



Building a Better Brookline

Meeting Minutes: January 9, 2017

Economic Development Advisory Board
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
617-730-2468

Robert Sperber, Founder Emeritus

Anne R. Meyers, Co-Chair
Paul Saner, Co-Chair
Cliff Brown
Derrick Choi
Alan Christ
Susan Houston
Kenneth Lewis
Carol Levin
Thomas Nally
Marilyn Newman
Alden Raine
Donald A. Warner

Attendees:

EDAB Members Present: Paul Saner, Ken Lewis, Tom Nally, Carol Levin, Marilyn Newman, Anne Meyers, Derrick Choi, Al Raine, Alan Christ, Susan Houston,
EDAB Members Absent: Cliff Brown, Don Warner
Economic Development Division: Kara Brewton, Andy Martineau, Evan Lehrer

HAB Members Present: Roger Blood, Steve Heiken, Karen Kepler, Alice Wong, Mike Jacobs

HAB Members Absent: Rita McNally and William Hardy
Community Planning Division: Joe Viola

Guests: The Fallon Companies: Joe Fallon
Robert Allen
Harry Wheeler (Architect)
Chestnut Hill Realty: Ed Zuker
Joe Geller

There were about 100 residents in attendance.

1. Call to Order

- EDAB Board Co-Chair Paul Saner opened the meeting at 7:01 PM.
- Highlighted why a joint meeting between EDAB and HAB was warranted for these mixed-use proposals, citing EDAB's responsibility to provide scrutiny to commercial development proposals, and HAB's to residential development proposals.
- Co-Chair Saner provided an overview of the Town's lengthy public process for major redevelopments like the proposals on the agenda providing many opportunities for public comment
- Shared that each developer would have twenty minutes to present their concepts followed by forty minutes of Q & A.

2. Presentation by The Fallon Companies re: 1200 Beacon St. Redevelopment Proposal

Presenters: Joe Fallon, Robert Allen, and Harry Wheeler (Architect)

Introduction

- The Fallon Companies made the case that the Holiday Inn at 1200 Beacon St. hasn't necessarily been a source of pride for the community for some time.
- They stated they see an opportunity at this site.
- Stated that their goal for their presentation was to share, "what could be," and that the current proposal is merely conceptual and that they were excited to engage the community throughout public process.
- Joe Fallon stated that there is an opportunity to expand the existing hotel in conjunction with new residential development and retail.
- Fallon shared that he believes the concept is appropriate both in scale and in use for the neighborhood.

Concept

- Harry Wheeler provided an overview of the existing mixed-use concept.
- Made clear that all ideas presented were very conceptual.
- Wheeler discussed existing site conditions, the development, and massing for the proposal.
- Discussed plan for below-grade parking with connection made via existing alleyway.
- Stated there is a disconnect between the existing structure and the public realm and that this proposal will seek to enhance the buildings' street presence and reconnect it to the community.
- Shared goals to bring amenities like an upgraded 8,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. event space back to the community.
- Stated the existing entrance location will not change with a wide buffer separating buildings.
- Shared plans to activate retail activity along Beacon St. with new curtain walled storefronts.
- Shared plans to extend existing 8' sidewalks to 12' to 14'.

EDAB/HAB Questions

- **Q.** *There has been discussion of public space improvements but amenities seem to be primarily shared between hotel and residential uses. What is the potential for further commitments to create more inclusive public amenities?*
- **A.** **This is all conceptual and eager to hear from the community about what amenities they would like that we could potentially include.**
- **Q.** *Can you define parking ratios? What is the denominator when calculating parking ratios?*
- **A.** **We think 250 combined parking spaces are achievable with a parking ratio of .4. Did not have an answer for the denominator, but will follow up.**
- **Q.** *Can you define the height of the proposed structure?*
- **A.** **The hotel portion is proposed 14 stories or 148 feet, and residential tower is proposed 10 stories or 100 feet.**
- **Q.** *What type of zoning relief will you be seeking? Can you accomplish this through a series of variances and special use permits, or will you seek a complete rezoning?*

- **A. Current zoning would not allow any of this proposal. Will seek a rezoning subject to approval by a 2/3 vote at November 2017 Town Meeting.**
- *Q. Have you considered turning the proposed courtyard around so that it faces the street? Seems like a good opportunity for public space.*
- **A. Interested in any ideas to enhance the community that will be viable.**

Public Questions/Comments

- *Q. How will this proposal benefit the community?*
- *Q. What is the breakdown of unit types and sizes for residential component?*
- *Q. What will the impact be on market values?*
- *Q. Have you considered the environmental impact of this proposal?*
- *Q. Have you assessed the traffic impact?*
- **A. We are sensitive to and understand all of these concerns. We are prepared for that discussion with the community and have to start somewhere to determine if there is an opportunity here by working with the Town.**
- *Q. Do you have any plans to develop professional space?*
- *Q. The existing driveway is completely unsafe, do you plan on changing that?*
- *Q. What type of retail do you anticipate attracting?*
- **A. We'd like to bring in retail that will complement the hotel space, which will include restaurants. Restaurants like to cluster so more than one would be desirable.**
- *Q. What is the density of bedrooms and how much will they cost to rent?*
- **A. Target market are millennials. Studios, 1 BR, and 2BR will be developed, but it is too early for cost analysis.**
- Comment: There is definitely an opportunity to do something with the Holiday Inn, but a shadow study is critical. It would be nice if parking could also accommodate the neighborhood.
- *Q. How many hotel rooms are there in the existing Holiday Inn and how many are you proposing?*
- **A. There are currently 225 rooms, we are seeking to add 170 for a total of 390 hotel rooms.**
- *Q. Is there enough demand to make a hotel successful at this site given the Homewood Suites and the hotel at Cleveland Circle about to come online?*
- **A. We believe the location will support a hotel and factored in existing hotels and those about to come online in proforma.**
- *Q. Are you looking for input from the community on something we'd all get behind or just comments on a proposal you've already decided on?*
- **A. If community does not agree with proposal we are open to public comment and opinion. If it doesn't work for the community it doesn't happen.**
- Comment: In an already congested area with good access to public transit there is an opportunity here to reduce parking requirements and perhaps attract people who don't own cars or drive to work
- *Q. What about this proposal is good for Brookline?*
- **A. The existing hotel simply won't last much longer. Seeking to develop a hotel that will bring desirable neighborhood amenities.**
- *Q. How many feet taller will the redeveloped hotel be than the existing hotel?*

