

Regular Board Meeting
Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

Wednesday January 19, 2022 at 5:30pm
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually via Zoom

Approved Meeting Minutes

Alexandra Levering, CRA Project Manager, said that due to COVID-19, certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law have been suspended allowing government bodies to meet using remote participation. In accordance, the CRA is holding this meeting via Zoom webinar. There will be opportunities for public comment at the beginning of the meeting and at the discretion of the chair. Ms. Levering explained the steps to take to provide public comment. Board meeting materials can be found on the CRA's next meeting webpage. This meeting is being recorded, including all video, audio, and QA messages

Call Roll

Chair Kathleen Born called the regular meeting of CRA Board. A roll call of Board was taken.

Vice Chair Conrad Crawford - present
Treasurer Christopher Bator – present
Asst. Treasurer Barry Zevin - present
Asst. Secretary Margaret Drury - present

Also present are CRA staff - Executive Director, Tom Evans, Alex Levering, Carlos Peralta, Erica Schwartz. Hema Kailasam, Fabiola Alikpokou, and new project manager Karriem Van Leesten.

Because this is a remote meeting, all votes will be taken by roll call and Mr. Evan will be repeating the response of each member present.

Public Comment

Heather Hoffman first noted a typo in the word “agenda” in the minutes on Page 2. She said that Steve Kaiser’s memo is an important communication. She has been continuously stating that the community should never have been in the situation of having the Eversource substation sprung on the community. This is a result of a failure to plan, a lack of transparency, and a lack of many other things that the government should be assumed to be providing but has not. She said that a citizen was not permitted to bring up energy issues during the City’s Envision meetings.

Chris Hope, Executive Director and founder of The Loop Lab said that he is present because there is an agenda item exploring the possibility of The Loop Lab being housed at 99 Bishop Allen Drive. He gave some background on Loop Lab, which a small organization that has various media arts apprenticeships for high school students and young adults. It focuses on supporting underrepresented communities to enter audio/video industries. Though a partnership with the Lesley School of Art and Design, scholarships are also available. Loop Lab also provides video work for other nonprofits within Cambridge and sees this as a potential service for current 99 Bishop Allen Drive tenants. He thanked the Board for their consideration. Ms. Born said that she was happy that the youth of Cambridge are benefiting from this program.

No other requests for public comment were offered.

A motion was moved by Ms. Drury to close public comment. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member’s vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes

Kathy Born – yes

Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.

Minutes

1. Motion: To accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board on December 15, 2021

Ms. Born said that she had several edits and would pass them onto Ellen Shore, CRA Operations Director. None of the edits are of substance except for a missing word “not” near the top of Page 7, which actually gives the opposite meaning. This was part of agenda item 9, the Boston Properties presentation, regarding their buildings and their compliance with the green roof ordinance

A motion, was moved by Mr. Bator, to accept the minutes, subject to the chair person’s provisional corrections and the correction noted by Heather Hoffman. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member’s vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes
Kathy Born – yes
Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.

Communications

2. Written communications received since the publication of this meeting notice.

Mr. Evans said that just after the agenda was published, the CRA received an email from Mr. Kaiser with his comments on the Eversource substation. These comments had been sent to MEPA regarding the environmental notification form (ENF) that Eversource had put forth regarding the substation and its various transmission line connections through the region. Mr. Evans said that it was agreed with MEPA that the environmental review process for the redevelopment plan amendment and the corresponding development that would be facilitated by the amendment, were to follow a separate MEPA review process from the Eversource substation project itself.

Mr. Evans continued that while the MEPA effort will be tracked, it doesn't directly affect the adoption of the Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan Amendment that had just gone through. He added that Mr. Kaiser's comments are very central to the main premise of this project. The Eversource team should provide, through the environmental review process, information about their load forecasting. This seems to be a natural part of their state filing with the Energy Facilities Siting Review Board. Mr. Evans said that he would try to find out if that information would be provided in that filing, which is expected to happen sometime this quarter.

Ms. Born thanked Mr. Kaiser for his thoughtful letter. There was a discussion about the required reporting of a public utility with regards to the Freedom of Information Act. In response to Ms. Born, Mr. Evans said that the Energy Facilities Siting Board deliberation process could take up to two years. The project timeline uses 18 to 24 months. From Mr. Evans' understanding, the goal from Eversource is to have the substation operational and online by 2028. After the review process, they then have to construct the substation as well as a very extensive network of transmission lines. That timeline puts the start of the construction project in 2024. They will then have four years to finish the construction project. The Boston Properties (BXP) portion of it, which is to provide the vault for Eversource, is likely to get underway this year. BXP will proceed with at least prepping the site for Eversource, even if Eversource won't start putting their machinery into the site.

