

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
January 23, 2024 Minutes

JPNC Attendance: Renée Stacey Welch, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Lorenzo Bartoloni, Esther Belliard, Nicholas Chaves, Peter DeCotis, Sarah Freeman, Luke Mathew, Willie Mitchell, Katherine O'Shea, Peg Preble, Purple Reign, and Gert Thorn.

Other attendees: Louise Johnson, Carolyn Royce, Dana Gonsalves, Susan Cibulsky, Teresa Pope, Ken Pope, Janet Galloway, Doug Rand, Michael Epp, Michael O'Brien, Evelyn Tate, SvenErik Karlsson, Carla-Lisa Caliga, Mia Jean-Sicard, Juwan Skeens, Kyle Smith, Lissah Johnson, Kristine Grimes, Karen Lifford, Kane Dimasso-Scott, Carlos Rios (Office of State Rep. Sam Montaña), Melissa Beltran (Office of City Councillor Ben Weber), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Renée Stacey Welch.

Introductions: The members of the JP Neighborhood Council introduced themselves. Aides to elected officials introduced themselves and the reporter from The Boston Bulletin introduced himself.

2. Approval of November 2023 and December 2023 minutes: Motion by Purple Reign to approve the minutes from the November 28, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Peter DeCotis. Passed 12-0-0 (3 came late). Motion by Purple Reign to approve the minutes from the December 21, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Peg Preble. Passed 12-0-0 (3 came late).

3. Community announcements:

- JP Centre/South Main Streets will hold their annual meeting tomorrow, January 24, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at The Footlight Club, 7A Eliot Street.
- Egleston Square Main Street will be having their annual Churros & Chocolate community event on Saturday, January 27 starting at 4:00pm from Robert Lawson Park, Washington and Atherton Streets.
- The Jamaica Plain Historical Society will host a lecture on "Slavery in Jamaica Plain". Volunteer researchers will share what they have learned. The event will be on Sunday, January 28 at the First Church of Jamaica Plain, Eliot and Centre Streets, starting at 2:00pm. It will also be on Zoom simultaneously.

4. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

4.1. Outreach Committee: Katherine O'Shea, Chair, reported that the Committee met on January 9 via Zoom. There is nothing major to report. The Committee members reported on community meetings they attended, such as JS Loves. An idea was raised that the JP Neighborhood Council invite our local elected representatives to come individually and talk about issues they are working on. This has been done by previous Councils.

Ideas about outreach were shared by JPNC members: Gert Thorn thought that general public relations about the JPNC should be the major thrust of the Committee. Renée Stacey Welch said that all Council members should challenge themselves to bring one new person to every meeting. Should the Council have posters to put up in store windows? Peter DeCotis said we should collaborate with other local neighborhood groups and maybe organize them to increase our community voice and power. It was suggested that tabling at neighborhood events is very helpful. Carla-Lisa Caliga, from Burnett Street, said that neighborhood groups are the bedrock of Jamaica Plain, and getting them together occasionally for a combined forum is very helpful.

The next Outreach Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 13 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

4.2. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on Tuesday, January 2 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda was a licensing request from Stoked Pizza at 3484 Washington Street (the former Doyle's location) for a new all alcohol license. This would be in a new building rebuilt to keep some of the flavor of the old establishment. It will not be built for at least a year. The applicants have two other restaurants operating. The capacity in JP would be 150 seats indoors and another 90 on an outdoor second-floor deck. (Doyle's had a capacity of 265.) The layout and design was shared with the Committee and the applicants emphasized the "pinch-points" entrances to enhance security, as well as an innovative dedicated take-out area with short-term parking on Williams Street for UberEats, etc. Alcohol will be served with food only and there will not be any live entertainment. There was overwhelming support at the Committee meeting, with some concerns expressed about inadequate parking. Neighborhood Council members had questions about noise from the large outdoor rooftop deck, and the 25 parking spaces not being enough. Michael Epp said the design of the deck was excellent and had been designed to shield noise from the adjacent residences. Michael Reiskind said that the Committee had sometimes requested applicants with outdoor patios to return for a followup community meeting after six months of operation. Mia Jean-Sicard was concerned about patrons being noisy when they leave Stoked Pizza and said that a six-month follow-up meeting seems like a good idea. Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request of Stoked Pizza JP, LLC, doing business as "Stoked Pizza", at 3484 Washington Street for a common victualler 7-day all alcoholic beverages license with a closing hour of 2:00am, with Toirm Miller as manager, and with an outdoor seasonal roof deck (on the second floor) for 90 patrons, and with an Entertainment License for 4 TVs only, with the proviso that Stoked Pizza have a follow-up community hearing with neighbors and the JPNC after six months of operation of the outdoor seasonal roof deck. Seconded by David Baron. Passed 11-0-4. There was also a licensing request for a transfer of the beer & wine license of Miami Restaurant at 381 Centre Street, with an extended closing hour of 1:00am

(Thurs.-Sun.). No attendees opposed the transfer of the license, and the extension of the closing hour to 1:00am for four days of the week was complimented. The Public Service Committee recommended approval. This request had a vote scheduled at the Licensing Board on January 4, so had to go to the Executive Committee, which supported the transfer. No vote is needed here.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 6 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be a discussion on getting sharps containers in more Jamaica Plain locations.

4.3. Parks+ Committee: Nick Chaves, the Chair of the Parks+ Committee, reported that the Committee sent a letter to Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Ryan Woods, asking for playground lighting in the winter season. The Committee is also sending out a poll to the Parks+ email list to gauge the best date and time for future meetings.

