



Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee Meeting
Monday, February 3, 2020
6:00 PM to 7:45pm
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, 2300 Washington St, Roxbury

Attendees

RSMPOC Members: Valeda Britton, Dorothea Jones, Nefertiti Lawrence, Marisa Luse, Charlotte Nelson, Norman Stembridge, Lorraine Payne Wheeler, Frederick Fairfield

Not in Attendance: Catherine Hardaway, Susan Sullivan, Frank Williams, Steven Godfrey, True-See Allah, City Councilor Kim Janey (Ex-Officio), Rep. Liz Miranda (Ex-Officio), Rep. Jon Santiago (Ex-Officio), Rep. Chynah Tyler (Ex-officio), State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (Ex-Officio)

BPDA Staff: Muge Undemir, Charlotte Ong, Devin Quirk, Morgan McDaniel, Dana Whiteside, Brian Golden

City Staff: Courtney Sharpe

Link to PowerPoint: <http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/799f01bc-e493-4a9f-8cb7-5f9a6483da69>

Opening

On February 3, 2020 Co-Chair Norman Stembridge of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee called the meeting to order. A moment of silence was observed for Chuck Turner and Clarence Jones. Stembridge then introduced Director Golden.

Brief Overview

Brian Golden, BPDA Director, thanked the RSMPOC for their service and everyone present for their interest, time and labor in sharing their thoughts and being present at this meeting, and emphasized that the BPDA believes in a Boston that takes care of all its own and welcomes new populations, which is why the BPDA works with communities to try to get the best outcomes possible for all.

Brian Golden then noted that the meeting was not only to discuss the history of Parcel P3 but also to address the future of P3 and the importance of getting a development proposal that can move forward in a way that can be embraced by the neighborhood and for it to be developed soon to provide something good with for the neighborhood instead of having an empty parcel that provides no benefits. Brian Golden shared that the BPDA recognizes the Museum as the important cultural component of the original proposal and stated that the museum really animated the development proposal and was seen as a significant contribution by the community as well. The issue was that despite dedicating almost 12 years to the project, due to the complications with the development – a complicated economic situation, and

the complexities of the site itself – although the BPDA extended the designation 28 times, the developers were not able to move this project forward.

Brian Golden stated the BPDA's commitment to engage with the neighborhood over the next few months to listen to the community, identify and understand the community's aspirations and needs for the parcel and ensure that these are then embedded in the RFP so that everyone can see a development that all can be satisfied with. The tentative plan is to seek new proposals sometime mid-2020 with the hope that a development team (or teams) that is able to work with the complexities of the site and financing requirements will be identified though the proposed timeline can be altered with the community's input. The brief remarks ended with a short tribute to Chuck Turner and Clarence Jones.

Planning Update

Muge Undemir, BPDA Senior Planner, presented the planning update, which included an overview of the PLAN: Nubian Square process to date, including the latest workshops on October 21st 2019, November 18th 2019 and January 27th 2020. The next workshop will be held on February 24th regarding an RFP review for Crescent Parcel and Malcolm X & Putnam Parcel. The update also included an overview of the upcoming meetings and deadlines, with the proposals for Blair Lot and Nawn Factory due on February 19th 2020 and developer presentations to follow thereafter with more details to come, PLAN: Nubian Square Workshop on February 24th and the next RSMPOC meeting on March 2nd.

Development Update

Dana Whiteside, BPDA Deputy Director, presented a high-level overview of the past Parcel P3 timeline and what transpired during the disposition process. Attendees at the meeting received a handout (<http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/8e6dc85a-4541-4e9a-bfda-f6b998570635>) that Whiteside spoke about. This overview concluded with the statement that the BPDA is at the milestone now where the BPDA wishes to re-engage with the community to determine the best way to move forward on P3.

Morgan McDaniel, BPDA Real Estate and Community Development Office, provided an overview of the next steps and what the process would look like, the proposed timeline and how the community's input will be incorporated into the process as the BPDA works to issue a new RFP while ensuring a good process and new results for the community, drawing on the guidelines developed as part of PLAN: Nubian Square and using lessons learnt from the past P3 disposition process. The overview reiterated that the PLAN: Nubian Square development principles will be the basis moving forward. (<http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/799f01bc-e493-4a9f-8cb7-5f9a6483da69>) For instance, the development principle of development without displacement, which has been included in RFPs for other parcels within PLAN: Nubian Square, has also been included in RFPs for other public parcels elsewhere in the city, will be incorporated as a key principle for the new P3 project.

