

February 2010

JPNC Minutes

February 23, 2010

Attendance: Andrea Howley, Pamela Bender, Jesse Abair, Steven Backman, David Baron, Red Burrows, Francesca Fordiani, Jeremy Harold, Ben Knappmiller, Stephen Lussier, Edith Murnane, Peggy O'Connor, Emily Wheelwright, Jay Zoldak.

Other Attendees: Sarah Freeman, Sam Sherwood, Sherry Erskin, Jess Nelson, Ken Griffin, Kristen Weberg, Greg Kornbluh, Jesse White, Drew Devereaux, James Lesnick, Carlos Icaza, Jeffrey Ferris, Bob Dizon, Lauren Ockene (Bikes Not Bombs), Kevin Walker (WCI Corp.), Brian McGinley (WCI Corp.), Ollie Keegan (WCI) RJ Long (Transit Realty Associates), Ken Cram (Traffic Solutions), Ed Forte (Forte Architecture & Design), David Foley (Office of Rep. Jeffrey Sánchez), Samantha Roy (Office of Rep. Jeffrey Sánchez), Melina Muñoz (Office of State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz), Anna Sylvester (Office of City Councillor John Tobin), Colleen Keller (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services), David Taber (JP Gazette).

Called to Order at 7:06pm at Curtis Hall by Andrea Howley.

1. Introductions:

- Members of the JPNC introduced themselves.

2. Announcements:

- There will be a meeting of the Boston Public Library (BPL) trustees at 3pm on March 9 at the Main Library Copley Square. Branch libraries are at risk of being closed outright, because state aid is being cut. The City budget for libraries is reduced by only 1%. Sam Sherwood is asking the JPNC to go on record in support of keeping the branch library, and any reduction of hours is unacceptable. He also is asking for people to contact the state representatives, Liz Malia and Jeffrey Sánchez and other elected officials, Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz and Governor Deval Patrick.
- A BPL representative from the Allston Branch library said that the fiscal year ends in June – nothing will happen until then. And there will be no personnel changes until October. Probably eight branches are to be closed, based on use and spacing between library branches. The problem in Jamaica Plain is that the branch libraries are really close together. The JP Branch is only one mile from the Connolly Branch and the Connolly is only one mile from the Egleston Square Branch. Andrea Howley said that she attended a trustee meeting and decisions will be made by the end of March. Only two branches are technically in Jamaica Plain.
- David Baron asked who will be present at the March 9 meeting? City Councillors will make every effort to attend. It is unclear whether decisions will be made at the meeting.
- A petition for support is making the rounds of the neighborhood. There was discussion whether JPNC should sign on or write their own letter of support. Motion by Francesca Fordiani for the JPNC to write a letter to the Boston Public Library trustees and state representatives to oppose the State cutting the BPL budget. Seconded by Red Burrows. Andrea Howley to write the letter. Passed 13-0-1(late)

- Sarah Freeman spoke about the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) partnership opportunity to complete the fence on the Arborway. DCR will match the funds raised. Flyers were distributed.

