

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
July 26, 2022 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Will Cohen, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Nicholas Chaves, Omer Hecht, Peg Preble, Kevin Rainsford, Alexis Rickmers, Paige Sparks, Renée Stacey Welch, Gert Thorn, and Trevor Wissink-Adams.

Other attendees: Sarah Freeman, Celeste Walker, Louise Robbins, Dana Gonsalves, Carolyn Royce, Marie Turley, Alan Benenfeld, Helen Mathews, Jeffrey Ferris, Joyce Smith, Michael Epp, Laura Mistretta, Weezy Waldstein, Michael Kane, Thomas Mannion, David Nollman, Jamie's I-Phone, (857) 334-4841, Eric Lawrence (Prolific Cannabis), Maya Gaul (Prolific Cannabis), Katherine O'Shea (Fuss & O'Neill/Prolific Cannabis), Matt Skelly (Fuss & O'Neill/Prolific Cannabis), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Will Cohen.

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves. The press was introduced.

2. Approval of June 2022 minutes: Motion by Omer Hecht to approve the minutes from the June 28, 2022 meeting. Seconded by Paige Sparks. Passed 10-0-1 (2 came late).

3. Announcements:

3.1 Council Vacancies: The Chair announced that there are three vacancies on the Council. There is presently one vacancy in Area A, one vacancy in Area B, and one vacancy At-large. Kevin Rainsford asked for an attendance update at the next meeting.

3.2 Community Announcements: None

4. Presentation from Prolific Cannabis: Eric Lawrence and Maya Gaul, co-owners of Prolific Cannabis, made a presentation requesting a letter of support. They are asking for a Retail Recreational Cannabis Dispensary License at the former 7-Eleven convenience store at 684 Centre Street with the hours of 9:00am to 9:00pm. Eric Lawrence is a contractor and Maya Gaul is real estate agent and resident in Jamaica Plain. They are an Equity Applicant. They also have on their team Tran Vu as compliance officer and Chris Fetau as security consultant. They promised to hire a local, diverse work force. They will pay a living wage, provide subsidies to employees for MBTA passes, and provide an affordable housing initiative. They will also add to the existing 2-bike rack at 684 Centre Street so that it can hold 8-10 bikes. Katherine O'Shea, from the traffic engineers Fuss & O'Neill, shared a preliminary traffic and parking analysis done for this location which showed that a cannabis dispensary of this size would generate fewer trips and have less impact than the previous convenience store use. It would generate between 90 and 135 trips per peak hour (45 to 68 round trips/hr.). The previous use generated two-to-three times the number of trips. The nearby Blanchard Lot is 75% to 90% full at peak hours, so there are almost always a few spaces available.

Eric Lawrence then spoke about the closed-looking storefront that is required by regulation to prevent passersby seeing into the dispensary. Prolific Cannabis is thinking about building out the front portion of the present space for use as a separate community flexible-use room. This room would block passersby seeing into the dispensary, have a separate entrance, and be used as an art gallery, meeting space, or pop-up retail use. This would improve the appearance of the storefront along a busy section of the business district. They have contacted the JP Artists Association and JP Open Studios to collaborate.

Questions from members were about the competition with the SEED Dispensary, and sustainability efforts. Prolific Cannabis answered that a living wage for their employees is an important sustainable goal. They also said they would use sustainable vendors who grow the product, and use recyclable paper packaging - not plastic. Prolific Cannabis will not be asking for a cannabis delivery license at this time. Mr. Lawrence said that a Host Community Agreement has not been signed yet, and they would add the bicycle rack and flex-space as part of the Host Community Agreement. Gert Thorn did not like the design for the front flex-space; he thought that an empty conference room is not an attractive addition to the streetscape and the 9-foot depth of the room is too small. Prolific Cannabis is working with Michael Epp on this convertible space. It will not be used solely as a conference room. It was mentioned that this proposal will also have to apply for zoning relief, so any support is preliminary and dependent on the community zoning process.

