

Austin St Liaison Committee Meeting Notes
City Hall, Room 205

Jan 31, 2018

Attending Liaison Cttee Members: Jake Auchincloss (chair/City Councilor), Helene Sroat (Newtonville Area Council), Stephen Logowitz (Newtonville neighborhood), Gwen Noyes (Austin St Partners), Mark Dufton (Austin St Partners), Jonathan Yeo (Mayor's office)

Absent: Brian Shaw (Craft Beer), Alison Leary (City Councilor), Michael Tucci (Jackson Rd Area Rep), Margaret Albright (Newton Public School designee), Bill Honeycutt (Newtonville Business Rep)

Also attending: Ouida Young (City Legal Dept), Rachel Blatt (City Planning), Lily Reynolds (City Planning), Joe Cyrulick (Austin Street Partners' consultant), Jonah Temple (Newton Legal Counsel), Tom Kraus, VP Member of NAC

Note: Documents herein referred to and presented in the Liaison Committee (LC) meeting have been posted by Newton's Planning Department on the City's Austin Street project website. Revised updates made in these documents, wherever requested and/or noted in the following minutes, will replace whatever documents are currently posted as soon as they are made available.

Meeting notes:

Chair's Invitation for Comments:

- Mark Dufton, representing the 28 Austin St Partners (ASP), was invited by the chair to respond to the questions raised by Tom Kraus of the Newtonville Area Council (NAC) at the last Austin Street Liaison Committee Meeting (ASLC) on Jan 10. The NAC questions were addressed at their meeting on Jan 18th, but Mr Kraus had some lingering considerations that he wished to bring up again at the Liaison Cttee meeting. Specifically:

- The proposed parking layout and its dimensions and column spacing had been questioned in the memo presented, but Mr Dufton pointed out that the column spacings in the newly completed building plans actually improve the driving and parking space maneuverability, except in 2 spaces; the trash truck will block only one drive lane for about 10 minutes a couple times a week; the compact spaces are basically in one area, and clustered as much as possible. It was also noted that there are a couple parking spaces that are more compacted by columns, but still legally spaced and maneuverable; they are compliant with conditions committed to in the Special permit. The LC was satisfied with the parking plans as presented.

- The trash room size and functionality has been designed by experienced architects and reviewed by the intended management company. These professionals believe the space provided is entirely adequate. The LC noted Mr Kraus' concern, but accepted the architect's work.

-The currently planned commercial space has been measured to be approximately 20 square feet shy of the 5000 sq ft requested in the original RFP. The area of the interior rear corridor access for these commercial spaces was originally counted as service space for them. This brought the earlier total commercial area to well in excess of 5000 sf. However, this corridor was opened to the outside so that it could provide customer access from the parking area. The LC concurred that though the outside corridor no longer counts “officially” as commercial space, it would provide better access for commercial tenants, and that the intent of the 5000 sf goal is met.

Plaza Design:

This item is of major interest to the LC, and the most recent iterations of plans were presented by Mr Dufton. The concern of several members of the LC is how much the Bramway section along the plaza can be a primarily and safely allocated for pedestrian use. The City’s legal counsel pointed out that the adjacent property owners/tenants have rights of access for deliveries, etc, from Bramway, and that any closure will need their permission. For the foreseeable future, it is likely that permission only for temporary closings will be achievable, and that other arrangements – such as particular and/or regular hours of closing for events- can be arranged and evolve over time. City staff was requested to investigate the businesses’ willingness for longer-term closure of through-traffic for the plaza section of Bramway.

The merits of several different design details for planter locations, bench and curb materials, the location and design of the water fountain feature were illustrated on two plans that were subtle in their differences. Mr Dufton agreed that a plaza plan showing the developer’s final recommendations – specifically taking into consideration the comments heard, including fountain and planter arrangements - will be presented at the next LC meeting.

Three week look-ahead:

Joe Cyrulik reported on meeting with neighbors regarding boundary lines, the immediate ASP schedule for tree removal, fence placement, asphalt and soil removal, signage, and placement of the early footings that allow for continuous on-site public parking. Also mentioned was the fact that the whole building permit application has been submitted to the Building Department. Beside the regular coffee hours with local businesses, Mr. Cyrulik will be providing the Planning office ‘three-week look-aheads’ on the project’s construction schedule and operations for the City’s project timeline.

Overall Project Schedule and Communication Coordination:

Rachel Blatt provided a detailed schedule spreadsheet covering the duration of the project and which will be updated and available on line. Beside the regular Constant Contact and Newton web site updates, there have been school department and business contacts and notifications. Interested Newton people will soon find a weather-proof box mounted on the construction fence, providing info sheets for interested locals about parking, shuttle stops and schedule. A parking location diagram and a building-plaza rendering will also be affixed to the fence shortly.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30

Next Liaison Committee Meeting: March 14 at 7:00 in City Hall, Room 205

Agenda:

- Chair's invitation for comments:
- Status of Planning Dept memo regarding completion of Special Permit conditions
- Project schedule update: (Joe Cyrulik)
 - Building Permit timing /process
 - Parking Management update
- Plaza design: Updated, finalized plans (Mark Dufton)
- Actual location of gas line: tree opportunities (Mark Dufton)