

## **BERKLEE TASK FORCE MEETING SUMMARY**

**Tuesday, October 2, 2007**

Place: Boston Public Library

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; 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); David Hornfischer, Bill Whitney, Jim McCoy and Linda Cole, Berklee College of Music; David Dixon, Goody Clancy; Felipe Schwarz, VHB Consultants; and approximately 25 interested citizens including representatives from the Christian Science Church, St. Cecelia Church, and Fenway CDC

### **Welcome**

Gerald Autler opened the meeting at 6:10 p.m. and thanked people for attending. He circulated sign-in sheets and distributed the meeting agenda.

Karla Rideout welcomed everyone to the Task Force meeting and thanked committee members for submitting items for discussion.

### **Task Force Administration**

#### *Draft comments for review*

Co-chairpersons, Karla Rideout and Susan Ashmont, distributed a letter from the Berklee Task Force to representatives of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and Berklee College of Music. The letter included "Draft Comments for Berklee IMPNF" to be discussed at the meeting (see attached letter and draft comments).

In reviewing the draft comments, Susan Ashmont stated the Task Force was sympathetic to Berklee's needs for additional space, but acknowledged that the means for the College to resolve its space needs was a matter of contention among some committee members. While the Committee heartily endorsed Berklee's commitment to maintain current student

enrollment levels and not increase parking demands, Susan said the Committee was not unanimously supportive of the tall Crossroads building proposed by the College. Many on the Committee believe a new building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street with less height would be better than a building consisting of 25 to 35 stories. Susan explained the scale of the building is the focus of objection and recommended it be designed within the limitations of underlying zoning codes.

Next, Representative Marty Walz suggested the Task Force compose a document whereby supporting committee members could sign the document and present it to Berklee. This would provide Berklee with a formalized response to the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPINF).

Karla Rideout supported the idea of developing a single statement in response to Berklee's IMPINF. In addition, she encouraged Berklee administrators to pursue other opportunities for property acquisition in the immediate neighborhood to resolve the College's space needs.

Representative Walz then referred to page 1-6 of the draft IMPINF. She noted one of Berklee's needs guiding the IMPINF is the creation of a unique, contemporary campus building that signifies Berklee's stature. Representative Walz stated, "The Crossroads building does not need to be tall to have stature." She suggested that some of the functions outlined for the corner building could be located in alternative locations nearby.

In response, Dave Hornifschler explained the College was trying to satisfy requests from the City and the Community Task Force to house a larger number of its students on campus. A building of six or seven stories would not resolve Berklee's space needs. He acknowledged that suitable property alternatives in the area were not readily available. College administrators had discussed with the Task Force many possible property acquisitions, which had previously been identified and considered.

Valerie Hunt responded that she supported a signature building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. Regarding scale of the building, Valerie said she could compromise on the issue of height, if it was stepped back.

Discussion then turned to air rights when Karla noted that air rights language was more supportive in Berklee's April 10<sup>th</sup> planning framework draft than in the current IMPINF draft. Representative Walz agreed and urged Berklee administrators to include a more affirmative, proactive statement regarding the Turnpike Authority's air rights parcels. She expressed concern that the current draft incorporated less specificity and a more cautious tone than the April 10<sup>th</sup> draft. Representative Walz noted that Governor Patrick had taken more control of the Turnpike Authority. Therefore, she encouraged Berklee to put more energy into "making it happen" and creating opportunities with the Turnpike Authority rather than waiting for the Turnpike Authority to take action.

Following those statements, Kelly Brilliant recognized that Berklee could not compel a large bureaucratic agency, such as the Turnpike Authority, to initiate action on the air rights parcels. She also stated the College should not be expected to work with air rights developers (or other partners) unless it chose to do so.

Susan Ashbrook then invited people to attend the next meeting to discuss historic preservation. Representative Walz requested Berklee administrators to not take a position regarding historic preservation at this time. Representative Rushing agreed, stating that more information was needed before decisions could be made regarding preservation issues.

Dave Horfischer then stated Berklee is committed to considering preservation of the building façade at 130 Massachusetts Avenue, but did not guarantee keeping the original façade. He acknowledged that Berklee's goals for resolving space needs within local zoning codes were similar to the goals of the Community Task Force. While the College has been seeking alternative properties, these acquisitions have not yet come together.

Next, Gerald Autler discussed the procedural difference between an IMPNF, an Institutional Master Plan (IMP), and Article 80 Large Project Review. He explained the IMP was the mechanism for organizations and businesses to acquire zoning. Large Project Review has a greater degree of specificity than the IMPNF. Accordingly, information regarding possible preservation of a building façade would be included in Large Project Review.

