

## Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council

### May 26, 2020 Minutes

**JPNC Attendance:** Kevin Rainsford, Max Glikman, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Robin Cheung, Will Cohen, Valerie Coimbra, Samantha Montano, Peg Preble, Carolyn Royce, Kyle Smith, Gert Thorn, Trevor Wissink-Adams, and Priscilla Yang.

**Other attendees:** Sarah Freeman, Dorothy Farrell, Andy Krasner, Rickie Harvey, City Councillor Matt O'Malley, Justin McClarey (Office of City Councillor Matt O'Malley), City Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George, Rachel Nagin (Office of City Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George), Natalie Kaufman (Office of Rep. Liz Malia), Lindsey Santana (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin). [One attendee did not sign in by name.]

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm by Kevin Rainsford via Zoom.

**1. Introductions:** Council members introduced themselves. Aides to elected officials also introduced themselves

**2. Approval of February and April minutes:** Motion by Max Glikman to approve the minutes from the February 25, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 11-0-3. Motion by Carolyn Royce to approve the minutes from the April 28, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Max Glikman. Passed 13-0-1.

**3. City Councillor Matt O'Malley:** City Councillor Matt O'Malley started by saying that Carol Senter (Loring Greenough House, Jamaica Plain Branch Library, Centers for Youth & Families) passed away recently. To date, Boston has 12,251 positive COVID-19 cases (with 6,000 recoveries) and 618 deaths. The State has 93,000 positive COVID-19 cases and 6,416 deaths. The State has tested 540,000 people. Neighborhood breakdown as of Friday: Jamaica Plain had 634 cases, which is a rate of 157.0 per 10,000 population. The Citywide rate is 180.1. Counting number of positive cases, there is a much larger impact on groups depending on their race and ethnicity. These health disparities are very troubling. There is free COVID-19 testing at Brookside Community Health Center and So. Jamaica Plain Health Center. This week is the first time there are no new admissions to Boston Hope, the emergency hospital set up at the Boston Convention Center. Trends have been positive, but Councillor O'Malley hopes that this will not allow people to become too lax. The City budget process has begun and the meetings have been very highly attended. The earlier budget drafts have had to be changed and will add more resources for public health, schools and the Office of Food Access. Right now, it is proposed to raise the budget by \$154Million (4.4%) and the five-year Capital Plan will be \$3Billion - the largest ever. However, the City has become increasingly reliant on property taxes (72% this year versus 52% in 2002). The high number of developments last year added \$99Million in new tax revenue. The proposed budget has been modified to allow for a reduction to \$65Million in new growth (lowest since FY'16) because of the health crisis. There will be new investments in environment, schools, and streetscape. Capital Plan proposals in Jamaica Plain include a new fire station for Engine 42 in Egleston Square, a rebuilt part of Bussey Brook wall in the Arnold Arboretum, Curley School, Amory Street Extension, Centre and South Streets, and Egleston Square. Also, a new Egleston Square Branch Library is now on the future schedule. The Boston Public Schools will have a difficult time going forward, but they have been a national model during this crisis; they distributed over 26,000 meals to students over the weekend and Monday. There is a big problem with not all students attending (logging in to) school remotely. More support is needed for teachers, and more Chromebooks have to be distributed. The JPNC can help with these BPS issues. On environment and sustainability and parks, the Councillor has re-submitted his bill on Net Zero Carbon, an initiative for new construction. All City building must be Net Zero Carbon, but it will take a continued push to extend it to the private sector. He also mentioned the mounted Park Rangers. Recycling is in a dilemma: it costs significantly more per ton to recycle waste than to bring it to a landfill. There is also a lot of work that needs to be done in Boston as a coastal city prone to flooding to meet the City's resiliency and sustainability goals. Councillor O'Malley said he is supporting mail-in voting and reducing fees by third-party vendors of restaurant delivery.

Questions: Will the COVID-19 crisis and the reduction of in-house staffing affect real estate assessments and reduce the City's revenue? How is the City's state aid formulated? It is by individual legislation every year. Does the State aid include BPS funding and Community Preservation Act funding? When will City government open more? Can Councillor O'Malley continue to update the JPNC about the budget throughout the year? FY'22 might be the toughest year. Will the restart of construction work well? The Inspectional Services Department (ISD) will be stretched thin and will need support. It is hard to socially distance in construction. Is there a possibility of shifting more real estate taxes from commercial to residential? How badly will a loss of the State reimbursement for school inequity affect BPS? Can the City increase funding for social services, especially in violence prevention? Hot Dog Nights at the housing developments will probably not happen this summer. How can the JPNC reach out and help build community? Perhaps some sort of online tutoring for BPS students. What can the City Council do to codify the Plan:JP/Rox guidelines?

Kevin Rainsford thanked Councillor O'Malley and especially his staff. He also recognized Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George.

#### **4. Announcements:**

- The YMCA of Greater Boston is having a virtual gala called Together We Care. It will take place on Saturday, June 6 at 7:00pm along with a silent online auction the whole week before on You Tube Live. Go to their Facebook page or their website [togeththerwecare.givesmart.com](http://togeththerwecare.givesmart.com).
- The Department of Conservation and Recreation has temporarily closed Parkman Drive to car traffic.
- JP Centre/South Main Streets will be having a public projection show on Centre Street. It will be projected onto the JP Licks building during the weekend of June 5-June 7.

