

## ***JAMAICA PLAIN NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTION HANDBOOK***

Elected membership to the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (J.P.N.C.) is open to all area residents of Jamaica Plain sixteen years or older. In addition, persons owning businesses and directors of not-for-profit organizations within Jamaica Plain are also eligible for membership. The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council shall have twenty (20) members, of whom a minimum of sixteen (16) shall reside in Jamaica Plain. Council members will represent the Jamaica Plain neighborhood as follows: Five seats are assigned to eligible persons residing in or representing Area "A", five seats are assigned to eligible persons residing in or representing Area "B", five seats are assigned to eligible persons residing in or representing Area "C", and five At-Large seats are assigned to eligible persons residing in or representing any location within Jamaica Plain. See Addendum A ("Map of J.P.N.C. Voting Districts) and Addendum B (Description by Ward and Precinct of J.P.N.C. Voting Districts).

This handbook contains the rules and procedures under which J. P.N.C. conducts its elections. Adopted pursuant to the By-Laws of the J.P.N.C. on March 31, 2009.

### **General Rules**

Elections shall be held every two years.

- The conduct of J.P.N.C. elections must be consistent with the current J.P.N.C. by-laws and this Election Handbook.
- In the application and interpretation of these rules throughout the election process, the resolution reached by a majority of the Ombuds Board will be final.
- Responsibility for conducting the election and selecting the members of the Ombuds Board rests with the ad hoc Elections Committee of the J.P.N.C. as established in the by laws
- The J.P.N.C. will determine the day, date, time, and location of the election.

### **Candidate Criteria**

- To be on the ballot, candidates must be Eligible Residents of Jamaica Plain, or own a business, or direct a not-for-profit organization in Jamaica Plain

**AND**

Have at least 25 qualified signatures for District candidacy, or 50 qualified signatures for At-Large candidacy. Qualified signatures must be from Eligible Residents of Jamaica Plain.

- Eligible Residents are those 16 years old or older as of the election day

**AND**

Listed on the most current City of Boston List of Residents in the Jamaica Plain area

**OR**

Showing proof of age, identity, and residency. Such proof includes, but is not limited to: government-issued photo ID, current school report card with envelope, drivers permit, birth certificate, or a piece of mail from a utility or governmental agency.

### **Filing Nomination Papers**

- Nomination papers must specify the Voting District in which the candidate intends to run ("Area A," "Area B, or "Area C") or that the candidate intends to run "At Large." If the candidate is the owner of a business or the director of a non-profit organization in Jamaica Plain, and not a resident, the Candidate must provide the name and official address of their Jamaica Plain business or organization and run in that neighborhood or At-Large. No candidate may run simultaneously in more than one neighborhood district, or for a neighborhood District and At-Large seat.
- Completed nomination papers will be submitted to a responsible community person who is not a current candidate or Council member and forwarded to the Ombuds Board.
- The filing deadline for Nomination Papers will be determined by the J.P.N.C.
- The Ombuds Board will verify the residency and genuineness of all nomination signatures based on the most current list of residents or other acceptable proof as provided in these rules.
- Nomination papers will be returned to the Chair of the J.P.N.C. who will promptly notify each candidate of their status as a candidate. Candidates who do not qualify based on disqualified signatures will have the opportunity to appeal to the Ombuds Board and show evidence to verify challenged signatures.
- The appeal period will last no more than eight days from the date a candidate is notified of their status by the Chair.
- At the end of the appeal period, candidates will be notified of their status by the Ombuds Board.

### **Write-in Candidacy**

- Eligible persons seeking to be elected to a J.P.N.C District or At-Large seat that have not previously qualified or participated in the nomination process can seek election through write-in candidacy on Election Day.
- Write-in candidates shall instruct their supporters to write-in the candidate's name and address in the appropriate section of the ballot, or to affix a sticker with a single candidate's name and address in the appropriate section of the ballot. Stickers must not cover the names of other candidates on the ballot.
- Stickers may not have more than one candidate's name and address.

