

**ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2015
TO DISCUSS THE VOLPE SITE
SULLIVAN CHAMBER**

TIME **5:41 PM**

PRESENT **Vice Mayor Benzan, Councillor Carlone, Councillor Cheung, Councillor Kelley, Councillor Mazen, Councillor McGovern, Councillor Simmons, Councillor Toomey, Mayor Maher, Richard Rossi, City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, Taha Jennings, Assistant to the City Manager, Louis DePasquale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, Iram Farooq, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Department (CDD), Stuart Dash, Director, Community Planning, CDD, Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Project Planner, CDD, Chris Cotter, Housing Director, CDD, Joseph Barr, Director, Traffic, Parking and Transportation, Robert Reardon, Assessors, Tom Evans, Executive Director, CRA and Barry Zevin, CRA Board member. Also present were Planning Board members: Ted Cohen, Chair, Hugh Russell, Louis Bacci, Catherine Preston Connolly and Ahmed Nur.**

ALSO PRESENT: **David Ishihara, US/DOT/Volpe Center, Robert Johns, US/DOT/Volpe Center, Robert Zarnebke, US/GSA, Glenn C. Rotondo, US/GSA and John Kelly, US/GSA**

The meeting was called to order at 5:41 PM. Mayor Maher announced there would be no public comment, no votes taken and meeting is not being publicly televised. He announced that the meeting is being taped privately. He outlined the format of the meeting.

City Manager Rossi stated that this is a development that the City and onlookers have been talking about for 30 years. He wanted the representative from Volpe Transportation and the federal government to explain the development process they envision and what this would mean. This development process is different and it is a development that contains fourteen acres of prime land in Kendall Square. The Volpe Transportation and GSA have a process around the value of the land. The planning process would be discussed. He introduced Mr. Johns.

Mr. Johns, Director, US DOT/Volpe Center, went through Volpe Center explaining who they are, their mission and what makes Volpe unique (ATTACHMENT A). Their objective is an exchange process.

Bob Zarnebke, spoke about the creation of GSA to handle real estate maintenance and archiving functioning. The GSA is the real estate contracting manager for the federal government. He stated that five years ago Congress gave the GSA authority to look at the value of property in exchange for services. The GSA is looking for land for the construction of a new building in Kendall Square. The fourteen acres of land will allow the DOT to retain a portion of the property for the construction of a new building. An industry day was held to hear about the project and to ask questions. It was well attended. The next step is the contracting step. A requisition for qualification will be done that will lead to a Request for Proposal (RFP) when there are qualified developers. He provided projects that the GSA has done in other locations. He explained that the GSA follows the character of the neighborhood and is concerned with the character of the architecture.

Ms. Farooq stated that the slide show (ATTACHMENT B) was important to the City to see the things that the federal government is concerned about with the place making aspect. The city and state has been trying to get something on the Volpe site for many years. Ms. Farooq stated that the City concluded the Kendall Square study in 2012. There was extensive engagement of stockholders. There was a companion process. There was a neighborhood sponsored ECPT/CBT plan. The two plans have a consistent theme. The zoning emerged to achieve the vision. She spoke of the zoning framework. She stated that the planning framework of the K2 included active ground floors, housing, innovation space, community investments; Kendall Square fund, sustainability, shared parking and design guidelines. The community investment fund will be used to enhance the transit connection. The two things that have come up in discussion with the Planning Board are affordable housing and open space. Once the Planning Board feels that the proposal is sound it will be forwarded to the City Council for zoning hearings. Once the zoning petition is filed there will be a robust process. Density will be increased and anything over 250 feet - 25% would be dedicated for middle income units. Inclusionary and incentive zoning requirements would still apply. She elaborated on the public space. The K2 study suggested that there is a need for flexibility on the open space as to the location and configuration. There was a competition for the Open Space Framework in Kendall Square. She stated that the Planning Board tested development scenarios for the Volpe site and will be able to occur in the zoning framework.

City Manager Rossi stated that this is a different kind of development project. The good news is that Volpe/federal government have stressed a willingness to participate in a community process. They are interested in doing public art, ground floor retail, parking and sustainability. This is a unique equity development project.

