

ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

DATE Monday, June 5, 2017

TIME 5:39 PM

LOCATION Sullivan Chamber

PURPOSE to discuss Envision Cambridge citywide, including the Alewife Planning.

ATTENDEES Councillor Carlone, Councillor Cheung, Councillor Kelley, Councillor Maher, Councillor Mazen, Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Toomey, City Manager Louis DePasquale, Deputy City Manager Lisa Peterson, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs David Kale, Assistant City Manager for Human Service Programs Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Community Development Iram Farooq, Director of Community Relations Lee Gianetti, Suzanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental Planning, CDD, Chris Cotter, Director of Housing, CDD, Representatives from Utile: Tim Love, Melissa Peters, Project Manager. CDD, Executive Assistant to the City Council Sandra Albano, Deputy City Clerk Paula M. Crane and City Clerk Donna P. Lopez

ABSENT: Councillor Devereux and Mayor Simmons

ADJOURNMENT 7:30 PM

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Vice Mayor McGovern opened the meeting at 5:39 PM. He stated that this Roundtable/Working meeting is being audio and video recorded. He stated that Councillor Devereux submitted a communication and this will be included in the Roundtable Minutes (**ATTACHMENT A**). Vice Mayor McGovern began the meeting with introductions.

City Manager DePasquale stated that he has met with this group many times and that every meeting starts with what has been heard from the community. He explained that the presentation is what the neighbors feel is best for that community. To date there has been eight Alewife Group Working Meetings, three highly attended public workshops and multiple surveys. He stated that the consultant understands that their role is to listen. He has heard from the CC when there is a consultant and make sure that they are listening and get into the community. At this point City Manager DePasquale turned the meeting over to the consultant.

Mr. Love gave a PowerPoint Presentation (**ATTACHMENT B**). He will talk about the process. He spoke about the project framework. There were 5-6 focus areas. The focus of the presentation is on the Alewife Quadrangle. The plan looked at the existing conditions in the quadrangle. He stated that there is a ton of engagement that began in 2016. He stated that there were 8 Alewife Working Group Meetings and 3 public workshops held at the Tobin school. There has been a robust discussion about the pros and cons of the project. There was concern about the existing business in the quadrangle. Industrial uses, industrial space can be planned, preserved and promoted in this area. Open spaces in the quadrangle ties into the broader open spaces. He spoke about land use to create a balanced mixed use. He stated that a vision is needed for the quadrangle. Mr. Love spoke about the proposed land use and creating a Main Street to with active ground floor uses. He spoke about the comparison of the open space as it relates to Dana Park and Clement Morgan Park. He stated that characteristics of the building prototypes were put into the plan. The flatland will be built out around 2030. He stated that they explored 60% build out. At full build out scenario there will be 600,000 square feet of industrial space compared to 825,000 square feet that there is today. The quadrangle is part of the business ecology of the city. He stated that Cambridge makes sense for these companies. He spoke about the regional salary for light industrial jobs. He spoke about the flood impact on the quadrangle and it is dealt with in a positive way. The urban design and policy strategy is that the first floor to be four feet about the sidewalk. He stated that A streets run east-west and no parking will be allowed so that a continuation public realm is created. Canopies are recommended on A streets to deal with the heat. These will be truck dependent businesses. This could be Cambridge innovation space including both residential and industrial space. He stated that the new streets would connect to the bike network in the City. He stated that all aspects of the six scenarios were reviewed. At 60% build out there is 1,080 new units of housing. The existing units in the quadrangle and the housing in the pipeline equates to this yielding 98 new students. The net revenues to the city is \$6.7 million. He stated that the estimated jobs is 725 industrial jobs. He spoke about the transportation impacts on Alewife Brook during peak hours and the impact on outer Concord Avenue from the rotary to Belmont line. This is the overview on work on quadrangle area. He stated that truck routes work was done but more needs to be done. In addition to bringing quadrangle discussion to a close he is looking at the shopping center as part of the Alewife and the corridors are being looked at moving forward. He stated that part of the culture of Cambridge is the residential corridors. The dimension of the parcels and the maturity of the corridors. Smart development in the corridors could improve the site. Development capacity analysis will be done. He spoke about the next steps and the engagement process.

