

ZONING COMMISSION, CITY OF BOSTON

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Room 900, City Hall, Boston

Attendance

Commissioners

David Marr	
Building Trade Employers' Association	Present
Robert L. Fondren, Chairman	
Boston Society of Architects	Present
Jay Hurley	
Greater Boston Massachusetts Labor Council AFL/CIO	Absent
James C. Clark, Vice Chairman	
Mayor's Selection	Present
William Tarlow	
Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay	Present
Vacancy	
Mayor's Selection	
Ralph Cooper	
Franklin Field South Neighborhood Association	Present
M. Pat Tierney	
Greater Boston Real Estate Board	Present
Nelson Arroyo	
Mayor's Selection	Present
Jill Hatton	
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce	Present
Jane Brayton	
Neighborhood Association	Present

Staff

Rick Shaklik	
Deputy Director for Zoning/ Advisor to the Commission	Present
Jeffrey M. Hampton	
Secretary to the Commission	Present

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings conducted.

Chairman Fondren called the Business Meeting to order at 9:03 AM

There was discussion on the request from the Mayor's Office that the Commission hearings now be conducted in the evening, after business hours.

Some of the questions raised during the discussion included:

Does this apply to the ZBA?

Is it a mandatory change?

The time switch does not seem to be significant. If people cannot make a 9 AM meeting because of work, family issues, commute, there will be those who cannot make a 5 or 5:30 PM meeting because of the same issues.

There were opinions on the weight of verbal testimony versus written. Some Commissioners weighed a submitted letter or email equally as testifying before the Commission.

Points were raised that many projects that come before the Commission have gone through extensive community review - as shown in the public hearings where the BRA details how many community meetings were held prior to the project appearing before the Commission. Night meetings will not solve the problems raised by the community.

Opinions were also expressed that no matter what time of day the meeting occurs, there will be those searching for an administrative excuse against why and when a meeting is held. Whether it be notice, the day or time in which it takes place.

Chairman Fondren also spoke to the issue of limiting the time and scope of those who could testify. He stated that he was not trying to limit the public comment or process, but rather limit repetition of information already stated and repetitive representatives. He cited a recent hearing on a PDA where 3 or 4 members from one construction union got up and said the same thing. General discussion on limiting the time one could speak and one representative from a group when applicable. Again there was mention that the community process was already completed by the time the proposed project appears before the Commission.

Jay Walsh from the Mayor's Office addressed the Commission on the switch from day to night meetings. He stated that his office had been getting more requests recently on this issue and that there was not one item the sole catalyst for the change. The Commissioners brought up several points already discussed to Mr. Walsh.

The Commission asked if they would have the chance to respond to the community concerns as most of them represent community groups. The Commission was not sold on the reasoning to move the meetings to the evening and stated that they would like to see more information on the requests so that they can make a better decision on whether to move the meetings to the evening. There was also some discussion on doing both day and night meetings, but the question was asked on how to decide on the criteria for which meetings occur when.

Mr. Shaklik stated that the letter from the Mayor addressed to the Commission asked that the meeting concerning the Boston College Institutional Master Plan be a night meeting. The Commissioners stated that they had no problem with this request. It was agreed the Commission's next meeting was to be held on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, beginning at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Fondren adjourned the meeting at 10:23 AM

Secretary