

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
September 27, 2022 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Will Cohen, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Nicholas Chaves, Sarah Freeman, Omer Hecht, Daniel Perez Lacera, Peg Preble, Kevin Rainsford, Micah Sachs, Paige Sparks, Renée Stacey Welch, Gert Thorn, and Trevor Wissink-Adams.

Other attendees: Celeste Walker, Dana Gonsalves, Michael Epp, Sarah Horsley, Allan Ihrer, Jay Flynn, Andrea Bourges, Leo Liu, David Seldin, Stephen Quigley, Arthur Courjaud, Ellen DeNooyer, Anne McHugh, Monique Douglas, Jennifer, resident, Cathryn's earbuds, Carlos Martinez (Boston Police Department, E-13), Scott Hamwey (MBTA), Alexandra Markiewicz (MBTA), Lydia Rivera (MBTA), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

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

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves.

2. Arborway Yard: Scott Hamwey, Director for Bus Modernization for the MBTA, and Alexandra Markiewicz, MBTA Manager of Bus Modernization said that they last presented to the JPNC in June of 2022 and were here again to update the community on the further plans to build a new bus facility in the Arborway Yard. As was mentioned in June, the plan is to electrify the entire MBTA bus fleet by 2040, and this bus garage and maintenance shop has to be built before buses arrive. A slide presentation on the current plans was shown reiterating the proposal to store 200 buses (more than the 118 buses agreed to in old agreements). Parking will increase to 335 cars and is planned to be underground. Primary access will be from Arborway. The City will maintain use of the Public Works Pole Yard. The City will get at least 8 acres for community uses, all on the west side of the Stony Brook culvert (Washington Street side). An MBTA backup Operations Center has been added to the proposal. In answer to questions, Mr. Hamwey confirmed that the building known as 500 Arborway will be demolished. He promised to share the slides with the JPNC. Mr. Hamwey was very reluctant accept a community advisory committee for this project; he wanted to maintain communications through these community presentations. Gert Thorn repeated the request for a community advisory committee and said that the neighbors should be able to understand the impact that 82 additional buses and a 2-story garage would have on their community. What is the additional square footage? What is the added height of the garage? Why are there no street views of the facility? When can we see a traffic study? The MBTA answered a traffic study will be released in conjunction with the report required by the MEPA environmental review (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act). Omer Hecht asked about the financial commitment of the MBTA to this project; he hopes we don't have to wait another two decades for money to become available. Mr. Hamwey said they have the funding they need for the initial design and the present CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) buses need to be retired very soon. Sarah Freeman asked about the hiring process; when are the Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) bids due to be returned? The MBTA answered that the team has already been selected from the SOQ, but the process is not complete and the chosen team has not been named. Landscape architects and urban designers are part of the team. Ms. Freeman was surprised to see that the primary entrance is a curb cut from Arborway. Bernie Doherty asked about the budget for the project. While \$116million has been received for purchase of the buses, the first cost estimate is not available - that will happen when we reach 15% design. David Baron asked whether underground parking is possible on the site. The MBTA has performed geotechnical borings and it is possible, but expensive. Micah Sachs asked again for a community process with an advisory committee. He also asked how much construction noise will be added for the underground parking. Michael Epp reiterated that the lack of community meetings violates the agreed-on Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and MBTA's standards of community process. He said that more community process makes a better project. He repeated that the new MBTA proposal is very big, has serious design issues, and is adjacent to the Emerald Necklace. Allan Ihrer said that his neighborhood, Stonybrook, has absorbed a lot of additional traffic because of the Casey Overpass project. The proposed bus traffic will be too invasive; a traffic study is needed. The MBTA said that buses are presently less than 1% of traffic in the area. Are the proposed additional uses of the Public Works Pole Yard and the backup Operations Center reducing the available footprint and creating the need for a second story? The MBTA ended with the statement that they are open to larger public meetings when they get to 15% design (in about three months).

3. Approval of August 2022 minutes: There were two corrections to the August minutes submitted by Sarah Freeman: under "Other attendees", Ms. Saporta's first name should be "Elena", and under "5.1. Ad Hoc Outreach Committee", the third sentence about the mission of the Outreach Committee should read "...actively engaging as much of the neighborhood as we can..." Motion by Omer Hecht to approve the minutes from the August 23, 2022 meeting, as amended. Seconded by Paige Sparks. Passed 14-0-1.

4. Announcements:

- There will be a rally against police violence and shootings at 9am tomorrow, September 28, outside the Moakley Federal Courthouse related to the Juston Root killing. Juston Root lived his whole life - until 2018 - in Jamaica Plain. In 2020, he was shot 31 times by police.

5. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

5.1. Outreach Committee: Paige Sparks said that the Committee decided to change the date of its regular monthly meetings to the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. It also announced the current roster as Paige Sparks, Omer Hecht, and Peg Preble - all Council members. There are openings on the Committee for two more Council members and ten community members.

There was a request for JP Neighborhood Council minutes. Paige Sparks said that all archived minutes are available to Council members by accessing the Google Group page and they are sent monthly by Michael Reiskind to all members.