Councillor Cheung stated that he liked the vision and where the project is going. The plan looks great in vision and imagination. He stated that the plan looks great. He asked about engaging residents who are navel to get out of their homes to voice their opinion. He stated that the previous discussions included a bridge but the air rights from the state are needed. The issue of connectivity is very important. Mr. Utile stated that the best strategies and the right financing to make the connectivity of the quadrangle to the rest of the City is in the next step of the work. Councillor Cheung stated that he would like to find a way to do some type of a platform.

Councillor Mazen stated that his comments have to do with the means of the outreach and the diversity.

Councillor Carlone stated that the traffic numbers confuses him the most. Office space is being added and traffic is not changing. This does not make sense to him. The assumption is that the change in the traffic will be minimal. He stated that he does not understand how this is even feasible. Mr. Utile explained that the parking ratio was pushed down a bit with a shared parking lot that helps with the impacts. Ms. Rasmussen stated that the numbers produced is because not all trips end up on Alewife Brook Parkway. She stated that the charts imply that things are fine, but the reason why you are not seeing a lot of trips on Alewife Brook Parkway is because people continue in different directions. There is no immediate solution. We are not seeing a lot of trips on Alewife because those entering the quadrangle go right and left. There is no underestimate of the trips. Councillor Carlone asked can the system handle this. The system does not work now and adding more office space this does not make sense. He knows that a shuttle bridge is needed over the railroad tracks and we must devise a way for a shuttle and pedestrian bridge to the T or there is no way that this can work. Ms. Rasmussen stated that this is the next level of the analysis. Councillor Carlone noted that the land use is the most important factor in traffic generation. This needs to be incorporated into the land use. If this does not work do we change it? He wanted this to work. He does not see how all this office can work. He stated that CambridgePark Drive does not work. He stated that he cannot endorse this mix without a shuttle bridge over the railroad tracks.

Councillor Carlone stated that the industrial program he understands and making this work is having office above. This is light industrial - but is it compatible industrial to the use and the area. This needs to be defined better. This is state of the art industrial area. Mr. Utile stated that to clarify how this development model works the upper floor commercial space cross subsidizes the lower floor and the commercial space is being built at a price point that is not being built today. There is an economic development and an urban design model about this.

Councillor Mazen spoke about the cost per square foot. He stated that he finds it hard to believe that the nature or the supply and demand in this area is such that some vendors will not opt for and then pay the co-working type prices for that type of space. He spoke about co-shared, incubator space and stated that they are not pay \$35; they are paying Kendall Square prices. He doubts the economic premises of what he is hearing. He stated that he hopes that this is project is not seen as though it were a community benefit as it relates to co-working space. He worries about job growth for the working class. In the future there will be two types of jobs robot telling humans and humans telling robots. He spoke about training for the jobs for the future. He hopes that those who are harder to reach are included in this model. He wanted to see more examples of what is possible. He feels that trip growth will increase immensely. He spoke about the misrepresentation of the data. He wanted to see the full spectrum of what is possible. He is worried and this is not a complete planning; it is a start.

Councillor Maher spoke about the 60-100% build out; is there enough incentive to actually see the residential properties along Concord Avenue. He stated that Mt. Auburn generates more traffic. What is the possibility that this will come to fruition. Mr. Utile stated that there are existing regulations in place and a special permit allows for development to happen under the current regulation. The Master Plan

should be looked at as a step to change the Master Plan overlay. The propensity for things to change is depending on property speculation. A decision was made early to test zoning if all this happened. Mr. Utile stated that to achieve the vision for the hybrid fabrication commercial district you would not be able to allow residential because you need a certain ecology in this district.