Councillor Simmons questioned the Volpe presentation in the public realm. She asked if the project will be the same in Cambridge as what is being offered. Mr. Zarnebke stated that the projects were not the same; the examples were to show how federal property invited the public in. The federal government is looking to do this where it can. Councillor Simmons asked if the PUD-Kendall Square guideline site would be on the city controlled site. Ms. Farooq stated that the design principals should apply to the entire site. The PUD and design review will be required. The site plan permit will show where the Volpe building will be. Councillor Simmons asked if the GSA/Volpe decides on what the building will look like and the City decides for the rest of the site. Mr. Zarnebke stated that the federal government is not subject to local approvals. Final determination will be made by Volpe and it will fit in the character of the site. The City does not have final approval on the federal government site but will give the City input. Councillor Simmons stated that she wanted the City interaction that feeds into the design of the building. Mr. Zarnebke stated that a lot has been learned in the last 50 years. The process today is different. The remainder will be subject to local control and zoning. It is

the portion retained that will be subject to federal review and there will be a conversation with the City. Councillor Simmons stated her hesitation that the building is built on City land, but the City has no say. GSA chooses the developer. The City has less control than usual at the beginning so she wanted guarantees. Mr. Zarneke stated that he cannot give absolute assurance because he does not have the authority. The authority is vested in the GSA.

Councillor Simmons asked how the zoning information will be discussed. Ms. Farooq stated that the Planning Board has been reviewing the zoning language and at the Planning Board meeting on April 7th the Planning Board will review the Volpe site. The Planning Board will present a zoning proposal to City Council in the future. Councillor Simmons questioned the timeline and she wanted something in writing. She wanted the City Council to work in tandem with GSA/volpe.

Mr. Zarneke wanted a contractor with the federal government by fall of 2016, but there are hurdles that need to be part of the process. Councillor Simmons stated that Volpe owned the site and asked if the City had control of the open space. Mr. Rotondo, Regional Commissioner, GSA, stated that under GSA design excellence the character design of building he wanted the facility to blend into the local communities as it relates to the open space surrounding the federal facilities. The design of the super block as it relates to the open space will be coordinated and blended in with the local community. He explained all the professionals that will be brought in to have the facility blend with the community.

Mr. Zarneke stated in response to a question by Vice Mayor Benzan, that he did not know what the proposal would be. Vice Mayor Benzan commented that the City Council is being asked to set rules for a potential exchange partner, in some ways they need to foresee the financial flexibility. This is difficult to do to have 7.5 acres of open space; if looking for a potential development and they can only develop 10 acres and 7.5 has to be set aside for open space it could be a deal breaker. Mr. Zarneke stated this is an equity project. How much value will be geared around zoning and open space? This is the closest solution to get to a new Volpe Center. Vice Mayor Benzan spoke about the deal and investment. Mr. Zarneke stated a housing plan outlined how much space is needed and what the character of the facility will be. There is a combination of office and lab space. The federal facility has to be the first thing built. A 400,000 square foot building(s) is needed. Vice Mayor Benzan could housing be built on the federal site? Mr. Zarneke stated that housing will not be built on the federal site. Vice Mayor Benzan spoke about inviting public spaces where the public feels welcome. He stated that housing and retail ground floor need to be created in this space. The zoning needs to provide for this. He hopes that there will be financial flexibility for the development partner so that the deal goes through.

Councillor Carlone supported this proposal. He hopes that the City has greater involvement in the partnership project. Volpe is the only public facility in Kendall Square. He stated that Volpe wants some presence so the facade should have a public presence. He hopes that the location of the site is key to the identity for the Volpe site. He hopes that there is a courtesy presentation down the line and that the City Council are kept in the loop. He thought this would be a semi urban 4 floor building. He stated that the City has had problems with typical labs near residences and that the master developer should shield lab spaces from residences. He stated that the inclusionary housing study will be done in 2015. Ms. Farooq stated that the inclusionary study will be completed. Councillor Carlone asked how the middle income study was developed. Open space at Third and Broadway is a logical location - will this be open ended for the developer or will the City provide guidance. Ms. Farooq stated that when the City lays out the principals it will be helpful. Councillor Carlone stated that an integrated system of open space can be done well. He asked if there will be FAR over the open space;

this is not lost value. New roads would count as FAR that could be transferred to the builder. Councillor Carlone stated that the City wants to maximize affordable and three bedroom units and 5% is very low. He stated that the strategy is good.

