

## Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council

### July 28, 2020 Minutes

**JPNC Attendance:** Kevin Rainsford, Michael Reiskind, Vicky Arroyo, David Baron, Robin Cheung, Will Cohen, Bernard Doherty, Valerie Coimbra, Marvin Mathelier, Samantha Montano, Peg Preble, Carolyn Royce, Kyle Smith, Esther Tutella-Chen, Trevor Wissink-Adams, and Priscilla Yang.

**Other attendees:** Sarah Freeman, Dottie Farrell, Celeste Walker, Paige Sparks, Andrew Brown, Colin Turner, Renée Stacy Welch, Thomas Pelkey, Joseph Lekach (Apothca), Justin McClarey (Office of City Councillor Matt O'Malley), Lindsey Santana (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

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

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

**2. Approval of May and June minutes:** Motion by Samantha Montano to approve the minutes from the May 26, 2020 meeting and the June 23, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Kyle Smith. Passed 14-0-2.

### **3. Announcements:**

- Folks in Egleston Square are developing a series of open dialogues - "Call It Out". The first one is on systemic racism and will be on Saturday, August 1 at 2:00pm at the Peace Garden. Next one is on August 12.

- Three Squares Main Streets is hosting a Mozart Park Reopening Cookout on Friday, August 7 from 2:00pm to 6:00pm (subsequently postponed).

- The Hyde Square Task Force is having a virtual community meeting on Thursday, August 6 at 6:00pm about the sale of the former Blessed Sacrament church building. Register to get the link at [www.hydesquare.org/events](http://www.hydesquare.org/events).

- The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is having a Public Meeting on the Centre Street/Walter Street intersection improvements on Wednesday, July 29 at 6:30pm as a GoToMeeting webinar. Community folks can register at this link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9154618883245545231>.

- The last themed discussion session in the Franklin Park Action Plan will be on Thursday, July 30 from 7:00pm to 8:00pm. This one will be about ecology. Community folks can register for the event at this link: [www.eventbrite.com/e/ecology-discussion-session-tickets-113650060390](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/ecology-discussion-session-tickets-113650060390).

- The PILOT Action Group is having a Virtual Town Hall Meeting about the City of Boston's PILOT program (Payment in Lieu of Tax) and would like more participation. It will be on Thursday, August 6 at 7:00pm. Folks can register at this link: [bit.ly/BOSPAG](http://bit.ly/BOSPAG).

- The City of Boston is conducting an inventory of Boston's carriage houses to inform planning for future projects around neighborhood development. You can get more information at:

[docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf8yUQ4pzgFQooYMC8bqWHcJ-AjwxzCuCDKQio-DiVmv6qsQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf8yUQ4pzgFQooYMC8bqWHcJ-AjwxzCuCDKQio-DiVmv6qsQ/viewform)

- The Boston Public Schools is holding a series of community engagement meetings on reopening 2020: There will be a meeting for Vietnamese speakers on Wednesday, July 29 from 5:00-6:00pm, a meeting for the general public on Thursday, July 30 from 5:00-6:30pm, a meeting for Chinese Cantonese speakers on Tuesday, August 4 from 5:00-6:00pm, a meeting for Chinese Mandarin speakers on Thursday, August 6 from 5:00-6:00pm, and a general public meeting on Saturday, August 8 from 10:00-11:30am.

