
CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Boston College Neighborhood Council

MEETING NOTES

Date: January 18, 2012

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development

Members

Ald. Lisle Baker
Ald. Marcia Johnson
Stephen Bart
Gloria Gavis
Thomas Keady
Candace Havens

Council Members Present: Alderman Lisle Baker, Ward 7; Gloria Gavis, President of the Chestnut Hill Association; Candace Havens, Director of Planning and Development; Tom Keady, VP Governmental & Community Affairs

BC Representatives: Jeanne Levesque, Director of Government Relation; Father Jack Butler, VP for University Mission and Ministry; Bill Tibbs, Director of Capital Planning & Engineering; Tom McGuinness, Associate Vice President; Counseling Services

Others present: Alderman Ruthanne Fuller and neighbors (see sign-in sheet)

1. Reuse of Flynn House, 66 Lee Road

College administrators presented for discussion the University's proposal to convert an existing single-family residence on the corner of Lawrence Avenue and Lee Road into a support house for up to nine undergraduate students who have received treatment and are currently in recovery for primarily alcohol or substance abuse issues. The program would be supervised by a resident graduate student counselor. The University recognized that alcohol consumption is a concern on college campuses, generally, and causes problems for some students. This location would provide recovering students a supportive environment near campus where they can pursue their education and sobriety, which would be more difficult to provide in a dorm setting. Students would have to apply to the program, be sober for a minimum of three months, and must provide documentation from counselors before being admitted.

Proposed interior renovations include creation of shared bedrooms, one counselor's bedroom, adding an elevator, sprinklers, and handicap-accessible bathrooms. No cars would be allowed for undergraduate students, though there would be two code-compliant, on-site parking spaces provided per code for program use or visitors. Maintenance or service vehicles would park in the existing driveway. Proposed exterior renovations include new siding treatment

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for the house and require approval of the Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission. The University plans to select materials that maintain the residential character and are consistent with other homes on the street.

Residents and Council members noted this proposal is a significant departure from previous College proposals, which have included academic or administrative office uses. While appreciative of the valuable purpose of the program, they expressed concerns about additional traffic, visitors, parties, barbeques, traffic, noise, and increased activity overall in an otherwise quiet residential neighborhood. They questioned how students would be supervised if the graduate student counselor was not present at all times.

In response to these concerns, the administrators noted that there would be random screening and monitoring of the students' compliance with program rules and that a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the City would be prepared to clarify expectations and the ground rules.

Alderman Baker noted that exterior changes to the building, which is located in an historic district, would require approval by the Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission and a determination as to whether the facility would be considered a dormitory. Candace Havens explained the administrative site plan review process and noted that, while not binding, City staff could make recommendations based on the Planning Department's review and public comments, and noted that the University and City have generally found agreeable solutions to issues that have arisen. All reviews are public information and will be posted on the City website.

2. Stokes Hall Update

Stokes Hall is in the second year of construction and due to be completed in October 2012. A virtual tour and other project information is posted on the University's website at www.bc.edu/stokeshall.

3. Pedestrian Signal at Beacon Street

The Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the signal at their December 15th meeting. The University is reviewing the final design with City's Traffic Engineers prior to appearing before the Traffic Council for presentation at a March or April meeting. If approved, the project is targeted for a spring construction start.

4. Underground Utilities/Pole Removal on College Road

Undergrounding of utilities is being coordinated with the Stokes Hall construction. The College is working with project engineers at VHB, Verizon (pole owners) and other utility providers, the Fire Department, and City Engineering prior to seeking approval from the Board of Aldermen.

5. Neighborhood Parking


Council members commented that parking in the neighborhood by University employees has been well managed recently, although the University has been unsuccessful in getting cooperation from one employee who refuses to move to campus parking because she is not in violation of any laws where currently parked. The Council urged the University to keep an eye on cars creeping back to park on Suffolk Road.

6. Other business

Candace Havens distributed Conflict of Interest information to the Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Havens", is centered within a light yellow rectangular box.

Candace Havens, Director
Department of Planning and Development