Councillor Maher stated that what the likelihood of townhouse being built is. Mr. Utile if this is all that is allowed to be built. NYC has a tighter zoning for land value. The city needs to think about a different regulation model. Councillor Maher stated that he liked the examples of the raised platform buildings and this is an interesting concept. He stated that the Sancta Maria is not included and this would be good to be a senior site development low impact community for seniors. He stated that the city is investing resources and if it does not go the way some want then the process is criticized. Mr. Utile stated that there has been robust discussions and there has been a general embrace of the hybrid industrial commercial district. There has been debate on the density and the traffic impacts. The preferred density is 1.56. How connectivity is improved. The allocation of land uses. Under current zoning the same FAR would be achieved at the end of the day without doing anything. To achieve the vision if too much density is taken away this cannot be achieved. He stated that the zoning needs to be achieved.

Councillor Kelley stated that we have to cross the tracks and he would like to see more detailed discussion about transferred development rights. He noted that to have any discussion not start off with how to cross the tracks is not paying attention to the right things. He stated that regarding the Open Space Network it is not a strong selling point for him. He stated that the space needs to be flexible to accommodate uses that cannot be currently imagined. He commented that he doubted that the job numbers will come through as predicted. He stated the City should think more about people related jobs. He asked who owns the Open Space Network currently. Mr. Utile stated that it is a development entity and is held in a trust. Councillor Kelley asked how they become the City's. Mr. Utile responded that this will be discussed in the next phase. He stated that they are not the right size for large scale development. Councillor Kelley stated that he would have been more excited to talk about how to cross the tracks.

Vice Mayor McGovern stated that people will continue to drive. He stated that he cannot image increasing commercial, retail and residential without having an increase in the traffic. He does not know what can be done to mitigate traffic and give people options. There is a difference between listening and agreeing. At what point do you use expertise of the professional aspect of this plan. The recommendations cannot be driven by what the City Council thinks. How is this balanced? Mr. Utile stated that the implementation strategy is everything. The zoning and financing to mitigate the transportation have not been decided yet. He spoke about the point of doing the scenarios was to balance the revenue, traffic and the mixed uses. Vice Mayor McGovern asked why transportation is the biggest issue. Mr. Utile stated that from an urban design, mixed use and creative flood mitigation standpoint the plan is good. The feedback is that the plan was embraced by the Alewife Working Group. Are the traffic impacts worth the vision? Can the parking ratios be pushed down further? It is important for Cambridge to realize that the quadrangle is the last opportunity for a mixed use district and think about businesses differently. He spoke about freezing the process or doing business as usually. Vice Mayor McGovern

stated that he does not want the plan that is going to be the best for housing and retail to somehow end up scrapped because of traffic issues. How is the area made more than just a place to live? He wanted this area connected to the rest of the City. He likes the manufacturing concept and wanted some of the jobs brought back for middle income people to stay in the city. He further stated that the City must make this area something that is a neighborhood and a place where other people want to go.

City Manager DePasquale stated that traffic is important, but there are other important factors with this. This is a great opportunity for the City. If the City volume goes up with revenue and housing the traffic needs to be balanced. He is not promising a bridge; he is looking and listening to this. He stated that there is no guarantee that there is a Cambridge tax supported bridge; a \$35 Million tax supported bridge is not in the plan. Vice Mayor McGovern stated that there are many people in building in this area and there is an obligation to their tenants to get to and from the T easier. He highlighted all the positive aspects of this plan. The T has to be connected to the neighborhood.

Ms. Farooq stated that one approach in this plan is to figure a plan that works with or without a bridge and the connectivity that people can get to the amenities without a bridge. She stated that landing sites are being maintained and are being put into plan to be able to do this as a possibility.

