

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee and Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee

April 5, 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

Meeting materials included: agenda; draft public participation subcommittee minutes from 3/19/2021 and 3/22/2021 full committee minutes

Guests included: Elias Audy, Fred Perry, Mark Lewis, Matt Hyatt, Michael Alperin, Pam Bracken, Paul Hanna, Stephanie Cooper, Charles Osborne, Oliver Virta, Brian Kane, Anotnia Bellalta, and a phone call participant.

John VanScoyoc opened the meeting, noting that it was being held remotely on the Zoom platform due to COVID, and after checking that all participants' audio/video were working well, announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Review & Approve Minutes

By roll call vote, the Public Participation Subcommittee approved minutes from 3/19/2021 (in favor: RB, JVS, WM). The full Committee then by roll call vote approved minutes from 3/22/2021, noting that the appendix showing the summary slides of the survey results needed to be attached (in favor: RB, WM, DB, MZ, TN, CR, JVS).

Discussion and potential vote to endorse the acceptance of the Community Preservation Act

Kara Brewton opened this topic by asking Committee members as individuals to raise their hands if they were aware of the pending May 4th question that was on the ballot locally to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and whether they planned as individuals to vote to accept the CPA. Everybody raised their hand, and Kara noted this could be a helpful starting point for Deborah Brown's presentation.

Deborah Brown presented a summary of the Community Preservation Act, including how it would bring much needed funding for affordable housing projects. The Committee then VOTED

by roll call to support Question 2 on the May 4th ballot, related to acceptance of the Community Preservation Act (in favor: RB, WM, DB, MZ, TN, CR, JVS).

Public comment

Prior to moving forward on the next agenda item related to the Davis Path footbridge, John VanScoyoc asked whether anyone from the audience would like to make a comment, as more than a dozen were in attendance. Elias Audy noted that he would be in support of the footbridge being rebuilt near the Brookline Avenue park, as it would provide additional public safety for pedestrian travel. He added that he would also like to see a more open or connected extension of the pedestrian footbridge near his building [there is both a stairway down from Cypress Street towards Boylston Place and a suspended footpath around and connecting the two buildings at Cypress Street lofts, at 323 Boylston and 110 Cypress].

Discussion and potential vote to support rebuilding the Davis Path footbridge

John VanScoyoc noted that although details of anticipated COVID-recovery federal funding were not yet released, there might be a possibility that funding could be available for infrastructure projects such as rebuilding the Davis Path footbridge. In response to a question, he believed that the estimate for replacing the bridge was approximately \$15 Million. Mark Zarrillo noted that construction methods could include pre-fabrication for a reduced timeframe of impacts to the MBTA like the replacement of the Boston University (BU) bridge. Carlos Ridruejo added that Commissioner Gallentine recently updated the Advisory Committee on this, and the Town is now speaking with the same engineers as the BU bridge replacement; we may see lower, refined estimates in the future. Two Committee members noted that before voting, the Committee should consider what other ways funding could be spent (e.g., affordable housing); one Committee member would like to keep the funding request narrower/ more specific in scope. John asked that Committee members think about this topic further, and he would bring a potential motion back to a future full Committee meeting.

Update on property owner conversations

John VanScoyoc, Rachna Balakrishna, Wendy Machmuller, and Kara Brewton reviewed conversations with property owners and businesses:

- The U-Haul and Dunkin Donuts sites are owned by the corporations. Dunkin Donuts would like to see a drive-through, but that wasn't likely to be in align with the Committee's pedestrian-oriented vision. U-Haul would like to expand their operations, but would not be interested in adding other uses nor selling their site. U-Haul would like to see whether the median could be removed so that customers are not forced to make multiple turns within adjacent neighborhoods to access their property.
- Elias Audy (120 Cypress Street & 14 Boylston Place) & the Balafas family (131 Cypress Street & 361 Boylston Street) both expressed general interest in seeing changes to their property to accommodate Town needs/desires, including housing and retail or office space. In the case of

120 Cypress Street & 14 Boylston Place, Committee members still need to have a follow up interview with the owners of adjacent properties at 116 & 345 Boylston Street.

- NETA does not own their property, but was open to further brainstorming around partnering with existing businesses and art activities in Brookline Village.

Charles Osborne noted that the Committee should continue to be willing to approach U-Haul with ideas about a future property condition, which may for example include adjacent properties.

John VanScoyoc announced that the full Committee meeting was being adjourned, Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:35 pm.

** Please see next page for minutes of the Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee, held immediately after the full Committee meeting.

Minutes

Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee

April 5, 2021 12:30 PM

Held remotely via Zoom

Subcommittee members (in attendance noted by Y/N):

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

Staff present: Kara Brewton

Meeting materials included: “Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee Urban Design & Massing Subcommittee” (K. Brewton, 4-5-21)

Guests included: Charles Osborne

Kara Brewton opened this portion of the meeting, which immediately followed the full Committee meeting, still being recorded.

Kara presented a timeline that works backwards from when the Fall Town Meeting warrant articles closes, needing small group and neighborhood meetings in late May or June and post proposed zoning changes, if any, in late June. She showed an analysis of the Cameron Street residential neighborhood. By comparing tax mailing addresses with street addresses, about two-thirds of the residents are likely renters. Looking at properties that are not already under development, not condominiums, and parcel size, there are three properties that are more likely to see development pressure in the future. One is 14 Leverett Street, the other is the Valvoline and Dunkin’ Donuts site combined, and the third is the meditation center. Other properties in the corridor that she asked for Committee input on was whether the tire store and Midas shop combined and the Boston Electronics and adjacent property should be studied for redevelopment. Finally, she asked for input on whether the permitted 223 to 229 Boylston property was appropriate; reminding Committee members that if no action was taken, change would still likely happen in this corridor.

Kara then reviewed Carlos’ concept from last year that showed some redevelopment ideas west of Boylston Street Playground and the Old Lincoln School; she reminded Committee members that we had not yet done any conceptual study of height or 3D massing.

Tom Nally noted that the parking lot behind the Madris building was of particular interest since the current zoning was only an FAR of 0.5; he volunteered to study that site further.

Mark Zarrillo views the center part of the corridor as more residential in nature moving forward, including affordable housing. Each end of the corridor would likely be more commercial in

nature. Mark agreed to look at the existing zoning, and considering the area north of Boylston, whether he would propose any changes to get the result he envisions.

Deborah Brown reminded the Subcommittee that the Brookline Improvement Coalition owns a 16-unit building in the corridor, next door to a single family house.

Mark Zarrillo noted that he thought 223-229 Boylston came out well in the design process.

Deborah Brown wants to make sure that housing development is a priority in the corridor.

The Subcommittee agreed to meet again on April 26th at 1 pm, in lieu of a full Committee meeting.

Deborah Brown, Tom Nally, and John VanScoyoc may walk the corridor together; Kara asked to be looped in with the date so she could post it on the calendar.

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