



Meeting Notes
February 5, 2007
6:00pm-7: 45 PM
Dudley Public Library
65 Warren Street

RSMPOC Members Present: Darnell Williams, Norman Stembridge, Jose Alicea, Joe Cefalo, Daniel Richardson, Jorge Martinez, Charlotte Nelson, Donovan Walker, Reginald Jackson, Michael Miles, Dorothea Jones, Senator Dianne Wilkerson, City Councilor Chuck Turner; Excused: Marilyn Lynch, Public: 20 plus

Darnell Willaims (OC-Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed the OC and public. He also suggested that the OC re-schedule their OC catch-up meeting.

Urban Ring Presentation

Ned Codd (Executive Office of Transportation) and Jay Doyle (Earthtech) introduced themselves as consultants working on the Urban Ring project. Ned (EOT) stated that the project is currently in Phase II. The Urban Ring is a proposed circumferential transit line around the greater Boston area. It is intended to connect the spokes of the MBTA system. It was first proposed in the 1970's. Phase I of implementation would be buses, Phase II would be Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and connections to existing radial transit lines and Phase III would be light rail. The project has learned many BRT lessons from Washington Street and there are 25 other cities with BRT projects to study (existing or planned). The project is intended to deal with spatial mismatch issues and benefit the local and regional economy. Also, it could relieve downtown congestion.

Ned continued to outline the central goals of the project: transportation, environmental, land use, financial, and implementation. He added that anyone looking for further information should check out www.theurbanring.com.

Jay Doyle (Earthtech) outlined four Build Alternatives:

- 1.) Surface routing per 2004 DEIR
- 2.) Surface routing/increased bus-way or bus lane
- 3.) Tunnels in some sections (shorter)
- 4.) Tunnels in some sections (longer)

The overall goal is to improve access across the region. The presentation also included a graphic of a reconfigured Melnea Cass Boulevard with 2 bus-only lanes in the middle with two travels lanes in each direction. It would be similar to the Commonwealth Ave Green Line.

Darnell (OC) thanked Ned and Jay and recognized that there would be a number of questions. He pointed out Charlotte Nelson (OC) as the OC's liason to the project and asked for a meeting schedule to allow interested individuals to participate more. Then, he urged the OC to ask any broad questions.

Ned replied that the next meeting would be 2/26 and 3/14 (at the State Transportation Building).

Donovan Walker (OC) asked what the value of this project would be to Roxbury. For example, parking would not work on Melnea Cass. Reggie Jackson (OC) felt that it was unclear what would be happening to green space. Ned responded that the green space width would vary and would be shifted over. If you include the Harbor Trail, the overall size would be about the same. This shift would utilize the existing conservation easements. Jay added that despite the movement, there would be about the same amount of space.

Darnell (OC) reminded the group that the purpose of this meeting is to inform the OC of this process and its impact on their work.

Dan Richardson (OC) stated that his concern was similar to Donovan's because the OC is doing Roxbury-specific work. He would like to see a greater explanation of how this effort would affect this neighborhood.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) stated that the intent was to connect Boston and other neighborhoods but that she did not know enough about the project and there were still too many questions. Ned replied that a legislative briefing would be occurring soon.

Senator Wilkerson asked what the purpose was of the Urban Ring community briefings? Darnell (OC) responded that about two years ago the OC was briefed on the Urban Ring and Charlotte Nelson serves as the OC rep on this issue. She asked for the OC to receive an update on the process. There are also state and financial hurdles to this.

Ned stated that they consultants wanted to provide the OC with information and invite feedback. We appreciate your time and we are beginning to do this type of presentation in other communities.

Audience Member Bob Barry introduced himself as a member of Tommy's Rock asked what the fear of underground transit was. This project will cause traffic jams and should be put underground.

Donovan (OC) asked if this project was a done deal. Ned replied that it was not.

Jose Alicea (OC) felt it was a drawback that Boston did not have a ring and pointed out that Paris has one.

Michael Miles (OC) asked how the project would be funded. Ned replied that state and federal money would be needed.