### **Who can vote?**

- All Eligible Residents of Jamaica Plain can vote.
- Eligible Residents are those 16 years old or older as of the election day  
AND  
are listed on the most current City of Boston List of Residents  
OR  
show proof of age, identity, and residency.
- Proof is documentation including, but not limited to, a government-issued photo ID, a current-year report card with envelope, a driver's permit, a birth certificate, or a piece of mail from a utility or governmental agency.

## **Election Day Process**

- No worker at a polling place may actively campaign or distribute associated literature or materials for any candidate.
- No candidate may actively campaign or distribute associated literature or materials within 50 feet of a polling table within a designated polling place.
- Each polling place shall have written balloting instructions available in both English and Spanish [to be drafted].
- Each polling place will have a listing of all nominated candidates noting the seat each is seeking.
- Each polling place will have a publicly-available copy of the J.P.N.C. Election Handbook as a reference.
- Each polling place shall have legible election maps to assist voters and poll workers in determining a voter's voting district.
- Each polling place will be staffed by at least one person over the age of 18 if possible.
- Each polling place will have adequate and conspicuous signage to identify it as a polling place for J.P.N.C. elections.
- Each polling place will strive to ensure the privacy of the voting.
- If a designated polling place is unstaffed or inadequately staffed, or is otherwise unable to open on election day, the location of the next-nearest polling place shall be posted at such location.

## **Balloting**

- Ballots will be accepted as verified by the most current City of Boston List of Residents or by presenting proof of age, identity, and residency.
- Proof is documentation including, but not limited to, a government-issued photo ID, a current year report card with envelope, a drivers permit, a birth certificate, or a piece of mail from a utility or governmental agency.
- Voters whose proof of residency cannot be verified will vote and the outer balloting envelope will be marked clearly with the letter 'S' for special circumstances. The voter's explanation of why the vote should be considered will be written on the outer envelope and reviewed by the Ombuds Board for qualification prior to ballot counting.
- Voters will receive a single ballot for the District in which they reside, together with an envelope marked or color-coded to show the District of the enclosed ballot.
- Voters will mark their ballot to elect up to 5 District seats and up to 5 At-Large seats.
- Votes for District candidates can be cast only by voters living in that District.

- Ballots will be placed by the Voters in envelopes before they are cast. The Voter must sign, address, and seal the envelope (as well as write any special circumstances that they believe entitle them to vote without adequate proof of residence, in the case of an “S” ballot) before casting the enclosed ballot.
- Ballots will be returned to a central location for safe keeping prior to ballot counting.

### **Ballot Counting**

- Sealed ballots shall be sorted by the Ombuds Board into four groups; (1) Area A, (2) Area B, (3) Area C, and (4) unsigned ballots, “S” ballots, and ballots in which the voter’s residential district cannot be determined.
- Ballots in unsigned envelopes shall not be counted. A majority of the Ombuds Board shall determine whether to count any “S” ballot or ballot that is despoiled, irregular, potentially fraudulent, or as to which the voter’s residential district cannot be determined.
- After all envelopes have been sorted and their eligibility determined, the Ombuds Board shall remove the ballots from their outer envelopes. Counting of ballots in each voting district may only begin after all ballots in that district have been removed from their outer envelopes. To the extent feasible, the Ombuds Board shall seek to keep the sorting and qualification of ballots separate and distinct from the counting functions, conducting these functions in separate areas, at separate times, with separate teams of volunteers.
- Ballots shall then be counted.
- If a ballot contains votes for more than five District candidates or more than five At-Large candidates, the ballot shall not be counted in the race (District or At-Large) in which the Voter has overvoted.
- No vote for a District candidate by a Voter who resides in a different District shall be counted, however the ballot shall still be counted as to any votes within the Voter’s District or At-Large.
- In examining questionable ballots, the Ombuds Board shall to the greatest extent possible seek to determine and give effect to the Voter’s intent in a manner consistent with these Rules.
- No candidate will participate in the actual counting of ballots except in the case of an emergency declared by the Ombuds Board, but in no event may a candidate count ballots for a District in which the candidate is running.
- A write-in sticker on a ballot, or a write-in name, where it has otherwise been done properly in accordance with these rules, shall be counted as a vote for the write-in candidate, without the requirement of a check mark, tick, or further indication of the Voter’s intention.
- No candidate for a District seat, whether write-in or nominated, shall be elected with fewer than 25 votes, and no At-Large candidate shall be elected with fewer than 50 votes.
- The elected J.P.N.C. members shall be the five candidates in each voting District and the five At-Large candidates with the highest number of votes, except as provided herein. However, in the case of non-resident business-owners or directors of non-profit organizations, if more than four such candidates are among the twenty highest vote-recipients as determined above, only the four with the highest vote totals shall be elected, and the next-highest vote-recipient in each voting district (or At-Large) shall be elected in

