 6 in the Charlestown Navy Yard.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 6:36 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission is scheduled for January 10, 2010. The recording of the December 1, 2009 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.