

Notes of the December 20, 2010 Berklee IMP Task Force Meeting

Venue: The Loft, 939 Boylston Street

Attendance:

Members Present : Susan Ashbrook, Co-Chair; Karla Rideout, Co-Chair; Kelly Brilliant, Valerie Hunt, Gail Korn, Randy Kreie, Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Richard Pendleton, Ellen Shortell, Barbara Brooks Simons

Elected Officials Present: Rep. Byron Rushing, Rep. Marty Walz

Other Attendees: Gerald Autler, BRA; Clifford Gayley, William Rawn Associates; David Grissino, Goody Clancy Associates; James McCoy, Berklee; William Whitney, Berklee

Observers: Ken Amano, Shirley Kressel, Harley Gates, Walter Hunt, Elliott Laffer, William Rawn, Rev. John Unni

Discussion:

Notice of Project Change The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:10 pm. Gerald Autler indicated that Berklee had submitted a Notice of Project Change (NPC) to the BRA substantially similar to the draft distributed by the college at the prior task force meeting. A response to the NPC is being prepared, and will be issued shortly. Rep. Rushing requested that the NPC response ask that Berklee's analyses reflect the effects of not only its proposed projects, but also of others that have been publicly announced by other proponents in the immediate area, e.g., the First Church of Christ, Scientist and Parcel 13 development proposals. Mr. Autler indicated that Berklee was requested to do so in a recent meeting for such studies as wind, shadow and urban design. Rep. Rushing asked that these requests be conveyed to Berklee in writing. Mr. Autler agreed to do so.

Ms. Ashbrook requested that summaries of the task force meetings be prepared and be posted on Berklee's task force website along with presentations. Mr. Whitney agreed to do so.

IMP Update David Grissino reviewed progress to date on responses to several aspects of the BRA's IMP Scoping Determination. Responding to a comment made by Mr. Grissino, Ms. Rideout indicated her view that not all Berklee student housing need be within immediate proximity of the Berklee academic buildings. Mr. Whitney and Mr. Grissino agreed, noting that while the two identified IMP projects that include student housing are proximate to the Massachusetts Avenue/Belvidere intersection, future student housing could be located within reasonable walking distance of the colleges academic buildings.

Preliminary Shadow Analysis Mr. Grissino reviewed a series of preliminary shadow analyses indicating the incremental shadow attributable to 1) buildings built to the as-of-right zoning on the sites of the three Berklee IMP projects, and 2) the proposed projects. Mr. Grissino described the above-referenced shadow effects for four times of the year at 9:00 AM, Noon and 3:00 PM and at 6:00 PM two times of the year. Generally, the identified shadow impacts are localized, resulting in some incremental shadows to the west in the mornings and to the east at certain times of year in the afternoon.

Rep. Walz inquired as to the effects of the December shadow at 3:00 PM. Mr. Grissino responded that some incremental shadows would be cast on roofs of existing structures up as far as Fairfield Street, but there were no new shadows on streets or sidewalks. Ms. Rideout inquired as to possible impacts on the 360 Newbury Street building (former Tower Records building). Mr. Grissino indicated that the analysis revealed no net new shadow on that building, particularly if the Parcel 13 project were to go forward.

Mr. Grissino indicated that the December shadow analysis revealed very limited impacts near the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue, with most new shadow falling on the auto ramps and inaccessible grass medians in that area. During a brief period on winter mornings, there are limited impacts on small sections of the Mass. Ave and Commonwealth Ave. sidewalks. Rep. Walz inquired as to the height reduction on the proposed Crossroads building that would need to occur to avoid the identified shadow impacts. Mr. Grissino replied that due to the very low sun angle during that time of year approximately 175 beds of student housing would need to be eliminated to effect that outcome.

Ms. Kressel inquired why the shadow analysis reflected the shadow impacts of both the as-of-right heights and the proposed projects. Mr. Grissino replied that the BRA has scoped Berklee to do so, and that, in doing so, it enables the demonstration of the net effect of the zoning relief it is seeking.

Traffic Circulation and Loading Mr. Gayley then explained that the 168 Massachusetts Avenue project's architecture will be discussed at a future meeting, but that the team wished to address specific comments raised at the prior task force meeting with respect to circulation and parking. He displayed a graphic cataloguing existing HP and metered parking, as well as loading zones. He then showed a graphic illustrating the ability of 35'-long trucks to move into and out of the proposed loading dock, provided that three metered spaces on the north side and one space on the south side of Belvidere Street between St. Cecilia Street and Massachusetts Avenue would need to be taken out of service.

Ms. Rideout asked if the metered spaces would need to be eliminated if trucks were to turn onto St. Cecilia Street and back into the loading dock and then to leave the site via St. Cecilia Street. Mr. Whitney replied that these trucks making such a maneuver might be traveling the wrong way on Belvidere Street for a short stretch. A discussion ensued concerning the problem of noise associated with early morning

deliveries (especially backing signals on trash trucks). Rep. Walz related her long experience of hearing from unhappy constituents concerning this issue. Mr. Whitney indicated that he would look into this question more closely with the college's physical plant staff.

Fr. Unni commented that Berklee has been very responsive in the past when such issues have arisen. He also indicated that St. Cecilia parish would ask that truck traffic not be directed onto St. Cecilia Street, and expressed a preference for locating the proposed loading dock on other than Belvidere Street (though he acknowledged that others might feel differently).

Mr. Flaherty indicated his feeling that a Institutional Master Plan should be completed before a specific project proposal is considered. Mr. Autler replied that the planning process in which the task force, the BRA and Berklee have participated has been ongoing over a period of four years. He also noted that concurrent consideration of IMP's and specific project proposals is not at all unusual.

Ms. Kressel expressed the concern that Berklee is proposing what it wants without due consideration of the community's desires. Rep. Walz replied that the task force and Berklee have been working together with the shared goal of creating additional student housing. While the task force has not yet taken a position on the proposed projects (particularly with respect to the proposed Crossroads project), Rep. Walz expressed her preference to be able to consider two projects that move the college closer to achieving the goal of creating 1,200 additional beds of student housing than to have only one project having much fewer beds under consideration.

Ms. Hunt noted that the college has consistently indicated its desire to create 1,200 additional beds, and that she felt Berklee's having a 1,600 bed inventory (vs. 800 today) would be a good outcome. Ms. Mainzer-Cohen also reflected that the task force previously urged David Hornfischer (Berklee's former SVP) to seek to acquire the 168 Massachusetts Avenue property to provide additional student housing. She also stressed the need for IMP's to be sufficiently flexible to enable institutions to respond to future opportunities.

Mr. Kreie indicated that, as a neighborhood resident, he would much prefer to see completion of a dormitory in 2013 instead of 2014. Ms. Ashbrook then inquired about the schedule for submission of the IMP and Expanded PNF. Mr. Whitney replied that Berklee hopes to file the IMP on or about February 1, 2011, and the Expanded PNF at the same time or shortly thereafter. He indicated that the college plans to circulate a draft IMP to the task force by mid-January, and that it would be his hope that the task force could discuss the draft at its January 24 meeting.

Mr. Laffer reminded Berklee of the presence of the proposed projects in the Groundwater Protection Overlay District, and the attendant requirements. Mr. Whitney responded that the college has been working with a civil engineer who was fully cognizant of these requirements and has considerable experience in this area.

Ms. Brilliant suggested that a summary of point of consensus be prepared following each meeting. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.