place of each disqualified non-resident.

- Ballots and ballot envelopes shall be retained in a secure location until the election results are certified.

### **Election Results**

- Upon the majority approval of the Ombuds Board, election results will be announced.

### **Post Election**

- The Ombuds Board will meet at least once post-election with members of the J.P.N.C.'s ad hoc Elections Committee to review the conduct of the election and to make suggestions for revisions to these rules or for improvements to the efficiency, fairness, and public participation in the elections process.

## ***ELECTION TIMELINE***

**July 8, 2011**

**Election packets will be available at the public libraries (Jamaica Plain, Connolly, and Egleston) and J.P. Licks**

**August 5, 2011**

**Completed nomination papers (including signatures and a short candidate biography for publication) must be returned in person by 5 PM to**

### ***JAMAICA PLAIN NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL***

c/o Jamaica Plain Library  
12 Sedgwick Street  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts 02130

**August 5 - August 18, 2011**

**Signature validation period**

**August 18-August 25, 2011**

**Signature Appeals period**

**August 25, 2011**

**Ballot Position Drawing**

**September 24, 2011**

**Voting at Forest Hills T station, J.P. Licks, Jackson Square Stop and Shop, 10am-7pm**

**To be determined by Ombuds Board**

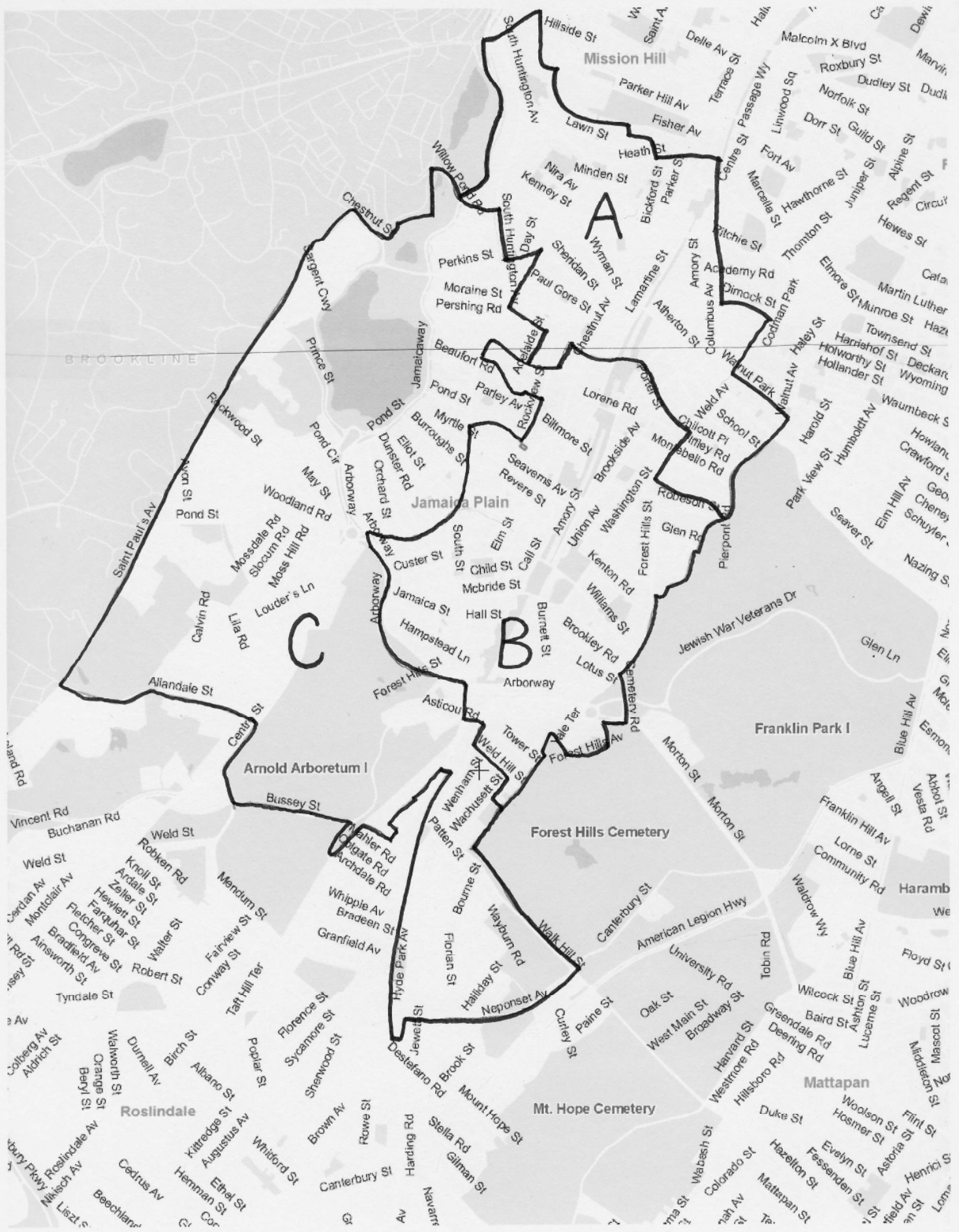