Motion by Kevin Rainsford to preliminary support the request of 684 Center St. JP, LLC ("Prolific Cannabis") for a Retail Recreational Cannabis Dispensary License at 684 Centre Street, with the provisos that Prolific Cannabis expand the 2-bicycle rack at that location to a bicycle rack that accommodate 8-10 bicycles and they build out the front of the store for use as a flex-space for an art gallery/retail space/community meeting space. Seconded by Trevor Wissink-Adams. Passed 12-1-0.

5. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

5.1. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): In the absence of Marvin Mathelier and Micah Sachs, Carolyn Royce gave the Housing & Development Committee report. The H&DC met on July 19 via Zoom. The Forbes Building (545 Centre Street) tenants are asking for changes to the initial leases that were recently sent out. The landlord promised to come to the JP Neighborhood Council. Helen Mathews said she is concerned that the landlord is not here at the July meeting. The tenants are running out of time. David Nollman said he had hoped for some assurances in July. Motion by

Gert Thorn to send a letter (written by the Executive Committee) to the Mayor to bring the landlord to the JPNC and the tenants, and move the concerns of the tenants to a fair conclusion. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 9-2-2.

2) Revisions to the City's construction noise regulations were requested. 3) Nothing new to report on the Monastery of St. Clare. Michael Reiskind said that he read that there is now a promise not to demolish the main building. 4) Madison Park Community Development Corporation, JP Neighborhood Development Corporation, and Urban Edge gave a report on alternatives to evergreen affordable housing ownership deed restrictions. Right now the City puts restrictions on deeds for 50 years and the State uses 15 years. The time limit resets every time a unit is sold. But how much equity should stay with the property rather than going to the selling owner? The H&DC is thinking about equity and timing - a reduction to 15 years could add generational wealth. Helen Mathews was concerned about any displacement. The Committee discussion was very helpful and this issue needs creative solutions.

5.2. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met on July 20 (the July 6 meeting was cancelled). One matter needs a vote tonight. 1) 3409 Washington Street, a petition by S&H Management, to construct one four-story building with 29 residential rental units, six of which will be income restricted, seven parking spaces, and 480sq. ft. of ground floor community space. The recommendation of the ZC was to approve with the proviso that there are ongoing abutter meetings and process over exterior design of the building, particularly rear façade. This proposal went through an Article 80 process that was completed in January 2022 and it was approved by the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA). There were fractional affordable units not included and the Zoning Committee asked the developer to pay for these fractional units, break up the massing in front, and work on the rear facade with abutting neighbors. At the recent ZC meeting, there were some attendees in favor and some opposed. There was a very thorough airing of all issues. One outstanding concern is the step-back in the rear does not meet Plan:JP/Rox guidelines. The applicant was not willing to add the step-back, but willing to continue working with rear neighbors on improvements. There was not much additional discussion on the affordability units. The ZC recommends approval with the proviso that there are ongoing abutter meetings and process over exterior design of the building, particularly rear façade. Motion by Omer Hecht to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 3409 Washington Street. Seconded by Kevin Rainsford. There was discussion about a January 2022 letter from the JPNC on the design and step-back being important. A February 2022 meeting was very productive and left the impression that more community meetings on the rear design would follow. There were none until the recent ZC meeting. There were worries about not seeing the full plans, and about the lack of a good rear design. Passed 7-4-2.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, August 3 at 7:00pm. On the agenda will be a proposal at 561-579 Centre Street (former JP Gas Mini Mart) for a doggie day care, and selection of a Vice-Chair for the ZC.