3. Neighborhood Input:

- Bike Lanes on Centre Street: Lauren Ockene from Bikes Not Bombs, said that the consultants and engineers working with Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Boston Transportation Department have concluded that it is reasonable to do bike lanes on Centre Street from the 7-11 Store at South Huntington Avenue down to the Monument. There is not enough width in other areas to mark a bike lane and keep the parking.
- The business benefits are increased ease of access to the stores. People who go by bicycle and public transportation tend to spend more money than those with cars. The community benefits are the ability to increase communication between people in neighborhood because you can actually stop and talk rather than honk and wave. Bike lanes help organize the lane. Drivers move away from parked cars and give bikers more room, and it calms traffic as they slow down with a smaller space to maneuver. Bikes Not Bombs is requesting JPNC sign onto statement to the Boston Transportation Department and BRA. No parking is supposed to be lost.
- Jay Zoldak asked about the statement that says "wherever is possible". Where is it not possible? The tool design analyzes streetscape based on width, etc. It is not possible where it is too narrow to accommodate both drivers and bikers. Pam Bender asked whether that means there will be no bike lane between the Monument and Forest Hills? Not at this time. Motion by Stephen Lussier to endorse the statement to the Boston Transportation Department and BRA to do bike lanes on Centre Street. Seconded by Francesca Fordiani. Passed 13-0-1(late).
- WCI Presentation on Forest Hills Changes to Parcels V & W: Kevin Walker, president of WCI Corp., the designated developer on Parcels V and W, said that his is a family business in Jamaica Plain since 1965. Other projects they have done in the neighborhood are 3313 Washington Street, 500 Amory Street, 555 Amory Street and 157 Green Street. (Others can be seen on their website: www.wci-realty.com) He introduced his architect, Ed Forte, who gave a slideshow presentation: There are six parcels for sale by Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in Forest Hills. This presentation pertains to two of those parcels just south of the Forest Hills T stop on Washington Street – Parcels W and V:
- Parcel W has 43,000 square feet of land, and has a slight slope. It consists of three separate lots – W1, W2 and W3. W2 is owned by the Boston Water and Sewer Commission and has not been conveyed to the developer. They are not interested in selling. They will cut the grass, but not fence it off. Therefore, the developer has had to redo plans since W2 is excluded. They have decided to leave W3 as open space. Parcel V has 22,000 square feet of land and is a level parcel.
- The proposal is for mixed-use buildings, looking at historic and recent architecture in JP. The goals in the BRA's plan are ambitious. WCI's proposal was developed in close consideration with those goals, but they have come up with a new plan. It has shortened the lengths of the buildings, but increased their height. They hope to establish a streetscape / urban edge, define retail entries and parking, define office entries and parking. They are looking to connect two parcels with a pedestrian crosswalk. The remaining green space will be left open as a buffer between the development and adjacent parcels.
- Parcel W will have a lower level single tenant – perhaps an urban grocer, a second level retail tenant – such as a florist, and upper levels with a single tenant or multiple commercial tenants. There will also be a small park.

- Parcel V will have a small local retail tenants on the lower level – 2 tenants. The landscape design will create and reinforce a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere with small pocket parks.
- Ken Cram, the traffic consultant from Traffic Solutions took brief snapshot look at the area, conducted new traffic counts in January 2010 and compared them to the 2007 study. Because the economy has been down, there has been no increase in traffic. Because of the location near bus terminals, there is a fair amount of bus traffic. He also measured the traffic signal timing. The Boston Transportation Department (BTD) made changes to signal timings which seems to have improved this end of Forest Hills, but affected the South Street side of Forest Hills. Using projections, he has included the possibility of other growth despite the lagging economy, using a 1% annual growth rate over 5 years. Other parcels are for sale but there are no known proposals at this time. Traffic projections included considerations for growth as well as increase from use of the two parcels V & W. A grocer is projected to add 726 average weekday daily trips over 24 hours. Total volume currently is 17,000/day. The BTD reviewed the plan and issued a letter to BRA on December 18, 2009 saying the plan was adequate for now. The developer will still need to go through a review process. Observations on traffic that need to be noted: New Washington Street left turn lane southbound has long lines that build up and dissipate. Only one pedestrian waited for a signal to cross safely. Vehicles that go downhill southbound on Washington Street speed up. He is proposing a traffic calming program to improve safety and parking on both sides of the street. WCI was asked by BTD to reduce the amount of parking in their plan.
- David Baron reminded people that the parcels are presently zoned as open space and the developer is asking the City to consider a Zoning Mapping Amendment to allow a Neighborhood Shopping (NS) District, which is a common zoning subdistrict in Jamaica Plain. Red asked which neighborhood shopping districts were in Jamaica Plain. Egleston Square, and a few others in Hyde Square and Jackson Square, about 7-8 in Jamaica Plain.
- Emily Wheelwright asked about the width of the bicycle paths. Usually 5 feet and 10 feet are recommended, but here they are 4.5 feet and 10.5 feet. the answer is that they understand 5 feet is optimal, but they need to make it work with existing curbs. There was a discussion of striping. Someone said that 5 feet is a minimum, not optimal.
- Jeremy Harold asked about LEED certification. WCI is looking at the cost. They are looking to make it LEED certifiable, but unsure if it will be certified The BRA bid asked for green and environmental design features which WCI addressed. Jeremy Harold asked if any there is any thought of incorporating the Bourne Neighborhood?
 1. That would be more applicable to another parcel, Parcel U.
 2. David Baron asked where the need for a grocery is coming from? Is the community calling out for a grocer?
 3. WCI said that Neighborhood meetings have been asking for grocers, and it is reflected in the community plan
 4. Which grocer is interested? WCI is talking with many different grocers in Boston.
 5. James Lesnick, an abutter to the Walker property on Amory for 30 years said that he doesn't know them, but they
 6. keep an impeccable lot. They have been slammed previously and he thinks they should now get a fair shake.

