

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council

February 26, 2019 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Kevin Rainsford, Carmel Levy, Michael Reiskind, Vicky Arroyo, David Baron, Robin Cheung, Bernard Doherty, Samantha Montano, Carolyn Royce, Kyle Smith, Emily Tabor, Gert Thorn, Esther Tutella-Chen, and Trevor Wissink-Adams.

Elected at the meeting: Marvin Mathelier.

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Celeste Walker, Dana Gonsalves, Dottie Farrell, Kathy Farrell, Marcia Burley, Marcos Elugardo, Louise Robbins, Leroy Stoddard, Veronica Zhang, Will Poff-Webster (Office of City Councillor Matt O'Malley), Isabel Torres (Office of State Rep. Nika Elugardo), Nika Elugardo (State Representative), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

Meeting called to order at 7:12pm by Kevin Rainsford at Farnsworth House.

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves.

2. Approval of January minutes: There are two corrections needed for the January minutes. In the "Housing and Development Committee" section, it should read that "The park is a shared space", not that the \$28Million will be shared. Also Dana Gonsalves' name was misspelled. Motion by Carmel Levy to approve the January 22, 2019 minutes, as amended. Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 9-0-3 (2 came late).

3. Rep. Nika Elugardo: State Representative Nika Elugardo passed out a handout with her contact information and the five priority bills she has filed. She lives on Sheridan Street and has been an elected official for just over one month now. Her core priorities are housing, education and health care - the three main public goods. Rep. Elugardo got her top two choices of committee assignments: She is on the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development which is a big revenue source for the state. She was also appointed to her chosen Joint Committee on Elder Affairs. As well, she was named to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, and the House Committee on Technology and Intergovernmental Affairs. She said that it is good that the new chair of the Ways and Means Committee, Aaron Michlewitz is from Boston.

Constituent services is a real key issue to her, as well as public safety and job opportunities for protected classes, such as youth, seniors, the LGBTQ community, the disabled, and formerly incarcerated. The Representative has visited the correctional institutions in Norfolk and Shirley. She takes a ten-year view of Justice For All.

Rep. Elugardo has filed 15 bills and co-sponsored 381 bills. Her number one bill (HD3654) is an Act to enable public housing authorities to borrow against real estate equity of publicly-owned properties. Other top priority bills are HD3638 - to protect elder housing, HD1100 - to enable local options for tenant protections (rent control is an option), HD3671 - to enable housing authorities to enter enforceable deed restriction agreements with small property owners in good standing as part of zoning variance approval, and HD3660 - oversight of tax expenditures. This last one focuses on finding places where there is hidden or underutilized money. There is also HD3642 - to enable conservation commissions to consider climate change within conservation plans.

There was a question about tracing the tax credits that subsidize film-making in the state. There was also a question about the 30-year subsidy expiring at the end of March for the Forbes Building (545 Centre Street); while there is no legislation directly affecting the seniors living in the building, there is a 13A subsidy from the State. There were questions on the culture in the State House, that the Green Budget needs to be increased, a large staff reduction at the Department of Environmental Affairs, the future of the Shattuck campus, and education funding reform. In summary, the Representative introduced her one staff person: Isabel Torres. She also mentioned eighty people from Team Nika have stayed on as volunteers and invited others to join them.

4. Announcements:

4.1. Third Announcement of Council Vacancy in Area A: Kevin Rainsford announced the vacancy in Area A and took nominations. Marvin Mathelier nominated himself for the open seat. He lives in Egleston Square at 14 Granada Park, is a first generation Haitian, and is in the Marine Corps Reserves. He has been serving the community for three years as a participant in the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA), and just bought a place because he has a 21-month old baby. He raised the fear that recent gentrification will displace too many residents from their homes. Egleston Square still has a problem with crime; the double shooting on January 18 is still fresh in residents' minds. He is interested in the Housing & Development Committee and the Public Service Committee. Leroy Stoddard rose to say he had intended to put his name in nomination, but has decided to withdraw at this time. Motion by Carolyn Royce to have Marvin Mathelier fill the JPNC vacancy in Area A. Seconded by Emily Tabor. Passed 13-0-0 (1 came late). Marvin Mathelier took a seat at the JPNC member table.

