

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council January 22, 2019 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Kevin Rainsford, Carmel Levy, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Robin Cheung, Bernard Doherty, Max Glikman, Bruce Marks, Carolyn Royce, Emily Tabor, Gert Thorn, and Priscilla Yang.

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Celeste Walker, Dana Gonsalves, Dottie Farrell, Kathy Farrell, Elizabeth Brown, Kristine Grimes, Louise Robbins, Susan Mahoney, Kevin Batt, J.K. Reiber, Mi Herzog, Dar Sandler, John Broussard, Kathy Brown, Carol Palmer Brilliant, Nancy Shapiro, Maria Torres, Gloria Gonzalez Rivera, Ivonne Cruzado, Josh Grolman, Angela Burgess, Richard Friend, Marjorie Charney, Alex Homans, Boe Morgan, Shamus Moynihan, Josef Haile, Michel Soltani, Adrienne Benton, Gene Gore, Susan McEwen, Delhia Emanuel, Thomas Geraty, Edwin Alicea, Tami Ohler, Leroy Stoddard, Panka Deo, Carlos Benitez, Gregory Molina IV, Gregory Molina III, April Assante (Core Empowerment), Tomás González (Core Empowerment), Kathy Mainzer (Core Empowerment), Dan Linsky (Core Empowerment), Michael Ross (Core Empowerment)), Tom Timlin (Core Empowerment), Will Poff-Webster (Office of City Councillor Matt O'Malley), Natalie Kaufman (Office of State Rep. Liz Malia), Nika Elugardo (State Representative), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

Meeting called to order at 7:13pm by Kevin Rainsford at Farnsworth House.

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves.

2. Approval of December minutes: Motion by Carolyn Royce to approve the December 18, 2018 minutes. Seconded by Emily Tabor. Passed 11-0-1.

3. Announcements:

3.1. Second Announcement of Council Vacancy in Area A: Kevin Rainsford announced that there is a vacancy in Area A and nominations are being solicited to fill the vacancy.

3.2. Other Announcements:

- There was a double shooting in Egleston Square on Friday, January 18 at 3:47pm. One died. Three schools are close by on School Street. One went into lockdown, but the other two did not.

4. Rep. Liz Malia: State Representative Liz Malia said that 6,000 bills have been filed in both the Massachusetts House and Senate. She has filed 35. They relate to substance use, affordable housing, voting and same-day voter registration, and cost of urban agriculture. She is also working with the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) on a fee on luxury real estate transfers. This would only tax properties that are more than 300% the median price in the county. This bill could generate \$70Million a year. She emphasized her initiative on treatment for substance use. She is trying to get 30-day guaranteed treatment with a dual diagnosis of mental health - it is now 14 days. What is also needed is one year of support. (New Jersey now covers six months.) There are now five recovery high schools in Massachusetts, including one in downtown Boston. Their students have very good outcomes.

She is also working on bills banning conversion therapy, on a carbon tax, on reforming the school-funding formula (with Sen. Chang-Diaz), lowering health care costs - especially prescription drug costs, safe injection sites (now also called drug consumption facilities) and clean needle exchanges, preventing employers from asking for a credit check before hiring employees, and improving access to Massachusetts Protective Services. She is also working on medical-assisted treatment for newly-incarcerated inmates. The Governor's budget is due out tomorrow (January 23). Rep. Malia has office hours in the neighborhood twice a month - on the second Friday of the month at 9:00am at the Grove Hall Branch Library and the third Friday of the month at 9:00am at the JP Branch Library.

Questions from those attending were: Gert Thorn asked if the state is doing anything about the potential of increased potency of legally-grown cannabis. This is still in the early stages of examination; might get information from emergency rooms and other medical facilities. Bruce Marks was disappointed that the "Millionaires Tax" was thrown out by the court because of the way it would be spent. It is being refiled with changed language. Carmel Levy asked about Mayor Walsh's legislative requests. They relate to safe injection sites/drug consumption facilities and affordable housing. Michael Reiskind asked about improvements at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). They are working on preventing speeding and crashes on Arborway. The Commissioner of DCR is not in a popular position, with lots of needs and fewer resources. Rep. Malia is still talking to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) on the Arborway Yard. There will be a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the "People Before Highways Day Rally" on Friday, January 25 at 1:30pm at the State House.

