

Blessed Sacrament CAC
7/12/06
DRAFT Notes

CAC Members Present: Rafael Benzan, Clara Garcia, Fernando Mercedes, Damaris Pimentel, Michael Reiskind, Jennifer Spencer, Carmen Velazquez, Sylvia Villar, Excused: Ashley Cotton, BRA: Ines Soto, Heather Campisano, Jonathan Greeley, Elected Officials: Victor Shopov (Office of Rep. Sanchez)

Welcome and Introductions: Ines Soto (BRA) welcomed the group and explained the agenda. It is important to note that both Representative Sanchez and Councilor Tobin have indicated an interest in these proceedings and as ex-officio members of the CAC, they will be attending or sending a representative to the meetings.

Ines (BRA) then asked if anyone had any questions before proceeding with the agenda?

Michael Reiskind (CAC) asked about the possibility of holding a 2nd public meeting. There is a large amount of information that needs to be processed and a second meeting might help the community accomplish this. Ines (BRA) responded that this was a good question for Heather Campisano from the BRA. Article 80 calls for one public meeting.

Carmen Velazquez (CAC) asked if the scooping session was public. Ines (BRA) replied that yes, it was public but it occurs during the day and is focused on city staff. It will not be advertised but the CAC is invited to attend.

Article 80: Heather Campisano (BRA) introduced herself and indicated that she would be going through the BRA's Article 80 process. In response to Michael's earlier question, she replied that there should be a specific reason to hold a 2nd public meeting. The public comment period has already been extended from 30 to 45 days.

Michael (CAC) felt that a 2nd meeting would help the community and build consensus. Rafael Benzan (CAC) agreed with this. Jennifer Spencer (CAC) asked if this was going to happen. Heather (BRA) replied that she would certainly pass this information along to the developer but felt that it would be important to see how the 1st meeting went and go from there. Michael (CAC) commented that it was odd Article 80 did not have paired public meetings, especially given the summer schedule.

Heather (BRA) asked if everyone had received the PNF. Everyone had.

Rafael (CAC) asked if there had been any response by the developers to the CAC's requests. He feels it is important to get responses to questions as quickly as possible.

Clara Garcia (CAC) stated that unanswered questions could hold up the process.

Heather (BRA) stated that there is no financial information in the ONF and that is normal. Michael (CAC) is looking for more financial information to help frame the discussion. This would seem like info important to the CAC.

Heather (BRA) replied that she would expect the project to want to provide that information on the CAC.

Ines (BRA) felt that grouping different topics such as open space and parking would be a good way to organize CAC working sessions.

Rafael (CAC) would like to know where financial info comes from and would like information on affordable housing. Damaris (CAC) followed with a question about what it means to be low income. Can we get examples of affordability? Heather (BRA) replied that this is a good question for the developer.

Ines (BRA) suggested a chart of affordable units and where they are in the project. Also, affordability and housing will be discussed at the 7/17 meeting.

Heather (BRA) began to explain Article 80. It refers to projects exceeding 50,000 square feet. The first step for a developer is to file a PNF. Normally the comment period is 30 days but in this case it has been extended to 45. This is an expanded PNF so it has even greater detail. By doing this, they are hoping to waive the Draft Project Impact Review (steps 2 and 3 of the handout). This request is very typical of this type of project and specific size to file an expanded PNF. In this type of filing, issues such as traffic are addressed as the developer tried to be as thorough as possible.

Rafael (CAC) felt this was not a bad thing and that thus far, the developer has addressed a number of community concerns.

Heather (BRA) stated that the comment period is intended for the CAC, the public and city agencies all to review and comment on the project. The BRA looks at these comments and makes a decision on how to proceed.

Jennifer (CAC) asked if this meant that the public will ask questions and be able to see the responses.

Ines (BRA) stated that Boston Civic Design Commission would be reviewing the project in August. Heather also stated that there are some issues with Landmarks due to the demolition of the bunker and the heating plant.

Carmen (CAC) stated that concern that the process might shortchange the community comment and reaction.

Heather (BRA) stated that the developer would provide supplemental info to respond to all questions and the BRA reviews each response.

Jennifer (CAC) asked what BRA design review was.

Heather (BRA) replied that a project goes to the BRA Board who looks at the project.

Rafael (CAC) asked Heather about her perspective on affordability. Heather (BRA) replied that Boston has specific regulations on affordability and that it sits at almost 90% of Area Median Income. This project has a wide range of affordability.