Councillor Cheung stated that he is not looking for a bridge, but would like a platform which is the only way to address the traffic concerns. He wanted a broad cross-section of people to be reached out to. It is still cheaper to live outside the City. He wanted to discuss this in the future. Is the assumption that it is a parking lot and will still be a parking lot. Mr. Utile stated that there is progressive traffic planners and the inconvenience of driving has driven people to other traffic modes. Traffic does influence behavior. Ms. Farooq spoke about the traffic in Alewife as a regional issue. When planning for Alewife we have to think about how much we hang our hat on the traffic situation in terms of determining the future of the City when we cannot influence the transportation scenario. She stated that regional growth will impact traffic.

Councillor Carlone stated that numbers will indicate that 8,000 new office workers are coming when there is 100% built out. Roads can be improved. He stated that the one thing that can be done is the bridge. It is not only a pedestrian or bicyclist bridge. People need to be comfortable to get to Alewife or no one will live there. He stated that a shuttle bridge that connects to the Red Line is the only way to go and without the one bridge the links will not be made. If this means that the commercial developers have to put money into make their land viable, he suggested developers putting money into a bridge fund. The city and the residential may need to pay. Councillor Carlone stated that this plan is gutsy and this is the last place to make this work. This will lower the value of the land to some degree to pay for the infrastructure. There will be more kids because we want more families. To build a neighborhood there is a need for a school, near a field and library. A great landscaper can make open space work. There are two distinct squares that become the living space. He spoke about a hard and soft diagram. This is not in the 100% build out. The low rise near the industrial is seven stories. He is not against density he is

opposed to not showing how people will get there. He does not believe that there will only be 500 more cars. He wanted to see more inspiration place making.

Councillor Mazen stated that there needs to be a funding mechanism that does not break the bank. He spoke about bonding. Is this worth this? He stated that there are many benefits and hopes that the policy makers can weigh in before the decision is made.

Councillor Maher spoke about Al Wilson who passed away after his 100 birthday. He advocated for many years for a crossing at this site.

Councillor Kelley stated that we cannot hold this off for fear of more cars. The bridge is needed and without this he does not know where this project goes.

Councillor Cheung stated that it would be good to plot vital service locations at this site. The City should plan for schools and a library.

Vice Mayor McGovern spoke about the mistake with Kendall Square as it was thought of as industrial hub. He did not want to do this at Alewife.

Vice Mayor McGovern announced that there is no public comment at Roundtable/Working Meetings, but when the minutes of the Roundtable/Working Meeting are on the agenda the public can comment.

On a motion by Vice Mayor McGovern the meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

ATTACHEMENT A

June 2, 2017

Dear Colleagues, Mr. Manager, CDD Staff and Team Utile,

I regret being unable to attend the June 5th Roundtable meeting on Envision Cambridge, as I will be out of the country for a family wedding. In fact, on the night of the roundtable I will be in Copenhagen, a side trip I planned specifically to experience firsthand Denmark's advanced bike network and bike- and pedestrian-friendly culture.

I have attended many of the Envision strategy workshops, several Envision Advisory Group meetings, and most of Alewife Working Group meetings, and this morning I discussed the Roundtable meeting materials with CDD staff. Having advocated prior to joining the Council for making Alewife the early focus of a citywide planning process, I am very glad to see this area receive further attention and study. I commend the efforts that Utile and CDD staff are making to address the thorny and longstanding land use planning challenges of the Alewife area. I continue to have concerns about adding any additional density to the Quad in light of the traffic and connectivity issues and flooding projections, and respectfully submit them for consideration.

When the concept of the mixed-use industrial scenario was first introduced in late January, the projected district FAR was 1.27, twice today's as-built FAR in the district (0.61). At the April 27 more housing along Concord Ave had been added to create a hybrid light industrial-plus-housing scenario, and the district FAR had increased to 1.56, which is above both the district's current potential FAR (1.3) and the "optimized" baseline (1.5).

Any up-zoning will increase land values and may displace similar light industrial and start-up uses currently operating in the Quad — uses that many wish to retain. The 3-over-1 buildings modeled as "mixed-use light industrial" are 75% office and the blocks remain large even with the proposed new streets. I have concerns about increasing the volume of truck and commuter traffic along Concord Avenue and sending it through a new residential area along Concord Ave. I feel the Quad plan still needs to identify a "town center" with community uses, street-front activity and open space that would define and anchor the area.

