

**Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council**  
**October 28, 2014 Minutes**

**JPNC Attendance:** Kevin Moloney, Gerard O'Connor, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Anne Barrett, Benjamin Day, Bernard Doherty, Dana Gonsalves, Jamey Lionette, Kristy Nardone, Mike O'Connor, Carolyn Royce, Kyle D. Smith, and Gert Thorn.

**Other attendees:** Dottie Farrell, Richard Heath, Jon Truslow, Donna Tremonte, and Chris Helms (Jamaica Plain News).

Meeting called to order at 7:08pm by Kevin Moloney at Farnsworth House.

**I. Introductions:** Members introduced themselves.

**II. Announcements:**

- The annual Halloween Stroll Trick or Treat will take place in the Centre/South Streets business district on October 31 from 3pm-6pm. Sponsored by the Jamaica Plain Business & Professional Association.

**III. Approval of minutes:** Bernie Doherty asked about a phrase in section V. "BRA Reorganization" of the minutes from September 23 which "reported the internal management of the [BRA] agency as a total mess". It was agreed to correct the minutes to have the phrase attributed to Benjamin Day, who was reporting on the BRA audit. Motion by David Baron to approve the September 23, 2014 minutes as amended. Seconded by Kristy Nardone. Passed 14-0-0.

**IV. 161 So. Huntington Avenue:** Benjamin Day reported that the permanent pedestrian walkway at 161 So. Huntington Avenue is to be built by Boston Residential Group (BRG) in the spring of 2015. BRG has applied to the Architectural Access Board for permission to build the walkway and is waiting for a response expected in November 2014. Gert Thorn asked if the JPNC could have the developer send the plans for the walkway as well as any past design studies. The City of Boston Inspectional Services Department has the construction package, but it does not include the walkway. Motion by Gert Thorn to send a letter to BRG thanking them for their previous response and asking them to send the JPNC a copy of the plans for the walkway as well as any past design studies done by BRG consultants. Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 14-0-0.

**V. BRA Reorganization:** Benjamin Day reported that Mayor Walsh promised to reform the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). A coalition is working on this issue. They will release a statement of basic principles soon, with four issues having a consensus: 1) A comprehensive plan for the City, 2) a City planning department/commission independent of the City's development department (Gert Thorn said that commissioners are usually professionals), 3) a master plan with updated zoning for each neighborhood, 4) the Board of Appeal (ZBA) to follow and respect the master plans and comprehensive plan. There was a question about where funding for this new planning group would come from. Since the BRA is nominally a state authority, the role of the state in the reform of the BRA was brought up.

Related to last month's discussion of the City's audit of the BRA's internal management, there was a motion by Gert Thorn to send a letter to the Mayor asking him what he is doing about enforcing the commitments to the BRA and tracking funds in the BRA. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. David Baron asked to see a draft letter before voting. A proviso was added "that the Executive Committee send out a draft for approval by e-mail". Passed 13-1-0.

There was a question of whether the strategy of the coalition is to reform the ZBA or improve planning. Ben Day said that good, clear planning leads to fewer variances during the development process. Jon Truslow said that planning for corridors, such as South Huntington Avenue and Washington Street, is easier than planning for individual parcels. Ben Day added that Seattle has a comprehensive 20-year plan that is updated every 10 years. It identifies areas where development should occur and then in-depth neighborhood planning is done there.

**VI. Committee Reports:**

a. Ad-Hoc Committee on Forest Hills Construction and Development Projects: Jerry O'Connor, chair of the Committee, reported that the Ad-Hoc Committee on Forest Hills Construction and Development Projects met yesterday on October 27. He said that a lot of community members are actively engaged. Deanna Keane has helped create five project-based subcommittees: Casey Overpass, Hughes Oil site, Flanagan & Seaton site, Parcel U, and MBTA Arborway Yard. The Casey Overpass/Arborway Project has been awarded and the overpass will be closed before December 31. Curtis Woodcock has created a map of the area of interest. It is a very useful tool showing every building and its uses. Outreach has been good, including most every pocket of the neighborhood: West Roxbury Courthouse Neighborhood Association, Asticou Martinwood South Street Neighborhood Association, Stonybrook Neighborhood Association, Forest Hills Neighborhood Association, and Four Ws. There is a lack of participation from the Hampstead Road area, a few side streets off South Street, and Woodbourne. John Barros has not yet appointed a BRA planner as liaison to the Committee. Gert Thorn said that Washington Street north of Arborway is an area that could benefit from rezoning.

The next meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee will be on the fourth Monday of the month, November 24, at 7:00pm

at Farnsworth House, 90 South Street.

b. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Jamey Lionette reported that the Committee continues its series of neighborhood groups presentations. This month ESAC spoke about their sixty-year history: In the 1960s they spun off groups such as the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and Urban Edge. They now work in the areas of GED (General Educational Development), elder services and foreclosure prevention. The Committee plans to restart the series in the spring of 2015.

- Heath Street: A vacant parcel at Gen. Heath Square (Heath Street and Parker Street) will have a community meeting in late November or early December. One proposed developer is the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC).

