



## River Road Study Committee June 1, 2016

### MEETING NOTES

**Committee Members**  
Select Chair Ben Franco  
Dick Benka  
Alan Christ  
Chris Dempsey  
Steve Heikin  
Brian Hochleutner  
Yvette Johnson  
Ken Lewis  
Wendy Machmuller  
Hugh Mattison  
Tom Nally  
Marilyn Newman  
Mariah Nobrega  
Charles Osborne  
Linda Pehlke  
Bill Reyelt  
Daniel Weingart

*Committee Members Present:* Ben Franco, Dick Benka, Alan Christ, Ken Lewis, , Tom Nally, Mariah Nobrega, Linda Olson Pehlke, Bill Reyelt, Steve Heikin, Hugh Mattison,, Brian Hochleutner, Yvette Johnson, Charles Osborne

*Committee Members Absent:* Chris Dempsey, Marilyn Newman, Wendy Machmuller

*Committee Members Participating Remotely:* Daniel Weingart

*Staff:* Andy Martineau, Kara Brewton

*Guests:* *Claremont Development Team, Cambridge 7 Architects, Joe Geller and Several Members of the public.*

*Committee members met from 8:30 am to 10:15 am*

*Materials:* *agenda, draft minutes, Claremont Revised Massing Powerpoint, Andy Martineau Draft Zoning Powerpoint*

#### 1. Review and Approve Meeting Minutes

- The minutes from 5/18/16 were approved as amended.

#### 2. Presentation by Claremont of Revised Massing for 25 Washington Street Proposal

- Project Architect Marc Rogers provided an overview of the relationship between the sidewalk widths, face of the building and the proposed bike/ped improvements that are part of Gateway East.
- Joe Geller provided an overview of some of the proposed landscape and hardscape enhancements along the Washington Street, Brookline Ave and River Road noting that the narrower sidewalks along Washington Street leave some room for landscaping, but not to the same extend as River Road or Brookline Ave
- Joe noted that the proposed cycle track was proposed as part of Gateway
- Joe also noted that the development team has been discussing options for keeping River Road two ways, but narrowing it to 23' which creates more room for landscaping and wider sidewalks.
- Joe Geller noted that the cycle track proposed for Gateway East limits the amount of trees/landscaping that can fit on Washington Street.
- Project Architect, Gary Johnson provided an overview of the massing options his firm has been exploring following feedback from the Committee and the public

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with respect to where the taller massing of the building might go and different options for stepping the building down on different sides of the parcel.

- There are four options each of which shifts the taller massing of the building to a different part of the site.
- Marc Rogers provided an overview of the shadow impacts of the different hotel massing options as well as part of the shadow impacts of the massing the Committee has been modeling for the balance of the district.
- Gary Johnson provided an overview of the massing options without the landscaping from the perspective of a pedestrian walking under the Jamaica Way over pass from Boston, from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Brook House and from Rt. 9 traveling west to east.

### *Committee Questions/Comments:*

- It would be helpful if the shadow study differentiated the hotel specific shadows from the shadows created by the other existing buildings in the area.
- What is the height of the mechanical on the hotel?
- *Marc Rogers – The town restricts the height of mechanical equipment to 10’.*
- How can we make sure the mechanical is better screened here versus how the mechanical is screened on the new hotel at 111 Boylston Street?
- *Joe Geller – We intend to push the mechanical towards the center of the building and screen as best as possible. The issue with the mechanical at 111 Boylston Street is that the sky plane zoning did not allow for the mechanical penthouse to be in the center of the building so it had to be pushed towards Boylston Street.*
- How far up the neighboring buildings will the shadows go?
- *We do not have the exact floor level with us, but the studies show that the shadows do not fully cover the buildings across Brookline Ave.*
- If River Road is narrowed to create more park land/landscaped area, than the shadow impacts will also change slightly.
- Is the skin of the massing shown what Claremont is proposing?
- No – We are looking into options that match the character of the surrounding area and Brookline. The skin you see today was left blank intentionally.
- Is there a pool on the roof?
- *Marc Rogers – There is an indoor pool on the mid level of the building.*
- The view of the building from the west is perhaps more important than the view from the east as there is less green and landscaping in that area.

