

## Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee  
February 3, 2021 12:00PM  
Held remotely via Zoom

*Committee members (in attendance noted by Y/N):*

John VanScoyoc, Chair	Y	Wendy Friedman	N	Tom Nally	Y
Rachna Balakrishna	Y	Joe Gaudino	N	Carlos Ridruejo	Y
Deborah Brown	Y	Wendy Machmuller	Y	Mark Zarrillo	Y

*Staff present:* Kara Brewton

*Guests included:* Carla Benka, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Fred Perry, Greer Hardwicke, Hugh Mattison, Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, Linda Olson Pehlke, Ryan Black

*Meeting materials provided ahead of time to the Board included:* Agenda, draft minutes for 12/30/2020 Public Participation Subcommittee & 1/20/2021 full committee meetings

*Information shared via Zoom during the meeting:* "Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee", 2/3/2021, K. Brewton

### **Approval of minutes**

The 12/30/2020 Public Participation Subcommittee meeting minutes were approved unanimously by the Subcommittee members at that time, by roll call vote (in favor: WM, RB).

The 1/20/2021 meeting minutes were then approved unanimously by roll call vote (in favor: JVS, RB, DB, WM, TN, CR, MZ).

### **Interim Summary of Property Owner & Business Interviews to Date (K. Brewton)**

Kara reviewed a timeline of both the community processes and recommendations that proceeded this Committee's work. She updated everyone on the individual business and property owner interviews that had been completed to date and planned, as well as the survey recently launched for all of those that live, work, play, or otherwise utilize the corridor. As an interim report on the individual interviews with businesses and non-residential property owners, she highlighted common themes that the Committee should particularly be aware of as they move forward in their work. These eight interviewees noted:

- Interest in outcome of this Committee's work, desire to continue participating in process, interested in change in the corridor
- Open to parking being provided off-street in public or privately owned areas

- Existing traffic conditions (pre-COVID) experience is bumper to bumper until dinner hours; concern about additional changes that would further increase traffic
- Don't see retail businesses as viable other than at Cypress or Washington/High corners
- Strongly support more residential use in the corridor
- Likely viable ground floor uses could include specialty services and classes (e.g., scuba shop, specialty electronics, specialty instrument making)

**Discussion and potential vote to include 10 Brookline Place and Brookline Housing Authority property at 22 High Street/ 4-24 Walnut Street as part of the Committee's study focus**

Kara Brewton then further detailed conversations with Bulfinch Group, owner of 10 Brookline Place and the Brookline Housing Authority with regards to the Walnut Street/Juniper property. Neither have immediate plans in the next 3-4 years. However, both are interested in having their properties be included as part of this Committee's focus.

The Bulfinch Group noted that they are interested in repositioning their property as lab and life science uses and completely redeveloping the property to improve building energy efficiency. They would like to hear from the Committee about pedestrian/ public realm ideas for the site, and would then develop some concept massing to present and discuss with the Committee.

The Brookline Housing Authority would like to redevelop the townhouse buildings that face Walnut and Juniper Streets through the federal RAD program, as they do not serve the senior population well (e.g., accessibility, on-site services) and are under-developed. They will likely renovate the 7-8 story Walnut Street family apartments that face High Street for 64 families. They are interested in hearing ideas from the community about some space available within the Walnut Street Apartment building. They also would like to work with residents, Parks about Juniper Playground and whether additional/ different public amenities are desired in this immediate neighborhood. Finally, they would like to hear the Committee's ideas on conceptual massing alternatives for most of site (likely keeping Walnut Street apartment building in place).

Committee members agreed that it made sense to include these properties, especially now that the Gateway East area is completed, zoning work at the Emerald Isle and 2 Brookline Place is complete; not including 10 Brookline Place would leave some "leftover" properties in the corridor. Mark Zarrillo pointed out that the Committee would know also be looking at the full intersection of Washington/High/Boylston. Deborah Brown suggested the Committee also consider whether there are other large property owners in the area that should also be invited to be included. Through comments and Q&A, community members suggested for example, the Brook House and the co-op property between the Brook House and Juniper Street. Additionally, Tom Nally updated everyone that the Economic Development Advisory Board this past Monday night established a lab use subcommittee, and so a good interface between the two groups would be important moving forward.

Following further discussion, the Committee VOTED to include 10 Brookline Place and the Brookline Housing Authority property at 22 High Street/ 4-24 Walnut Street as part of the Committee's study unanimously by roll call vote (in favor: JVS, RB, DB, WM, TN, CR, MZ).

**Presentation by Tom Nally and others, "Taking Visions to Reality"**

Chair VanScoyoc invited Tom Nally to speak about the process of the Gateway East area's transformation so that this Committee had a better understanding of what it takes to move from just a vision to real physical changes.

Tom Nally focused most of his presentation on the 2-4 Brookline Place (Children's Hospital) redevelopment. He noted that the process was circuitous and included different people and boards at different stages, but that the other sites the Committee are studying are nowhere near as complex as 2-4 Brookline Place. The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) started in 2002 with an office feasibility task force, which led to an established connection with Winn Development, property owner at that time. While he was initially interested in bio or life sciences labs, it was about in 2003 that Boston University began its planning for its Level Four lab at Albany Street (with regards to biohazards, Level One is like a high school chemistry lab and Level Four could deal with materials like Ebola). Following a couple times where either the zoning proposal for a Level 1 or 2 Biolab use was either pulled or failed at Town Meeting, it did pass in 2004 Town Meeting.

Then in 2006, the property was sold to Children's Hospital and was permitted as medical office by 2009 with most of the parking located underground. Following the economic downturn and further information about the cost of underground contamination removal that would have been required Children's Hospital worked with a study committee to renegotiate the development, which included above ground parking and significant public mitigation; this passed in June 2014 at town meeting. A special permit was granted in 2016, and construction is mostly complete today, with the exception of some interior tenant fit-out. Significant landscaping and funds were crucial towards the Gateway East pedestrian and bike improvements just completed last year. Linda Olson Pehlke added that a significant pedestrian easement including performance space was an important contribution to the community.

Committee members noted that:

- The public-private interface, sidewalk easements, and coordination was an important part of Brookline Place
- Interest in streamlining the redevelopment process so that commercial areas don't languish over a long period of time
- Would like to have a toolbox of community benefits beyond traditional traffic/ open space, especially benefits to income-restricted housing areas – such as employment programs, daycare availability for low-income residents, maintenance agreements of housing areas, etc.
- The scope of this Committee's work is much broader than a one site, one developer negotiation
- Additional outreach is needed to potential developers for this corridor, not just the current property owners or developers that are already familiar with this area

**Other business, if any**

John Van Scoyoc noted that in response to Committee members' requests, a doodle pool would be sent out soon to find a better regular meeting time for everyone, hopefully during the day, to meet every other week.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 pm.

\*\*

Additional summarized notes from the Q&A & Chat functions:

- Wendy Machmuller agreed with Matt Hyatt that the Committee was not looking to focus on any properties such as his that have frontage on Walnut Street, but go "through" to Boylston Street
- Link to the survey was shared
- Kara Brewton confirmed that Hugh Mattison's concept sketch of a pocket park on the north side of the Dunkin Donuts lot between Smythe & Cameron was presented as part of the Committee's very first meeting
- Kara Brewton shared with Ryan Black links to the Payment In Lieu of Taxes and other agreements with Children's Hospital at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/648/Two-Brookline-Place-Childrens-Hospital>