

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
March 22, 2022 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Nicholas Chaves, Will Cohen, Omer Hecht, Marvin Mathelier, Daniel Perez Lacera, Peg Preble, Kevin Rainsford, Micah Sachs, Gert Thorn, and Trevor Wissink-Adams.

Elected at the meeting: Paige Sparks

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Louise Johnson, Janet Galloway, Dana Gonsalves, Celeste Walker, Louise Robbins, Renée Stacey, Lauren S., Lena Shapiro (Office of State Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz), Isabel Torres (Committee to Elect Nika Elugardo), My'Kel McMillen (Office of City Councillor Kendra Lara), Lauren Bennett (Jamaica Plain Gazette), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Vice-Chair Bernie Doherty.

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves. Aides to elected representatives and the press introduced themselves.

2. Approval of February 22 minutes: Motion by Micah Sachs to approve the minutes from the February 22, 2022 meeting. Seconded by David Baron. Passed 10-0-1 (2 came late).

3. Announcements:

3.1 Council Vacancies: The Vice-Chair announced that there are still vacancies on the Council. There is presently one vacancy in Area A, two vacancies in Area B, and one vacancy At-large. There was one nomination for a vacancy in Area B: Paige Sparks from 96 Brookley Road nominated herself. She said that she is a 2-3-year resident of Jamaica Plain who works as a research manager at the Brigham & Women's Hospital. She is interested in community outreach and providing residents with access to important information. She has been to many community meetings and serves on the Steering Committee of the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA). Her leadership term on the SNA is coming to an end and she has the time to serve on the JPNC. She is already active in the Public Service Committee's Subcommittee on Police Procedures and is interested in the Parks Committee. Motion by Will Cohen to elect Paige Sparks to the JP Neighborhood Council in Area B. Seconded by David Baron. Passed 11-0-0 (2 came late). Ms. Sparks took a seat on the JP Neighborhood Council.

3.2 Community Announcements:

- JP Centre/South Main Streets is having their Annual Meeting on Wednesday, March 23 starting at 7:00pm. It will be in-person at the First Church in Jamaica Plain (Unitarian Universalist).

- There was an MBTA public meeting on March 9 about planned accessibility improvements at Forest Hills T Station. It was attended by several JPNC members who said that more public meetings are needed before the 70% design is done.

4. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

4.1. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Marvin Mathelier reported that the H&DC met on March 15 via Zoom. After an update from the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee, there was a discussion on the format of future meetings. It was decided to have virtual meetings for the next two months before switching to in-person. The main issue of discussion was the proposal to demolish the Monastery of St. Clare at 920 Centre Street (at Murray Circle) and sell the land to Holland Development which would build 26 townhouses. A draft letter to the Mayor and others was submitted by email to Council members. The letter asks for a robust community process on the parcel and also that the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) delay its April 12 hearing on the demolition. David Baron thought that the letter was appropriate and should be sent. Omer Hecht wanted the letter to be reformatted. There was a lot of back-and-forth discussion on the two-part process of first demolition delay (BLC) and then Article 80/zoning variances. The demolition delay applies to the Poor Clare Sisters and the Article 80/zoning applies to Holland Development. Gert Thorn wondered if it were also possible to landmark the building and not just ask for a delay of demolition. Do the Poor Clare Sisters qualify for a religious exemption? Nicholas Chaves was uncomfortable about advocating for a demolition delay, but wanted a strong community process on the proposal for future development. Motion by Bernard Doherty to send the letter as written to the Mayor (and the cc list of department heads, elected officials, and the JP liaison). Seconded by Gert Thorn. An amendment was requested to add the local press to the cc list. The amendment was accepted by Messrs. Doherty and Thorn. Gert Thorn was most worried about the proposal for luxury housing on the site. A full community process is needed for such a project. Will Cohen said that he liked the letter as is. Passed 10-3-1.

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, April 19 at 7:00pm, with a pre-meeting at 6:45pm.