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- The view from the east will be more filtered because of the landscaping being installed as part of the Emerald Necklace Crossing project and the additional landscaping we are proposing. There is less of a filter on the West side.
- Do each of these massing options work with respect to the shared ramp access we have been exploring for the neighboring site?
- *Gary Johnson – Yes.*
- Could you pull more of the building in at the corner of Washington Street and River Road where there is a pinch point and narrower sidewalk? It may require a column, but might actually work well.
- *Gary Johnson- We could look into that option to see if it is viable. –It may allow for some covered sidewalk seating.*
- Have you looked at how the views to the LMA and BU are impacted by your proposal?
- *Marc Rogers - We have looked at it. It is hard to illustrate and we do not have slides showing that with us today.*
- Are the massing images accurate? 1 Brookline Place appears to be the same height as the hotel.
- *Gary Johnson – The massing images are accurate. 1 Brookline Place is closer to the street and closer to the vantage point in the slide you are referring to.*
- Option 2 is my preferred option. I have concerns about the sidewalk widths/set backs on Washington St.
- All of the massing options shown are good and have their advantages; the real decision is where the taller massing goes.
- Could there be even taller massing on the Brookline Ave corner?
- Gary Johnson - We have not considered going higher, but could look at that as an option. It may impact some of the internal circulation of the hotel.
- *Elias Patoucheas – The thing about each of these massing options is that we are able to maintain two levels of parking and the building program and the shared ramp access. Shifting even more of the massing to be taller on one part of the building may not be possible without impacting the parking and internal circulation. Very tall narrow footprint would be extremely inefficient, given that each floor needs multiple access routes, stairs, elevators, etc. regardless of how many rooms fit on each floor.*
- The architecture subcommittee can review the pros and cons of the massing options.

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#### **3. Review and Discussion of Draft Zoning:**

- Andy Martineau provided an overview of the mechanics of the draft zoning, including uses, criteria, and triggers for the overlay.
- Andy stated that 12K SF was selected as a minimum lot size based on the size of combining the vet and auto repair parcels just north of the hotel. The Committee's desires to incentivize parcel aggregation.
- Andy emphasized that this is a first draft and an attempt to put many of the ideas and zoning concepts the Committee has been exploring on paper and that they will need further refinement.
- Andy stated that the issue of parking is one important area that the Committee has not reached a consensus on how to regulate and that the group will need to review the zoning and make decisions on parking requirements.
- Andy noted that one of the challenges in moving away from FAR as a measure of scale is that the Committee has discussed using FAR as a means of regulating how much parking is built.
- Andy stated that regardless of whether parking is counted in the FAR, that the massing envelope that the Committee has been using does not change as the massing has always included structured parking.

#### Committee Comments/Questions:

- The Committee may want to think about separating some of the zoning changes into separate articles so it is clearer at Town Meeting with respect to what is being changed and what is being proposed. It also seems like some of these changes (like allowing hotels in the industrial district and adding new uses like age restricted housing and micro units) should be done anyway.
- There should be no parking maximum for the district.
- There should be no minimum parking requirements for the district. We have already heard from Pam and others that Developers do not want to build more parking than they need to.
- I am wary of having a cap on FAR for the district and parking as it sets up a first come first served situation and makes regulating subsequent development difficult, i.e. how much of the district cap should be allocated to the next development, etc.
- If there are no parking requirements, there is a concern about spillover impacts into the neighborhoods if not enough parking is built.

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- Having parking minimums is something that is useful in residential districts where it effectively limits the size of buildings. Minimums may not be as important in this district because of its location.
- Parking is not an issue in the Village Way neighborhood because we have our own deck.
- It would be helpful to label the existing uses allowed under the overlay.
- 450 SF is too small for the live-work space. Co-working space should be added and defined as another use.

#### Public Comments/Questions:

- I liked the massing presentation and was pleasantly surprised. I feel like there needs to be more process leading up to Town Meeting.
- What are the specific items that the public is able to comment on? I feel like there needs to be more education on how this Committee arrived at this point.
- We just took down the ugly pedestrian bridge. Putting a large massing on Washington Street feels like we are going backwards.
- Is there an example of where Claremont has built a hotel on a similar site?
- There needs to be some public education generally around zoning so there is some kind of shared language between the Committee and the public.