Ms. Born asked at what point BXP can start work on their buildings. Mr. Evans replied that BXP is obligated to create the vault for. BXP can begin construction ahead of the full approval of the substation itself.

A motion was moved by Ms. Drury, to place the letter from Steve Kaiser on file. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member’s vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes
Kathy Born – yes
Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.

Reports, Motions, and Discussion Items

3. Monthly Staff Report

Mr. Evans said that staff are coming into the office now on an “as needed” basis because of COVID. He hopes to be back to a more formalized hybrid setup over the next couple months. He expects there to be an extension of the hybrid public meeting rules. The CRA will continue to meet via Zoom at least until April 1. Carlos Peralta is leaving the CRA this week and staff have been working these past two weeks to ensure a smooth transition, especially with regards to property management. Staff is also working with the insurance advisor to confirm appropriate coverage of CRA assets. In addition, an RFP for CRA park landscape maintenance services has been posted.

Looking at the calendar, the CRA annual meeting is next month. Some budget adjustments will be needed over the next couple of months. An appraisal has been done on Parcel 6 in light of the letter of interest from MITIMCO for the parcel that was received in the fall. Regarding the Foundry, commercial space leases will be discussed later tonight but the formal sublease and operating agreement with the Foundry Consortium will be brought to the Board. The Foundry Advisory Committee has four new members. The next meeting will be on January 28. The CRA thanks the exiting members for their valuable input. Although turnover is part of the governance plan, it is sad to see members step aside. However, some of these people have joined the Strategic Advisory Group and will be helping the CRA with its strategic planning process.

An Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) and a designer are under contract for the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House project. Unfortunately, the scheduled onsite walks have been delayed due to Covid and the snow. Staff hopes to bring the Food Truck program back to Parcel 6 and an RFP has been posted. Staff is finalizing the work on the concept plans for Kendall Square streetscapes, which could bring some follow-up work for a few small street segments, as well as some bus planning.

Mr. Bator thanked Mr. Peralta for his wonderful work and deep commitment to the CRA. He wished him well.

Hema Kailasam, Director of Finance and Operations, presented November's financial report. November was a quiet month in terms of activity. Nearly one million dollars was paid to the GVW contractor, bringing the percentage paid to the contractor 92% of the contract value. One more requisition is expected for this year. A 5% retainage fee is being held until spring for some remaining to be done. The closeout for the project is ongoing. To recap November, there was a loss of \$151,000 related to the investment performance. Some income from operations was received so the net loss for the month was \$145,000 for total income and operations. Operational expenses continued to track below budget. The total expenses in November was \$73,000, with most of this for staff salary. Total expenses were \$1.1 million, which reflects the almost \$1 million payment made toward construction costs for the Bishop Allen project. As a result, there was an operating deficit of \$1,256,000 for the month of November. Through November, the total deficit is \$8,259,000, of which Bishop Allen represents \$8 million. Operationally, the CRA has benefited from the strong market as operational expenses have basically been funded by the performance of the portfolio. The full year numbers will be in the annual report next month.

Mr. Bator emphasized that the CRA is spending some of its assets, as intended. Ms. Born said that the CRA is transferring from one asset class to another, investments to real estate. Ms. Kailasam said that this will be evident on the balance sheet. Instead of having \$10 million reflected in the investment account, it will be reflected in the fixed asset account.

A motion was moved by Ms. Drury to place the staff report on file. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member's vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes
Kathy Born – yes

Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.

4. 99 Bishop Allen Drive – Project Update

Motion: Authorizing the Executive Director to negotiate a lease agreement with Loop Lab for office space at 99 Bishop Allen Drive.

Erica Schwarz, CRA Project Director, said that as of December 22, the building was officially turned back over to the CRA from the CRA's general contractor, GVW. At that time, a temporary occupancy permit was received due to some minor things that are already underway and largely completed. The non-temporary full occupancy permit is expected in the near term. The elevator also got a 90-day inspection because of some minor things, many of which have been resolved. Some interior punch list items are being completed. There are also exterior punch list items but some of these will have to wait for warmer weather. The building looks beautiful. It is a real win for the neighborhood and the nonprofit tenants who are returning to the building.

