

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
January 26, 2021 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Kevin Rainsford, Max Glikman, Michael Reiskind, Vicky Arroyo, David Baron, Robin Cheung, Will Cohen, Marvin Mathelier, Peg Preble, Gert Thorn, and Priscilla Yang.

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Robert Kordenbrock, Ruth Page, Scott Glidden, Allan Ihrer, Paige Sparks, Jennifer Uhrhane, Andrew Dwyer, Dianna Bronchal, Tomás González (Core Empowerment), April Arrasate (Core Empowerment), Peri Higgins (Core Empowerment), City Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George, Rachel Nagin (Office of City Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George), Liana Poston (Office of State Rep. Liz Malia), Justin McClarey (Office of City Councillor Matt O'Malley), Lindsey Santana (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

Meeting called to order at 7:06pm by Kevin Rainsford via Zoom.

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

2. Approval of November and December minutes: Motion by Max Glikman to approve the minutes from the November 24, 2020 meeting and the December 22, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Will Cohen. Passed 8-0-3.

3. Announcements:

3.1. Community Announcements:

- City Councillor Annissa Essaibi-George introduced herself and her aide and made brief comments. There was a question about potential changes at City Council committees after City Council President Janey becomes Acting Mayor.

- "Call It Out", the series of open dialogues on structural racism and social injustice, is continuing in Egleston Square.

They will be having special movies every Saturday in February on Zoom.

- The City of Boston announced that it will be going to Step One, Phase Three of the Reopening Massachusetts Plan starting on February 1. Vaccines for those eligible are also available at the Reggie Lewis Center.

- The Friends of the Boston Park Rangers Mounted Unit will have a Zoom Party called "Gallop into 2021" on January 31 from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. The Ringmaster will be Marcy Fortnow of Engaging Play. It is on-line and free to join.

3.2. Second Announcement of Council vacancy: Kevin Rainsford announced several vacant seats on the JP Neighborhood Council: the first official announcement of a vacancy in Area A, the first official announcement of a vacancy in Area C, and the third official announcement of a vacancy in Area B. Kevin Rainsford also said that Esther Tutella-Chen has resigned, so there will also be another JPNC vacancy in Area B. He then asked if there were any nominations for the Area B seat. There was one nomination: Ruth Page from 12 Stedman Street. There were several questions for Ms. Page: what JPNC Committees would she be interested in serving on (Zoning Committee); why is she interested in participating on the JPNC (to bring the perspective of neighborhood people to the Zoning Committee); what is her general background (she is a multi-media producer creating case studies for Harvard, has been on the Steering Committee of the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association, and was involved in the Plan:JP/Rox community process). Ms. Page asked that a vote on her nomination be postponed until February.

4. Core Empowerment: Tomás González, Chief of Staff at Core Empowerment, introduced himself and said they were here to give a status report on the proposed adult-use cannabis retail business at 401 Centre Street. He introduced two other principals of Core Empowerment, Peri Higgins and April Arrasate. The fourth, Derric Small, could not attend. April Arrasate gave the presentation. Since they last came to the JPNC in October 2019, Core Empowerment has been working closely with the business owners and the Hyde Square Merchants Association. They will sign a Good Neighbor Pledge. They have put a lot of effort and money into the basement space at 401 Centre Street and are very proud of it. They have passed the Post-Provisional License Inspection (PPLI) at the state's Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) and will be on the CCC agenda on February 11. They plan to open in late February. The dispensary name will be SEED. There will be a police detail for the first month of operation and an additional staff member stationed outside. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, they are restricted to 57 or 58 people inside (25% of capacity), 50 in the floor and 8 waiting in line on the stairs. Because of the reduced capacity and recent reduced demand for dispensaries in the region, Core Empowerment will not institute the appointment-only procedure for customers that they had originally promised. There will be six point-of-sale stations plus roving salespeople. All product is pre-packaged; no open product will be displayed. There is going to be a co-located social justice museum and Ms. Arrasate does not expect any problems with people flowing through the basement space. They have hired Mike Allen as in-house director of security. There will be a job fair which will lean toward employees who live nearby so as to reduce parking needs. Tomás González then spoke about parking. Parking regulations have changed on Barbara Street and the Boston Transportation Department may soon change signage on So. Huntington Avenue. A pick-up/drop-off zone has been placed at 401 Centre Street. Core Empowerment is asking that enforcement be increased in the area. David Baron asked about the Host Community Agreements and how much is geared toward the local neighborhood. A 3% tax of gross will be donated: that means \$500,000 over five years (\$100,000/year). Among those already receiving donations are La Chica Project, Hyde Square Task Force, Spontaneous Celebrations, JP Music Festival, Burger Slam, Regan League, Union of Minority Neighborhoods, Puerto Rican Festival, Caribbean

