

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
May 24, 2022 Minutes

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

Elected at the meeting: Renée Stacey.

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Dana Gonsalves, Celeste Walker, Louise Robbins, Alan Benefeld, Cathie Wilder, Marie Turley, Dan Sarmiento, Dan Tenner, Patty Yehle, Dot Joyce (Forbes Building), Rep. Nika Elugardo, Isabel Torres (Committee to Elect Nika Elugardo), Emily Polston (Office of City Councillor Ruthzee Louijeune), Kevin Higgins (Committee to Elect Liz Miranda), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Bernard Doherty.

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

2. Approval of April 2022 minutes: Michael Reiskind said he had been requested to correct two items: Under “Update from Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz”, it should read “sports betting” instead of “sports meeting”. Under the Housing & Development Committee discussion on the Monastery of St. Clare, it should read “Micah Sachs thought that fighting for demolition delay will slow down the process, which would delay the availability of affordable housing at the site.” Motion by Trevor Wissink-Adams to approve the minutes from the April 26, 2022 meeting, as amended. Seconded by Bernard Doherty. Passed 11-0-0 (1 came late).

3. Announcements:

3.1 Community Announcements:

- Peg Preble announced that Massport has an ongoing project to increase the number of landings at Logan Airport’s Runway 4L. This is an approach from the southwest and may affect noise levels for Jamaica Plain residents. Alan Wright has offered to give a report to any Jamaica Plain group that is interested. Contact Peg Preble at highwaypeg@comcast.net. Project information is at faabostonworkshops.com/project-information/ea-findings.

- There has been a toxic algae bloom at Jamaica Pond and the Pond is closed for swimming for pets and others until further notice. The paths and park remain open.

- Sarah Freeman, a member of Boston Park Advocates, urged folks to help Boston parks in three important ways: The City’s budget hearing for the Parks and Recreation Department will be on May 26 at 2:00pm; there will be a citywide forum on parks coming soon; and she asked people to write letters to the Boston Bulletin and other papers to increase park funding.

3.2 Council Vacancies: The Vice-Chair announced that there are still three vacancies on the Council. There is presently one vacancy in Area A, one vacancy in Area B, and one vacancy At-large. There was one nomination for the vacancy in Area A: Renée Stacey of 11 Beethoven Street said that she is a 47-year resident of Jamaica Plain who grew up on Montebello Road before moving to Beethoven Street. She went to Jamaica Plain schools. She is very active on the Zoning Committee and the Housing & Development Committee, as well as Call It Out. Motion by David Baron to elect Renée Stacey to the JP Neighborhood Council in Area A. Seconded by Peg Preble. Passed 10-1-0 (1 came late). Ms. Stacey took a seat on the JP Neighborhood Council.

4. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

4.1. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on May 3 via Zoom. The Committee considered a request by Blue Nile Restaurant at 389 Centre Street for an all-alcohol license. This is a 26-seat restaurant that has been operating with a beer and wine license since 2018 and a cordials license since 2019. It is one of Boston’s few Ethiopian restaurants. All neighbors attending were strongly in favor. Much of the discussion was about whether to continue a proviso that alcohol be served with food only. Attendees thought that this proviso was not necessary for this restaurant. The Public Service Committee voted to recommend support with no provisos. Motion by Daniel Perez Lacera to support the request by Blue Nile Inc., doing business as “Blue Nile Restaurant”, at 389 Centre Street for a Common Victualler 7-Day All Alcoholic Beverages License, with a closing hour of 12:00midnight, with Yosef Haile as manager. Seconded by Gert Thorn. Passed 12-0-0 (1 came late).

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 7. On the agenda will be discussion about bicycle issues at Jamaica Pond along Perkins Street and increasing trash barrels in the business districts.