A draft timeline was presented, though it was noted that this was only a draft timeline and the process might take longer to ensure that the community is comfortable with the direction. The first step (February to March) will be for the BPDA to do due diligence internally, with discussions with stakeholders and abutters about their needs and to learn from the past process to set the project up for success by reconsidering requirements such as the movement of the sewer line, splitting up the site etc.,

exploring funding options for site preparation like environmental cleanup on site before development starts. The BPDA will evaluate these considerations before coming back to the community on the proposal.

April – May would be the first of several workshops and more workshops or meeting can be planned for as needed to ensure that the community is comfortable with the process. This could then be followed by approvals by the RSMPOC and BPDA in June with the release of the RFP in late June or early July, which would have an early October due date. This would then be followed by the Project Review Committee (PRC) nomination and selection in September – October, with the newly-formed PRC meeting and evaluating RFPs in October – December and developers giving presentations that are open to the public during this period as well as part of the evaluation process. The PRC would then recommend a proposal to the RSMPOC for approval before the approved proposal then goes to the BPDA Board for Tentative Designation and the PRC will then transition to become the IAG for development review.

Morgan McDaniel reiterated that this draft timeline presented was only a draft timeline and the process might take longer to ensure that the community is comfortable with the direction.

RSMPOC Comments

- A RSMPOC member commented that she was glad the BPDA presented on the history of the P3 project as the sewer line was big issue and the street grid was something that she was concerned about as there might be a need to make changes. On the point that the BPDA raised about splitting up the site, it could still be possible for the whole site to go to one developer and that developer can exercise the option to do it in phases and do it diligently rather than having multiple development teams. Having the project to be done in pieces would be easier for the developer too and have a higher chance of success. The question is the BPDA mentioned that the BPDA would consider doing some of the infrastructure work and whether this will be the case for all upcoming projects.
 - Morgan McDaniel (BPDA) clarified that the BPDA will not be doing work on the sewer line. The discussion is whether the developer will be allowed to move the sewer line running through the site or change the paper street grid.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) added that the parcel has complexities because the of paper streets that are connected to existing streets and the BPDA will take a close look at this parcel to determine that there are no obstacles to development so as to move the project forward successfully. It is a good question on whether the BPDA will take this approach to other parcels, though it is noted that none of the other public parcels have this level of complexities all in one site. The process will try to unravel as many of these issues beforehand as possible and try to solve as many of these complexities so the development team can have an easier process, which means that the parcel can then bring benefits to the community.

- Brian Golden (BPDA) added that the parcel is unusual and unique - first in terms of its size as it is several acres large, also there are paper streets on the site, as well as a sewer line that carries a third of the City's sewerage through it. This sewer line is massive and significant and needs to be handled carefully and there are very few other parcels that are like this out there so the BPDA needs to be sensitive and careful in what the BPDA allow developers to do as this site is more complex than other parcels that the BPDA has to deal with.
- A RSMPOC member commented that in terms of the PLAN: Nubian Square development principles, a key one is community benefits and that it would be good for the community at large and the RSMPOC to make sure that community benefits are considered in the project as this consideration is very important since there are people outside of the Roxbury community that are interested in what goes on in development here and we need to hear the Roxbury community primarily.
- A RSMPOC member asked what the plan is on moving forward with new developer and noted that while she is new to the RSMPOC but after hearing what has gone on, she wondered if the city will help out with part of the process so developer will not be in the same position especially regarding funding issues.
 - Dana Whiteside replied that yes, since this is a publicly-owned parcel, the City can look at ways to get access to public funding sources for things like affordable housing, as there are certain public funding sources that the BPDA and the City in general has access to, that can support infrastructure - eg. For the foundation, utilities, streetscape and pedestrian improvements. There are public funding sources that facilitate these things and the BPDA can look at ways to leverage those sources.
 - Morgan McDaniel (BPDA) added that one of the major funding hurdles was the question of moving the sewer line that is why the BPDA is relooking whether the BPDA wants to set severe restrictions on moving the sewer line.
- A RSMPOC member asked what will go into the RFP and whether the BPDA has examples of any other projects in the city that the BPDA has taken the path of encouraging developers to split the parcel up.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) responded that the BPDA does not really have this experience in its repertoire, closest thing is the Marine Industrial Park. For neighborhood projects, Parcel P3 is really the largest parcel that the BPDA owns. But the BPDA is thinking along the lines of setting this development up for success and to find ways to allow teams to move along as fast as possible which is why the BPDA is exploring the option of having a master developer with partners that can take on components, with the parcel being divided up to make it more feasible for developers. Dana Whiteside noted that there are examples around the country but not for the BPDA.
 - Brian Golden (BPDA) added that if we were to go back in time, the agency owned a lot of property during the time of urban renewal and back in those years of assembling parcels, the agency on multiple occasions would gather parcels and then designate

