

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

April 25, 2022 10:00 AM

Held remotely via Zoom

Committee members (in attendance noted by Y/N):

John VanScoyoc, Chair	Y	Wendy Friedman	Y	Tom Nally	Y
Rachna Balakrishna	Y	Joe Gaudino	N	Carlos Ridruejo*	Y
Deborah Brown	Y	Wendy Machmuller	Y	Mark Zarrillo*	Y

**arrived late/left early*

Staff & consultants present: Kara Brewton

Meeting materials included: agenda, **letter from Deb Brown**

Guests included: Cammy Brothers, Perry Grossman, Paul Saner, Zoraida Fernandez, Kim Smith, Charles Homer, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Fred Perry

Kara Brewton opened the meeting, noting that it was being held remotely on the Zoom platform due to COVID, and after checking that all participants' audio/video were working well, and Kara announced that the meeting was being recorded.

John opened the meeting. This meeting will move us towards identifying the final form of our proposal. Today, we need to consider some of the various ideas that have been presented and whether or not we need to take more time to develop this article or if it should proceed to Town Meeting this spring.

Should this continue to Spring Town Meeting?

- Deb Brown voiced that this should continue, otherwise there are many other topics that need to be addressed and this will never move forward. Deb Brown wrote a formal email and would like that included in the record.
- Tom Nally asked, if we decide to continue, do we have resources to address some of the questions raised? Kara said no. There are several amendments that the Moderator has deemed out of scope.
- Rachna agreed with Deborah to move forward, but asked Kara about what the lack of resources are? Kara voiced that a staff member in Economic Development has resigned. We need a dedicated staff person for this Warrant Article, which is somewhat lacking. Kara voiced that she has a list of what could be done well if we proceed with submitting for fall Town Meeting.
- Wendy Machmuller shared that she feels there's so much more materials that could be shared, but that it's hard not to feel overwhelmed by that. She noted that she feels the Committee did a great job of community outreach. If this is pulled for spring TM, what would be the detriments? Could we do a development moratorium in the interim?
- Wendy Friedman shared some comments. She agrees with Deborah, but instead thinks that we should pull the Warrant Article until the fall. We can incorporate feedback heard (especially around SW corner).

- Carlos Ridruejo voiced that the final combined reports are due in two days. We haven't discussed any existing proposed amendments and they have varying support from other Boards & Committees. The Committee Mission is also confusing when compared to our final product since the mission emphasizes so heavily housing. Hard to revamp the whole thing in the last few weeks when there was so much community outreach done over the last 1-2 years. Doesn't have clear opinion – clear we don't have 2/3 support at Town Meeting.
- Mark Zarillo feels that we're second guessing because we don't have answers to new questions. Now we're hearing from special interest groups. From his standpoint as a member of the Planning Board, he's seen this type of lobbying have a heavy impact. Rather than acquiesce to a vocal group, we're already discussed many of these issues. We could eliminate the parcels that clearly affect abutters, we could do clearer work on housing (incentives for housing), then come back at a later date and put forward suggestion on incentives for commercial development. In the meantime, we can gauge next Town Meeting. This needs to have a path forward, but understand we may need to change approach.
- Tom Nally agrees with Wendy F. and Mark. Agree that Madris needs more work, as well as the corner across the street. However, we've done all this work comprehensively, and so am reluctant to pull this apart. I'd prefer we withdraw article from consideration and proceed with all work comprehensively.
- Rachna Balakrishna agrees with Tom. It will always be hard to get everyone in agreement.
- Wendy Friedman is unclear why a two-step process would be beneficial. I don't think we should remove things in a piece meal fashion.
 - Mark Zarillo shared that we might have more luck moving with smaller pieces.
- Deborah Brown voiced skepticism about the ability to do the work with an extra few months.
- Wendy Machmuller is conflicted about whether to proceed or not. Thinks we should pull this for now. Agrees with others that this should be kept together and not be done piece meal.
- Tom Nally feels we need to pull this.
- Mark Zarillo noted that we're not changing any underlying zoning, we're simply changing the incentives via an overlay.
- John VanScoyoc reviewed whether this needs a 2/3 or majority vote. If it was only housing, we could do majority, but our legal counsel decided this needs a 2/3 vote. The second issue is deal-breakers and must-haves. There just may never be a 2/3 majority around these. Third, there are some suggestions on putting elements of the design guidelines into the zoning that we could do but maybe don't have time to do. Finally, is there a way to separate commercial and housing conversations? Housing only needs majority, but commercial will still need 2/3 vote. Is this ok, or does this mean that we'll basically only make improvements around housing? This is relevant to the Comprehensive Plan conversation.
 - Tom Nally asked clarifying questions around John's points about what needs 2/3 versus majority vote. Can we re-write it so that everything includes housing? Several Committee members voiced concern about this approach, and that we don't have time to make these changes.
 - Mark Zarillo noted that if we only go housing route, this doesn't disallow commercial. If we do only housing, we'd have to eliminate L district. Carlos and Mark went back and forth on this a bit. Concern remains that the housing section may pass, and the commercial incentives may never pass.
- Deborah Brown doesn't see that the mission is only housing. John responded to this and voice some issues with financial viability of commercial, whereas housing has backed up demand.
- Wendy Friedman asked Kara what the implications would be if this was/was not pulled? What would be the timeframe? Kara voiced that we've run out of time basically to proceed.

John notes that we need to decide today if this article is going forward.

Moved that we withdraw WA 15 from consideration at this time and, as soon as possible, with available resources, proceed with outstanding work so that the main positions are published by the end of June, with finality on work by end of November 2022 by roll call vote. Yes: WF, TN, WM, JVS; No: CR, DB, MZ, RB.

Kara voiced the reasons that the Planning Department feels this work should be pulled and submitted again for fall Town Meeting. These members changes their vote to yes on the previous motion: CR, RB, DB, MZ. **The motion passed.**

Next Steps

The Writing Subcommittee will still meet next Wednesday at 10am. Kara will send out a notification in NotifyMe about the Committee decision to pull the article.

Closing

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:26 am.