Carlos Peralta, CRA Project Manager, said that the CRA property managers, Third Sector New England (TSNE) have been doing a great job of maintaining all aspects of tenant relations as well as property management since the building was been turned over to the CRA. A majority of the tenants have not yet moved back into the building to work due to Covid. This has actually given TSNE more time to set up the building-wide internet as well as other small tenant amenities that weren't completed during construction. Some tenants have prepared their spaces for work, while others still have boxes that were delivered in December. The move back into the building went smoothly. There are some items that may be misplaced throughout the building but as tenants begin to move back into the building, Mr. Peralta expects that these things will turn up. The tenants that have moved back into the building are happy with their spaces.

Ms. Schwarz said that the project is expected to come in marginally under budget with a small amount of contingency remaining. The exact numbers are being calculated. With respect to tonight's motion, Ms. Schwarz said that she was planning to say a few words about Loop Lab but Chris Hope already spoke in detail about his organization earlier in the meeting. Loop Lab has expressed interest in becoming a tenant in the 99 Bishop Allen Drive building. An RFP has been out for many months but COVID has been a bad time to find nonprofit tenants so there was little interest. Loop Lab is a great fit for the building. The motion will allow Mr. Evans to enter into lease negotiations with Loop Lab. She noted that there might be some other tenants who want to shift to different spaces. If Loop Lab is approved, there will still be one space available for a nonprofit. Although the RFP had an initial deadline, it was changed to a rolling deadline so organizations can still respond to it.

Summarizing the project, Ms. Schwarz said that the building was purchased by the CRA in 2019. The renovation project had a \$11.3 million budget. The CRA received support from the Cambridge Community Preservation Act Fund for historic preservation. The Cambridge Historical Commission gave advice on some design details. A rebate of about \$16,000 from Eversource is expected for energy improvements. All the systems were upgraded to meet fire and safety codes, with much of the building gutted. Some of the floor plan was reworked to ensure that the building was fully ADA compliant. Ms. Schwarz showed before and after pictures of the outside and the inside of the building. Each tenant was allowed to individualize their space with flooring choices, as well as paint colors. Mr. Evans added that, consistent with the City's net zero plan, this building now runs solely on electricity. The HVAC units are located in the alleyway. Mr. Peralta added that the tenants are pleased with the new heating. Throughout the upcoming year, a separate project will install solar panels on the roof, which is solar-ready.

In response to a question in the chat, Ms. Schwarz said that all of the tenants are nonprofit organizations. The building was purchased by the CRA to preserve affordable space for nonprofit organizations. All of the original tenants are returning. Because of the reconfigured plan, some new suites were created that can accommodate new tenants.

A motion was moved by Ms. Drury authorizing the Executive Director to negotiate a lease agreement with Loop Lab for office space at 99 Bishop Allen Drive. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member's vote was repeated.
Chris Bator – yes

*Kathy Born – yes
Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.*

5. MXD Retail Signage Design Review – 415 Main Street

Motion: Approving the new signage proposal by Life Alive for 415 Main Street, Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan Parcel Three.

As of December 22, the CRA received a signage package from Boston Properties in regards to exterior signage for Life Alive's new retail space. After staff review, questions were relayed to Life Alive. Staff feels that this proposal is ready for Board review. Bryan Timko and Alex Chan from Life Alive, Jeff Quast from Viewpoints Sign and Awning, and Teresa Morgan from Boston Properties were in attendance. Sebastian's was previously in the 415 Main Street space, which shuttered due to the pandemic. Mr. Evans added that this space is in the ground floor of the first Broad building. The building was developed by Boston Properties but through an agreement with the Broad Institute, MITIMCO owns the building but Boston Properties functions as the property manager.

Mr. Quast explained that the proposal is for a small, metal, custom-fabricated canopy which will have wood-looking slats. LED-illuminated letters, "LIFE ALIVE," will be on top of the front aluminum bar. Next to those letters are non-illuminated letters "ORGANIC CAFÉ" mounted to the same raceway. The canopy will be mounted to the existing storefront mullions. The canopy only has a 30-inch projection. A second smaller canopy has no sign on it.

Mr. Peralta added that some bricks in the sidewalk will also be illuminated. Mr. Quast said that one or two very small lights will go into pavers. In response to Mr. Peralta, Mr. Quast explained how he thought the LED light would be fixed if one of the lights break. Mr. Timko said that the light in the paver is a clear or white light. The electrical conduit is channeled to the signage lights through the aluminum tube structure. The power pack would be inside the building. There would be no visibility from the ground. In response to Mr. Zevin, Mr. Quast said that the illumination is all low voltage LEDs. There are two entrances. The Life Alive Organic Cafe overhang sign will be over the main entrance. The other smaller canopy, without letters or illumination, will be over the secondary entrance.

