

Brighton Neighbors United

September 22, 2008

Kairos Shen
Chief Planner, Boston Redevelopment Authority
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Dear Mr. Shen,

We are writing to seek clarification about the process that you have proposed as a way to proceed with the Boston College Institutional Master Plan Review (IMPR). We also wish to raise a concern about how your proposal may affect public opportunity for review and comment.

You have discussed seeking ‘approval’ or ‘consensus’ to proceed on certain projects in advance of the BRA’s Adequacy Determination of BC’s Institutional Master Plan. We are concerned about how this fits into the Article 80 (Development Review and Approval) process.

The statute sets out the purpose of Institutional Master Plan Review (s. 80D-5(4)(c)) as follows:

“Institutional Master Plan Review recognizes that Institutional Uses need to expand and renovate their facilities more frequently than do other uses, and that the cumulative effects of incremental expansion may be greater than, or different from, the effects of each project individually. To assess these cumulative impacts and determine appropriate community benefits, Institutional Master Plan Review examines the combined impacts of an Institution’s overall development program and affords the public the opportunity for review and comment.” (Emphasis added.)

Proceeding with certain projects in advance of the Boston Redevelopment Authority issuing a written Adequacy Determination appears to be outside of the statutory authority granted to the BRA (s. 80D-5(4)(c)). The BRA may approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove an Institutional Master Plan, but there is no authority for proceeding with some projects ahead of an Adequacy Determination of the IMP. Moreover, none of the projects that you discussed for possible advanced approval appear to meet the exemption for IMP review (s. 80D-2(3) (exemption for small institutions)) or expedited review (s. 80D-9(2) (expedited review for certain small projects)). As you acknowledged, Boston College’s Institutional Master Plan and response to the Scoping Determination are

inadequate in many respects and could not be approved “as is.” Brighton residents should have the opportunity to evaluate and respond to a complete and adequate IMP, revised and amended if necessary, and not be rushed through an *ad hoc* and possibly extralegal process.

In addition, a piece-by-piece approval of individual projects is contrary to the purpose of IMPR. We are particularly concerned about Boston College proceeding with certain projects without understanding how they fit into the whole Institutional Master Plan. As you acknowledged at the most recent BC Task Force Meeting, a decision to proceed with one project will have an impact on other projects. For example, the decision to build dormitories on Shea Field will necessitate moving the existing baseball fields to another location. Likewise, the decision to build the proposed 470-bed dormitory on the More Hall site will foreclose the opportunity to increase the density for this residence.

Finally, we are very concerned that this community will not have an adequate opportunity for review and comment. It has been discussed that some ‘approval’ will be sought at the BRA’s next meeting on October 16, 2008. Three BC Task Force meetings have been called on three consecutive weeks. What’s the rush? The community, like Boston College, is prepared to keep the process moving forward. However, we have questions about the propriety of the process you are proposing, the projects to be ‘approved,’ and the Adequacy Determination of BC’s Institutional Master Plan. We would like these questions and concerns to be addressed first, before we are asked to make decisions that will have long-term effects on the viability of our neighborhood.

In light of these concerns, we respectfully request that either prior to or at the beginning of tomorrow’s BC Task Force Meeting that you respond, in writing, to the following concerns:

- How does your proposal to move forward on some projects in BC’s IMP comply with Article 80?
- What steps, procedures and timeline do you envision to approve all or part of BC’s IMP?
- Does the BRA intend to bring some aspect of the BC’s IMP before its Board on October 16th? If so, what component(s)?

Answers to these questions do not foreclose discussing aspects of the IMP, as we did last week. We, like all of our neighbors, appreciate the Mayor’s and your commitment to ensuring the continued vibrancy and sustainability of our neighborhood. We have sought to give Boston College clear guidance about the community’s views and, to that end, we have endorsed virtually all of the recommendations of Mayor Menino’s appointed Boston College Task Force. All we want now is a complete understanding of the BRA’s and Boston College’s plans, in writing, and how we will move forward.

Kind regards,
Brighton Neighbors United

cc: Hon. Mayor Thomas Menino, City of Boston
Fr. Leahy, SJ., President of Boston College
John Palmieri, Director, BRA
Membership of the BC Task Force
Tom Keady, BC Govt. & Community Affairs
Councilor Mark Ciommo
Rep. Mike Moran
Rep. Brian Honan
Sen. Steve Tolman
Councilor-at-Large Michael Flaherty
Councilor-at-Large John Connolly
Councilor-at-Large Stephen Murphy
Councilor-at-Large Sam Yoon
Gerald Autler, Senior Project Manager, BRA
John Fitzgerald, Project Manager, BRA