

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
January 24, 2023 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Will Cohen, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Nicholas Chaves, Sarah Freeman, Omer Hecht, Peg Preble, Alexis Rickmers, Paige Sparks, and Renée Stacey Welch.

Other attendees: Dana Gonsalves, Kane Dimasso-Scott, Michael Epp, Gordon Weissmann, Christine O’Toole, Jay Flynn, Giselda Polanco, Duncan Grimm, Michael Kane, Kathy Brown, Laura Mistretta, Carlos Rios (Office of Rep. Sam Montañó), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

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

1. Introductions: Council members introduced themselves. The reporter from The Bulletin and the aide to Rep. Sam Montañó introduced themselves.

2. Approval of December 2022 minutes: There was a suggested addition to the December 2022 minutes: Sarah Freeman recommended adding “Referred to the Housing and Development Committee for discussion” to the Arborway Yard item in the Housing & Development Committee section. Motion by Peg Preble to approve the minutes from the December 20, 2022 meeting, as amended. Seconded by Renée Stacey Welch. Passed 11-0-0.

3. Announcements:

3.1 Community announcements:

- There will be a Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) Public Meeting on a zoning amendment to the City’s Inclusionary Development Policy. It will be a virtual meeting on Thursday, January 26 starting at 6:00pm. Information on how to register is on the JPNC website calendar.
- Carlos Rios shared some of the bills that Rep. Montañó has filed for the new legislative session.
- Bernie Doherty asked about a proposed Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) project for a deep-rock tunnel in our area as a redundant connection from Quabbin Reservoir to the Boston area in Mattapan.

3.2 Council Vacancies: The Chair announced again that there are five vacancies on the Council. Two vacancies in Area A, two vacancies in Area B, and one vacancy in Area C. Nominations from the community are encouraged. Nicholas Chaves said that he lives in Area C, but has been seated as a member in Area B. Should he switch areas? It was suggested that he remain in place and run for re-election this year from Area C.

4. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

4.1. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Renée Stacey Welch said that the Housing & Development Committee met on January 17 via Zoom with Ms. Welch as Chair; Carolyn Royce was elected to serve as an interim Vice Chair to support the new Chair. The Committee has submitted a draft letter to go to Mayor Wu about the City’s Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP). Kathy Brown, from the Boston Tenant Coalition, reminded the Council that ten years ago the JPNC voted to urge developers in JP - in buildings that fall under the Policy - to aim for 25% of their units affordable with a lower Area Median Income (AMI). This goal is higher than the City’s requirement of 13%. The Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston has been asking the City to improve the IDP and Mayor Wu has proposed a new Policy which has 20% affordability (17% affordable units and 3% reserved for vouchers) with a lower AMI. The public comment period ends on February 12. The proposal also sets up a City Advisory Committee to assess feasibility of the new Policy. Bernie Doherty thought that the Policy still puts housing out of reach for many working families. Alexis Rickmers asked whether parking is mentioned in the IDP. Will Cohen thought that the Mayor’s Policy is OK and worried that the H&DC letter may go too far and actually reduce housing production. Nick Chaves asked about the IDP threshold being 10 units before a building is included in the Policy; Mayor Wu’s proposal lowers the threshold to 7 units. David Baron said he supports Mayor Wu’s new stronger Policy, but disagrees about the H&DC asking for more. Three members said they would abstain because the draft letter came too late. The Chair urged members to read the letter after the meeting and tabled any vote to an email or a later meeting.

Arborway Yard: There was a discussion on the organization of a working group on the Arborway Yard. There was little opposition to its being a separate ad hoc committee. The Chair is not chosen yet. Sarah Freeman said that this new committee will be in a rebuilding stage and needs to have a good planning process to work with the MBTA’s plans and process. She felt that the H&DC was not focused on the planning issues. Will Cohen thought that restructuring the committee would not change anything basic. Volunteers to work on the issue include Gert Thorn, Michael Epp, and Allan Ihrer. Michael Epp said that any community process has to include the many groups that worked on the issue in the past: residents, the Boston Society of Architects, the Conservation Law Foundation, the Boston Planning & Development Agency, and state representatives. He reminded folks that the plans are for a windowless building 60’ high which violates previous Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). Paige Sparks offered to help the process move forward by helping with logistics such as setting up the working committee. Nick Chaves asked whether any Community Planning Committee for the Arborway Yard (CPCAY) recommendations need to be approved by the H&DC or can go directly to the JPNC. Dave Baron offered that the committee needs a written mandate that may or may not become a bylaw. Will Cohen asked interested residents to think about such a mandate and send it to the Housing & Development Committee.

