Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, November 18, 2011
Room 12-196 12pm – 2pm
Minutes taken by Lisa Stagnone

Present: Alex Slocum, David Singer, Katie Vogel, Hamed Alemohammad, Danielle Guichard-Ashbrook, Andy Barlow, Phuree (Will) Smittinet, Karen Anne Sittig

Guests: Walker Memorial Assessment Team (WMAT) represented by Brian Spatocco, Will Steadman, Rachel Meyers

Topic: Walker Memorial

Walker Memorial was built in 1916 named after MIT President Francis A. Walker and was the hub of activity within student life, the center of the Institute. There are 36 student groups residing there. The Cambridge Historical Society has long been involved with the building as well as the community. Last year, the building was targeted for repurposing. By fall, student involvement was requested in the planning purposes of the space due to the direct impact the building has on student life. Through months of meetings with administration and students, involvement via a committee was determined and named the Walker Memorial Assessment Team (WMAT).

The team members are:
Associate Provost, Marty Schmidt who chairs is the chair person
Dean for Student Life, Chris Colombo
Dean for Graduate Education, Christine Ortiz,
Student Reps: Brian Spatocco (GSC), Will Steadman (UA), Rachel Meyers (ASA)
Director of CAC and DSL space, Phil Walsh
Assistant to the Provost for Space Planning, John Dunbar
Dept of Facilities, James May
(charge: http://web.mit.edu/asa/docs/WMATCharge.pdf)

Phase One:
WMAT has been working together to recommend how and what will happen to the space due to the impact on student life

- Establish current usage, allocation and reserved spaces. Lay out alternative.

- Work with the architects to define the physical space.

- Seek recommendations for the functionality assessment

The building is a historical site within Cambridge and is protected. The footprint may change but basic features cannot change. When you do change things you need to think in regards to current building code concerns. Some buildings here have been grandfathered in, meaning
they don’t need to conform right away to new codes unless major changes are happening. This building has deferred maintenance concerns.

Last year Morss Hall hosted approximately 400 events per the CAC records.

Phase Two:
The executive summary was drafted and sent out to groups during summer 2011 so that senior leadership can understand at a glance the usage of Walker. Whether you are familiar with Walker or not, the need to understand the impact on the community is important. Because Walker Memorial is heavily used after dusk when senior leadership is not present on campus, such executive summaries help to identify the usage of the space.

During renovation, we are concerned with enabling projects and create swing space (for both long and short term placement). Capital projects trying to be aligned to move other groups into swing spaces. We have to make sure that we aren’t creating new problems with placing groups in areas and upsetting their neighbors. Morss Hall is the hardest to place due to the fact of its size, 8000 square feet.

Professor Slocum asked the group:
If you president of MIT and had infinite power and access to funding what would you do?

- Building a Graduate Student Center in the tennis courts at Walker Memorial containing a large space for student groups and administrative offices
- Add two more floors to the current Student Center
- Make another Morss Hall like space to hold up to 1000 people for events
- Take the space of E40, across from East Gate, and make it a grand auditorium to host Jack Welsh-ess like events and place parking underground.
- Build more on campus housing
- Take the space at 26-100 with the bad seating and renovate it
- Create large event space along with conferencing facility near the Red Line for transportation options
- Build a theater on campus (larger than Kresge)
- Have all student reps as deans
- Large meeting space with portable seating for optimal use of space
- When hosting foreign institutions for collaboration purposes, take funding to build locally a new center for all needs and maybe repurpose the Metro Warehouse as student center with pre-cut spaces as offices.

(presentation attached)
Walker Memorial Assessment Team (WMAT)

Brian Spatocco, Rachel Meyer, William Steadman
Preface

• Identified in the 2030 Process as a potential project
• Fall 2010: Administration notifies occupants/users of Walker that space was being considered for repurposing
• October 2010: GSC begins working with Admin
• Oct 2010 - Feb 2011: the GSC advocated for student representation (both undergrads and grads)
• March 2011: WMAT convened
• NB: This is the first capital expense project in which students are playing an active and official role from the “beginning”
Team Details

• Team
  – Admins: Provost Marty Schmidt (chair), Dean Christine Ortiz, Dean Chris Colombo, Phil Walsh
  – Staff: Jay Scheib (MTA), William Cutter (MTA)
  – Students: Brian Spatocco (GSC), Rachel Meyer (ASA), William Steadman (UA)
  – Staff Support: John Dunbar (Provost Office), James May (Facilities)

• Time
  – Phase 1: March 30th – July-ish
  – Phase 2: October 13th – December-ish
Charges

- Catalog, assess and summarize the current student uses, needs and the historical, community and cultural value of Walker Memorial to the graduate and undergraduate student populations
- Consider, formulate, and evaluate options for the movement of current usage elsewhere on campus (both temporary and permanent)
- Communicate, exchange information and provide feedback to MTA/DoF team and the architects on a regular basis, and vice versa. This would include working with the architects and MTA to develop concepts for shared use of Walker Memorial.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits to students associated with the repurposing of Walker Memorial for the various architectural scenarios; if possible, provide a recommendation for the preferred architectural scenario
Progress thus far (Phase I)

- Student Group Questionnaires and Interviews
- Student Group Executive Summaries
- Compilation of online letter-writing campaign
- Identification of potential relocation spaces
- Proposals of enabling projects
- Quantification of Morss Hall Usage
- Quantification of current relocation space usage
Upcoming work (Phase II)

• Authoring of Report (early December)
  – Give detailed analysis of current student group usage of Walker, potential relocation sites, and important enabling projects
  – Present the evidence that Morss hall is critical and is a remaining issue for further investigation

• Morss Hall Investigation
  – Analyze utilization by event type and resource demands
  – Analyze capacity available to displace current activities
  – State questions that require further investigation and identify a process to follow the report

• Follow up meetings with Student Groups
  – Allow groups to comment on potential relocation spaces and revise them accordingly
Things We believe

• This is an amazing collaboration and first step towards playing a larger role in university decision making
• Most groups have potential relocation spaces which are equal to or better than their current spaces
• Morss Hall is one of the most significant space-planning problems facing the Institute right now.