(Update - The approved minutes were posted to the JPNC website in early October).

The Committee has selected three initiatives to pursue (schools outreach, content for tabling and distribution, request for a public bulletin board at The Brewery). The Committee is asking all Committee Chairs to make a list of their accomplishments to help with outreach.

There were two requests for bylaw changes - Article 7 about term limits for community members on committees, and Article 14, term limits for working committee Chairs. The proposed amendments had been provided in writing and tabled to this September meeting to allow time to consider the changes. Votes can be entertained at this meeting. Paige Sparks reiterated the reasons for the first bylaw amendment: Amendment to Article 7, Committees, sub section - Working Committee: "Community members who serve on a working committee may serve for no more than 2 full terms of the council. If community members wish to continue to serve on a committee again on the same committee, they must run for a council seat and participate in the JPNC as any other member." She said that without this change, there is no natural turnover on committees like there is on the full Council (with its biennial election). The change will also increase competition for JPNC seats at the election.. Ms. Sparks also summarized the comments that had been solicited from all the working committees. Michael Reiskind asked for a modification by adding capital letters to "council" and "chairs". Gert Thorn was uncomfortable with the mandatory turnover since it is difficult to attract people to serve on the Council or working committees. Micah Sachs asked for the vote to be delayed a month. Sarah Freeman thought that the amendment should be modified to allow for time to make the Council and some committees more attractive, and so increasing the competition for seats. Omer Hecht said that having "lifelong" members serving on working committees gives a bad impression to the public. The votes on both proposed amendments were tabled to October because of time constraints on the other agenda items.

5.2. Parks Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee): In the absence of Alexis Rickmers, Sarah Freeman reported that the Parks Committee "Love Your Block" Clean-Ups were conducted on September 17 at the Parkman Memorial at Jamaica Pond and near Stony Brook MBTA Station.

5.3. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met on August 24 and September 21. (The September 7 meeting was cancelled.) The Committee heard five proposals and all need votes tonight. 1) 561-579 Centre Street, a petition by Tammy Boyer-Lewis (Pondside Petcare), for a change of use from gas station to doggy daycare. This site is the former JP Gas Mini Mart and satellite parking for the Arbour Hospital. This proposal went through a very extensive community process. The neighboring groups are very active. The Jamaica Pond Association voted not to oppose with certain provisos and the ZC recommends approval with those provisos added. This request was in the agenda of the Zoning Board of Appeal this morning and the applicant withdrew at that hearing. 2) 55 Boylston Street, a petition by Adam and Chade Granger, for new second and third floor additions, enlarge garage with in-law suite above and basement play space below, mudroom, first and second floor renovations. This is for an in-law apartment truly for a relative. The ZC recommends approval. 3) 10 Glenside Avenue, a petition by Croan McCormack, to construct a three-family residence with three off-street parking spaces per plan. This applicant owns both 8 Glenside Avenue and 10 Glenside Avenue. 8 Glenside was extensively renovated and there is a shared driveway between #8 and #10. The request has lots of dimensional variances and the shared driveway parking is oddly configured. Neighbors didn't like the design and its size. Maybe a two-family residence would be a better fit for this lot. The ZC recommends denial. 4) 48 Waterman Road, a petition by Hussen Mohammed, for a gut renovation of existing structure and conversion from 1.5 story Cape-style to 2.5 story Colonial-style home with new windows and siding, new main foyer, systems upgrades, additional 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. There are existing 2 1/2-story houses on this street. There was no community opposition. The ZC recommends approval. 5) 183 Chestnut Avenue, a petition by Eileen Ani, to add a driveway for off-street parking for one vehicle. The main question in these matters is does the proposal just exchange a public parking space for a private parking space? The configuration of the street shows that it does not remove a useable space and it will create two off-street spaces. The ZC recommends approval. Omer Hecht thought that 48 Waterman Road and 10 Glenside Avenue seem to have the same amount of variance requests and one is being approved and one is being denied. Dave Baron disagreed and indicated that the two petitions have a very different number of variances. Motion by David Baron to support the recommendations of the Zoning Committee on 561-579 Centre Street, 55 Boylston Street, 48 Waterman Road, and 183 Chestnut Avenue. Seconded by Paige Sparks. Passed 13-1-1. Motion by David Baron to ratify the recommendation of the Zoning Committee for denial on 10 Glenside Avenue. Seconded by Bernard Doherty. Omer Hecht said that Dave Baron seemed to ignore the spirit of some of the neighbors' letters about 10 Glenside Avenue. Passed 13-1-1.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, October 12 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be a proposal at 78 Child Street for an addition of a sunroom and bathroom, and the return of 81 Woodlawn Street (not heard).

5.4. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): No report (time constraints)

5.5. Public Service Committee: No report (time constraints)

6. Old Business/New Business:

- Gert Thorn asked when the re-instituted Arborway Yard Committee will meet and what will be the agenda.

7. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

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

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: October 20 at 7:00PM via Zoom.