5.3. Parks Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee): Alexis Rickmers reported that the Parks Committee discussed ideas for a dog park in Jamaica Plain. The question was which agencies may authorize a dog park; it depends on the owner of the proposed location. (Flaherty Playground in the Brookside Neighborhood **is in the process of a redesign with an off-leash dog run included.**)

5.4. Ad-hoc Outreach Committee: Paige Sparks reminded JP Neighborhood Council members to provide biographies and headshots to be used on the JPNC website. The Committee discussed the issues of term limits for members of committees, community engagement, and how to use technology to improve the Council's outreach. The JPNC mission statement should also be improved by expanding it to three or four sentences. The Committee decided to ask the Council to make Outreach a Standing Committee. Motion by Paige Sparks to make the Outreach Committee a Standing Committee in order to imbue outreach as a base value of the JPNC and keep it continuing. Seconded by Trevor Wissink-Adams. David Baron raised the point that Standing Committees are part of the JPNC bylaws and so an amending of the bylaws is needed with the appropriate process: the Council asks that the amending language be provided in writing before the meeting and adequate time be allowed for consideration of the bylaw change. The motion was then changed by Ms. Sparks to just a "sense of the Council" about the proposed bylaw change by adding "in principle" to the motion. This friendly amendment was accepted by Mr. Wissink-Adams. The motion was then withdrawn by Ms. Sparks.

The Committee's proposal on term limits was summarized as community members on Committees may serve a maximum of two terms (about four years), and then must resign or run for the full Neighborhood Council to remain on a Committee. Omer Hecht said that outreach is important to try to address repeated issues that plague the JP Neighborhood Council. He suggested that term limits and good outreach can work together to solve some of these problems. The discussion on term limits was tabled to the August meeting.

5.5. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on July 12 via Zoom. On the agenda were two permit requests: a request for a beer & wine license at Mangú Dominican Bistro at 264 Hyde Park Avenue and a request for a change of ownership interests and name at Little Dipper at 669A Centre Street. The Committee voted to support both requests, but because of time constraints both matters were sent to the Executive Committee which concurred. The Licensing Board did grant both requests on July 14. In addition, there were two related petitions supported by the Committee in July: 1) a request for an entertainment license for one TV at Mangú, and 2) a request for take-out at Tonino - if the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) later decides that zoning relief is necessary. Since these requests were not time-sensitive, the Committee is now asking the JPNC to support them. Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request by Pinales Kitchen Inc., doing business as "Mangú Dominican Bistro", at 264 Hyde Park Avenue for an entertainment license for 1 TV only. Seconded by Omer Hecht. Passed 12-0-1. Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request by 669 Centre, LLC, (doing business as "Tonino"), acting as agent for Nicholas H. Darris Trust, to grant a #36A

take-out use at 663-671 Centre Street, with the proviso that the take-out use will stay only with the current business tenant at 669A Centre Street, 669 Centre, LLC, doing business as “Tonino”. Seconded by Omer Hecht. Passed 12-0-1. There will be no August meeting. The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, September 6.

6. Old Business/New Business:

6.1. Role of Committees: Due to time constraints, the discussion on Committees was tabled. Marie Turley suggested the Council ask for suggestions from all Committees’ members to get the best outcome.

6.2. Arborway Yard: In response to unanswered questions by the MBTA on the Arborway Yard, there was a request for an ad hoc committee. The MBTA is open to additional meetings, but are not able to return to the full JPNC until September. Michael Epp said that the community group that originally worked with the MBTA on this issue, the Community Planning Committee for the Arborway Yard (CPCAY) handed things over to the JPNC’s Housing & Development Committee. He said the new MBTA proposal is very big and has serious design issues. He also summarized past promises and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) in 1999 and 2001, and other agreements and cosigners. The question is how to represent the whole community on this important issue? Sarah Freeman said she hoped that the JPNC can develop a consensus on a shared vision for the property. Motion by Gert Thorn that the JP Neighborhood Council develop an ad hoc committee to work with the MBTA that reflects the MOU and develops a plan for the Arborway Yard. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Omer Hecht said that too much has changed and we should not be bound by twenty-year-old MOU agreements. He doesn’t think that a tiny committee working on a design would be helpful. Bernie Doherty said that we should look forward and make sure that the MBTA abides by the will of the folks who live in the neighborhood today. Kevin Rainsford said that the MOUs should inform how we move forward, but should not lead the process. Tabled by agreement to the top of the agenda of the August meeting. Motion by Kevin Rainsford to censure Gert Thorn for interrupting.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:24pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, August 23 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: August 18 at 7:00PM via Zoom (not held).