

## **BERKLEE TASK FORCE MEETING SUMMARY**

Date: Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Place: Berklee College of Music  
David Friend Recital Hall, 939 Boylston Street

Members Present: Susan Ashbrook, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay; Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance; Tim Horn, Fenway Civic Association; Valerie Hunt, Area Resident; Gail Korn, Area Resident; Richard Pendleton, Fenway CDC; Karla Rideout, Fenway Co-operative Resident; Michael Ross, Boston City Councilor; Byron Rushing, Massachusetts State Representative; Ellen Shortell, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay; Barbara Simons, Acting President Symphony United Neighbors; Marty Walz, Massachusetts State Representative

Attendees: Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); William Onuoha, Mayor Menino's Office; David Hornfischer, Jim McCoy and Linda Cole, Berklee College of Music; David Dixon and Ben Carlson, Goody Clancy; Felipe Schwarz, VHB Consultants; Shirin Karanfiloglu, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority; Ted Siefer, Boston Courant Reporter; Bill Whitney; and approximately 25 interested citizens including representatives from the Christian Science Church, St. Cecelia Church, and Fenway CDC

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Gerald Autler opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone present. He circulated sign-in sheets and thanked Berklee College of Music for hosting the meeting. He also distributed the meeting agenda and a list of proposed dates for future meetings.

Gerald announced that Gillian McDaniel had moved from the area and introduced Kelly Brilliant, Executive Director of the Fenway Alliance and new member of the Task Force.

Dave Hornfischer introduced two new Berklee employees to the Task Force. Bill Whitney has accepted the position of Vice President for Real Estate and Linda Cole, Administrative Assistant, is working on real estate issues at the College. Dave also introduced Jim McCoy, Director for Community and Government Affairs at Berklee, as well as consultants David Dixon and Ben Carlson from Goody Clancy and Felipe Schwarz from VHB Consultants.

Dave Hornfischer distributed a draft letter from Roger Brown, President of Berklee College of Music, to Paul McCann, Acting Director of the BRA, regarding the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPNF) to be submitted by Berklee. He noted the IMPNF had not yet been filed

## **Task Force Administration**

### *Proposal to select chair(s)*

Karla Rideout expressed concern regarding issues that some Task Force members believed had not been addressed. She explained that members wanted to have more involvement in setting the agenda in order to have their concerns addressed at the meetings. Karla requested more information on air rights issues and suggested that more people be invited to discuss air rights. She also urged the Task Force to elect a member as its leadership chair. As the Task Force has representation from both the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay and the Fenway Alliance, it was further suggested two co-chairs be elected.

Gerald stated he would be willing to work with co-chairs; however, he reminded members that the purpose of the Task Force was to review the project for the BRA. David Dixon then reminded Task Force members that a chairperson frequently loses an advocacy position within the group. He also noted that Gerald was a strong advocate for the Community Task Force when dealing with the BRA.

At that time, Susan Ashbrook volunteered to be Back Bay co-chair. Karla Rideout volunteered to be Fenway Neighborhood co-chair. After a brief discussion, a motion was made, seconded and unanimously

**Voted: Susan Ashbrook, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay and Karla Rideout, Fenway Co-operative Resident, elected co-chairs of the BRA Community Task Force**

## **Presentation and Discussion of the Draft IMPNF**

David Dixon began his presentation with definitions contained in the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPNF) and the subsequent Institutional Master Plan (IMP), which is developed after the IMPNF is reviewed by the City of Boston. He then explained the IMP is a formal method for Berklee to define its long-term goals and vision, thereby giving the city and community perspective on the relationship of the institution's goals to its mission and context. Berklee's planning outlook extends approximately ten years.

David Dixon then acknowledged he had received questions from Task Force members regarding numerous references in the draft IMPNF to "high spine" concept. He explained that "high spine" concept was developed years ago as a means to say historical neighborhoods should not change, but growth, and specifically tall buildings, should be in a defined area between, rather than in the middle of, neighborhoods.

Representative Walz stated the “high spine” reference in the draft IMPNF was inflammatory and should not be used as justification for construction of tall buildings. She explained that each building should be judged on its own merits and cautioned Berklee regarding use of this concept as setting precedence for the Crossroads project. Both David Dixon and Dave Hornfischer acknowledged potential problems with the concept and agreed to eliminate all references to “high spine” in the final IMPNF report.

Next, Dave Hornfischer discussed the draft cover letter from Roger Brown, which was distributed earlier to Task Force members. The cover letter reflects ten central themes in the draft IMPNF, including Berklee’s recognition as the world’s leading school of contemporary music and Berklee’s importance to Boston as a cultural resource. These ten themes were the basis for his presentation and each of them were listed in the PowerPoint slides.

Dave Hornfischer then described critical space and identity needs of the College such as adequate student housing, a student center to promote campus unity, and a technology building to house recording studios. Every educational program at Berklee utilizes technology in some fashion. In addition, as the World’s leading school of contemporary music, Berklee cannot achieve its mission without a sufficient number of adequately sized recording studios for its students. The use of those studios crosses many programs.