4.2. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Marvin Mathelier reported that the H&DC met on May 17 via Zoom. There was continued discussion about the issues that the tenants of the Forbes Building (545 Centre Street) are having with the owners about their continued tenancy. A draft letter from the H&DC to the landlord, Paul Clayton, is being submitted tonight to the JPNC. Gert Thorn suggested three changes: 1) in bullet point 2, add potential dates for the meetings, 2) in bullet point 4, remove “as possible”, 3) add Mayor Wu to the cc list. The H&DC heard from Michael Kane, executive director of the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants. The government subsidy expired in March 2022. The Committee also heard from Jeffrey Sacks, a representative of the landlord. He said there was little to update, but the owners are about to present a plan to preserve the long-term affordability at the building. Dot Joyce, a representative of the landlord, was on the Zoom call at this JPNC meeting. She said that a letter will be sent this week to tenants which

should give tenants relief about their future. The landlord intends to move forward on affordability for the next 40 years. Nika Elugardo said that, in her experience, Paul Clayton seems trustworthy and reaffirmed he would not raise rents this year for existing income-restricted tenants. Mr. Clayton also agreed that all current income-restricted tenants would have a life-tenancy. He is also working very strongly that all affordable units remain affordable, but this is not a done deal yet. He is also working on financing to insure that all renovations and updates are done in an environmentally green manner.

Motion by Micah Sachs to send the draft letter to Paul Clayton with the three changes. Seconded by Gert Thorn.

Passed 12-0-0 (1 came late).

Marvin Mathelier added that there was also discussion of the proposal to demolish the Monastery of St. Clare and sell the land to build 26 townhouses. There is no major movement on this issue.

Mr. Mathelier said that there is a new issue about the very high noise level on Washington Street due to the multiple construction projects near Washington Street and Green Street. Information is needed from the lead Boston agency, the Boston Air Pollution Control Commission. It seems that the ongoing noise levels are not violations of the existing regulations. There was discussion about changing the code to provide relief for residents. Perhaps different foundation construction methods could be used. Marie Turley (Union Avenue) urged folks to contact the director of the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) about using Plan:JP/Rox to coordinate all construction of multiple projects. There was more discussion on lengthening deed restrictions on affordable units from 50 years to permanently affordable. The Committee is considering in-person future meetings of the H&DC.

Michael Epp asked the H&DC about getting involved on the Arborway Yard and the plans for a new garage facility for the electrified buses. The Public Service Committee would be a better Committee to discuss electrification.

The next H&DC meeting will be on Tuesday, June 21 at 7:00pm.

4.3. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met on May 4 and May 18. Four matters were discussed and three need votes tonight. 26 Union Avenue is not up for a vote tonight. 1) 57 Brookside Avenue #14, a petition by Luke Bruffee and Matthew Doherty, to add and finish bedroom in 2nd floor loft area. This is an artist live-work space with an already existing loft. They want to extend the loft for more space. Neighbors and the local Egleston Square Neighborhood Association were in support. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. 2) 12 Cataumet Street, a petition by David and Jessica Rand, for a new 2nd story addition. This is a second floor addition to the garage. The side yard and rear yard setbacks are not being made worse. Neighbors and the local Jamaica Hills Association were in support. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve. 3) 15 Meehan Street, a petition by 15 Meehan Street LLC (Pierre Joas), to increase living space and add extension for egress/porches in rear. The added space is in the basement and upper level. There was a lot of discussion from 13 Meehan Street because it is so close to the proposed development. 15 Meehan Street is vacant and derelict. The local Stonybrook Neighborhood Association (SNA) was concerned about the effect on 13 Meehan Street, so three provisos were added: The applicant is to (1) repair and paint north side of 13 Meehan Street; (2) procure insurance naming 13 Meehan Street Association as additional loss payee; and (3) hold weekly check-ins with neighbors at the property. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve with the three provisos. Motion by Dave Baron to support the recommendations of the Zoning Committee on 57 Brookside Avenue #14, 12 Cataumet Street, and 15 Meehan Street. Seconded by Michael Reiskind. There was discussion about 15 Meehan Street: Bernie Doherty said that the owner had put 15 Meehan Street up for sale during the zoning process. Omer Hecht said that the SNA dragged the community process out so long that it jeopardized the project. Patty Yehle (11 Meehan Street) said that the SNA did not slow down the process. She said that something needs to be done with this property. It is only a 1700 sq. ft. parcel with no yard and no parking. The developer was not engaged with the neighbors during the community process. Ms. Yehle said that the proviso are fine, but the proposed building is too large for the parcel. Passed 10-1-2. 4) 26 Union Avenue, a petition by Frederick Vetterlein, to install a curb cut and driveway for two off-street parking spaces. This issue was very controversial. There were lot of attendees on both sides of the issue. Almost all concerns related to the narrowness of the proposed driveway. It is only 10 feet wide and the tenants in the rear would not be able to exit. An immediate neighbor is Marie Turley, who is opposed. There was one ZC motion to deny, which failed. There was a ZC motion to put off to a later meeting, which failed. There was a ZC motion to approve, which also failed. Therefore, no action is being taken by the Committee and the Zoning Committee will not rehear the issue. Omer Hecht asked whether the JPNC can accept a motion to approve the request at 26 Union Avenue, which he moved. There was no second. There was continued discussion with disagreement about what votes on 26 Union Avenue were held at the Zoning Committee. Neighbors from Union Avenue extended the discussion and reiterated the safety issues and problems with ingress and egress.