5. Presentation by Core Empowerment: This is a request by Core Empowerment LLC to change the occupancy at 401A-405 Centre Street to include a retail cannabis facility. They appeared before the Zoning Committee on December 5 at a well-attended meeting. Tomás González started the presentation by describing the principals: April Assante, who was the first woman to receive a cannabis cultivation license in Connecticut, Peri Higgins, Derric Small and himself. He gave a short biography, having been on the JPNC, run for State representative against Liz Malia, and worked for the City of Boston. He also named the consultants working on the project: Kathy Mainzer, Dan Linsky (security), Michael Ross (counsel), and Tom Timlin (traffic and parking). Core Empowerment's proposal is for a 6,000 sq. ft. basement space with

an entrance at the corner of Centre Street and Perkins Street. It is not within 500 feet of any school. Mr. González described the layout, entrance and security of the establishment. There will be a museum in the center of the basement facility featuring art on the history of cannabis use. The hours will be 10am - 10pm with anticipated usage of 15 to 30 customers per hour. The facility can hold up to 150 people. Most customers will spend 5-7 minutes in the store. Right now, there are eight dispensaries open in the state. The City of Boston is anticipated to have between 42 and 52 for retail, growing and testing. As a community benefit, Core Empowerment is offering up to \$100,000/year (\$500,000 for five years) to local groups such as the Hyde Square Task Force and Mildred Hailey Tenants' Task Force. They are also committed to having a paid police detail for the first six months - up to a year, if needed. They have assembled 56 spaces for their valet parking use in remote lots. The Boston Transportation Department seems committed to putting in a shared valet curbside zone of five spaces. There will be 20-25 employees hired at \$20/hour starting rate. There will be a local job fair. All employees will get 100% subsidized T passes and a shuttle service to Jackson Square. Core Empowerment will install lighted alerts at the nearby crosswalks. Dan Linsky talked about how the establishment is allowed to be very selective on who they can let in. They can refuse service for bad behavior. April Assante said that they will have a compassionate care program where medical users will get a discount on the product, as well as seniors and veterans. Question from the members were: Bruce Marks said that \$20/hour is good and \$500,000 is good; is the rent really \$40,000/month and can you offer the community 1% of your gross revenue? Mike Ross said that with the 3% tax and the \$100,000/year, they are almost at 1%. Gert Thorn thought that even though the Core Empowerment team is made up of women and minorities, the community is left out and he suggested a public community benefit corporation with a 5% share in this enterprise. Mr. González said that there are already local investors from Jamaica Plain and Boston. Priscilla Yang asked how the community could get all the information and whether they could have regular communications with the neighbors. Mr. González offered to have followup meetings every three or six months. Mr. Linsky offered to go to the monthly Police Community Relations meetings. Next steps are the official public meeting on Thursday, January 24 at Curtis Hall at 6:00pm. This is a state requirement. Then a Host Agreement needs to be signed with the City. The Jamaica Pond Association has voted not to oppose with five provisos: customers by appointment only for the first six months, 1% of gross to the community, a shared valet space be approved, a pickup and drop-off space is approved, and the conditional use is subject to re-approval in two years.

Motion by Carmel Levy to approve the change the occupancy at 401A-405 Centre Street to include a retail cannabis facility, with the provisos that the change of occupancy applies to this business tenant only (Core Empowerment LLC), that valet parking be in effect at the start and the shared valet space is approved, and Core Empowerment attend quarterly JPNC followup meetings. Seconded by Dave Baron. Comments from the community were: Many thought this was a good agreement, increased foot traffic would make the neighborhood safer. Opposition comments were that marijuana is not good, especially for young folks, and it will lead to an increase of use among the young. Also, there is too much extra traffic and a reduction in quality of life. State representative Nika Elugardo asked that more community comments be allowed, because it appears that some folks of color have some additional comments. The Chair did not extend the time for comments. He mentioned that there is an official community hearing on the request for a cannabis establishment in two days on January 24 at Curtis Hall at 6:00pm. Request for a friendly amendment to defer any vote on 401A-405 Centre Street until a traffic study is completed for the area. The friendly amendment was not accepted. The motion then passed 8-4-0.