developers for different parcels but the BPDA does not do eminent domain anymore and most of those parcels that were owned of significant size have already been developed, with only P3 remaining as an example of a parcel of such a large size. While the BPDA does own significant square footage, like in the Marine Industrial Park or the Charlestown Navy Yard, which were developed over time, the BPDA has not often done a project this big in the past, so it is important to ensure that the project is feasible for big and small developers to handle. Brian Golden noted that there could be a developer out there who could handle the entire P3 site and the BPDA could test the market and see what happens.

- A RSMPOC member asked how the BPDA will ensure that community benefits are a key priority as there is no specific language in the RFP that articulates community benefits so developers will come up with their own ideas and whether the community has input on how that will look like and where this language will go.
 - Morgan McDaniel responded that the BPDA is looking for feedback on exactly this and to understand what the community priorities are for additional benefits, with the intention that this language will go into the RFP and the BPDA will be happy to work with the community on this.
- A RSMPOC member said that in order to learn from the past, they would like to see the extensions and understand why they were granted and what the extensions were granted for so that when the RSMPOC and the community are looking at this situation again, everyone can avoid making the same mistakes and be more thoroughly versed on what happened.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) responded that the BPDA will provide this information as an update to the document.
 - Brian Golden (BPDA) provided a quick explanation of the 28 extensions by explaining that the BPDA does issue extensions very frequently and there are a variety of reasons why developer needs more time to get the project moving, this is usually about financing though it could also be about engineering and logistics. In such situations, the assessment is that things could be moving well but the developer thinks that with some extra time they would be able to overcome the problems. On P3 specifically, a big part of why the BPDA wanted to keep the designation with the selected development team was because of the cultural component which was important to the community as well, and so the BPDA wanted to believe that the development team could get this project done but the problem is that this process went on for over a decade. The BPDA wrestled with this project because of how valued the cultural component was and also because some of the other aspects like affordable housing, retail etc. had the potential to generate significant economic vitality for neighborhood so the BPDA did not want to go back to the start. However, the truth was that the financing fell through again last fall, and even though the development team had tried and tried again, the collective understanding was that the BPDA could not just keep going down this road, especially considering that the empty parcel would not be doing anything for the community so

the decision was that the BPDA could not allow this particular approach to continue. But each time the BPDA extended the designation, there was a rationale, a belief that the development team really could get over the problems they faced.

- A RSMPOC member commented that if the large development was split up then sections could be financed on their own, which would make financing more likely to happen. However if say there is one developer who comes in and they have done such a large-scale project before, then a suggestion is that they should still split up in phases so the financing could work out. If the site is too big for one developer then it should be split up to make it more feasible but if one developer is able to take it on then they could have the option to have different sections.

Community Questions

- A community member said that the issue that the community has was on community benefit and how the project will ensure that there will be MWBE investors for the financing portion.
 - Morgan McDaniel (BPDA) replied that the community benefits of the project and the requirements that will be defined and included in the RFP will be discussed in April and May as part of the workshops and community input is needed and welcomed. Furthermore, all PLAN: Nubian Square RFPs have included a diversity and inclusion criterion so developers need to include MWBE at all phases of the development process including financing and will likewise be included in this RFP.
- A community member asked if there is an opportunity to have public meetings throughout this process videoed and recorded and uploaded to the City's YouTube channel so that community members can watch the entire proceedings and provide feedback.
 - Devin Quirk (BPDA) responded that the BPDA has recorded developer presentations previously and the BPDA can explore doing this again. As for recording public meetings, everyone present would need to agree to be recorded and this might also have an impact on the meeting as participants might feel less inclined to be candid and to have an open and comfortable discussion.
- A community member said that the community needs a more robust narrative of the designation process and to understand why the designation was extended 28 times to learn from the process.
 - Brian Golden (BPDA) responded that the BPDA could do that and to provide a quick response now, where the previous P3 development process all fell apart was after a prolonged period of identifying and seemingly securing financing, this financing arrangement fell apart with just a few days to go to the expiration of designation.
 - The community member followed up and said that there seems in this discussion to be several things that the city could do to make the project more workable and the community needs to have this list of considerations, including the BPDA's decision on the movement of the sewer line and the street grid and this should be decided on and reported back to the community before the RFP goes out.