Audience Member Ron Gibson identified himself as a member of the RNC and asked about the difference between a public meeting, a public hearing, and a public briefing. Ned replied that three large public meetings had been held in Chelsea, Cambridge and in Boston at the BWSC. There have been press releases to the Globe and Herald. Tonight's presentation is an example of a neighborhood briefing. Mr. Gibson followed up by asking

if there were other chances for public view. Ned replied that there were, and that there was a committee meeting monthly on this as well.

Darnell (OC) thanked the consultants for their time. He also added the need to reschedule the January planning session for the OC.

Transportation Modeling

Hugues Monestime (BRA) reminded the group that the OC asked the BRA to put a transportation study together for the RSMP area. An RFP has been issued. Darnell (OC) added that it was an expansion of the current study. Hugues (BRA) agreed and stated that an RFP was issued on 11/27/07 and called for proposals to be due on 1/3/07. There was one response, and it was from the consultants who had completed the earlier piece of the study. The BRA and BTM have reviewed the study, and it seems good. It will be a 9-month study period, with 3-4 months of data collection. Once the model is in place, it will be able to measure potential impact of projects on the Roxbury neighborhood.

Darnell (OC) stated that this would put the timetable for completion around October/November of 2007. John Dalzell (BRA) stated that there would be interim progress reports made by the consultant. Hugues (BRA) added that the first presentation would be in 4 months.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) asked about the study's scope. Hugues (BRA) replied that it was the Roxbury neighborhood encompassed by the RSMP. Senator Wilkerson asked for clarification. Hugues (BRA) responded that it was the entire Roxbury area included in the RSMP, including Jackson Square, Eggleston Square, Dudley, and MLK Boulevard. It will generate information pertinent to the neighborhood. The existing study focused on Downtown to LMA, as well as the South End and Chinatown.

Darnell (OC) stated that the full scope of the study is larger and that the Roxbury neighborhood is an extension of the original study.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) asked what the study entailed. Hugues (BRA) replied that the scope includes traffic impact throughout the study area as well as being able to make projections based on proposed projects.

John Dalzell (BRA) referred to a handout listing updated projects.

Hugues (BRA) introduced a revised timeline for Parcel P-3. He also introduced a new set of guidelines proposed by the PRC Co-chairs for members to follow. The timeline includes 3/8 – 3/28 as a public comment period. The group will be meeting at Central Boston Elder Services and hope to have a recommendation by 4/12/07.

Darnell (OC) asked Norman Stembridge (OC) to chair the meeting. Darnell (OC) then stated that there were two extensions on the re-submittal deadline for this parcel. The OC and PRC objected to both and he wanted the record to reflect this objection. We have had no voice in these decisions. We remain committed to this process but want it to be a transparent process.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) asked if the OC had asked the BRA for a recommendation. Norman (OC) replied that they had, but she could ask again if she liked.

Kairos Shen (BRA) stated that in both cases, a developer requested the extension. These requests were honored by the Director's Office and the Secretary's Office. The new deadline is 2/16. He stated that he had reviewed the revised schedule and expressed confidence in it. The executive offices of the BRA do have the power to make these types of decisions and the Planning Staff was not responsible for the last extension. Currently, the Acting Director has received no new requests.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) replied that this was not an answer. An extension is given because a developer calls? It is important for the public to view the OC as running the process. Is there a policy regarding extensions? This gets worse.

Darnell (OC) stated that he had requested a meeting of the OC Executive Committee with the BRA Director. Additionally, this issue was discussed for an hour last meeting.

Kairos (BRA) stated that this was an extension of the re-submittal process, not the entire RFP. Senator Wilkerson (OC) replied that this was beside the point and the process has never been like this. The OC has to explain this to the public.

Councilor Turner (OC) stated that he assumed the developers could not change major components of the project? Kairos (BRA) stated that the BRA was looking for clarification of material presented in the original proposal. Councilor Turner (OC) suggested that a developer may want to change 1200 beds to something else. Can they change the proposal? The OC needs to discuss this, not just the PRC, especially if the BRA changes the process.

Michael Miles (OC) stated that the BRA staff present has indicated that it did not weigh in on this decision. Here is not the right place. Darnell (OC) agreed that was a good point.