Motion by Gert Thorn that this zoning change is contingent on a public community benefit corporation be founded to enable the community to be involved and obtain a 5% share in this enterprise. Discussion was that the upcoming January 24 meeting and host agreement are the proper places for this discussion. Failed 4-8-0.

6. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

6.1. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met on January 2 and January 16 and three requests need votes: 1) 7-15 Catherine Street, a request by 15 Catherine Street LLC (Bee Yeo, manager) to construct five (5) adjacent townhouses. Each home to have four bedrooms, three and a half baths, and two off-street garage parking spaces. Shared 2000 foot green space. Existing buildings to be razed. This was a well-attended meeting. The proposed townhouses are side-by-side with first-floor garages. The comments were overwhelmingly negative. People thought the design was ugly. The recommendation of the ZC was to deny. Motion by Dave Baron to deny the request on 7-15 Catherine Street. Seconded by Carmel Levy. Passed 10-0-0 (2 left early). 2) 95-97 West Walnut Park, a request by City Realty to change occupancy from two-family to four-family dwelling, add dormers, add a rear addition including garage with three off-street parking spaces, renovate existing building. The proposal has changed down to three units. It was brought up that City Realty had not gone far enough in their meetings with the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA). The Zoning Committee refused to hear the design and zoning issues even though the applicant was at the meeting. Some felt that it was unusual that the applicant was not allowed to make a presentation. The recommendation of the ZC was to deny if applicant proceeds. Motion by Dave Baron to confirm the refusal to hear the request on 95-97 West Walnut Park and to deny if the applicant proceeds. Seconded by Max Glikman. Passed 10-0-0 (2 left early). 3) 632-638 Centre Street, a request by Andrew Zuroff to construct additional story (fourth floor) on existing building [plans] and change occupancy from 9 residential units with office and retail to 18 residential units and 4 commercial (retail and office) spaces. This project is on Centre Street between Greenview Avenue and Lester

Place. The proposal has changed to allow turnarounds on both side streets. There was a letter of non-opposition from neighbors. The proponent's architect thinks they will get approval at the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA), because the size of the bedrooms in these residential units is larger than the nearby 628-630A Centre Street project that was denied by the ZBA in December 2018. Discussion centered on the affordable units; the ZC asked that two more affordable units be added (up from two) and the exterior parking surface be permeable. Agreed to by the developer. There were questions at the JPNC meeting whether this project should have gone to the Housing & Development Committee and JP Centre/South Main Streets first. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve, with provisos to include 4 affordable rental units at minimum 70% AMI, exterior parking surface to be permeable. Motion by Gert Thorn to approve the request on 632-638 Centre Street, with the provisos and as long as the applicant gains approval of JP Centre/South Main Streets. Seconded by Michael Reiskind. Failed 4-5-1 (2 left early). Motion by Max Glikman to approve the request on 632-638 Centre Street, with the provisos. Seconded by Emily Tabor. Passed 7-1-2 (2 left early).

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Weds., February 6 and February 20 at 7:00pm at Farnsworth House.

6.2. Public Service Committee: No report.

6.3. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Carolyn Royce reported that the H&DC met on January 15. They heard from Janna Cohen-Rosenthal, Executive Director of the Franklin Park Coalition (FPC). There is \$28Million authorized for Franklin Park - for a Master Plan and implementation. The park is a shared space with the golf course, park areas, Shattuck area, and the maintenance yard. There needs to be better connections to the restaurants across from the Park. There was no report on the upcoming changes at the Shattuck campus.

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

6.4. Environment, Parks & Energy Committee (EPE): There have been no volunteers yet to replace Priscilla Yang as Chair of the Committee.

6.5. Ad-Hoc Education Committee: The Boston School Committee Community Meeting for Jamaica Plain on BuildBPS was on Thursday, January 10 at The English High School. It was well-attended and positive. It went much better because the JPNC organized it. There are proposals to build five new schools and nine sites are proposed. There may be a new school built in Jackson Square.

7. Old Business/New Business: Robin Cheung thought that the Neighborhood Council should have given more time to community folks during the Core Empowerment portion of the meeting. Since it is rare that we have such a well-attended meeting, we should have been more accommodating to the guests. Perhaps we should have limited the time of the Core Empowerment presentation to allow more community discussion.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:00pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

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