

Harvard Square Advisory Committee Meeting

Minutes

October 29, 2009

Harvard Square Advisory Committee Members: John DiGiovanni, Frank Kramer, Bill Bibbins, Sheldon Cohen, Alexandria Offiong

Meeting was opened by John DiGiovanni at 6:00 PM.

Presentation by Raj Dhanda and architect Peter Quinn. The property is located at 1075 Massachusetts Avenue.

The proposal is for a mixed-use project on the site of the former Bowl & Board store. The proponent said that he plans to create ground floor retail with a housing block above it, parking to be underground. The building would be a 7-story, 80-foot high structure, with an FAR of about 6.

Les Barber of the Community Development Department explained the approvals that would be needed: The Planning Board would need to issue a special permit to go above 60 feet up to the 80 proposed; if the setback requirement is to be waived, that would also require a special permit; if there is less parking than required, that would also require a special permit; and the whole project would be subject to the Project Review special permit. And, with the 6 FAR greatly in excess of the c. 4 FAR that would be allowed with the affordable housing bonus, a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal would also be necessary. Mr. Barber explained that the special permits could conceivably be granted, in line with other projects in the Square; however, the variance would be very difficult to obtain.

There were 11 neighbors in attendance, all of whom opposed the project. Residents of 1105 Mass Ave next door said they would go to court, if necessary, to stop any project that would require a variance, and also spoke about the need to respect the setback requirement, to have something like the 31 feet of setback that the 1105 tower provides from the 1075 site.

Mr. DiGiovanni suggested that the proponent meet with the neighbors to see if a plan could be worked out that has a better chance of succeeding. Mr. Dhanda said he will set up some meetings with neighbors, and come back to the HSAC when a more agreeable plan has been put together. Until such time as a more definitive plan is available to review, the HSAC will not issue a final report.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.