In response to questions by members of the Task Force, Felipe Schwarz explained the rationale for an IMPNF. It is the first phase of an approval process, which provides a conceptual overview of the project under consideration. A specific project has to be included in the IMPNF to allow the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) to issue a scoping determination. Gerald added that Article 80 Large Project Review allows for modifications throughout the planning process.

Susan Ashmont suggested that Berklee look for property beyond a ten-minute walk of the campus core. Representative Walz agreed that extending the search area would open additional opportunities for the College. On the other hand, David Dixon cautioned that student housing must be close enough to the campus core so students can walk and not drive to classrooms and practice spaces. Also, many students carry heavy instruments so walking distance is an important consideration. Valerie Hunt then suggested removing the words "within a ten-minute walk" and adding, "within a reasonable walking distance" of the core on page 4-10 of the draft IMPNF.

Regarding the draft comment on parking, Susan Ashmont stated that Berklee neighborhoods' parking numbers in the IMPNF were overstated. Representative Rushing

urged the College to review the number of available spaces at the Prudential Center Parking Garage in particular. In addition, Gerald Autler agreed to have a representative research the process by which students are exempted from residential parking permits in the Fenway area.

Next, Representative Walz expressed concern with Berklee's outside storage of trash on Cambria Street. She requested Berklee administrators to specify in the IMPNF that trash would be stored indoors. Representative Walz also requested that trash pick-ups not be handled during the middle of the night.

As a follow up, Dave Hornfischer acknowledged problems of recycling storage on Cambria Street. He announced the College was working with St. Cecilia officials to clarify issues and develop ways to address the operational problem. Berklee is currently working to implement a plan to place recycling and trash containers inside its facilities.

Susan Ashmont encouraged Berklee to pressure the Turnpike Authority to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) as soon as possible for Parcels 12, 13, 14 and 15. The Task Force believes this would allow for only one tall building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. Representative Walz and Valerie Hunt urged Berklee to work with the Turnpike Authority to construct one building on Parcel 15 and Berklee College land.

Following that discussion, Dave Hornfischer explained the timing in dealing with the Turnpike Authority could be problematic. Additionally, financial constraints of the Turnpike Authority and possible developers could be too cumbersome for the College to accept. Dave also noted that Berklee continues to work on alternative sites, which did not involve air rights.

Karla Rideout suggested a unified approach by the Community Task Force, Berklee College of Music, and the BRA to deal with the Turnpike Authority. Representative Walz suggested the Community Task Force could possibly function as a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC). The Task Force could then send a message to the Turnpike Authority for one procedural process instead of two. However, Gerald Autler cautioned that the City of Boston might not advocate for one approach.

Gerald continued to explain that many questions needed to be addressed in the Article 80 Large Project Review process including the unresolved issue of the Crossroads building. He noted Berklee had outlined its program objectives without identifying specific sites. Gerald reiterated that at least one project needs to be included in an IMPNF to receive a scoping determination by the BRA. He further stated the College could initiate the Article 80 Large Project Review process while also developing an Institutional Master Plan. The IMP could serve as both a zoning and a regulatory plan. Gerald allowed that Berklee could begin the IMP process before hiring an architectural firm for the project.

A citizen asked how Berklee could acquire more space and continue to pay taxes assessed on that property to the City of Boston. Responding to the question, Dave Hornfischer explained that Berklee consistently pays more per square foot in PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) payments than any other institution in the City of Boston.

Richard Orareo questioned whether Berklee had pursued the possibility of acquiring the Wilbur Theater located in the Theater District of the City. He also suggested college administrators consider joint ventures in their real estate deals.

Dave Hornfischer stated the Wilbur Theater was in poor condition and located too far from the core of Berklee's campus. David Dixon agreed that performance center space should be located near the core of a vital and lively campus. He emphasized that the performance center is not under consideration for relocation; however, everything else could be considered for relocation.

Discussion then centered on Cambria Street. Representative Walz questioned the process of discontinuing a city street. Gerald Autler replied that he was not sure of the procedural process. Berklee has been investigating how to actually have the street be formally abandoned.

Dave Hornfischer noted that Berklee had discussed the issue of Cambria Street with representatives of the Hynes Convention Center and various possibilities are currently being studied. This would need further attention in an IMP after consultation with an architect.

Finally, Representative Walz stated she would like to receive comments from representatives from St. Cecelia Church, the Christian Science Church, and the Boston Preservation Alliance. She suggested discussion with these.

