

**Economic Development Advisory Board
Lab & Bio/Life Sciences Subcommittee
Minutes**

April 13, 2021

8:30-9:47 AM held remotely via Zoom

EDAB Board Lab Subcommittee members in attendance (noted by Y/N)

Cliff Brown	Y
Marilyn Newman	Y
Carol Levin	Y
Paul Saner	Y

Staff present: Kara Brewton, Meredith Mooney

Members of the Public included: John VanScoyoc, Carla Benka, Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, Manu Chopra and Hugh Mattison

Paul Saner opened the meeting remotely via Zoom due to COVID, ensured all members were able to participate with audio and video, and announced that the Zoom meeting would be recorded with the Zoom transcript feature enabled to facilitate the preparation of summary minutes.

Paul began the meeting stating that the objective was to take stock of where the sub-committee was at and to discuss where the group feels it should be headed. He opened the floor to comments from subcommittee members. Kara indicated that she had begun to record the meeting.

Cliff suggested that everyone should state where the group was along a path that might have been anticipated prior to the interview process beginning, suggesting a future focus on areas that had not yet been addressed that people thought should be addressed.

Marilyn offered that the group should first evaluate what we have heard and determine whether an initial threshold has been met to answer the question of whether there was sufficient information to suggest that Brookline could be attractive to developers and users of lab space. She suggested the group take some time to reflect on that 'gating' issue and that each individual should give their perspective on the question. Carol supported that approach.

Marilyn stated her major conclusions were 1. There is a current market opportunity for Brookline due to its location, 2. That there are probably a limited number of sites that could work for certain kinds of facilities, and 3. The opportunity is 'now' but she was unsure whether she had a firm view as to how long a window might be open. Her stated the gating question was answered affirmatively but was still unsure what market segments might be best served by Brookline. She felt we should hear from peer municipalities about the specific models that have worked for them. She also said the issue of Fossil Fuel Free buildings remains difficult for the lab/life science sector to fully comply with. She would like to explore building convertibility to allow for a transition as technology improves. Finally, she said that a little more input from the academic/institutional side would be of interest and relevant.

Carol agreed with everything Marilyn said. She stated the question is what market niche Brookline might appeal to and also said that it is easier to say what it isn't than what it is. She felt that speaking to Watertown and Lexington and some other nearby peers would be of interest but that we need to recognize that our situations may not be analogous to each other. Carol feels that Brookline needs to consider how to best 'interact' with activity in the Fenway/Allston area and that no clear link had been identified by either the brokers or developers that had met with the subcommittee.

Cliff said he did not have much to add but did say he wasn't sure how much time he wanted to spend with institutional users and also wondered whether some of the larger privately owned parcels in Town offered an opportunity if the Town could work with any of the organizations that owned the property.

Marilyn said she felt the group heard that most institutions had worked with private development partners and that most of those projects became taxable. Cited the difference between institutional demand as a driver versus institutions as an owner.

Paul agreed with everything that had been said and felt that the group had finished the 'fun' part of the investigation. Paul feels the group needs to make a decision about Chestnut Hill West as it has gotten the best feedback of any other area of town as a potential lab site (beyond the 10 Brookline Place site). He also indicated that he was not concerned about missing a current window and that the Town needs to think long term. Also felt it was important to meet with BU as a large owner in Town. He suggested meetings with Watertown and Somerville and that we should look at their zoning related to this use, possibly before meeting with them. Finally, he suggested we try to develop a strategy around the municipal rankings related to lab space to understand what Brookline needed to do to move up in those rankings.

Carol raised the issue of 'certainty' that the subcommittee heard from developers and asked what it was that Brookline could do to move as much into the 'certain columns' if we can't do as of right development.

Cliff asked why wouldn't the group recommend creating some sort of as of right zoning as a recommendation? It may never happen but why wouldn't we at least recommend it?

