



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts
Department of Public Works
Engineering & Transportation Division

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September 23, 2020

Jesse Geller, Chair
Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445

Re: 445 Harvard Street

Dear Chairman Geller,

Per Chapter 317 of the Acts of 1974 the Transportation Board for the Town of Brookline is the local governing body which has authority to enact rules and regulations regarding the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians on the public way. However, as you are aware, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B Sections 20 – 23 and 760 CMR 56.02 supersedes our enabling legislation for not only permitting but also for creating and altering the Traffic Rules and Regulations for the Town's public ways. Therefore we are writing this letter to provide comments and recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals relative to the proposed 500 Harvard Street Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Application.

At the September 21, 2020 meeting of the Transportation Board, we reviewed the plans and peer review memorandums for the proposed 40B development at 500 Harvard Street with representatives from the proponent including Danny Danesh, Scott Thornton of Vanasse & Associates, and Jennifer Gilbert of Law Offices of Robert Allen. It is the Board's understanding that the project will entail the removal of the existing restaurant and parking lot and to construct in its place a new Mixed-Use Development with:

- 30 residential units, including 2 accessible units, with pedestrian access from Harvard Street,
- 6 onsite parking spaces, involving 5 spaces via stackers and 1 handicap-accessible space, in a ground level garage accessed via Kenwood Street,
- 30 onsite bike parking spaces
- First floor cafe/retail space with access from Harvard Street,
- A proposed 40 foot commercial loading zone on Harvard Street in the morning with parking meters the remainder of the time
- Closure of the existing curb cut on Harvard Street

The hearing included a discussion with the developer, their consultant, their attorney, staff, and neighborhood residents on the design elements of the building, the proposed commercial loading zone, the existing traffic congestion and impacts by the project, the appropriateness of the onsite parking ratio and its relation to area accommodations for alternative travel modes, planned and potential transportation demand management and travel mode choices by future residents, public parking supply and usage and how this project could impact it, and planned safety improvements by the 500 Harvard Street project.

In response to this discussion and our review of the plan and in recognition of the Town's sustainability goals and to increase mode share of non-personal motor vehicle travel, we offer the following comments and recommendations on this project that were unanimously adopted by the Transportation Board:

1. The Transportation Board is making no recommendation on the right amount of on-site parking except to recommend that there be onsite accessible parking spaces equal to the number of accessible units.
2. In recognition of the fact that the area provides easy access to non-personal motor vehicle modes of transportation including the MBTA Rte. 66 Bus, MBTA B & C light rail lines, and BlueBikes station, the Board supports the developer's plan, to the extent allowed by law, to unbundle the parking spaces from the residential leases rather than automatically include the space with the rental price of a residential unit. This is an increasingly common best-practice in parking-constrained neighborhoods like JFK Crossing. Priority for lease of onsite parking should be given to those with state issued handicap placard or plates.
3. Given the high dependence of this building on use of alternative travel modes, including ride share services such as Uber, Lyft, and The RIDE (the MBTA's paratransit service) over personally owned single occupant vehicle trips, the Transportation Board believes that the curbside space is better managed through a permanent 40 foot loading zone on Harvard Street and not limited to morning hours only as proposed by the petitioner. This will ensure that these services, along with other delivery services such as UPS, FedEx, or Amazon have a safe, designated space to pull out of the travel lane and out of the adjacent bike lane to stop and make their commercial or passenger loading activity. Therefore the Board recommends that
 - a. The area be posted LOADING ZONE/TOW AWAY ZONE and all signs and poles initially installed are paid for by the developer and meet Town of Brookline specifications
 - b. The developer be responsible for the full cost of materials and labor needed to accommodate the construction of the loading zone which must meet Town of Brookline specifications
 - c. Any changes in design must be approved by the Director of the Engineering & Transportation Division
 - d. The building owner be responsible for the removal of snow and ice in the loading zone so that it remains available for their tenant use
 - e. The use of the loading zone is available to any vehicle authorized by the Traffic Rules and regulations for the Town of Brookline and not the exclusive use of the tenants of 500 Harvard Street
4. Should the Zoning Board of Appeals decide to install the shared commercial loading zone/metered parking space on Harvard Street the Transportation Board recommends that:

- a. The area be posted COMMERCIAL LOADING ZONE/TOW AWAY ZONE 7AM TO 10AM and all signs, parking meters, and poles initially installed are paid for by the developer and meet Town of Brookline specifications
 - b. The developer be responsible for the full cost of materials and labor needed to accommodate the construction of the loading zone which must meet Town of Brookline specifications
 - c. The loading zone be normal metered parking during non-loading hours
 - d. Any changes in design must be approved by the Director of the Engineering & Transportation Division
 - e. The building owner be responsible for the removal of snow and ice in the loading zone so that it remains available for their tenant use
 - f. The use of the loading zone is available to any vehicle authorized by the Traffic Rules and regulations for the Town of Brookline and not the exclusive use of the tenants of 445 Harvard Street
5. The Board supports the Peer Review consultant's recommendation for the installation of a posted NO PARKING ANYTIME/TOW AWAY ZONE adjacent to the building on Kenwood Street from Harvard Street to the driveway curb cut. Including that:
 - a. All signs and poles initially installed are paid for by the developer and meet Town of Brookline specifications; and
 - b. The developer be responsible for the full cost of materials and labor needed to accommodate the construction of the loading zone which must meet Town of Brookline specifications
 6. The driveway entrance should not be depressed, but should be at the elevation of the sidewalk to minimize impacts to pedestrians.
 7. Transit screens (similar to <https://transitscreen.com/>) displaying real time information for MBTA buses, Greenline Trolleys, and other alternative modes of transportation should be installed in the onsite residential lobby for use by residents, visitors, and service people.
 8. Any onsite bike racks that are outside the building and meant for long-term storage should be covered to promote use by residents, visitors, staff, and service employees.
 9. Mitigation package should include:
 - a. the cost to design and construct ADA sidewalk ramps with a reduced curb radii and crosswalk pavement markings at the intersection of Harvard Street and Kenwood Street, meeting all Town of Brookline standards as determined by the Director of Engineering & Transportation.
 - b. The cost to purchase and install up to 4 bike racks on the public way for short-term use by retail customers and the general public, meeting all Town of Brookline standards as determined by the Director of Engineering & Transportation.
 - c. The cost to purchase and install Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) push buttons and count down timers to make the nearby traffic signal at Harvard Street and Verndale Street ADA compliant meeting all Town of Brookline standards as determined by the Director of Engineering & Transportation.
 - d. The cost to construct and restore the adjacent sidewalks on Harvard Street and Kenwood Street to Town of Brookline standards as determined by the Director of Engineering & Transportation

10. A comprehensive Parking & Transportation Demand Management (P&TDM) program that complies with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines for employees of the residential building and any tenant that occupies the cafe/retail space.
11. A Transportation Access Plan Agreement including traffic monitoring that complies with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines.
12. Installation of at least one EV Charger to be included in the garage in compliance with the Town's Transportation Access Guidelines, and an "EV Ready" installation for all other parking spaces not supported by an EV Charger.
13. We reserve the right to comment further in the process when this information is made available for review by the public.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed 500 Harvard Street Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Application. Because the proposal may change throughout this process the Transportation Board does reserve the right to provide comments further in the process when this information is made available for review by the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris A. Dempsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chris Dempsey, Chair
Brookline Transportation Board

Cc: Alison Steinfeld, Director – Planning & Community Development
Daniel Bennett, Building Commissioner