Robin Cheung asked about lack of participation of some JPNC members and whether seats can be freed up so that interested residents can come onto the Council. In particular, Kevin Leary has missed eight meetings over the last year. Motion by Carmel Levy to start the process as outlined in the Bylaws and send a notice to Kevin Leary about his absences. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 10-3-1 (1 came late).

4.2. Request for a new Chair of the Environment, Parks & Energy Committee: After a request for volunteers to chair the Environment, Parks & Energy Committee, Esther Tutella-Chen said that she would think about it and decide by the next meeting.

4.3. Other Announcements:

- There will be a Better Bus Open House for riders at Forest Hills station on Wednesday, February 27 from 3pm to 5pm.
- There will be a meeting on pedestrian safety and traffic in West Roxbury on Wednesday, February 27 at 7:00pm at the Elks Lodge, 248 Spring Street. There will be a meeting on pedestrian safety in Jamaica Plain in the future.

5. Streetscape Improvements on Centre and South Streets: Kevin Rainsford updated the Council about a long-standing request from the JPNC, the Jamaica Pond Association, JP Centre/South Main Streets, the JP Business & Professional Association, and the Sumner Hill Association to obtain funding for design work necessary for streetscape improvements on Centre and South Streets from Hyde Square to Forest Hills. Motion to sign the joint letter asking for \$500,000 in the City's Fiscal Year 2020 budget to complete the design work of streetscape improvements on Centre and South Streets from Hyde Square to Forest Hills. Passed by acclamation.

6. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

6.1. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met on February 6 and February 20 and five requests need votes: 1) 21-23 Wyman Street, a request by Dar Sandler (Appian Communications LLC) to change occupancy from a three-family dwelling to a lodging house with thirteen (13) bedrooms. This property just became a three-family last year. The owner has been using it as three-unit AirBnB, and is proposing a lodging house with thirteen separate rooms. It will be professionally run with a live-in manager in one of the units and twelve rooms rented out on AirBnB or a similar app. There was support from the neighbors, a petition in support, and support from Hyde Jackson Square Main Streets. Folks thought there was a need for short-term rentals in Jamaica Plain; the only other official Bed & Breakfast is the Taylor House. There was opposition with a petition of names. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve with the proviso that the change of occupancy applies to this applicant only. Michael Reiskind asked that support for a lodging house license also be added. Motion by Dave Baron to approve the recommendation of the ZC with the proviso and a request for a lodging house license at 21-23 Wyman Street. Seconded by Carmel Levy. Discussion was mainly on the question of why should we reward a bad actor by legalizing a previous illegal use. Passed 13-2-0.

2) 74 Westchester Road, a request by Joseph Zegarelli (as agent for Ethel Shepard) to confirm occupancy as a single family dwelling, construct second-floor addition with new front porch with roof and a rear balcony off of master bedroom, extend living space into basement with new garage space. Full interior renovation. The proposal puts an exercise room in the basement. Discussion centered mostly on design issues. The local Jamaica Hills Association voted not to oppose. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. 3) 12-12A Wyvern Street, a request by Steven Tarantino to add a 6-foot dormer to current third-floor staircase. The Zoning Committee did not receive anything from the neighbor on the side where the dormer is proposed to be built, but this abutting neighbor is not that close to 12-12A Wyvern Street. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve, with assurance from applicant to make best efforts to contact abutter on dormer side. 4) 319-329 Centre Street, a request by Andres Gutierrez/JP's Massage to change occupancy to include massage therapy use. JP's Massage Therapy Center is moving from its old location at 408 So. Huntington Avenue to a storefront at 319 Centre Street. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve with the proviso that the change of occupancy applies to this applicant only. 5) 26-28 Chilcott Place, a request by Tommy Noto and Shawn Butler for a change of use from a two-family to a three-family residence, construct vertical and rear additions and renovate existing structure, and add four (4) off-street parking spaces. The local Chilcott Place-Granada Park Neighborhood Association and the ESNA Housing Committee supported this proposal. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. Motion by Dave Baron to approve the recommendations on 74 Westchester Road, 12-12A Wyvern Street, 319-329 Centre Street, and 26-28 Chilcott Place. Seconded by Carmel Levy. Passed 13-0-2.