4.2. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on March 8 via Zoom. There was a request by Little Cocoa Bean for a new café license at 114 South Street. This is an 18-seat café that will serve coffee, tea and smoothies for adults, but will mainly feature fresh and healthy food for babies and toddlers. This "baby café" will feature chef-crafted afro-latina foods that are prepared off-site and available to eat in and take out. There will be a significant play area, classroom, and extra-large ADA-compliant bathroom. There was no opposition from neighbors at the meeting. Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request of The Little Cocoa Bean Company LLC, doing business as "Little Cocoa Bean", at 114 South Street for a Common Victualler License, with take out, with the hours of 7:00am to 7:00pm, with Tracy Skelly as manager. Seconded by David Baron. Passed 14-0-0.

There was a final discussion of the Public Service Committee initiatives. The initiatives were shared by email to all JPNC members. In addition to most of the initiatives from three years ago, two more were added: 1) the important work of the Subcommittee on Police Procedures was added, and 2) Public Service Committee member Omer Hecht brought up the issue of Space Savers and that has been added. Motion by Michael Reiskind to accept the Public Service Committee Initiatives 2021-2023. Seconded by Peg Preble and Omer Hecht. Dave Baron thought that there was no need for the full JPNC to vote on this Committee issue. Michael Reiskind said that while it is mainly a tool to keep the Committee focused, it also confirms the policies that have been approved by the JPNC, allowing the Committee to send such policy letters when needed. Passed 12-1-1.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, April 5. On the agenda will be a request by Vee Vee for a rear patio addition to their restaurant at 763 Centre Street and a beginning discussion on Space Savers.

4.3. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met on March 2. One matter was discussed and needs a vote tonight. 1) 29 St. John Street, a petition by William & Kimberly Messenger, to add a two-story addition to an existing single-family residence, remodel; no change in occupancy/use. This matter involves filling in a corner to square off the rear of the building. One rear neighbor did not attend the abutters meeting, but did attend to hear the plans at the Zoning Committee meeting. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. Motion by Dave Baron to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 29 St. John Street. Seconded by Peg Preble. Passed 14-0-0.

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, March 23 and April 6 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be 76 Wyman Street (for the third time), 3514 Washington Street, and 72 Hyde Park Avenue.

4.4. Parks Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee): Trevor Wissink-Adams reported that the Committee met on March 14. No votes are needed at this meeting. Issues that the Parks Committee are discussing are the Shattuck Campus in Franklin Park, a dog park, creating a ListServ for neighborhood garbage pick-ups, the future of Hellenic Hill, and making an inventory of all open spaces, parks, and tot lots in Jamaica Plain. There will be an important event for Olmsted 2022 coming up. The 200th anniversary of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted is April 26, 2022. There will be a celebration at the Jamaica Pond Boathouse at 6:30pm on Tuesday, April 26 (subsequently moved to April 27). The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is also starting a year-long event called "Olmsted Now".

The next Parks Committee meeting will be on the second Monday of the month, April 11 at 7:30pm.

5. New Chair:

Since the previous Chair of the JPNC, Samantha Montaña, resigned on March 1, nominations are now open for a new Chair. Omer Hecht nominated himself for Chair. Micah Sachs nominated Will Cohen. Gert Thorn nominated Bernard Doherty. David Baron asked Paige Sparks if she would consider becoming Chair of the Council. Ms. Sparks declined. Omer Hecht said that he has a good understanding of how the Council works, and has the energy and ability to lead the Council. He is able to cut off rudeness at meetings and increase neighborliness. The JPNC needs to be more hospitable. He said that he will not tiptoe around difficult issues.

Will Cohen said that the main task of the Chair is to make JPNC meetings efficient, respectful, and productive. He admitted that he would need assistance on logistics.

Bernie Doherty said that he is a long-time member and thinks that the main job is to listen and direct discussion toward an outcome. He would like to build the Council so that it is more representative of the community. He then stated that he was withdrawing from consideration as Chair and endorsed Will Cohen. Mr. Doherty would like to remain as Vice-Chair.

A voice vote was taken and Will Cohen was elected as Chair of the JP Neighborhood Council.

6. Old Business/New Business:

- Paige Sparks asked about the Outreach Committee which has not met in a while. She would like the Council to improve its communications. Nicholas Chaves asked how the Council advances the ideas of the community at large, and how can the Council increase community participation? He hopes that the meetings run better without bogging down. The JPNC should respect attendees' time. Kevin Rainsford asked if the Neighborhood Council has an Instagram account that would help with outreach.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:58pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, April 26 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: April 21, 2022 at 7:00PM at JP Licks (not held).