**4. Presentation by Apothca Inc:** Joseph Lekach, Chief Executive Officer of Apothca Inc. said they are here to update the JPNC on the status of their permitting process for a medical marijuana facility at 54A Hyde Park Avenue (near Weld Hill Street in Forest Hills) and to ask for support to co-locate a retail marijuana dispensary at the same location. Mr. Lekach said that they have already met with the community on July 2, July 9 and July 27. They have received good feedback. They presently have co-located facilities in Fitchburg and Lynn, a medical dispensary in Arlington and an initial medical dispensary approval at 54 Hyde Park Avenue, with their cultivating and manufacturing facility in Fitchburg. In late 2018, they received their medical host community agreement and conditional use zoning permit. They applied for and received approval (in January 2020) from the state to move a license in Holyoke to the JP location. It has been a three-year process and last week the JP medical dispensary floor plans were approved; construction should begin in October. Opening is planned for January 2021. If a co-located adult-use facility is supported by the community, operations could start in August 2021. The company would need a new host community agreement, zoning approval and Boston Cannabis Board approval. The 54A Hyde Park Avenue building is shared with JP Crossfit; Apothca's facility is 1,500 square feet. Mr. Lekach said Apothca will enhance the safety in the neighborhood. There will be very limited vehicle traffic because of the nearby MBTA station. The dispensary offers smokeable products, as well as edibles, tinctures, and vaping cartridges. They offer reduced cost or free marijuana products to patients with verified financial hardships. Security is very tight at dispensing sites. Patients cannot be admitted without a state-issued Medical Marijuana Dispensary card. Patients must have a qualifying medical condition and be approved annually by a doctor. Patients are also checked that they have not exceeded their monthly quota. Two IDs are checked every time. All employees go through a vigorous background check. All products are monitored by two seed-to-sale tracking systems and inventory is taken three times a day. No consumption

is allowed in or near the facility - it is illegal to consume marijuana products in public places. Violations must be reported. Mr. Lekach said that local hiring is important to Apothca. Differences in adult-use retail facilities are that customers must be 21 years old or older (not 18-years old for medical facilities). Amounts of product allowed are different. The same showroom floor will be used for both customers, but there are separate check-out lines for medical and adult use. All product is sealed in a plain childproof bag before leaving. He has made his personal cell phone number and email address available.

There was a question about the diversity of the executive management team: Joseph Lekach is Latino, as is his father. The chief financial officer is Jamaican and the comptroller is Mexican. Apothca is not classed as a economic empowerment establishment because it is a not-for profit entity. There was a question about how previous convictions for marijuana might affect criminal background checks of employee candidates. The state guidelines are the controlling factor. It was hoped that Apothca could help nudge the state to be more accepting. There was also a question on how the verified financial hardship program worked. All permits are now in place for the medical marijuana facility, and it is expected to open first, before the adults-use permits are obtained. The company is profitable now and there are no plans to sell the company to a larger entity. The large national companies already own up to their three-license cap and so could not buy Apothca. All corporate sales must go through a process at the City and State level. Mr. Lekach promised to advocate for a crosswalk

across Hyde Park Avenue. There was a question about subsidizing transit passes. Apothca will do it for medical patients - they are not allowed to offer promotions to adult retail customers. There will be up to four handicapped parking spots available off-street behind the building. Mr. Lekach offered to come back whenever asked.

## **5. Update from the JP NDC on 3371 Washington Street: Tabled**

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

**6.1. Public Service Committee:** Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on July 7 via Zoom. They discussed how the Public Service Committee could be involved in the Arborway Parkway Improvements Project being restarted by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The project begins at Kelley Circle and goes along Arborway to Forest Hills at the edge of DCR's old Casey Arborway project. Because DCR reopened Parkman Drive and notified the community only three hours before the change, it was agreed by the Committee to write a letter insisting that DCR give the community ten-to-fourteen days notice of important traffic changes.

The Committee began a discussion on reforming the Boston Police Department. The JPNC asked the Committee to come up with some action items at this July meeting. We looked at two documents developed by others: a document called Eight Can't Wait from Campaign Zero, and a 10 Point Plan from the Massachusetts Elected Officials of Color. The Committee first looked at, discussed and recommended a version of Eight Can't Wait that came from the Boston Police Department (BPD) website. These deal with police procedures such as restricting chokeholds, requiring de-escalation of situations, and requiring officers to intervene to stop other officers using excessive force. After the meeting, it was noticed that there are many differences between the national version of Eight Can't Wait and the BPD version that was recommended by the Committee; mainly, the BPD version softens the restrictions with wording such as "when possible" and "restricting" instead of "banning". Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the adoption by the Boston Police Department of the eight policies in Eight Can't Wait (BPD version). Seconded by Vicky Arroyo. Failed 2-8-5 (1 left early).

Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the adoption by the City of Boston of the two Municipal policies from the Massachusetts Elected Officials of Color 10 Point Plan. Seconded by Peg Preble. Passed 13-0-2 (1 left early).

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, August 4 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be a continued discussion on reforming the Boston Police Department. Also on the agenda will be a presentation on the finalized plans for the Columbus Avenue Bus Lane project.

**6.2. Zoning Committee (ZC):** David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met on June 24 and July 15 as virtual meetings. Three matters were heard and two need votes tonight. The matter of 120 Minden Street was deferred.

1) 7A Eliot Street, a petition by the Footlight Club for an accessibility upgrade with a new fire stair and Limited Use/ Limited Application (LULA) elevator. There will be a long ramp along the side to an accessible entrance. The Jamaica Pond Association does not oppose. The recommendation of the ZC is to approve. 2) 98 Forbes Street, a petition by Gregory and Cassandra Aloe to confirm occupancy as a single-family residence and add a two-story (approximately 150 square foot) addition. This family had originally proposed a two-story tower-like addition of 250 square feet containing a mud room and kitchen. One neighbor submitted a long letter in opposition about shadows and loss of privacy. After discussions and modifications, a new smaller one-story addition is being proposed. The neighbor has been notified and had not communicated any opposition by the time of the ZC meeting.. The recommendation of the ZC is to approve. However, after the meeting, the neighbor has now sent an eight-page letter of opposition. Because meetings are now virtual, all comments up to the time of JPNC meetings are in order. Motion by Kyle Smith to support the recommendations of the Zoning Committee on 7A Eliot Street and 98 Forbes Street. Seconded by Carolyn Royce. Passed 14-0-1 (1 left early).

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, August 5 at and August 19 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the

agenda will be the return of 12 Everett Street and 395 Centre Street (Rockstar Body Piercing).

**6.3. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC):** Carolyn Royce reported that the H&DC met on July 21 via Zoom. There was an update on the eviction/foreclosure moratorium. The governor has signed an extension for another two months and the legislature may extend it even longer. The Town of Brookline's resolution forbidding gas and oil lines in new construction/renovation under 15,000 sq. ft. has been struck down by the state Attorney-General.

The new Sustainability subcommittee will start meeting in August and Ms. Royce encouraged folks to join. There should not be more than four meetings over the next two months. The goal is to distill some simple guidelines useful for all Committees of the Neighborhood Council. Contact Carolyn Royce or Aidan Foley.

The main discussion was on how issues raised by Black Lives Matter affect affordable housing. What areas could the H&DC explore that would lead to some improvements? The City is doing a big study of fair housing and how it is implemented. The H&DC will look at interim reports from the City and its advisory groups. The City Council is proposing changes in zoning to incorporate fair housing criteria. Jamaica Plain realtors may be invited to speak about fair housing in our neighborhood. The H&DC may also invite back the Good Jobs Policy subcommittee to speak about hiring practices. What is JP's racial makeup in owner-occupied housing?

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, August 18 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

**7. Upcoming JPNC Election:** The next biennial JPNC Election had been scheduled for April 25, 2020 and was postponed by the Executive Committee to October. By that schedule, candidate nomination packets would have to be available in August. Because of the pandemic and national elections, it seems better to postpone again until April 2021. There was a request to check JPNC attendance and possibly create vacancies, so that we may attract new members before the 2021 election. Motion by Kevin Rainsford to postpone the JPNC election until April 2021. Seconded by Trevor Wissink-Adams. Passed 11-0-4 (1 left early).

**8. Old Business/New Business:** None

**9. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:04pm.

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, August 25 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, August 20 at 7:00PM via Zoom.