- 3152-3160 Washington Street: City Realty Group has been trying to evict seven tenants in a commercial block at 3152-3160 Washington Street. At a City Council hearing on October 20, 200 people showed up and told horror stories about this landlord. They have a high number of court cases pending on their 700 properties which they own through 73 different corporations. At the City Council, City Realty offered to work with the community and is offering five-to-seven year leases to six of the previous tenants. JPNDC, Urban Edge and Egleston Square Main Street are all involved in this issue.

- Parcel U: The developer, Urbanica, has submitted their Article 80 plan on MBTA's Parcel U at Forest Hills. It includes 25% affordable units in the Phase II apartments. Six units in the townhouses condos have been changed to affordable units (\$900/month).

- 3521-3529 Washington Street: This project at Washington and McBride Streets (former Flanagan & Seaton site) had their public comment period end on October 10. The developers presented to the JPNC in April 2011 and again in April 2013. They were informational meetings only and no votes were taken. The developers claim that the high costs of the toxic cleanup preclude a higher number of affordable units than the 13-14% they have submitted (the City's minimum). The project now has 132 units - it started with 42 units. They are planning to meet with the H&DC next week on November 5 at 6:30pm.

The next monthly meeting of the H&DC will be subsumed by the November 5 meeting about Flanagan & Seaton.

c. Environment, Parks and Energy Committee (EPE): Ben Day reported that the Committee met on Monday, October 20. The Committee discussed the City's seven-year plan for Parks and Open Spaces 2015-2021. Anita Cooper has come up with some new language to amend the JPNC by-laws in Article 16 regarding the description of the Environment, Parks and Energy Committee. Motion by Kevin Moloney to have the JPNC and Executive Committee consider the proposed new language of the Environment, Parks and Energy Committee. Seconded by Gert Thorn. Passed 13-0-1

The next meeting of the EPE will be on the second Monday of the month, November 10, at 6:30pm at the John F. Kennedy School, 7 Bolster Street.

d. Zoning Committee: David Baron reported that the Committee met twice at Farnsworth House on October 1 and October 15. There were two items that went before the JPNC Executive Committee because they appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeal before tonight: 1) 725-737 Centre Street, a request by Caffè Nero to change occupancy to include a restaurant/café with take-out. No one came to oppose; there was a letter from Ken Sazama in opposition. The Zoning and Executive Committees recommended approval. Bernie Doherty commented on their contractor's unsafe removal of the old Commonwealth Bank sign at 733 Centre Street. Gert Thorn commented on the arrogance of construction encroaching on the public sidewalk with no posting of the building permit or use of public way permit.

2) 3700 Washington Street, a request by Cill Dara, Inc., doing business as Eugene O'Neill's, to change occupancy to permit live entertainment until 1:00AM. Mike O'Connor asked if anyone came to oppose. Jerry O'Connor said that he is one of the closer neighbors and he supports the change. The Zoning and Executive Committees recommended approval. The following request needs a vote of the JP Neighborhood Council: 16 Custer Street, a request by Alex Long to renovate a three-family house - construct dormers and convert attic space into living space, reconstruct rear decks/porches; no change in occupancy. These are mostly pre-existing conditions Three out of four requests do not worsen the conditions - only the FAR is increasing. The Zoning Committee recommends approval. Motion by David Baron to accept the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 16 Custer Street. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. There was a question on whether the spiral staircase shown in the drawings is allowed. Passed 14-0-0.

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, November 5 and November 19 at Farnsworth House.

e. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind reported that the Public Service Committee met twice, on October 7 and October 21. At the October 7 meeting, a request of Caffè Nero for a new common victualler license at 733 Centre Street was considered. Jay Gentile, president of Caffè Nero Americas Inc., made the presentation along with Jason Souza, the proposed manager, and Michael Ford-Deegan, one of the co-founders of the company. Caffè Nero is a european-based coffee chain with more than 650 cafés/restaurants in seven countries. Mr. Gentile gave a very good presentation emphasizing that they are family-owned and have a community-friendly design which

encourages talking and meeting. Each store is custom designed by Mr. Ford-Deegan. They promised to not have any pulldown security grates, keep the place litter-free, and have bilingual menus. No audience members came to support the application. The opposition centered on large chains having no accountability or community involvement, and the over-saturation of coffee shops in the Centre/South area (seven already). Since Caffè Nero had not yet applied for the common victualler license, the Committee wanted to try to develop a Good Community Neighbor Agreement with Caffè Nero and added a special meeting on October 21. The October 21 meeting was fruitful in developing a draft agreement which was brought to Caffè Nero. The next meeting of the Public Service Committee will be on Tuesday, November 4 at 7:00pm at Curtis Hall, 20 South Street. At that time, the Caffè Nero request will be considered again and presumably voted on. The Public Service Committee was asked not to go to the JPNC Executive Committee with the result of the Public Service Committee vote, but to wait until the full JPNC meeting on November 25.

**VII. Old/New Business:** none

**Meeting was adjourned at 8:53pm.**

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next JPNC meeting: Tuesday, November 25 at 7:00PM at Farnsworth House

Next Executive Committee meeting: Monday, November 17 at 6:30PM, JP Licks, 659 Centre Street