

Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group Meeting – Notes

Tuesday, July 24th, 2018

- Attendees:
 - Working Group: Peter Kroon, John DiGiovanni, Janet Si-Ming Lee, Mary Flynn, Sarah Rosenkrantz, Robyn Culbertson, Frank Kramer, Ken Taylor, Daniel Andrew Schofield-Bodt, Bertil Jean-Chronberg, Abhishek Syal, Abra Berkowitz
 - Staff: Iram Farooq, Kathy Watkins, Daniel Wolf
- Kathy Watkins: Updates
 - Presented at Cambridge Historical Commission hearing to bringing the Commission up to speed on the design approach; this was an informational session – not a formal submission
 - Will be holding an open house sometime around October to get feedback on Kiosk and Plaza design
 - Conducting initial discussions with the MBTA to work toward necessary permitting
 - Looking into options for a temporary location for visitor information during construction
- Discussion of feedback received on draft Working Group recommendations
 - After the City posted the draft Working Group recommendations, members of the public and Working Group members were invited to submit feedback. Those comments were organized into a single [document](#) for discussion at this meeting. Working Group members and members of the public participated in the discussion. The discussion was structured by reviewing one or more comments on the document at a time in sequential order and resolving how to respond to the comment through one of the following ways: incorporate changes more or less as suggested, incorporate changes with modifications, incorporate ideas in earlier “discussion” section of revised report, or omit. The following discussion is organized by comment number, designated below and in the feedback document as A1, A2, etc. In the “discussions” below, each bullet refers to one person’s comment.
 - Discussion:
 - Iram Farooq: we will include a broader discussion of some of the key topics that have been discussed in a discussion section of the report toward the beginning to provide more background for the future Advisory Committee.
 - How directive should the recommendations be?
 - Iram Farooq: they should be pretty clear but also include why we got to where we are.
 - A1: Incorporate
 - A2: Incorporate
 - A3: Can include wayfinding to nearest public bathrooms
 - A4: Opportunity for seasonal semi-permanent or “evergreen” displays or built-in fixtures – move beyond dichotomy between just permanent things and one-day things
 - A5: Incorporate
 - A6: Consider providing information directly in the Plaza in some form
 - A7: Incorporate
 - A8: Incorporate into discussion section

- A9: Incorporate
- Discussion:
 - Cambridge Office for Tourism: We'd participate in the RFI to provide input in RFI process.
 - There's an opportunity for historical tourism; consider incorporating statues, etc.
 - News should be an essential component of the place.
 - News could take a digital form.
 - Likes history concept, but today is history for someone in the future; it would be a shame not to act like Out of Town News is a legacy of this space.
 - Iram Farooq: We could embody news as part of the history of the space.
 - Thought there had been general consensus that it not be commercial; we don't need digital displays – need communal space.
 - A strong point in the draft recommendations was that it's possible to vend things that other papers don't have; the Chronicle, super local producers (Etsy-type), opportunities for unique retail that doesn't compete, niche newspapers.
 - How can this be self-sufficient?
 - Example: museum and gift shop is synergistic; similar kinds of opportunities may arise in RFI responses.
 - Newspapers are not a strong revenue source. Consider using digital flashes of news from around the world. Coop and other places sell news.
 - Museum metaphor is not adequate – too small a space
 - Operator can't do a hundred things; City can provide criteria and solicit entrepreneurial ideas for how to support it; competition between Kiosk activity and/or commerce and rest of the Square isn't necessarily bad
- A10: Incorporate into discussion section
- A11: Incorporate into discussion section
- A12: Incorporate into discussion section
- A13: Incorporate
- A14: Incorporate into discussion section
- A15: Incorporate into discussion section
- A16: Incorporate into discussion section
- A17: Omit
- A18: Incorporate into discussion section
- A19: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Kathy Watkins: taxi stand would remain with modifications
 - Request for second taxi space to be removed for additional Plaza space
- A20: Incorporate into discussion section
- A21: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Selling bricks of existing Plaza could be a fundraising tool
 - Kathy Watkins: we may spend as much on making that happen as we'd make in revenue
 - People could create their own news
 - Music and performance in Plaza is desired; consider "speaker's corner" idea