Although Berklee continues to evaluate many different options, including the purchase or lease of smaller properties along Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street, the College still entertains the possibility of a major building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. The building would serve various functions, including accommodating approximately 50 percent of Berklee’s student housing needs. The construction of a Berklee building at the corner would not increase traffic or parking in the area.

When questioned about the preservation of buildings, Dave Hornfischer explained that 130 and 136 Massachusetts Avenue would likely be torn down because of their present size, condition and value of their location to the College. However, since buildings are expensive to purchase and replace, Dave stated that other acquisitions by Berklee are expected to remain intact and be renovated according to College needs and current zoning codes.

The next question to arise involved property tax implications of new acquisitions. Dave Hornfischer explained that even though some property use by Berklee is tax-exempt, the College does make PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) payments to the City of Boston. When asked if Berklee would list the assessed value of its properties, Dave responded that Berklee annually files a 3ABC tax statement with the City, which is open for public review.

Dave Hornfischer then discussed the Crossroads Project at Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. He assured Task Force members that the height of the proposed corner building was intended to be similar to other tall buildings in the area. Berklee would investigate the maintenance of the façade of the existing buildings. New construction would primarily reflect theater needs, student life needs and student housing. Students would have activity space in this building, thereby relieving sidewalk congestion.

Councilor Ross asked Dave Hornfischer if the College had tried to purchase the Summer Shack. Dave replied that a conglomeration of people owned of the building and numerous tenants had long-term leases.

Several Task Force members acknowledged that Berklee was not involved in nearby air rights; therefore, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority could erect an “iconic” building of 40 to 50 stories on Parcel 15. In an attempt to understand the impact of a Berklee tall building in the immediate neighborhood of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street, Representative Walz requested Berklee and its consulting team to submit images including a tall building on Parcel 15 and show how that could impact the College. Representative Walz and other Task Force members encouraged Berklee to state in its IMPNF that it should be the only tall building erected in the area. A Berklee building would present the least traffic impact while also serving the City’s goal of increasing affordable student housing. Members requested the College to work with the Task Force in developing related language for the IMPNF. Representative Walz compared this attempt to the successful request of the Red Sox to limit use of parcels near Fenway Park. Several Task Force members agree with the “civic vision” of the community, and anticipate only one tall building on this corner.

In response to this request by Task Force members, David Dixon stated that the College is analyzing various scenarios of what could take place at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. With the possibility of different eventualities, Dave Hornfischer noted that the needs of Berklee and the needs of the Turnpike Authority may not be financially compatible or may not accommodate each other’s time priorities.

Shirin Karanfiloglu, representative from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, stated that currently there are no plans to issue RPFs (request for proposals) for Parcels 12-15 in the foreseeable future. She explained the Turnpike Authority has to look at all contexts, including a public comment process, which involves a lot of preparation time. When questioned about whether Millennium retains any rights to the air rights parcel, Shirin stated she could not answer the question, but she would research the information.

Felipe Schwarz then discussed the IMPNF report and its development process, whereby the consulting team has held numerous meetings to discuss the College’s needs. He briefly discussed chapters in the IMPNF and outlined information that would be included

in an Institutional Master Plan. Felipe assured Task Force members that inflammatory language would be eliminated from the IMPNF before it is filed with the City. Copies of the draft IMPNF, which had been emailed to the task force, were made available to the public attendees. A copy is posted at [www.berklee.edu/taskforce](http://www.berklee.edu/taskforce).

Following a brief discussion, Dave Hornfischer was questioned about ground water problems associated with the area buildings. Dave noted there were some issues and the College would address those problems as plans moved forward for acquisition.

Dave Hornfischer assured Task Force members that Berklee would continue to respect historical resources in the area. He also agreed to wait six weeks before filing the IMPNF. This would allow the Task Force time to convene another meeting and comment publicly plus it would allow the College time to acquire some neighboring sites.

In summary, Gerald Autler explained the IMPNF is the beginning of the process. Once an IMPNF is filed, the BRA will issue a scoping determination, following public comment and city agency review. The next step is for Berklee to prepare an IMP, which is a strategic planning and zoning document that requires BRA and Boston Zoning Commission approval. He noted that Berklee would also need to file for Large Project Review under Article 80, including review of specific design elements, shadows, et al., if it proposes a tall building on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. Following the Large Project Review filing, a 30-day period allows for public comment on the Project Notification Form (PNF).

Gerald then encouraged the Task Force to organize itself and decide how it will comment on Berklee's IMPNF. He stated that Boston Groundwater Trust would also study the IMPNF proposal. Gerald will take all public comments into consideration before issuing a Scoping Determination. Once the Scoping Determination is issued, Berklee would then file its IMP document.

Representative Walz urged the Task Force to write a letter on Scoping Determination and the IMPNF document itself. Karla Rideout suggested doing that at the next Task Force meeting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Dave Hornfischer thanked the Task Force members for their efforts and repeated his desire to work with them to shape the IMPNF before filing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Prepared by Linda Cole, Berklee College of Music