Dave Baron reported that he spoke to the Dorchester Civic Association about the Zoning Committee's community process.

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, June 8 and June 22 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the first agenda will be 7 Boylston Street and 19 Spalding Street, #3.

4.4. Parks Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee): Alexis Rickmers reported on two issues from the May 16 meeting. There was a proposal that the JPNC co-host a meeting being organized by Boston Park Advocates on the topic of the City of Boston Parks Department's Seven Year Open Space and Recreation Plan. Motion by Alexis Rickmers to co-host the Boston Park Advocates meeting. Seconded by Michael Reiskind. The date has not been chosen yet and there is no cost to the JPNC. Sarah Freeman agreed with the proposal and asked if it could be amended to have JPNC join Boston Park Advocates as a Community Member. The Boston Park Advocates is "A Citywide Network of People who Champion Urban Greenspace". The amendment was agreed to. Passed 13-0-0.

2) Olmsted Now grants are being offered and the JPNC could be a recipient with a partner organization. Send any ideas you have to Alexis Rickmers. Gert Thorn brought up the issue of bicyclists from Perkins Street using the pedestrian-only path at Jamaica Pond. He asked Ms. Rickmers to help with additional signage to prevent this.

Sarah Freeman gave an update on Franklin Park future plans: It is proposed to close part of Circuit Drive and there is a question of what will be the new configuration of bus Route 16.

The next Parks Committee Zoom meeting will be on Monday, June 13 at 7:30pm.

4.5. Ad-hoc Outreach Committee: In the absence of Paige Sparks, Omer Hecht reported. Paige Sparks sent out two emails about reviving the ad-hoc Outreach Committee. A letter will be forthcoming. There was discussion about whether a bylaw change is needed to form the Outreach Committee, and if a bylaw change is needed whether an Ad-hoc Bylaws Committee is needed to be created first. Dave Baron said a bylaw change for an Outreach Committee can be discussed either through the Executive Committee or an Ad-hoc Bylaws Committee.

5. Old Business/New Business:

- Micah Sachs urged folks to write letters opposing a state takeover of Boston Public Schools. Gert Thorn thought that this is an important issue that needs extensive community discussion. Daniel Perez Lacera said that the record of previous state receiverships in other cities was not good and detrimental to students. This issue was sent to the Executive Committee.

- The issue of potential term limits for community members on committees was tabled to the next Ad-hoc Outreach Committee meeting.

- Gert Thorn thought that items on Council agenda should have times added to reduce excessive discussion.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, June 28 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: June 23 at 7:00PM at JP Licks (not held).