Festival, and the Brain Aneurysm Association. Gert Thorn asked for a complete list of amounts and promised donations. Max Glikman then shared a picture of a large Apothca billboard in Lynn advertising “Marijuana Retailer” here. There was a lot of discussion about billboards in general and specifically for cannabis. Core Empowerment would not commit to not use the existing billboards above 401 Centre Street to advertise. Gert Thorn asked about parking and the number of spaces, as well as the potential for long lines outside. The 50-70 potential parking spaces that were mentioned by Core Empowerment at previous meetings have not materialized at all. Ms. Arrasate said there will be some relief with the new pick-up zone and the new 2-hour parking signs freeing up spaces in the area. The lack of off-street parking spaces and enforcement are the biggest problems. Folks asked that the appointment-only policy be reimplemented. Ms. Arrasate did not completely commit to that, but said that a texting system to allow customers to leave and come back will help keep sidewalks clear. On-line ordering could help as well. Council members were still skeptical and remained worried about sidewalk congestion. Kevin Rainsford invited Core Empowerment to come back after opening to discuss any concerns that do arise.

5. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

5.1. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met on January 20 as a virtual meeting (January 6 was cancelled.). Two matters were heard and both need votes tonight. 1) 1785 Columbus Avenue, a petition by Boston Health Care for the Homeless Programs (BHCHP) (as agent for Horizons Watermark LLC) to change occupancy to include a 2,600 square-foot family practice clinic on the second floor. Family practice clinics are conditional uses and need zoning relief. The major tenant at 1785 Columbus Avenue, Horizons for Homeless Children, brought up the idea of a BHCHP clinic at this location. This Clinic would provide a lot of street medicine to the children clients already coming to Horizons for Homeless Children, as well as for their families. There was no opposition and the recommendation of the ZC is to recommend approval. 2) 97-99 Williams Street, a petition by 97 Williams Street LLC (Joseph Federico) for a new 6-unit residential construction on vacant lot (99 Williams Street) combined with portion of neighboring lot (97 Williams Street); existing 3-family residence on neighboring lot (97 Williams Street) to be maintained; with the proviso that the design be modified as to first-floor unit on right side building to create covered front porch. The proposal is for a 6-unit building on a double lot in the Stonybrook area, with some land being transferred from a third lot. This matter had already come before the ZC in December and was deferred. It has been going through a community process for almost a year. It had taken so long that the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services became involved. The opposition centered on side lot setback, front setback (staggering), preserving existing trees for privacy and green space, and excessive Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The Stonybrook Neighborhood Association has met in December and January on this project and has voted to oppose. The consensus at the Zoning Committee was to support with design provisos to make the building fit in with the streetscape of triple-deckers. The design proviso is to add a covered front porch for the handicap-accessible unit. There was a very lively discussion at the ZC and the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) spoke strongly in opposition. Motion by Kevin Rainsford to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 1785 Columbus Avenue.

Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 10-0-1.

Motion by Kevin Rainsford to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 97 and 99 Williams Street.

Seconded by Max Glikman. There was a lot of discussion about respecting neighborhood concerns, especially from an active neighborhood organization. Passed 6-4-1.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, February 3 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be two projects on Washington Street, 3371 Washington Street and 3326 Washington Street.

