Meeting Date: Wednesday, May 14, 2014


1. Introduction and Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon introduced himself and called upon the other members of the Committee to do the same. More than half of the group noted that they were residents of Washington Square Village or Silver Towers. Maslon noted his service as chair of the Stewardship and Quality of Life Subcommittee of the University Space Priorities Working Group (USPWG), which recommended, in its final report, that the University form a standing Stewardship Committee.

Maslon indicated that he hopes the Committee will focus on the opportunity to improve life on the superblocks, not just the mitigation of the “inconvenience” of construction, and on working collaboratively and constructively with the University. He urged members to keep in mind schedules and deadlines in order for the Committee to provide meaningful input.

At the Committee’s request, Lynne Brown, Senior Vice President, University Relations and Public Affairs, provided an overview of the pending litigation that was filed against the City’s approval process (known as the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure or “ULURP”). She noted that the New York State Supreme Court ruled on January 7, 2014 to dismiss five of the lawsuit’s six claims. In the sixth claim, however, the judge ruled that three strips of land on the superblock site were to be considered parkland by implication. What that means, Brown said, was that the judge ruled that approval is required from the New York State Legislature to use those strips even for staging during construction. Brown indicated that both the plaintiffs and the defendants filed appeals in the Appellate Division; oral arguments are expected in September 2014, with a decision likely to come three to six months thereafter. Since the Coles site was unaffected by the judge’s decision, Brown noted that NYU was moving forward with the planning and design of a new building.
2. Process and Timeline for Selection of Architect

Kenny Lee, Senior Director for the Coles project, provided an overview of the process and timeline for hiring an architect. He introduced a draft set of guiding principles that would help inform the development of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the formation of a list of potential architectural firms and asked that the Committee provide input. Members suggested that specific experience with design in an urban environment be added as a qualification.

The Committee was also asked to provide feedback on the prioritization of the guiding principles, as well as to suggest any additional criteria, in advance of the release of the RFQ in late May. The Committee requested the opportunity to review a draft of the RFQ document, which will be provided to them. [Note: the RFP was distributed to the committee by Michael Patullo via email on May 19th]

3. Process and Timeline for Selection of Construction Monitor

Lee introduced a process for hiring a construction monitor, which was recommended in the University Space Priorities Working Group Final Report (under the set of qualifications known as industrial hygienist). This monitor, he noted, could be in addition to the one that was mandated in the Restrictive Declaration and which reports to the Department of City Planning. The proposed monitor would provide, as indicated by the Working Group, an evaluation of the adequacy of the mitigation measures required by the City under its approval of the NYU Core Plan.

A draft set of guiding principles that would inform an RFQ for the construction monitor was introduced for discussion. Members discussed possible ways in which the monitor could maintain independence and be a resource for the Committee. It was noted that the monitor should serve as an expert who could interpret and assess the effects of construction on behalf of the Committee.

It was agreed that the Committee would revisit this discussion at its next meeting. Lee will prepare a list of firms with outstanding records for safety, high quality skill sets as they relate to the qualifications put forth by the Working Group, and that can meet the expectations of the scope of work. The Committee will then review the list to help inform the subsequent process of choosing a monitor through a sequential process of issuing a Request for Proposals and conducting interviews.