- **A. 80 feet. The lower floors will have higher ceilings than the upper floors.**
- Comment: Three primary concerns: 1.) type of residential units will promote a transient population, 2.) tax revenue from residential not as significant as commercial, and 3.) quality of design- the Town desires a different typology than developments you've built in South Boston.
- Comment: It's clear that the existing building and Beacon Street frontage is tired. Options should be explored to anchor this corner, better define the space, and give it identity.
- **Q. How many additional parking spaces are you proposing?**
- **A. There are currently 138 parking spaces. This proposal shows 218 but we think we can get to 250.**
- Comment: The alley where you are proposing connection to parking is already challenging for 2-way traffic due to rubbish disposal happening in the alley for existing businesses. There should be consideration to widen the alley.
- **Q. Won't the residential proposal bring in students?**
- **A. Rents would likely be too high to attract a student population.**
- Comment: It should be noted that this section of Beacon St. is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building deserves some TLC and there are existing buildings of comparable height in the area. To gain public support I would consider less housing and less shadow in the back. Design review is critical.

3. Presentation by Chestnut Hill Realty re: Waldo/Durgin Garages Redevelopment *Presenters: Ed Zuker and Joe Geller*

Introduction

- Provided overview of Chestnut Hill Realty's history in Brookline.
- Gave analysis of existing conditions and noted existing structures are an eyesore.
- Stated that any proposals will capitalize on the potential for improvements to the streetscape.
- Cited the 2006 Town study of the Waldo Garage and discussed the buildings access issues as a result of no street frontage.
- Gave a synopsis of the process and conceptual development since engaging with direct residential abutters.
- Stated that they are looking forward to the public process and working with the committee to rezone the property.
- Shared that they have stepped back from filing a 40B after discussions with the Town to engage in this process.

Concept

- Stated that from a massing perspective it made sense to sit on Pleasant St.
- To provide neighbors with more greenspace and maintain parking ratios, seeking to develop below-grade parking structure.
- Shared that any concept or proposal will be considered based on results of a pro-forma and architecture that will support community needs with economic viability for the developer.

- Below grade parking will be in addition to parking above-grade for a total of 333 spaces and that creating a parking amenity for the Town will be a goal.
- Stated that the total number of units, floors, and massing is not clear at this time and will be determined by the outcome of the public process.
- Concept will include retail, fitness center and other amenities, a Boutique Hotel, residential units, development of greenspace and streetscape improvements, and shared parking.

EDAB/HAB Questions

- **Q.** *Circulation Access? What are the queuing distances off of Pleasant St?*
- **A.** **We are currently in the process of a traffic study. Initial impact analysis shows that queuing won't be an issue.**
- **Q.** *You've obviously done some pro-forma work and presented some massing schemes, so why no breakdown of number of units?*
- **A.** **Economics will determine the final numbers. We are seeking to create below-grade parking that is a significant additional cost of about \$60,000 per space.**
- **Q.** *Why is the proposed height that we saw in the Boston Globe necessary? I see similarities between this proposal and the Cleveland Circle Hotel development, so I don't believe that height is necessary to compensate for the affordability component of units given that there is only a 10% difference between what is mandated by 40B and minimum 15% affordability requirement of the town.*
- **A.** **The height you saw was a 40B proposal. We now will have more flexibility because the affordability component is less.**
- Comment: The concept you've shown us is dominated by parking and vehicular access. You should be giving thought to developing more open public space and less about accommodating vehicles.

Public Questions/Comments

- **Q.** *Have you conducted an analysis of what the demand is for more hotel rooms in Brookline?*
- **Q.** *Have you studied what the occupancy rates are for existing hotels?*
- Comment: I am disappointed with your presentation. I want to be excited about it, but I'm afraid there isn't much to get excited about because there isn't much to comment on. There is a lack of information.
- **Q.** *What thought have you given as to what this will bring to Coolidge Corner and to Brookline?*
- Comment: It's clear what you are seeking to do. There is a history of Coolidge Corner residents battling down density, but density is coming to Coolidge Corner and people shouldn't fear it. Projects like this will bring in significant tax revenue. I want to see a public realm plan that values pedestrians and cyclists.
- Comment: I want to get excited but I can't. Someone mentioned working with the library. How can we think outside the box to develop a concept that adds value to the community while remaining lucrative enough for the developer?
- Comment: This concept appears to lack imagination and creativity. How is it that residential and hotel uses seem to be the only options that make projects like this viable?

- Comment: Brookline has a very committed citizenry. I am very concerned about bringing more renters into the neighborhood as I believe they are less likely to be invested in the Town than homeowners.
- Comment: I commute from the green line stop near this building and it is already so busy I often walk to a stop further down in Coolidge Corner. I am concerned that a development of this scale will make an already crowded public transit location untenable.

Conclusion

- Chairman of the Board of Selectman Neil Wishinsky thanked the two development teams for engaging the Town through the committee process for these proposals.
- Offered an overview of who will be sitting on the committees, the scope of their work, and tentative timelines.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:01 PM.