Subsequent to the meeting, the possible November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting date was cancelled for a number of reasons and the next meeting was confirmed for December 11, 2007. The location is yet to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Prepared by Linda Cole, Berklee College of Music

October 2, 2007

Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Berklee College of Music

To whom it may concern:

The Berklee/BRA Community Task Force is presenting our preliminary concerns to you regarding the draft IMPNF. This document represents the consensus of the group, and does not include opinions of individual members.

The Task Force supports Berklee's desire to grow to meet the needs of its students. Our main concern, however, is to oversee the effect of such growth on the quality of life in the neighborhood.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. We hope our input is found to be useful. We realize that additional concerns and information will arise, and we reserve the right to continue to respond during the entire process.

Sincerely,

Susan Ashbrook  
Karla Rideout  
Co-chairpersons  
Berklee Task Force

## DRAFT COMMENTS FOR BERKLEE IMPNF

SEPT 26, 2007

### AREAS OF AGREEMENT WITH PLAN

The Task Force is sympathetic to Berklee's overall goal of the creation of a better environment for the pursuit of the College's academic mission centered near and around the intersection of Mass Ave and Boylston Street.

Specifically:

- The desire to create a better center for student life.
- The goal to house 50% of Berklee students in campus housing.
- The intention to create student housing on West Boylston Street and in the Fenway Park area.
- Incorporation of Cambria Street into the footprint of the corner project.
- Intention to create no additional parking or burden on the transportation infrastructure.
- We also endorse the stated policy of keeping the student enrollment at its current level.

### AREAS OF ISSUE WITH THE PLAN

- **Scale:** The Task Force is strongly opposed to the proposed 35-story height of the corner project. Although the Task Force is sympathetic to Berklee's desire to create an architectural identity for the college where none has existed, we believe the goal should be achievable in a building of more modest dimensions, which respects the underlying zoning. Height need not define drama.

Some of the functions outlined for the corner project could be accommodated in other locations nearby, for instance the 50,000sq.ft. space proposed for academic use. We urge Berklee to even more actively pursue other options in its immediate neighborhood, for example on Mass Ave. and Boylston Streets, to accommodate some of these functions, with the understanding that there should be no net loss to the city of property tax revenue. Additionally Berklee should aggressively seek partnership opportunities with air rights developers (see below).

- **Historic buildings and the corner project:** the Task Force does not have enough information at this time to form a position on the two historic structures on the site: whether they should be preserved intact, whether their facades should be incorporated into the new design, or whether the buildings can be demolished entirely. This is an issue of great importance that requires further review in close consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston Preservation Alliance and the Boston Landmarks Commission.

- **Campus Development Concept 3:** Although the proposed 10 minute walk goal for additional student housing is most desirable in view of Berklee's stated goals concerning campus life, we believe that it may be too limiting. We urge Berklee to look beyond the 10-minute circle for opportunities to acquire or build housing for upper class students.
- **Parking:** students living in Berklee student housing must not be eligible for residential parking stickers. We question some of the numbers of available off-street parking spaces contained in the document as overly generous. For instance, valet parking surely cuts into the stated 2000 available spaces in the Prudential Center Garage.
- **Deliveries and Trash collection:** There have been reports of serious violations of city regulations regarding trash disposal, dumpster management, and deliveries. Berklee must manage these functions better to minimize impact residential neighbors.
- **Groundwater:** as the proposal notes, Berklee's entire campus falls within the Groundwater Overlay District. It is worth emphasizing, however, that any building projects undertaken by the college must have no negative impact on groundwater levels.
- **AIR RIGHTS:** we note that the language of the April 10 Draft Framework report was much more proactive in favor of pursuing partnership opportunities with air rights developers for Parcels 12, 13, 14 and 15. Although we understand the college's desire to be able to move forward with a plan to place the bulk of its immediate needs on the corner site that it already owns, this is shortsighted and risks building a project that is not in the vest long-term interests of either Berklee or the surrounding neighborhoods. Berklee should insist that the Mass Turnpike Authority issue an RFP as soon as possible for Parcels 12, 13, 14 and 15. The Task Force declares in the strongest possible terms that, in the spirit of the Civic Vision document, there should be **no more than one building greater than 15 stories** on the air rights parcels, and that this scale should be extended to all sites between the Hynes and Fenway Studios. If Berklee could share in a tower built on Parcel 15 that would obviate the need for a building of the scale that it proposes for the corner of Boylston and Mass. Ave.