Marilyn said that she had begun to look at zoning codes and regulatory frameworks in other municipalities and said she hadn't seen anything as of right, indicating that beyond baseline zoning special permits were required in other jurisdictions.

Paul asked what our deliverable should be, particularly as Brookline is several years away from having any site with zoning necessary for a developer to go through the regulatory process.

Carol sees the final report being that 1. These are sites with potential, 2. Here are things that need to get done to enable the Town to enter into negotiations with someone, 3. Discuss potential tax revenue.

Paul asked for staff input. Kara would like to hold out lab as of right for the use. Any significant development would require special permits but would be intriguing to see about things like site plan review, guidelines from the health department. Get to a point where a developer knows what they will be asking relief for instead of wondering about the use itself. Paul said that a regulatory process on some basis would be needed.

John VanScoyoc-Feels as of right use is worth exploring. Feels we should do what we can to take advantage of opportunities to increase revenue base but also if it enhances environment for stakeholders in the area. Boylston corridor ripe for enhanced vitality, to bring in more activity. Thinks we should focus on sites where we

feel the use is actually feasible. Feels the opportunity is now and That this the time to have the conversation regarding 10 Brookline Place and we should have “regulations at the ready.”

Carla Benka. Question about Fossil Fuel Free warrant articles. If passed by TM, how does it impact our thinking? Kara said 25 doesn't impact the study group at all. With 26, will petitioners entertain broader lab exemptions proposed as a compromise. With pressure for more housing, how do you 'reserve' land/space for commercial versus housing?

Paul—At the lower Boylston study group there is no investigation beyond 10 BP for all commercial. Lot size and depth insufficient for lab along the corridor. No thought being given to U-Haul and Audi sites. For chestnut hill west, Town could do a PUD to create limits on housing. Or, focus on the underlying zoning which today may be Office only. On FFF, said the impact would depend on petitioner's willingness to engage/accept alternative language.

Carla asked about Old Lincoln for lab use. Paul conveyed that Tom McNally thinks the OLS combined with the U-Haul site could potentially work for lab. Carol would like to see it as an assembly with U-Haul and National Grid sites. First reaction of not deep enough may not be definitive. Wants to understand value to the town of old Lincoln parcel. On FFF, feels that it is a function of what the market is saying.

John VanScoyoc joined by phone and reiterated some of the comments he had made earlier. Not just a zoning question but also a question of will people be comfortable with the rules and regulations for the specific use.

Paul asked about future meetings. Also asked for a volunteer to outline the major sections of a report.

Carol said she thought previous discussions led to conclusion that a discussion with the Health Department and Dr. Jett made sense prior to talking to other municipalities as it might inform some of the questions to ask.

Paul would like to see what others have done in the regulatory area prior to discussions with Dr. Jett.

Marilyn offered to do research and see if she could find things for the group to read prior to meeting with Dr. Jett.

For May meetings, Paul raised BU and other municipalities. Suggested giving BU a shot and then Watertown/Somerville as fill-ins. Paul also asked about WS Development, arguing that if a report is to be published in September with a focus on Chestnut Hill West and that EDAB has an interest in cultivating a relationship then his instincts were that a meeting was necessary. Carol felt that as a courtesy we should meet with WS and hear their issues and ideas regarding land use.

Kara Brewton suggested that bringing in community input would be important and suggested meeting with Town Meeting members from Chestnut Hill. Paul Saner will touch base with Janice Kahn Comments discussed the timing and approach for accomplishing that. Question was raised as to the end use of the proposed report? To inform the CHW study group or something that stands alone? Paul suggested stand alone but a section that discusses possible issues that the group has learned to provide people with a flavor as to what to expect with a lab if one were to be in their neighborhood.

Carol volunteered to do a first brush of an outline, with Paul's assistance, by sometime in May.

Additional thoughts for the next meetings were discussed. Minutes from the last meeting were briefly reviewed and then approved.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:47 AM.