**Official results certified and announced by Ombuds Board**

## **THE OMBUDS BOARD**

The Ombuds Board shall be selected by the ad hoc Elections Committee of the J.P.N.C. and approved by the full Council. Ombuds may be any competent persons willing and able to carry out the responsibilities of the Ombuds Board who are (1) not current J.P.N.C. members, (2) not currently seeking to be elected to the J.P.N.C., and (3) not an immediate family member or employee of any current candidate. The Ombuds Board shall have an odd number of members, not less than three, and shall not take any action as a Board without the participation of at least three members.

The Ombuds Board shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Ensuring integrity of the election process
2. Supervising the adherence of the election process to these rules, and their enforcement at the voting sites (e.g. no candidate signs on the voting tables)
3. Supervising the collection of nomination papers, candidate biographies, and signatures
4. Resolving signature disputes during appeals period
5. Taking possession of the ballots and providing for their safekeeping prior to counting
6. Resolving any contested or questionable ballots
7. Supervising the counting of ballots
8. Certifying the Election results
9. Reporting to the Ad Hoc Elections Committee on all matters related to the conduct of the election, adhering to Election Committee deadlines and requests for information.



## **ADDENDUM B – J.P.N.C Voting Districts**

**Area “A”** is Ward 10,  
Precincts, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (east of  
South Huntington Avenue)  
Ward 11, Precincts 4 and 5  
Ward 19, Precinct 1

**Area “B”** is Ward 11,  
Precincts 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10  
Ward 19, Precincts 4, 6, and 9  
(East of Centre Street).

**Area “C”** is Ward 10,  
Precinct 9 (west of South  
Huntington Avenue)  
Ward 19, Precincts 2, 3, 5, 7, 8,  
9 (West of Centre Street) and 12.