Ms. Born brought up the issue of possible confusion due to the 415 Main Street building address while the Life Alive entrance is on Ames Street. Mr. Evans said that much of the new construction in the area has that issue.

A motion was moved by Ms Drury approving the new signage proposal by Life Alive for 415 Main Street, Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan Parcel Three. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member's vote was repeated.

*Chris Bator – yes
Kathy Born – yes
Conrad Crawford – yes
Margaret Drury - yes
Barry Zevin – yes
The motion carried.*

6. Foundry Office Leasing

Motion: Authorizing the Executive Director and Chair to negotiate and execute lease agreements with Deep Genomic, the Commonwealth Cancer Consortium, and Breakthrough Greater Boston for office space at the Foundry Building, 101 Rogers Street.

Ms. Schwarz said that the financial model for the Foundry relies heavily on office rental income to support the building's operations. The community-use spaces on the first and second floors will generate some income. There are four office suites - three at market rate and one at below-market rate. CRA staff and Newmark, the CRA's broker for the market-rate suites, did extensive outreach. Newmark conducted many site visits and tours, with the City's construction team being very accommodating in letting groups into the building. There are now two signed letters of interest (LOI) for two of the market-rate office suites from tenants who align well with the building's mission.

The below-market space was offered under a different process - a lottery. Groups responded to a posted RFP. TSNE, the CRA's property management consultant for the Foundry, identified which responses were qualified to go into the lottery using the rankings that the CRA Board approved at a prior meeting. The rankings considered criteria including whether the organization was BIPOC led, had an existing location in Cambridge, and served low-income constituents. There were just three responses to the RFP, with all three qualifying to enter the top tier of the random selection process. Breakthrough Greater Boston was selected first, followed by Flavor Continues, a street dance group that's been active in Cambridge, and then The Loop Lab.

The leases proposed at this time are all for five-year terms. The rent amounts will not be shared at this time as there is still a fourth office market-rate office suite that is not leased yet. The rents support what is needed in the building. There is one entity who has shown interest in the remaining 8,000 square foot market-rate space. Staff is hopeful to get a proposal in the next few weeks. Newmark continues to market the space.

Staff is in touch with the Executive Director of the Foundry Consortium (FC), the CRA's nonprofit operator, on finalizing the lease language so that it aligns with their plan to operate the building. Staff have been meeting with the FC regularly regarding their other plans.

Mr. Evans clarified that tonight's executive session meeting will be about the Foundry master lease arrangement with the City and is unrelated to these three entities.

A motion was moved by Mr. Zevin, authorizing the Executive Director and Chair to negotiate and execute lease agreements with Deep Genomics, the Commonwealth Cancer Consortium dba Break Though Cancer, and Breakthrough Greater Boston for office space at the Foundry Building, 101 Rogers Street. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member's vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes

Kathy Born – yes

Conrad Crawford – yes

Margaret Drury - yes

Barry Zevin – yes

The motion carried.

7. Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Evans noted that the Strategic Plan item was posted on the agenda but that a related handout regarding options for the updated mission was not posted. Ms. Born said that Mr. Evans distributed the one-page handout to Board members this afternoon. This document was presented on the screen during the meeting.

Kathryn Madden, CRA Strategic Planner, said that staff had a work session regarding the mission statement in late August. A summary of that meeting was then brought to the Board for discussion in September where the existing mission statement was analyzed regarding words that resonated and words that didn't resonate. Ms. Madden emphasized that a mission statement defines the CRA's identity and who it serves. It keeps the CRA accountable, on track, and informs decision-making by capturing its values. The current mission statement that was written in 2013 and 2014 has stood well over time, but it's worth looking at it again. She suggested that this time, a simpler one with possibly a one sentence statement might be useful for use on documents or a webpage. One-line statements are also easier to remember. Other statements can be added on a sub-level to qualify it.

Ms. Madden proposed five Mission Statements to the Board, which were ordered by length from shortest to longest. She asked the Board to identify which one works the best and which ones had words that might be problematic. The members spent several minutes reading the statements individually. Each statement was then read aloud. Ms. Madden emphasized that this is a work session and that she would take feedback from the Board and then work to create a single draft version.

Mr. Bator felt that number five best stated what the CRA does but he said that there are words that can be omitted because they are obvious and not necessary, such as "work collaboratively". He doesn't like "brings a human dimension." In statement number one, "address climate change" is a bold claim. Regarding number four, the CRA

deals with conventional, as well as “unique redevelopment issues.” Mr. Bator did not feel it necessary to state that the CRA is creative.

