

**Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council**  
**February 22, 2022 Minutes**

**JPNC Attendance:** Samantha Montaña, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, Nicholas Chaves, Will Cohen, Marvin Mathelier, Daniel Perez Lacera, Peg Preble, Kevin Rainsford, Alexis Rickmers, Micah Sachs, Jonathan Watkins, and Trevor Wissink-Adams.

**Elected at the meeting:** Omer Hecht.

**Other attendees:** Sarah Freeman, Louise Johnson, Janet Galloway, Paige Sparks, Robin Cheung, David Carnochan, Jill Havens, Sharise Mayala-Nelson, Elizabeth Smythe, Gerry Wright, Jason DesRosier (Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation), Frances Oliveira (Inspectional Services Department), My'Kel McMillen (Office of City Councillor Kendra Lara), Tiffani Caballero (Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Samantha Montaña.

**1. Introductions:** Council members introduced themselves.

**2. Approval of January 25 minutes:** Motion by Trevor Wissink-Adams to approve the minutes from the January 25, 2022 meeting. Seconded by Bernard Doherty. Passed 10-0-1 (2 came late).

**3. Workshop on Community Benefit Agreements by Jason DesRosier:** Jason DesRosier, Manager of Community Action at Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation (ABCDC), spoke about community benefits that residents can ask for during the community process. In Allston, Harvard University is a very large player in the neighborhood. There have been 3,000 new housing units built since 2018. Harvard owns about 1/3 of Allston property and is heavily involved in the Allston Landing project. ABCDC created workshops to teach folks about community benefits for Allston Landing. It is important to remember that community benefits are different from mitigation. Community benefits usually involve greater affordability and a lower AMI (Area Median Income) in residential developments, more parking, and more green space. A lower AMI is an especially important request in Allston. The ABCDC has a strong goal of 20% Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) affordable units with lower than 70% AMI. Subsidies are targeted to rental units rather than homeownership units and ABCDC has a rental assistance fund that offers up to \$50,000 for new renters. On the other hand, mitigation is required by the City or by project needs. While almost anything is feasible for the community to ask for, the requests may not be feasible for the developer to do. Samantha Montaña asked how to codify the community benefit agreements that are promised. Mr. DesRosier said that he tracks every Article 80 project, keeping up with the base criteria and the community benefits. Ms. Montaña asked how a volunteer group with no paid staff like the JPNC can accomplish this tracking. Can we create a visual dashboard for multiple developments in the same area? For further questions, Jason DesRosier's email is [desrosier@allstonbrightoncdc.org](mailto:desrosier@allstonbrightoncdc.org).

**4. Announcements:**

**4.1 Council Vacancies:** The Chair announced that there are still vacancies on the Council. There is presently one vacancy in Area A and three vacancies in Area B. There were no nominations for the vacancies at this time.

**4.2 Community Announcements:** none

**5. Committee Reports/Recommendations:**

**5.1. Zoning Committee (ZC):** David Baron was not in attendance, but sent a written narrative along with his monthly zoning report. Micah Sachs said that the Zoning Committee met on February 2 and February 16 and three matters were discussed and need votes tonight. 1) 41 Cornwall Street, a petition by Francisco M. Skelton, to construct new roof dormers to extend living space to attic in existing two-family dwelling. This matter involves the reconstruction of a two-family house that was damaged by lightning and fire. The homeowner/occupant would like to enlarge a dormer on the roof in order to create more living space. The Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA) Housing Committee and a number of neighbors were in support. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. Motion by Micah Sachs to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 41 Cornwall Street. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 11-0-0 (2 came late). 2) 12 Everett Street, a petition by Kate and Mike Earls, to construct a three-unit residential building. This property is a large vacant lot with only a narrow driveway's worth of frontage on Everett Street. Last year, a proposed 7-unit residential building was significantly opposed by neighbors/abutters. This new proposal is for a three-family residence with three parking spaces, an accessible elevator in the building, and large three-bedroom units. The applicant had extensive discussions with Sumner Hill neighbors about the design of the new building and about landscaping and saving a large pin oak tree. Some of these agreements were memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding that was accepted by both the neighbors and the property owner/developer. There was a letter from a Stony Brook resident criticizing the amount of hardscape that is planned in order to serve both the new building and the existing building at 8 Everett Street, but otherwise there was no significant opposition. The landscape architect promised to take another look at the driveway to see if the hardscaping could be reduced. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve subject to the Memorandum of Understanding with the neighbors. Motion by Peg Preble to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 12 Everett Street with the proviso. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Omer Hecht criticized the amount of influence that the Boston Fire Department has in changing design proposals. Passed 11-0-1 (1 came late).

