

## **Pedestrian Committee Meeting**

### **February 24, 2022**

#### **Minutes**

Staff and Committee Members: Evan Killion (CDD), Amina Dadou (CDD), Cara Seiderman (CDD), Sarah Scott (CDD), Jeff Roberts (CDD), Erik Thorkildsen (CDD), Ray Hayhurst, Robin Bonner, Jeannine Powers, Debby Galef, Brooke Williams, Jenny Turner-Trauring, Elizabeth Paden

Visitors: Marlees West, Ann Tennis, Mary Flynn, Ann Stewart, Lynn McEnaney, Peggy Kutcher, Mallorie Barber, Esther Hanig, Mike Nakagawa, Richard Monagle, Danica Mari, Marc Levy, Jeff Amero, Karen Cushing, Thomas Shaw, James Zall, Daryl Gates

1. Introductions
2. Minutes from last month - approved
3. Zoning 101: A Primer on the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance – Sarah Scott & Jeff Roberts
  - a. Zoning Basics
    - i. Discussed the basics of zoning, what's included within its purview and what's not.
    - ii. How zoning can be conveyed through both ordinances and maps
    - iii. Discussed zoning districts, overlay districts, planned unit development districts
    - iv. Discussed the allowed uses permitted by zoning, development controls
    - v. Described when and how transportation impact studies (TIS) are used
    - vi. Question from an attendee: When is the TIS conducted?: Before the planning board hearing
  - b. Development Project Review
    - i. Discussed the usage of 'as of right,' discretionary approvals, the purpose of the planning board, the board of zoning appeals and the various overlay zoning advisory committees
    - ii. Discussed the types of special permits and the aspects they review
    - iii. Discussed the holistic approach of the process to align projects toward citywide urban design objectives
  - c. Planning Board Process
    - i. How the process simultaneously uses community engagement and informal consultation with city staff, then to the public hearing and planning board action
    - ii. Discussed zoning amendments and the role of committees in this whole process
  - d. Questions:
    - i. Can bike lane infrastructure be a part of zoning or special permit approvals?: The planning board looks at how a development proposal lines up with the City's long term plans and ensures that developers are aware and can incorporate these plans in proposals.

- ii. Does CDD submit memos on every development seeking a SP? What are the conditions that trigger a memo to the PB?: Yes, it can be useful to highlight what things come up often, what things change, etc. and it is useful to provide information to the public prior to a planning board hearing.
- iii. Special Permit Zoning is often written to have less restrictive limits to allow flexibility to trade-off design elements for a site. If a special permit is designed to be approved, how is a project prevented from taking the minimal route on all requirements, instead of doing less in one area in exchange for more in other?: The special permit process is designed for a site-specific review, not just a set of minimum requirements but a holistic program of objectives that should be strived for.
- iv. Who's on the planning board?: Planning Board: 9 appointed members; BZA: 5 member board (on a rotational basis)
- v. Are the associate members on these boards also voting?: Yes
- vi. What kind of backgrounds do these members have typically?: A mix, some involvement in development or construction, some architects, design professionals, law background, etc.
- vii. If something is a guidance and not codified in zoning, does the planning board have to follow these requirements (like in overlay districts)?: From a zoning standpoint, there are requirements that must be met. Judgements above this are made from a holistic manner to help achieve city goals on a site-specific basis.

#### 4. Review of Alewife One Development

- a. A brief review of the graphics and details of the site
- b. Discussion:
  - i. Map doesn't address commuters coming from the north.
  - ii. Does building 5 have no sidewalk on the north side of the road?
  - iii. Does all traffic come from Whittmore?: No, there is an entrance from Alewife Brook Parkway
  - iv. Concerns regarding construction impacts on neighborhood and linear path
  - v. Question regarding soil contamination and disturbance. They have been working with DPW to mitigate this big concern
  - vi. The traffic report mentions poor quality pedestrian crossings in the area, is there a plan to improve this?: Through the TIS you can suggest further improvements beyond what's already listed
  - vii. Are the parking lots part of the project? Will they be improved regarding pedestrian access? Some planting of trees, recommended in the memo, but no further proposals
  - viii. Is there a possibility to use the parking for something else, especially since the site is currently surpassing the parking minimum?: Not for now (but could be in the future)
  - ix. Can the material be permeable if they are repaving?: It's a possibility but there are contamination concerns in the soil underneath

- x. Can permeable paving be plowed?: Yes
- xi. Will there be an increase to transit station usage?: Yes
- xii. Raised concerns for the multimodal intersection at the southwest corner of the football field.
  - 1. Can Harvey St be used to alleviate pressure, is it open to the public?: Yes it is open. The gate is just for vehicular traffic.
  - 2. Could a bicycle roundabout around the garden help this intersection?
  - 3. Point that more path could be more pavement – what about options like boardwalks or permeable pavement
  - 4. Intersection visibility could be improved, perhaps by relocating proposed community garden
  - 5. Will walking through the campus feel safe? Lighting, enough people? Don't want to be pushed onto an out-of-the-way lightly used path, it feels safer to be where more people are. (specifically do not want to be directed to the path from the headhouse to the development).

c. Formal Memo Comments

- i. We had concerns regarding connectivity for commuters from coming from the North (Arlington, etc.) down Massachusetts Ave to the site.
- ii. We would like to see possible improvements to the parking lots, perhaps in the form of increased pedestrian crossings, permeable or high albedo surfacing and increased tree cover to mitigate heat effects.
- iii. We had concerns regarding the impacts of construction to surrounding neighborhoods and the linear park, especially with issues of the soil being disturbed and the possible closure of the paths during construction.
- iv. We had concerns regarding increased usage of linear park paths, particularly at the intersection at the southwest corner of the football field, near Jerry's Pond. We hope for further improvements of these locations through means such as lighting, increased visibility, etc.
- v. We had concerns regarding expected usage of paths on the site and raised concerns of the increased number of paths decreasing the density of usage on some paths, leading to a lack of 'eyes on the street'