- Put multiple soap box elements in Plaza
- A22: Incorporate into discussion section
- A23: Incorporate into discussion section
- A24: Incorporate into discussion section
- A25 + A26: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Kathy Watkins: design team is looking at additional opportunities for green space; will be respectful of existing memorial tree, which may be adapted in a different location
- A27: Incorporate into discussion section
- A28: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Kathy Watkins: in conversation with Arts Commission about using 1% for Art funds on temporary and performance based art
 - What about when that funding is gone?
 - Kathy: the funds would help this kind of activity get off the ground; temporary art can be more cutting edge than permanent works
 - Lamps inside the Kiosk are nice and should be maintained
- A29 + A30: Incorporate into discussion section
 - Kathy Watkins: these relate to key aspects of the design
 - The visual element of news racks is worth considering retaining in some way on the exterior
 - Kathy: Working Group was clear that openness of the Kiosk envelope is important
- A31: Incorporate into discussion section
- A32: Incorporate into discussion section
- A33: Add after “uses”: “year-round, with a focus on news and information”
- A34: Kathy Watkins: City is raising these issues with the T
- A35: Incorporate into discussion section
- A36: Incorporate examples of information/events to highlight
- A37: Incorporate into discussion section
- A38: Incorporate examples of information to highlight
- A39: Incorporate into discussion section
- A40: Incorporate into discussion section
- Discussion:
 - All information presented should be done in an accessible way
 - Find It Cambridge is a precedent; we should provide information for everyone, with a focus on vulnerable populations
 - Can the City provide a social worker to provide these services onsite?
 - Iram Farooq: the operator or tourism function can provide the information available at the Kiosk at all times; the operator would partner with City entities or nonprofits for actual services (happening occasionally)
 - Consider stating, for instance, that 20% of the time, there would need to be a social service provided, and 10% of the time, youth programming, etc.
 - We must actively invite people to submit proposals to become the operator

- Iram Farooq: we could decide to include minimum or maximum of types of activity and include that in the RFI, producing feedback which would inform the RFP; we could propose numbers on minimums and maximums on certain activities
- A41: Incorporate into discussion section
- A42: Incorporate
- A43: Incorporate
- A44: Incorporate
- A45: Incorporate into discussion section
- A46: Discussion:
 - Iram Farooq: you can imagine a spectrum between the Kiosk featuring lots of events and a calmer, not over-programmed Kiosk
 - Daniel Wolf: to some extent, feasibility will impact what programming intensity level is possible
 - Tourism, history, and news are key; 10 activities per week is too much and prescriptive
 - Voter registration happens here already; free eye exams already happen, but if the Kiosk was available for such an activity on a rainy day, that would be helpful – this would allow for existing activities to happen more easily
- Discussion:
 - We shouldn't call them "events" in the Kiosk
 - We should keep the Kiosk a flexible space; we can't totally predict future needs today
 - Keep the Kiosk as simple as possible; the RFI shouldn't be too prescriptive; as little built into the Kiosk as possible; few dedicated people in the Kiosk to make room for tourists and other activities; public, not commercial
 - Make it inclusive and open with seating; don't program homeless people out of it
 - Keeping the Kiosk open and simple is the best move
 - The operator should be skilled in working with diverse communities and communicating with all different kinds of people
 - Boston information booth looks like a schlocky gift shop now; the Kiosk is a small space, so leave it as open as possible; let it be; even keep the tourism function simple; don't need as much print material as in the past
 - Where does revenue come from?
 - Kiosk shouldn't have commercial activity; just promotions of local businesses; should be subsidized; entities could pay for the opportunity to display their wares