5.2. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Marvin Mathelier reported that the H&DC met on January 19 via Zoom. Max Glikman, from MassHousing, came and spoke about financing for affordable housing.

The Subcommittee on Net Zero Carbon (NZC) Construction met and is planning to finish its work by March 2021 and give the JPNC draft recommendations at that time.

Carolyn Royce gave an update on the state’s plans for the Shattuck Campus. The newest plans are to have the Shattuck Hospital move out by 2024, not 2022. The State has put together a preliminary project proposal, before a Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued according to the Vision Plan. There will be phased development of the Campus and a public hearing is needed with the preliminary project proposal.

The H&DC is developing a summary of the Committee’s 2020 accomplishments and goals for 2021.

Motion by Marvin Mathelier to add Robert Kordenbrock as a community member of the Housing & Development Committee. Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 10-0-1.

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

5.3. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on January 5 via Zoom. The Committee is starting to develop an education campaign about the confusing new striping and signage relating to bicycle safety on Jamaica Plain streets. There was continued discussion on how to reform the police. One priority is police accountability and there will be a new Civilian Review Board. Motion by Michael Reiskind to write letters to the Mayor of Boston and the President of the Boston City Council nominating the following four Jamaica Plain residents for the Citizens Review Board within the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency: Dorothy Farrell of 345 Pond Street, Paige Sparks of 96 Brookley Road, Leroy Stoddard of 155 Lamartine Street, and Gert Thorn of 72 Robinwood Avenue.

Seconded by Kevin Rainsford. Ms. Sparks declined the nomination. Passed 8-1-2.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 2 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be a request for a new restaurant at 365 Centre Street (formerly The Frogmore).

5.4. Outreach/Election Committee: Max Glikman said that the Committee met on Monday, January 11 to discuss plans for the next JP Neighborhood Council Election, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 24, 2021. Nomination packets and Election Rules will be available just after the February JPNC meeting. The Committee is looking at ways to get the nomination signatures signed safely using petition software to collect electronic signatures. Signatures collected in-person or collected for the previously scheduled Election in April 2020 will also be allowed. The safety of the Election was discussed; options offered will be in-person voting, as well as ballot drop-off boxes and mail-in ballots. Carolyn Royce asked about availability of the brochure that the JPNC had made for previous Elections. She thought that would go well with the “job description” for JPNC members that was discussed last month. Gert Thorn was worried that the April date for the Election might not yet be safe enough and thought late summer would be safer. He said that outreach during this health crisis is also much more difficult. In the past, the nomination process has been an excellent way to talk to neighbors about the work of the JPNC. Kevin Rainsford said that the Council will reassess whether it is safe enough to move forward at the February meeting. Peg Preble would like to see every JPNC Committee write a “job description” for their Committee and have them available on the JPNC website; while there are descriptions of the Committees, they can be expanded.

6. Old Business/New Business:

- Kevin Rainsford brought up the issue of JPNC members also serving on neighborhood associations. Do these folks have “two bites of the apple” when they can vote at the neighborhood association and then vote at the JPNC? He said that he lives in an area that does not have a neighborhood group. He would propose that voting members of neighborhood associations not be allowed to vote at JPNC Committee meetings. This issue can be raised next month. Peg Preble thought that this cuts off neighborhood representation. Michael Reiskind said that he is on a local neighborhood association (the Board of the Jamaica Pond Association) and he does not vote twice, but he does it in reverse; while he actively participates at the neighborhood association, he does not vote and waits to make up his mind at the JPNC Committee level. He does this mainly because he is Chair of a Committee. It is an interesting matter whether a non-Chair should refrain from voting. Gert Thorn said that engaging with all neighborhood associations is important and Committee members should be fully engaged, listen carefully to all sides, and vote clearly at the Committee to advance the issue. He also proposed that the JPNC meet once a year with all active JP neighborhood groups to improve communications.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:26pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: February 18, 2021 at 7:00PM via Zoom.