Councilor Turner (OC) understood but we need to discuss how a developer could interpret this extension. This will be important if a developer comes in with a new proposal.

Jose (OC) asked if he would reassume his PRC position now that he had returned? If so, he pledged to get up to speed on the process. Darnell (OC) replied that we would figure this out.

Reggie Jackson (OC) felt that the comments this evening could jeopardize our schedule. This is the 3rd or 4th time this has happened. For the review of the proposals, we assumed that we would receive the financials that would make the proposals much clearer. If there is a meeting with the BRA, the PRC Co-Chairs should be there.

Charlotte Nelson (OC) appreciated the PRC schedule. She then referred to page 4 of the meeting notes from 1/22/07, where Kairos stated that the BRA Director's Office exercised his authority. The Acting Director has now indicated his intention to keep this new schedule.

Dan (OC) stated that the real question is the PRC process. Chuck's point is "what is the process?" It is a new issue here.

Darnell (OC) stated that it is an issue regarding the re-submittals extension.

Jorge Martinez (OC) stated that he recalled that the developer could improve on his proposal if he choose to do so. The executive committee should discuss this.

Kairos (BRA) stated that the letter he sent to the developers said that in addition to meeting the lease requirements, the could enhance their proposals to better meet the use and design guidelines. He urged the committee to examine the letter sent.

Audience Member John Spears, an architect requested more information on the extension request to ensure that all proponents had equal footing going forward.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) asked for clarification, who should go to this meeting?

Michael (OC) stated that the meeting should address the BRA on the issues expressed here.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) felt that this was time sensitive and it should happen soon, especially given the Parcel P-3 timeline.

Darnell (OC) responded that he requested the meeting on 2/2/07. He wanted to push this and coordinate the date.

Joe Cefalo (OC) asked what would happen if the three respondents cannot meet the minimum lease. There is discussion on both sides of the table regarding whether the requirements were negotiable. This is a rock and a hard place and should be put to the director as well. If this does happen, what is the next step?

Charlotte (OC) asked what now? Where does this leave the schedule?

Darnell (OC) stated that the PRC would be meeting on 2/28/07, so there is some time. Hopefully, we can meet before 2/16 when the proposals are due.

Charlotte (OC) wanted the record to show that the OC took action on this.

Michael (OC) made a motion to accept the P-3 PRC revised schedule.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) questioned the need to vote on the schedule.

Darnell (OC) asked if there was any downside to voting on it. The OC then voted unanimously to approve the schedule.

Councilor Turner (OC) brought up the lease-fee sub-committee. He indicated that he had a written report to be presented. Darnell (OC) asked him to submit it to the OC and discuss it next meeting. Could he provide a 30-second summary? Time is an issue.

Jose (OC) asked about the possibility of drafting a letter from the OC to the BRA. Darnell (OC) replied yes.

Joe (OC) brought up Bob Terrel's list of requests from the BRA. Is it still on the March agenda?

Councilor Turner (OC) raised a point or inquiry regarding the RNC's definition of abutters. Has the OC received this? Kairos (OC) replied that they had not.

Donovan (OC) wanted a formal request to the RNC to present themselves as compliant with their own rules and guidelines, especially if the OC is acting on their requests.

Darnell (OC) asked for a consultant to work with the OC to help inform them of what is feasible and informs them on the development process. This needs to be discussed with the BRA and brought back to the OC.

Councilor Turner (OC) agreed and asked whether it would be a volunteer. Darnell (OC) responded that it should be a paid consultant.

Norman (OC) asked that the councilor's report be on the March Agenda.

Darnell (OC) suggested all letters to be reviewed get sent to OC members ahead of time. The RNC letter is a good example.

Donovan (OC) also wanted to reschedule the OC's internal meeting.

Audience Member Bruce Bickerstaff suggested that the OC discuss Parcel 25.

Senator Wilkerson (OC) felt that the MBTA was charging an excessive filing fee for Bartlett Yard.

Audience Member Joyce Stanley stated that there is a state law about transparency that should be followed in that case. Also, she suggested a microphone for future OC meetings.

Meeting Adjourned