Ms. Drury did not like “agile public authority” or the word “nimble.”

Mr. Crawford liked the brevity and comprehensiveness of statement number two. He suggested the possibility of using “brings a human-centered approach” instead of “brings a human dimension” so that the public knows that the CRA thinks about people first.

Ms. Born had liked that statement four was general but also aspirational. “Agile” is an overused word today. Although brevity is important, Ms. Born liked statement number five but suggested eliminating the word “achieves” so that the mission statement is not self-adulatory. “Promotes” was suggested as an alternative. She likes the notion of being upfront and stating that the CRA is “a public real estate entity with unique redevelopment tools.” Mr. Bator said that the phrase “working with the City of Cambridge and community organizations” was implied and didn’t need to be stated. Ms. Madden said that some of the statements can be second tier statements.

Mr. Zevin agreed that many of the words are vague and overused. He doesn’t want the mission statement to over-promise. He added that the CRA doesn’t have the scope and authority to fully address the complexity of climate change. He questioned the uniqueness of the redevelopment tools since they are bound by state statute. He dislikes the word “resilience.”

Mr. Bator is okay with “unique redevelopment tools,” because in the Cambridge environment, the CRA is unique and not an arm of City government. This suggests that ideas that aren’t getting heard elsewhere should come to the CRA, which has happened during this Board’s tenure. Mr. Zevin noted the distinction is that, as a redevelopment agency, the CRA has development tools that differ from those available to other city entities. It was agreed that either the word “imaginative” or “creative” would suffice; both were not necessary.

Ms. Madden asked if the first sentence in statement number five could stand on its own as a value statement. Mr. Bator isn’t bothered having three sentences in a mission statement.

Mr. Evans noted that the initial strategic plan had the mission statement as well as a series of operating principles that could cover some of the other concepts.

Ms. Born suggested rearranging the sentences in statement number five, starting with the third and working backwards. She also didn’t see any issues with three sentences, especially if some words were removed. Ms. Madden said that statement number five is the current mission statement. Ms. Drury thought it was too wordy. Ms. Born insisted on replacing the word “achieve.”

In response to a request from Ms. Born, Ms. Madden said that she would edit statement number five, possibly rearranging the three sentences, and adding some words that members felt were important to include. This will be distributed to the Board with adequate time for individual review. Ms. Madden said that it’s been almost a year that the CRA started this strategic plan. Usually, a plan is written and then implemented but with this plan, it’s been implemented as it’s being developed. The idea of a Strategic Advisory Group came up in the spring. A decision was made to pause the planning process to focus on selecting people for that group. It is a very diverse group on every dimension. The strategic planning process will draw on the Group’s combined professional and personal experience and knowledge. The recommendations for projects or initiatives that come out of this group’s discussions will be brought to the Board. The staff is now orienting the Strategic Advisory Group, discussing past CRA projects and lessons learned, and reviewing redevelopment tools and the differences between the role of the CRA and the City.

Ms. Born noted that having a Board approved mission statement would be important for the Strategic Advisory Group to have. Ms. Madden noted that the current mission has been a touchstone in discussions.

Mr. Bator noted Ms. Hoffman’s message in the chat where she commented on liking the mention of government entities affecting human lives in a mission statement. He said it is better to explicitly state this goal than using terms like social equity and environmental sustainability. He added that the CRA’s operating principles are also

important for the group to understand - act, operate with transparency, maximize the public benefit, operate with fiscal responsibility, and set an example.

Mr. Zevin suggested the phrase “the CRA is a public real estate entity with a set of tools unique to redevelopment authorities.”

Ms. Born said that the CRA has now concluded all of its business. There will be a vote to move into executive session with the understanding that the regular board will not reconvene in open session afterwards. The Board is going into executive session in order to consider the lease terms for the Foundry at 101 Roger Street.

At 7:41 p.m. there was a short break and the executive session will start at 7:55pm. It was clarified that Ms. Levering had sent a Zoom link for the executive session and Mr. Evans sent a document to the Board for review.

A motion was moved by Mr. Bator to enter into Executive Session to consider lease terms for the Foundry at 101 Rogers Street. A roll call was taken by Mr. Evans and each member’s vote was repeated.

Chris Bator – yes

Kathy Born – yes

Conrad Crawford – yes

Margaret Drury - yes

Barry Zevin – yes

The motion carried.