4. Committee Reports:

- ***Zoning Committee*** – Dave Baron reported that there was two requests looked at by the Zoning Committee at their meeting on February 4. 222-224 Amory Street; request by Luis Peguero to transfer the use of take-out license from one restaurant to new set of owners.

Pam Bender asked about neighborhood support, because she remembered some problems here a while back. David Baron said that no opposition has been heard. 10 Green Street; request by Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center to change the legal occupancy from offices to offices, general purpose function room and health care clinic. Because of scheduling at City Hall, this has already been sent to the JPNC Executive Committee and has been approved by the Zoning Board of Appeal. Motion by Red Burrows to recommend approval on 222-224 Amory Street, with proviso that it is limited to new owners of business. Seconded by Jeremy Harold and Pam Bender. Passed 14-0-0. The next Zoning meetings will be on Thursday, March 4 and Thursday, March 18 at Curtis Hall at 7:00pm.

- **Public Service Committee** – Jeremy Harold reported on the Public Service Committee meeting held on February 2 at Cheverus School. There was a request of Tres Gatos LLC doing business as “Tres Gatos” (presently Rhythm & Muse) at 470 Centre Street for a new Beer and Wine license for 45 seats, and a seasonal (April to October) outdoor patio for 10 seats with a 12 midnight closing hour. The manager would be Felicia Sánchez. The establishment will be doubling in size to 1,600 square feet, with the retail portion in the back and the restaurant/bar in the front. There will be a second entrance off Roseway Street. The large audience in attendance was unanimously in favor of the petition, most members saying that the present small independent music and bookstore is an important business and needs the added revenue from the proposed tapas restaurant and wine bar to survive. Issues of noise, delivery, trash, smells, and landscaping were answered well by the owner, David Doyle. Felicia Sánchez has been the owner and manager of Centre Street Café for 22 years, and runs a well-managed restaurant at that location. The patio would have a closing hour of 10:00pm. Motion by David Baron for a recommendation of approval of the petition of Tres Gatos LLC, doing business as “Tres Gatos”, at 470 Centre Street for a Beer and Wine license with 45 seats, and a seasonal outdoor patio for 10 seats with a 12 midnight closing hour, Felicia Sánchez as manager. Also, for a recommendation of approval of an entertainment license, for recorded music only, for Tres Gatos at 470 Centre Street. Seconded by Edith Murnane. Passed 14-0-0. The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 2 at 7:00pm at Curtis Hall.

5. New Business:

- Vacancy in Area A — Carlos Icaza raised a procedural issue regarding by-laws. He thought that the JPNC was required to have voted on his nomination in January. Due to time constraints, there was a motion by Stephen Lussier to postpone the issue until next meeting. Seconded by Red. Passed 14-0-0.
- Nomination of Jesse White by Emily Wheelwright. Seconded by Jay Zoldak. There are presently two candidates for the open seat in Area A: Carlos Icaza and Jesse White. Passed 14-0-0.

The next meeting of the full JPNC will be on Tuesday, March 23.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm.

Minutes submitted by ben Knappmiller and Michael Reiskind