3) 3243 Washington Street, a petition by 3227 Washington Street, LLC, (Matt Javich and Dan Botwinik) to change occupancy from two-family to four-family residence; renovate entire structure; add rear decks; extend living area into basement for Units 1 and 2 to create duplex units; sprinkler building. The lot does not currently have any parking and no parking is proposed. This proposal was originally for a four-family house, and at a prior Zoning Committee meeting, there was opposition both from the neighbors and from the ESNA Housing Committee to increasing it from a two to a four. For the current proposal, a letter was submitted by the ESNA Housing Committee outlining agreements reached between the developer and the neighbors as to the rear decks, landscaping, location of utility meters, location of trash storage, and management of the construction process. With those agreements in place and the change by the developer from a four-family to a three-family house, the ESNA Housing Committee supported the requested variances. Alex Ponte-Capellan, chief-of-staff to City Councilor Kendra Lara, stated that Councilor Lara would be opposing this project unless and until the developer reaches a “no-displacement agreement” with her office or with City Life. The applicant noted that this building is currently vacant - and was sold vacant to this developer - so there would not be any displacement of residents in this instance. A representative of the ESNA Housing Committee, Carolyn Royce, supported the notion of this developer working with Councilor Lara’s office to develop a no-displacement policy for other/future projects, but she reiterated ESNA’s support for the current proposal. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve subject to items agreed to by the developer in the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association Housing Committee letter. There was discussion about the past record of this developer in other JP developments and their behavior. Motion by Bernie Doherty to table this issue. No second. Motion by Micah Sachs to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 3243 Washington Street with the proviso. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 9-0-3 (1 came late).

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

**5.2. Public Service Committee:** Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on February 1 via Zoom. There was a request by Brassica Kitchen + Café at 3710 Washington Street, across the street from Forest Hills T station, to formalize a seasonal outdoor patio with 23 seats in the rear of the building. This patio has been operation for about two years under the temporary pandemic regulations. Folks attending were strongly in favor of the rear patio. There was also a petition presented with over 170 signers in favor. This request is for two permits - a license change and a zoning change of occupancy - so the motion is a long one with two parts: Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request of KeanKruta LLC, doing business as ”Brassica Kitchen + Café”, at 3710 Washington Street to amend the description of the premises of its existing Common Victualler 7-Day All Alcoholic Beverages License and to amend the Certificate of Occupancy of West Realty Trust, (owner of 3710 Washington Street), to add an outdoor seasonal patio in the rear for 23 patrons from April to October with a closing hour of 10:00pm. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 12-0-0 (1 came late). The Public Service Committee continued its discussion of Committee initiatives. Public Service Committee member Omer Hecht brought up the issue of Space Savers and the issue has been added to the Draft Initiatives.

In addition, during February the Subcommittee on Police Procedures submitted a letter to the Mayor on increasing police accountability, first response using mental health professionals, civilian flaggers at traffic details, and other matters. The letter was approved by the JPNC Executive Committee. Michael Reiskind also reported to the JPNC that a letter was sent to the Boston Cannabis Board supporting SEED’s two changes at 401A Centre Street as voted on by the Council at its January 11, 2022 meeting.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 8. On the agenda will be final discussion of the Public Service Committee initiatives and a request by Little Cocoa Bean for new café license at 114 South Street.

**5.3. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC):** Marvin Mathelier reported that the H&DC met on February 15 via Zoom. No votes are needed from the JPNC today.

1) The Committee inaugurated a new Breakout Group discussion before every meeting at 6:45pm. It will give people an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss their views on housing. It is spearheaded by the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. The first session had five people.

2) There was an update from the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee and what needs to be done. The Boston Planning and Development Agency will help with outreach.

3) There was a discussion on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). This is an anti-displacement initiative to make developers take a closer look at integrating within a community. Within Article 80, there is an assessing tool which developers are required to use.

4) The Committee is working on adjusting the Article 80 Checklist historically used to cover issues such as affordable housing, energy, and livable wages. A poll was sent out to members, but there was no consensus on the top three issues or what changes should be made.

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, March 15 at 7:00pm.

**5.4. Parks Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee):** Alexis Rickmers said the Committee met with a few folks who have been interested in parks issues. The Committee will be meeting on the second Monday of every month at 7:30pm.

The next Parks Committee meeting will be on Monday, March 14 at 7:30pm.

## **6. New Chair:**

Samantha Montaño reminded folks that this is her last JP Neighborhood Council meeting as she will be resigning on March 1. A new Chair will be needed at that time. Omer Hecht, from 54 Marmion Street, nominated himself for Chair.

Since the Chair must be chosen from the membership of the JP Neighborhood Council, discussion turned to Mr. Hecht's nomination to fill a vacancy on the JPNC. He was a member of the JP Neighborhood Council five years ago and is presently a community member of the Public Service Committee. Robin Cheung asked Mr. Hecht why he wants to be the Chair of the Council. He said that Black Lives Matter opened up communities to important new ideas. New voices need to be heard and JPNC members should not be rude or condescending during meetings. Consensus-building requires equity and inclusivity. Motion by Kevin Rainsford to have Omer Hecht fill a vacancy in Area B. Seconded by Samantha Montaño. Passed 12-0-0 (1 left early). Omer Hecht took his seat on the JP Neighborhood Council. Micah Sachs welcomed Omer Hecht's energy and ideas, but he was worried about divisive comments that he posted on social media using a pseudonym. Mr. Hecht said that his criticisms of the JPNC were a way to make it a true voice of the whole community. Mr. Hecht promised not to post those types of comments while he is Chair of the JPNC. Bernie Doherty was also worried that Omer Hecht's "bridge-burner" personality might not be a good fit for the JPNC. Kevin Rainsford nominated Bernard Doherty for Chair of the JP Neighborhood Council. Mr. Doherty declined. Samantha Montaño spoke about her experience being Chair of the JPNC - how hard it was logistically and emotionally. Motion by Samantha Montaño to table the vote for Chair to the March meeting. Seconded by Will Cohen. Passed 12-0-1 (1 left early).

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

**8. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, March 22 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: March 17, 2022 at 7:00PM at JP Licks.