- A community member asked if given the complexities of the development, whether the City could provide a state lawyer or point community members to legal resources that neighbors can consult with as homeowners and abutters on their rights.
 - Devin Quirk (BPDA) responded that the BPDA would be happy to answer questions wherever possible and could for instance direct community members to DND Legal department or the Boston Homeowners Center, depending on the legal issue at hand and will get community members to the right resources.
- A community member said that a key issue here is on sustainable, resilient and healthy development especially because there were two factories on that piece of land and it is a brownfield site and any new housing for the community needs to be built on healthy land especially since this new housing will be 66% affordable, so a critical question is what will be done to clean up land contamination and contaminated groundwater and this needs to be addressed since a healthy community is important and residents should not be sickened from living on Parcel P3.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) responded that this is one of the principles of PLAN: Nubian Square and one of the things that the BPDA is doing as an agency to support this development principle is to looking at funding sources to get the site cleaned up before the development teams respond to the RFP as the BPDA agrees that it is important that P3 is a clean site for development. Furthermore, it is required through State Law that this publicly-owned land is appropriate and suitable for housing.
- Another community member followed up and said that this issue of environmental contamination was crucial to the shift in Parcel P3. Furthermore, looking at all the publicly-owned land sites in PLAN: Nubian Square, many of these sites are likewise affected by such environmental contamination issues for instance there is contaminated soil at 135 Dudley Street that is now changing the scope and the nature of the development, causing it to get stuck at the BCDC. In the case of P3, there is an element of P3 that is contaminated and its connection to Whittier Choice and we should be aware that groundwater contamination is bleeding into the landfill. Also there are parts of the development and street design that need to be rebuilt for a future that is healthy and there is a requirement in all of this work that we start to address the needs of the community from a base level. Because the site was contaminated for a few decades, the nature, size and scope of contamination is something that needs to be dealt with and the community wants to facilitate that being done while not slowing down the process to the point where there is nothing happening without any integration into this community and the parcel is just sitting there.
- A community member commented why everyone keep using the word community when there is no definition of a community and that we have a false illusion that we have a black community and we will not strive to get one if everyone keeps using that word 'community'.
- A community member asked how did the BPDA determine that 66% will be for inclusionary housing especially knowing that inclusionary housing cannot be done without funding and

whether the RFP would have two different distinctions in it for a large project and another one for a few smaller projects if the large site will be split up into smaller parcels.

- Morgan McDaniel (BPDA) responded that 66% affordable housing is a development principle that came out from the PLAN: Nubian Square process as a way to ensure that there is affordable housing as part of the entire development process.
- The community member followed up and asked if the BPDA would bring resources to allow this development to happen.
- Morgan McDaniel (BPDA) responded that the BPDA will work with other City agencies and the state and the BPDA will leverage these funding sources to help move this development process forward.
- A community member asked what the definition of ‘people of color’ was and mentioned that there is a great model out there in Oakland CA with a group called Restore Oakland; it is a model that is not extractive and has restorative economic justification that works with project managers and contractors etc. that is truly collaborative and includes stakeholders in the process.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) responded that the attempt in using the term ‘people of color’ is to encompass a broad range of individuals be as inclusive as possible and that the BPDA would be keen to explore any good examples of bringing the community together.
 - The community member followed up and said that ‘people of color’ should mirror people who are already present.
- A community member asked if the Whittier Street building would be torn down since the previous development had proposed to tear it down.
 - Dana Whiteside (BPDA) responded that tearing down the Whittier Street building is not included in the RFP right now and this can be discussed in upcoming conversations with the community and that the Whittier Street building site has not been gutted out.
- A community member said that he wanted to give props to Barry Feldman for the development team’s persistence and wanted to share a little on how the past P3 development proposal was put together – Elma Lewis started the project on their own and was later partnered with Feldco. The community member then commented that 12 years for a development is a long time but 2 months is a short time and there should not be a rush to do this project and while it should not be delayed for long time but there should be a comprehensive plan. The community member then went on to address the issue of MWBE inclusion and how this could be done as it is a critical issue and brought up that Northeastern University should be on the hook for benefits they were supposed to provide such as an agreement for the University to buy 15%-20% from the community. For the upcoming P3 project, there needs to be a stronger MWBE component and the community and BPDA should explore options for businesses that can be started on the P3 site that also services the anchor institutions like Northeastern and include requirements that that these institutions have to spend their money in the community, representing a massive opportunity for the Roxbury community.

Norman Stembridge, Co-Chair of the RSMPOC closed the meeting and reminded everyone that the next workshop would be on February 24th 2020 to discuss the Crescent Parcel and Malcolm X & Putnam Parcels.

Meeting adjourned at 7.45pm.