Damaris Pimentel (CAC) asked about step 4, BRA design review and how this would affect the uncertain nature of the Cheverus. Also, with the parking spot issues and uses, does this fall under the purvey of this review? Heather (BRA) stated that this would go under the co-operation

agreement and the terms are legally binding. Ines (BRA) added that there is a new city department focused on ensuring that co-operation agreements are held up.

Michael (CAC) asked if design review is more architectural. Heather (BRA) replied that by that point, most of those issues have usually been resolved.

Michael (CAC) stated that Jamaica Plain has had issues in the past with Article 80 and that the agreement has been changed by the BRA design review. An example is 131 Green Street. What is the CAC recourse if this occurs? Damaris (CAC) added that this is a very important issue to the JP community.

Heather (BRA) acknowledged the point and felt that the CAC could set parameters and priorities for the process and get the developers to respond to those. Ines (BRA) stated that Michael Cannizzo from the BRA could be brought in to address those types of issues.

Michael (CAC) explained that the two trees near the Cheverus are examples of something an outsider might find unimportant and willing to remove during construction when in reality they are very important to the neighborhood streetscape. Heather (BRA) suggested he make those types of points clear to the developer.

Heather (BRA) also stated that the detail of the expanded PNF included detailed site plans, traffic studies and shadow issues.

Rafael (CAC) asked if the developers' experts would be on hand at the public meeting. Heather (BRA) replied that they would be bringing their experts to help clarify any issues.

Carmen (CAC) asked if the historical preservation issues and the Massachusetts Historical Commission are part of the Article 80 process. Heather (BRA) replied that they are separate bodies but developers will be working with them concurrently with the Article 80 process.

Heather (BRA) stated that the CAC will get copies of all comment letters and will see any and all developer responses.

Jennifer (CAC) asked about any issues that remain unresolved. Heather (BRA) replied that it depends on the project and the types of issues.

Michael (CAC) talked about the two zoning changes as well as the curb cut issues and changes to the zoning map. Is there any public process on that outside of Article 80?

Heather (BRA) replied that the zoning commission will hold a separate public meeting after the recommendations is approved by the BRA Board.

Michael (CAC) asked if the Cheverus will be determined later. He also asked about the transportation appendices. Heather (BRA) stated that they are very extensive reports summarized elsewhere in the document. Michael (CAC) would like to see those documents. He also expressed concern about the traffic situation on Creighton Street in relation to this project.

Rafael (CAC) felt it was extremely important to address those questions to the right person as quickly as possible.

Michael (CAC) commented on construction impacts and how workers are encouraged to use public transport. Will this really happen? Heather (BRA) stated that as part of Article 80, a construction management plan needs to be filed and it covers that issue.

Damaris (CAC) addressed parking concerns regarding projects in the neighborhood that negatively affect local businesses. Heather (BRA) stated that those are issues that should be addressed to BTB.

Carmen (CAC) added that this is a large project and there will be a lot of disruption to both businesses and residents.

Zoning: Ines (BRA) began to review the proposed zoning map amendment. It involved extending a neighborhood shopping district along Centre Street and multi-family residential zoning across Creighton Street onto the back of the site. The site is also in a Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD).

Michael (CAC) commented that JP zoning was updated on 1990 to bring it up to date, not as a planning tool.

Ines (BRA) stated that design review for the historical district makes sure projects fits the character of the neighborhood. Also, this site is going through a landmark designation and that has more stringent design review than the NDOD.

Damaris (CAC) stated that you cannot construct a building in the neighborhood larger than there is currently.

Ines (BRA) pointed out Table E108 in the multi-family residential zoning code. She explained the dimensional tables would not change. The developer is asking for a Map Amendment which will allow the proposed uses on the site.

Carmen (CAC) asked about variances. Ines (BRA) replied that there may be other variances needed even with a map amendment. The project team will approach the Zoning Board for a variance.

Ines briefly went through Article 55 --Neighborhood Shopping District table of uses on page 53 of the zoning code. Ines reminded the CAC that they will revisit Article 55 as they discuss the use for the Cheverus school.

Jennifer (CAC) suggested that all CAC members bring a list of their questions to the 7/17 meeting and schedule the maximum number of meetings throughout this process. Also, the meeting on Monday will be lengthened from 6pm to 8pm.

The agenda for the next weeks meeting: Understanding project financing and affordability. David West, DND Development Officer will be joining us next week for that discussion.

Everyone agreed to bring a laundry list of his or her issues to Monday's meeting.