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, March 6 and March 20 at 7:00pm at Farnsworth House. On March 6, Max Glikman will give a review of the public records of the Jamaica Plain properties owned by City Realty. On the March 20 agenda will be requests from 16R Robeson Street, 79 Jamaica Street, and 12 Rock Hill Road.

6.2. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind reported the the Public Service Committee met on February 5 at Curtis Hall. On the agenda was a request for a beer & wine license at the Ethiopian Café at 377A Centre Street. This issue had to go to the Licensing Board before February 23, so it was sent for a vote to the Executive Committee. Firehiwot Zeleke, owner of Ethiopian Café, Inc. and manager of Ethiopian Café, said that the restaurant has been serving Ethiopian food for almost two years. She has a B.Y.O.B. license now, but reported that some customers leave the establishment when they learn that they have no beer and wine license and do not return. There was no opposition from the audience at the meeting. The Public Service Committee and Executive Committee recommended approval, with the proviso that alcohol is served with food only.

Also on the agenda was a discussion on bicycle safety, especially the bike lanes on Centre and South Streets. There was a strong case made for protected bicycle lanes (between the parking lane and the sidewalk) to improve safety and reduce dooring. On the other hand, it makes left turns harder for bicycles and might eliminate the bump-outs at the corners. The Boston Transportation Department (BTD) said that putting in protected bike lanes here would necessitate removing a

whole parking lane along the street. Bernie Doherty expressed a strong concern about the safety of bicycling in crowded streets in Jamaica Plain and said that a real education campaign is needed to improve compliance with existing laws. There was a request to look at existing protected bike lanes elsewhere in the region.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 5 at 7:00pm at Curtis Hall. On the agenda will be continued discussion on bicycle safety, and making a list of crosswalks and bike lanes needing repainting and streets needing repair.

6.3. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Carolyn Royce reported that the H&DC met on February 19. They heard from the developers of 121 Brookside Avenue for a proposed 4-story building with 21 residential units and 2 artist live/work spaces. Ms. Royce submitted a draft letter to be addressed to the director of the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) saying that the Council supports the increased density and low parking density and work spaces, but the affordability proposed is below Plan:JP/Rox and JPNC guidelines. The developer's threshold uses 80%-100% Area Median Income (AMI) for the affordable units. The letter asks that the proposal be changed to increase the number of affordable units and lower the AMI threshold. The proposal should also meet the setback requirements for a residential building; the developers are using the industrial building requirements in this district. The H&DC also had questions on the prices of the units and the square footage of the units.

Motion by Dave Baron to send the draft letter on the 121 Brookside Avenue proposal. Seconded by Carmel Levy. Gert Thorn asked that the language in the letter be massaged to make it clear what the JPNC supports and what we oppose. Passed 14-0-0 (1 left early).

A subcommittee of the H&DC is working on environmental benefits in new construction, such as being carbon neutral and using renewable energy.

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00pm at the Bowditch School, 82 Green Street.

6.4. Ad-Hoc Education Committee: There was no Education Committee meeting in February. The next Education Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 19 at 7:00pm at Curtis Hall, 20 South Street.

7. Old Business/New Business: None.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:13pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next JPNC meeting: Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at 7:00PM at Farnsworth House
Next Executive Committee meeting, Thursday, March 21, 2019 at 7:00pm at JP Licks.