4.2. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met only once, on January 4, 2023. The Committee heard a single proposal that needs a vote tonight: 27 Dixwell Street, a petition by On Point Capital (as agent for PCS-Dixwell Realty Trust), to construct a new three-story (changed from four-story), 12-unit residential building including 2 affordable units (changed from 14 total units); 12 parking spaces in the rear and four private roof decks (changed from

common roof deck). This project went through a community process with the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association (ESNA) Housing Committee and it has been modified from a 4-story, 14 unit project to one of 3-stories and 12 units, but with still 2 units as affordable. This building is for rental units, not home-ownership. Units will be set aside as dedicated for Section 8 vouchers. The ZC recommends approval. Motion by David Baron to support the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 27 Dixwell Street, as modified. Seconded by Paige Sparks. Passed 11-0-0.

The next Zoning Committee meetings will be on Wednesday, February 1 and Wednesday, February 15 at 7:00pm via Zoom. The February 1 meeting may be cancelled.

4.3. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind reported that the Committee met on Tuesday, January 3 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda was further planning on getting more trash barrels and recycling containers in the business districts. A complete inventory was done of existing trash barrels, and where additional ones are needed. The Committee is concentrating on the main block at Forest Hills as well as at bus stops. In addition, there was a request to add some trash barrels along Perkins Street next to the parking lane at Jamaica Pond. There was also an explanation of the City's Sidewalk Snow Clearance Program. The Public Works Department is open to adding more sidewalks to the program.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 7 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be work on getting more trash barrels in the business districts and discussion of the City's Sidewalk Snow Clearance Program.

4.4. Outreach Committee: Paige Sparks said that the Committee met on Tuesday, January 10 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

The Committee continued their three initiatives: adding information about the Council on public bulletin boards, attracting more youth to participate in the Council, and developing written material to use at tabling events.

The Committee started planning for the biennial JPNC Election. There are two proposed dates for the Election: Saturday, June 24 or Saturday, May 20. The Election requires about three months of planning, and especially needs volunteers for Election Day. A JPNC vote will be needed at the February meeting to decide on the date. The Outreach Committee will act as the JPNC Ad Hoc Elections Committee to plan the Election.

The Outreach Committee started a discussion on the merits of the Council becoming a 501(c)(3) corporation.

The next Outreach Committee meeting will be on a Wednesday, February 8 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

4.5. Parks+ Committee (Environment, Parks & Energy Committee): Alexis Rickmers said that the Parks+ Committee last met in December. The Committee is communicating with different groups, such as the Southwest Corridor Parkland Management Advisory Committee (PMAC). PMAC recently changed its name to "Southwest Corridor Park Alliance" (SWCPA). There are fifty people on the "interested" list. Tiffani Caballero will help with the "Love Your Block" cleanup this spring.

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

5. Old Business/New Business:

- Forbes Building letter: The H&DC submitted a draft letter on the Forbes Building at 545 Centre Street. Bernie Doherty emphasized that these tenants are at risk and the JPNC must act to reduce their fear. Michael Kane (Mass. Alliance of HUD Tenants (MAHT)) said that the tenants have been under stress for two years without a clear plan for the building's future. The landlord missed a deadline to submit a plan for rent subsidy, and no plan with numbers has been shared with the JPNC or tenants. Mr. Kane wants a different letter to go to the landlord, Paul Clayton, with copies to the City and State. Motion by David Baron that the JPNC send the H&DC draft letter to the Mayor, with minor revisions. Seconded by Michael Reiskind. Omer Hecht thought the letter needs more work before sending, and it came to the Council too close to meeting time. Passed 9-1-1.

- Duncan Grimm introduced himself as a new homeowner. He appreciated the links on the JPNC website and thought the JPNC meeting was a good community forum.

- Nick Chaves had a general question on how JPNC members should identify themselves being on the JPNC when speaking as community residents. There was a longer discussion on how much should Council members "fly the banner" of the JP Neighborhood Council when speaking publicly.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:38pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 7:00PM via Zoom.
Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: February 16, 2023 at 7:00PM via Zoom.