

Lasell College Neighborhood Council

February 3, 2010

Meeting Notes

In Attendance:

Paula Fazli, neighbor
Alderman Lenny Gentile
Candace Havens, Interim Director of Planning, City of Newton
Tom Koerber, Director of Public Safety, Lasell College
Carie Michael, neighbor
Alderman Amy Sangiolo
Kevin Shea, neighbor
Ruth Shuman, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Lasell College

1. Filling Neighbor Seat on Council (Dec 2009 – Dec 2012)

Three neighbors applied for the council seat being vacated by Kevin Shea:

- Molly Kellogg, 7 Myrtle Avenue
- Jose Martinez, Woodland Road
- Michael Menadue, 6 Grove St

It was decided that Molly Kellogg will be invited to join the council because, of the three applicants, her home will be most directly impacted by construction planned by the College in the immediate future. Candace Havens will notify all three candidates of this decision. Next year, the council seat will be filled in the fall, before the term ends in December.

Lenny Gentile thanked Kevin for his generous service to the council and invited him to say a few words.

- The College has made an enormous improvement over the past decade.
- Master Plan and the green campus focus are terrific.
- Improved quality of students and policing over the years.
- Lasell College has done a great job, sometimes in a tough economic environment.

Kevin proposed organizing an outreach project in which neighbors would offer editing help to Lasell students. This 'pet project' of his would put neighbors in contact with individual students. As a father of college students, Kevin has observed that editing of writing assignments is in constant need and can be enormously helpful. The neighborhood is rich with highly educated people who might be very willing to help. Kevin agreed that he would be willing to help get this project started.

2. Update on College Construction Plans and the Campus Master Plan

Ruth Shuman and Tom explained that there have been a few factors that have caused the College to reprioritize and sequence their planned construction projects.

- The College received a \$2M donation for the Myrtle Project, and they will begin construction in the Spring.
- The Board of Trustees evaluated the current total debt load, and has decided not to go ahead with Building D until next year. The College is encouraged by their success in filling the new Woodland East and West dorms.

- Projects will be staged sequentially so that construction management efforts are focused on one site at a time.

Parking Lot across from Williams School

Tom Koerber stated that plans for the parking lot (1 level up, 1 level down) had been submitted prematurely to the Auburndale Historic District Commission and were withdrawn. The College is now going back to the drawing phase with Perkins Eastman architects and anticipates a parking structure 2 - 3 stories tall. There is a one-year delay with this project so that the College can work with the neighbors to discuss the project and address neighbors concerns.

Carie Michael pointed out that neighbors objected to the plan in a 2008 meeting in which Campus Master Plan was presented to neighbors in draft. The site concentrates cars directly across the street from our elementary school. Some doubted that neighbor support for this project could be won.

Amy Sangiolo requested that any construction plans need to be submitted to the Planning Office before appearing on the AHDC docket. Not adhering to this process for the parking lot, though not required, caused some uproar at City Hall and with abutters.

Building D, Bragdon

- 101 bed
- Site Plan Review is in progress.
- This project is currently slated to begin construction in Spring 2011.

Myrtle Project (Center for Creative and Applied Arts)

- Set to begin in May, 2010
- \$2M gift received for this project
- 11-month project
- Great impact on the fashion department, with the Yamawaki Center returning to its original purpose as an art and cultural center.

Hamel House, 221 Woodland (formerly the President's house)

- Hamel House will serve as the Admissions Office
- 11 parking spaces
- Renovations to this house have been approved by the AHDC and will begin in late summer 2010.
- The College anticipates filing for the Site plan review within the next couple of months. Candace discussed that her office is carefully considering models that count parking over a campus as a whole, rather than site-by-site, which can lead to double counts in what's needed. She added that UCLA has studied this quite a bit, and their model may be helpful. This consideration would allow for 11 spaces rather than 25.
- Lenny and Kevin both raised concerns about parking lot lighting often having the biggest negative impact on neighbors. Kevin pointed out that the lighting ordinance was outdated and required far more illumination than is necessary. Tom indicated that he is flexible and would like to plan lighting that is low impact and functional, but needs approval. Switched lighting that doesn't stay on all night, or motion detectors, were suggested.

Irwin Hall on Cheswick Rd

This is currently the site of the Admissions Office. Lasell has not yet determined how it will repurpose Irwin Hall after they relocate its current function.

Case House

- Tom confirmed that he is continuing to evaluate the costs and feasibility of moving Case House across Woodland Road to the site on the corner of Woodland and Hawthorne (currently an outdoor volleyball court), where it would continue to be used as a 10-bed dormitory.
- Both aldermen noted that this project contradicts their overall effort to avoid situations in which neighborhood homes are in close proximity to dormitories, as is often the case with dormitory houses on the campus.
- Paula Fazli noted that Case is a fairly small, architecturally unremarkable building that may cost more to move than it is worth. She also question whether it would fit on the site.
- Almost all council members were in favor of having Case House torn down to create the desired open space on its current site. Lenny asked Tom to relay to President Alexander our “significant interest in not having Case House put there.”
- Amy said she couldn’t fully support tearing down Case House, because she has concerns about what the alternative might be. “What goes in if Case House doesn’t?”

3. Woodland Road Improvements

Lenny asked about the status of plans to improve Woodland Road, noting that some motorists are veering into oncoming traffic to avoid potholes that are opening up where patches are eroding. Tom and others expressed concerns about the condition of the sidewalks in some areas, where they are disintegrating and are poorly distinguished from the road.

If there is hope of coordinating and financing the larger Woodland Road improvement project that would involve burying cables and electric wires, that would be ideal. Coordinating NStar, Verizon, and the DPW will be difficult. Candace will check on the status of this effort. Some questioned how long resurfacing can wait.

4. Meeting Notes

Carie will continue to take meeting notes.

- They will be distributed to council members in draft, as an email attachment, within one week of the meeting date.
- Council members will have 5 business days to make edits, via email.
- Final meeting notes will be distributed immediately following the review period.

Lenny asked if meeting notes from past meetings could be available to council members. Candace will investigate whether this council can be added to the Planning Department website, where notes from similar groups are organized and available online. Carie will forward a complete set of meeting notes to Candace.

5. Next Meeting

The Council agreed to meet again on May 5th at 8:45 am..

Respectfully,
Carie Michael