The original impetus for Envision's early focus on the Alewife area was the urgent need to address and course-correct the shortcomings of the prior Concord Alewife plan, namely that high-density residential growth has far surpassed expectations without making enough progress toward improving the area's longstanding mobility, place-making, urban design and environmental deficiencies. All the scenarios under consideration in the Quad risk repeating and compounding these challenges evident in the Triangle, since the Quad is a larger and similarly constricted land area that relies on an overburdened roadway (Concord Ave) for egress. Both the Triangle and the Quad feed into the same clogged Rt 16 regional artery, which does not currently have the extra capacity to provide any margin for error; when there is a crash or a detour on any portion of the network, traffic backs up unacceptably at the limited egress points with ripple effects on North and West Cambridge. When the planning and development focus turns to the two shopping centers, the density may further increase. There remains much work

to do to improve walking, biking and transit connections for the existing level of development and the known pipeline projects. Could tax revenue from recent development in Alewife (as much as \$10M a year) be earmarked to fund infrastructure improvements in advance of new development?

Further, in the time since we embarked on the Envision process the City's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments have brought into sharp relief the Alewife area's vulnerability to effects of increased rainfall, sustained heat waves and the potential for storm surge from sea level rise. [Take a look at this new interactive map of the flood zones.](#) I have concerns about up-zoning this area in the face of the certainty that the Alewife area will become much hotter and wetter within the expected lifespan of the new buildings being erected and within the lifetimes of the younger populations living and working there. Certainly the newer buildings and streets can be constructed to be more resilient than the existing ones, but are we striking the most responsible balance of incentives and requirements?

A word about process: The working group meetings I have attended have not allowed adequate time to elicit meaningful input from and debate among the working group members. Often the members have appeared frustrated with how little time they have to probe and discuss the assumptions, the amount and accuracy of data presented and the conclusions drawn from it. Presentations are not shared in advance, so people do not have the opportunity to study the data and come prepared with questions. And it can be hard to track the changes made to the scenarios between meetings because the presentations don't include direct comparisons to the prior versions. There is little time left at the end of the meetings to hear comments from residents who have been closely engaged with the process throughout.

In closing I respectfully suggest that we:

- 1. Create a complete street connection via Terminal Road.** As a near-term measure to improve mobility and safety for existing populations, independent of what Envision ultimately recommends for Alewife, we should create a new complete street connection between Wheeler Street and Terminal Road and through the Fresh Pond Mall parking lot to Danehy Park and New Street. The public should know if the long-promised pedestrian-bike bridge is no longer under serious consideration; its exclusion from the proposed new connections is troubling in light of the number of recent developments that have been constructed, permitted and premised on a direct connection across the railroad tracks. In the longer-term a future commuter rail stop at Alewife could provide a crossing over the tracks between the Quad and the Triangle, but how hard are we willing to push for this, and who will lead that effort?
- 2. Form an Alewife Mobility Task Force** to bring together state and municipal officials (including representatives of Belmont and Arlington), major property owners, City staff and residents along with the MBTA, MassDOT, DCR, and the Alewife TMA to determine what resources are available to improve the current traffic and transit situation — and what additional resources will be needed to support any additional growth around Alewife. Creating a regional bus rapid-transit system should be a top priority.

3. Understand our resiliency planning challenges. We should allow adequate time for the Council, the Planning Board, the various Envision Working Groups, and the public to study and comment upon the forthcoming Climate Change Preparedness Report for Alewife. Our resources and capacity will be spread thin building resilience into our existing physical assets and populations in other areas of the city.

Again, I regret I could not participate in the roundtable discussion, but I look forward to watching the meeting video when I return home and to continuing this discussion at future meetings. Thank you to the CDD staff and the members of Utile's team for diligently digging into a perennial planning puzzle.

Sincerely,

Jan Devereux
City Councillor