Councillor Mazen spoke about community impact. He asked how GSA plans to upgrade services and pipelines. Mr. Johns stated that employees are public sector employees. Volpe stresses community outreach for its employees and the opportunity to design a facility of transportation and get more structure where students come to Volpe. There is interest in the public role for Volpe to develop programs. Councillor Mazen stated that it is reasonable for the Volpe organization to have a public presence. Councillor Mazen stated that regarding the active retail space he suggested comprehensive planning to help small retailers. Councillor Mazen stated that it is not good in the zoning to ban dorms. He spoke about open space and service pathways being considered open space. He hopes that discretion is limited for the Planning Board. He asked about the innovative space. He stated that the problem with innovation space is the cost. He asked who gets access to the incubator space. He asked how Volpe is working with Cambridge businesses. Mr. Ishihara stated that more collaboration in Kendall Square is what they want to do.

Councillor McGovern stated that it is amazing the things that are done at Volpe and the building does not match the research and innovation. He wanted the discussions to continue like this. He hopes the partnership continues to build something that will fit in the community. He questioned the acres that the City will control and the affordable housing option. With this amount of land he hopes that there is creative thinking on the inclusionary. He wanted the expectation clear for the developers about the affordable housing needs. All the housing needs to be reviewed and to ensure that as much housing is received. He asked for 40%. Ms. Farooq stated that the percentage is for the entire site. Councillor McGovern stated that this links the open space with the retail space. He hopes that the open space is thought of in terms of families and he wanted this to be a concern as well for the retail.

Councillor Cheung appreciated the architectural review. He was concerned with addressing the needs of the community, its function, local retail, middle income housing and below the lowest income level. He wanted the Volpe site connected with the community, to include the neighborhood, senior citizens, community engagement and to make sure that there is a process for the 10 acres to reach out to the broad community and engaged in the vision. He spoke about innovation and increased height for housing. He wanted the K2 recommendations to be tuned up. He wanted this building to be tall and to make a statement with the design of the building that this is Cambridge. The ownership of the land he wanted CRA in this transaction. He has issues selling federal land to a private owner. He would rather CRA in the transaction. He commended the partnership proposal.

Councillor Kelley stated that he is excited about this, but sees the discussion falling off the tracks. The City is giving Volpe the zoning to build the building, but the cost is unknown. To come up with a zoning package and to explain it is difficult to come up with.

Councillor Toomey spoke about the history of the site. He is excited that we are at this stage. There are possibilities to entertain moving forward with the neighborhoods. He spoke about the ECAP study. There are serious constraints to move forward. He supports all the entities working together on this matter. He supported open space for the neighborhood. This is an opportunity that needs to be embraced and can be a win/win for Volpe and the City. This has been a long time coming.

Mayor Maher thanked the Volpe representatives. This is exciting and this will benefit the community as a whole. He spoke about the larger rezoning, but the developers were known. It is wise to come up with the zoning before the developer is known or should we develop guidelines and then when developer is known develop the zoning. This is the place in the City for height; is 300, 350 or 400 feet appropriate. He addressed this to the Planning Board and City Council. He stated that there is an opportunity to continue to enliven Kendall Square and the commitment to housing needs a commitment to family housing and what the open space can mean to the City. The City wants a new Volpe Center that Volpe can be proud of. This ties the East Cambridge neighborhood to Kendall Square.

Ted Cohen, Chair, Planning Board, stated that this will be discussed at the Planning Board meeting on April 7th. This will be a discussion between staff and the Planning Board. A public hearing will be held at a later date. A frame work of zoning was needed by GSA so that the developers are not moving blindly. This will be forwarded to City Council so that the City Council can work on this. Affordable housing, inclusionary study is still being worked on.

Councillor Simmons asked Volpe if the land transfer model has been done before. Mr. Zarneke responded that there are nine initiated and none completed. This is a new authority activated by the last administration. This project is the best example of how this process works. GSA works with the community. Councillor Simmons stated that she wanted authenticated community outreach. Ground floor retail needs to be economically diverse and that the open space is open to the community. The housing dynamic conversation needs to continue. She wanted the City Council and the Planning Board to be closer aligned.

Hugh Russell stated that the zoning is a frame work, not a plan. All scenarios need more flexibility. He is supportive of the GSA talking about quality. The GSA will fit in fine with this goal. He asked if the Planning Board frame work works and wanted it not to be made more difficult for the process. GSA adds to the knowledge and feed off the knowledge in Cambridge. He stated that the opportunities are all good.

Mr. Nur stated that this is a long awaited project. The amenities to the public are essential.

On motion of Councillor Toomey the meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.

A TRUE COPY:

ATTEST: Donna P. Lopez, City Clerk