#### **5. Committee Reports/Recommendations:**

**5.1. Zoning Committee (ZC):** David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met on May 13 as a virtual meeting. One matter was heard and a vote is needed tonight: 561-579 Centre Street, a petition by Amelia Pagounis Family Trust (Meadowlark Butcher & Grocer/Max Gitlen acting as agent) to renovate a former gas station for use as a retail/wholesale butcher, grocery, café with off- and on-premises consumption, malt/wine beverages for off-premises consumption; resurface pavement (seven off-street parking spaces) and landscape. Meadowlark Butcher intends to use the existing building and add a walk-in cooler as an ell along Goodrich Road. Mr. Gitlen wants to add seasonal outdoor tables in the middle of the parking lot under the existing canopy, as well as have seven parking spaces. Meadowlark went through an extensive community process, especially with the folks at Lakeville Place Condominiums. There was a support letter that came from Lakeville Place Condominiums with a sort of Memorandum of Understanding talking about hours of operation, waste being kept inside the cooler until being picked up, closing the curb cut from Lakeville Road, and screening and plantings along the Lakeville Road side. There were about a hundred letters of support received on this issue. The Jamaica Pond Association also gave a letter of support which incorporated the Lakeville Place Condominiums provisos. There was a neighbor who opposed mainly about parking and traffic as well as sanitary concerns about having a butcher in the district. There was a question about the noise of the cooler: the condenser is located on the side away from the residences, the brand of condenser was vetted for low noise, and there will be an enclosure around the condenser to insulate the sound. There was discussion about the City posting zoning requests on each property along with all relevant documents. The recommendation of the ZC is to approve, with the provisos that it is subject to the provisos stated in a March 24, 2020 letter of the Jamaica Pond Association, and this special permit is limited to this business and business owner only. Motion by David Baron to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee to approve with provisos on 561-579 Centre Street. Seconded by Gert Thorn. Passed 12-0-0 (2 left early). The Zoning Board of Appeal is planning to start virtual meetings in the future.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, May 27 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be 12 Everett Street asking for seven residential units with basement parking.

**5.2. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC):** Carolyn Royce reported that the H&DC met on May 19 via Zoom at which time there was a continued discussion on sustainability. The idea is to reduce the use of gas and oil and encourage the use of electricity in residences. Much of the meeting was a presentation from Jennifer Pink. She spoke about how far green improvement has come in twenty years. Codes and regulations have really progressed in matters of sustainability and energy efficiency. She stressed the importance of site cleanup, the building envelope and heating systems. Complex building methods, exterior design and labor costs puts cost constraints on affordable housing and need to be addressed. But additional green investment upfront can lead to cheaper maintenance costs in the future.

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, June 16 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

**5.3. Public Service Committee:** Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee has not been meeting, but will restart in early June. The City of Boston Licensing Board has recently passed two new regulations. The first is an emergency measure that allows restaurants to apply to put seating outdoors without going through a community process. A simple application will enable the applicant to meet with the Licensing Board. This will extend through the current public health emergency. The second vote rescinded a regulation that required restaurants with both alcohol licenses and outdoor patios to only serve alcohol with food. This second regulation is intended to aid the suffering restaurants.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 2 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be ways of widening sidewalks to allow for social distancing and outdoor dining. The additional seating may be on public sidewalks as well as public streets.

**5.4. Ad Hoc Education Committee:** Trevor Wissink-Adams said the Education Committee had a discussion on Wednesday, May 13 on ways that the Committee could help Boston Public Schools (BPS) with gaps in technology, trying to help families struggling with remote learning. The Committee will try to collaborate with some of the elected officials to work on this issue. The Education Committee will also help with community outreach on how the upcoming summer semester and fall semester will work once BPS comes up with definite plans.

The next Education Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, June 10 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

**5.5. Ad Hoc Parks + Committee:** The Committee is on hiatus. Sarah Freeman spoke a little about the Parks Parcel Priority Plan - a long-term planning effort to prioritize parcels of land in the City, either to acquire or protect for public use. Folks can take a survey at [survey123.arcgis.com/share/6be91ab084754ab4815f6a5a058afa1d](http://survey123.arcgis.com/share/6be91ab084754ab4815f6a5a058afa1d). Hellenic Hill is one area that comes to mind.

**6. New Business:**

- There was continued discussion about recording these virtual JPNC meetings and committee meetings. The suggestion by Carolyn Royce is to not keep the recordings of Committee meetings. Dave Baron was in agreement. Motion by Kevin Rainsford to not keep the recordings of Committee meetings, but keep recordings of full JPNC meetings. Seconded by Dave Baron. Passed 10-0-1 (3 left early). The recordings of the JPNC meetings will not be available to the public, but will be used as an aid to the Secretary - unless released by a specific motion. There was a request to make sure that the written minutes become publicly available, which was agreed to. After continued questions about the Open Meeting Law and whether recordings inhibit public participation, further discussion was tabled to the June JPNC meeting.

**7. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:59pm.

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, June 23 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, June 18 at 7:00PM via Zoom.