Gert Thorn asked about better signage to prevent bicyclists from using the pedestrian path around Jamaica Pond. Michael Epp said the Parks+ Committee should keep their eyes on White Stadium and the Shattuck Campus. Both are on the National Register of Historic Places and under the purview of the Landmarks Commission. The JPNC should oppose both projects. Gert Thorn asked whether White Stadium is essentially “being privatized” during the soccer season, and how will the rehabilitated stadium be shared - in use and in costs?

4.4. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met twice - on January 3 and 17. Two issues were considered and one vote is being requested at tonight’s meeting. 1) 470 Centre Street, a petition by David Doyle and Maricely Perez Alers, to add a deck and stairs to the second-floor unit on the rear of the building; add a door from second-floor unit to new deck. This is an owner-occupied residence above Tres Gatos occupied by the owners of Tres Gatos. This is mainly a rear yard variance and the neighbor to the rear did not object. The Zoning Committee recommended approval. 2) 22 Rockview Street, a petition by SvenErik and Amanda Karlsson, to subdivide a lot with an existing single-family residence to create a separate front yard lot on Rockview Street, construct two single-family residences on new front lot. This proposal came back twice to the Zoning Committee. The first time, there were questions and concerns and the Zoning Committee sent it back to the developer. The existing house is set way back from the street on what is essentially a cliff. The proposal is to divide the large front setback into two house lots. A curb cut would be added. Because of the extensive ledge, the houses would be built as slab on grade with no basements. They are about 2,000 sq. ft. each. There will only be some excavation. There were concerns about the ledge; one neighbor said they got sick from some spores released from the ledge. This time at the Zoning Committee there was a motion to approve, which failed; then there was a motion to deny, which failed. The ZC is recommending no action. Motion by David Baron to approve the recommendation of the Zoning Committee on 470 Centre Street. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 15-0-0.

Dave Baron submitted an updated roster of Zoning Committee members; there are two new members being recommended for Council seats on the Committee: Willie Mitchell and Purple Reign. Motion by David Baron to approve Willie Mitchell and Purple Reign for Council seats on the Zoning Committee. Seconded by Renée Stacey Welch. Passed 15-0-0. There is now one Council seat vacancy and one community seat vacancy on the ZC.

Dave Baron gave a brief update on the Squares + Streets zoning initiative. There will be six new zoning subdistricts created, called S0 through S5. After the zoning is defined, they will select the districts in active neighborhood centers. The first two chosen are Roslindale Village and Codman Square. Folks thought that there was too short a comment period and the deadline should be extended.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, February 7. On the agenda will be 104 Child Street again, 27 Hopkins Road, 3510 Washington Street, and 13 Regent Circle.

4.5. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC)/Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard: Purple Reign reported that the Housing & Development Committee met on January 16 via Zoom. There was conversation about White Stadium. Richard Heath, from the Boston Bulletin, said that he is having trouble getting information on the project and its design, Council members also shared their concerns on the project. There was also discussion about tax exemptions for large non-profits and the City’s PILOT program (Payments In Lieu Of Taxes).

The next Housing & Development Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 20 at 7:00pm via Zoom.

The Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard: There has been no Arborway Yard meeting in January yet. There will be one on Thursday, January 25 with the MBTA and the City of Boston attending. Sue Cibulsky reported on the Arborway Yard discussion at the H&DC meeting on January 16. There was a big concern about the 150 parking spaces on the Arborway Yard that the MBTA wants to move into the 8 acres of community land.

The Arborway Yard letter to the MBTA that was discussed last month was approved by the JPNC Executive Committee and sent. Bernie Doherty thought that the letter was passed too quickly for all neighbors to be informed about the project’s impacts. Ken Pope, from Wenham Street, said that 2,400 housing units will be built along Washington Street from Forest Hills to Williams Street. None of his neighbors have heard about this part of the project.

Bernie Doherty was also concerned about cold weather affecting the batteries in the electric buses planned to be stored outdoors in the winter. The MBTA says that in the winter, the batteries will be stored indoors separately from the buses. The next meeting of the Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard will be on Thursday, January 25 at 6:00pm via Zoom.

5. Old Business/New Business:

- Vacancies on the JP Neighborhood Council: There are three vacancies on the Council, all in Area B. Candidates who want to be nominated can send a chat or email to the Outreach Committee.

- Juwan Skeens introduced himself. He reminded folks that he had attended before and last year he ran for City Council as a write-in candidate. He is now running for the State Senate in the 1st Suffolk District, which lies outside Jamaica Plain. He will be returning to a future JPNC meeting.

- Teresa and Ken Pope spoke about the issue around 72 Hyde Park Avenue, which went through the ZC in April 2022. The Popes live on Wenham Street which is at the back of the Hyde Park Avenue property. There is a huge old tree at 72 Hyde Park Avenue that was promised to be saved by the developer in return for his zoning relief, which was granted. The developer now wants the tree taken down. The community is trying to save it. There is extensive discussion on the Forest Hills Facebook Group. The Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) said that since the tree was on the plans submitted to the agency for approval, the developer has to submit amended plans to be approved. A Stop Work Order was issued. Ken Pope said that the JP Neighborhood Council was not a lot of help on this issue. It was recommended that City Councillor Ben Weber could be the best one to help.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 7:00PM via Zoom.