

**Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council**  
**February 25, 2025 Minutes**

**JPNC Attendance:** Renée Stacey Welch, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Lorenzo Bartoloni, Carla-Lisa Caliga, Nicholas Chaves, Peter DeCotis, Sarah Freeman, Willie Mitchell, Katherine O’Shea, Purple Reign, and Leah Simmons Dzintars.

**Other attendees:** Sue Cibulsky, Carolyn Royce, Michael Epp, Susan Zebrak, Todd Kerr, Genevieve DeWalt, Todd Washburn, Rob Simmons, Eileen McMahon, Willie Gomez, Evan Foss, Bradley Cohen, Kane Scott, Marvin Mathelier, Juwan Skeens, TriciaMuse, Kiara Mark, State Senator Liz Miranda, State Representative Sam Montaña, City Councillor Ben Weber, Caroline Peters (Office of Neighborhood Services), and Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by Renée Stacey Welch.

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

**2. Approval of January 2025 minutes:** Motion by David Baron to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2025 meeting. Seconded by Willie Mitchell. Passed 11-0-0 (1 came late).

**3. Community announcements:**

- There will be a community stand-out tomorrow, February 26 at 1 Ashburton Place at 12noon to ask Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell to help save Franklin Park. Organized by the Franklin Park Defenders.
- Caroline Peters, JP Liaison at the Office of Neighborhood Services, said that she will be hosting office hours on the next four Fridays from 10:30am to 11:30am: on February 28 at Brassica Kitchen + Café, 3710 Washington Street (and Chief of Civic Engagement Brianna Millor will join in from 11:30am-12:30pm); on March 7 at Evergreen Eatery & Café, 154 Green Street; on March 14 at Fiore’s Bakery, 55 South Street; and on March 21 at Mike & Patty’s, 388 Centre Street.
- Caroline Peters reported on the following five upcoming community meetings: February 26-Summer Safety Meeting at Mildred Hailey Youth Center, 30 Bickford Street at 5:30pm; February 26-JP Centre/South Main Streets Annual Meeting, 7A Eliot Street at 6:30pm; March 3-Article 80 Public Meeting for 920 Centre Street, on Zoom at 6:00pm; March 4-City Hall on the Go, Curtis Hall, 20 South Street at 10:00am; March 6-Franklin Park Shattuck Tennis Community Meeting, 1 Circuit Drive at 6:00pm.
- Caroline Peters reported on the following three City resources: Sign up by 5pm on March 3 for Love Your Block in order to host a community cleanup on April 12. The City will provide equipment and handle trash removal; Free tax preparation is available to residents that earn up to \$70,000/year at the Boston Tax Help Coalition. Other financial literacy resources are also available; Free programs for older adults hosted by Age Strong start next week at Spontaneous Celebrations, 45 Danforth Street. Classes include mindfulness, yoga, pilates, sound bath, and meditation. City Councillor Ben Weber added that the Spontaneous Celebrations classes will run for ten weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00am-1:00pm.
- Caroline Peters said 37 businesses in the City recently received their liquor licenses, including six spots in JP.
- You can nominate a business, community group, or individual taking innovative action to support Boston’s decarbonization, energy transformation, resilience, and waste reduction. Nominations are due by March 13.
- Todd Washburn, chief of staff at the Arnold Arboretum, followed up about the March 3 Article 80 meeting on 920 Centre Street by saying that the developer has filed a Project Notification Form (PNF) and the comment period has now started. The Arnold Arboretum has two major concerns - the blocking of views from the Arboretum and the effect on the health of its trees.
- Willie Gomez, Boston Latin Quarter Coordinator, reported that the signs are now up in the district announcing it as Boston's Latin Quarter. He said that Caroline Peters helped a lot getting them installed.
- Councillor Ben Weber said that next Wednesday, March 5, Mayor Wu will be testifying before Congress. The City is hosting a solidarity event that day at City Hall starting at 11:00am.
- Marvin Mathelier introduced himself. He said he used to be a member of the JP Neighborhood Council, is a co-owner of Ula Café, and is a candidate for Boston City Council At-Large. He is very interested in affordable housing and Boston Public Schools (BPS), having two children in BPS right now.
- Genevieve DeWalt, from the Jamaica Plain Recovery Center at 120 South Street, said that the Center works with a lot of partners in the community and will be starting workshops in March.

**4. Arborway Yard/State Representative Sam Montaña and State Senator Liz Miranda:** Sue Cibulsky said that the JPNC had a Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard for two years. Discussion with the MBTA and City revealed that the MBTA wanted to keep some of the land promised for community use. In late fall 2024, the MBTA paused their design plans for the Arborway Yard. The Subcommittee has taken this opportunity to invite State Senator Liz Miranda and State Representative Sam Montaña to attend this February JPNC meeting and discuss the big picture of MBTA funding and how it affects the Arborway Yard. Sen. Liz Miranda said that she had been a state representative for two terms before becoming a state senator in 2023. Rep. Montaña said that she has been involved in community issues for many years. The funds for design and construction are capital funds, are raised through bonds, and are on a five-year rolling budget. This puts the City in a tough spot as the MBTA will not turn over the land for community use until the funding is secured. Also,

the MBTA has many other needs. They are under a federal mandate to electrify their bus fleet and if this is not met Arborway Yard buses which serve neighborhoods to the south will have dirtier air. The projected MBTA deficit is \$700M/year and growing about \$50M every year. Over the last few years, the State has been using Covid relief funds to keep the MBTA running, but those funds will be disappearing. Also, some of the 4% surcharge Millionaires Tax (Fair Share Amendment) has been going to the MBTA - about \$1B a year. In addition, the MBTA needs to hire about 1,000 new employees just to meet current service levels. Sue Cibulsky asked if the \$700M deficit is operating or capital - it is just the operating deficit. Sarah Freeman offered that if the federal government mandates bus electrification, then the federal government should be funding it. Sen. Miranda urged everyone to get behind a major investment into the MBTA. Rep. Montañó also mentioned that the MBTA is paying off a major part of the bonds for building the Big Dig. Evan Foss reported that he attended today's MBTA Board meeting. Mr. Foss is worried that the MBTA is assuming that Capital and Operating funding will continue at today's levels, but the Federal Transit Administration's mandate is now to base funding on a region's birth rate. Massachusetts, being a low birth-rate state, will lose funds. He also thinks that Gov. Healey's promise of extra MBTA funding from the Fair Share Amendment (4% surcharge) will not continue. In summary, Rep. Sam Montañó said that federal, state, and municipal funding are all at great risk. It is also very difficult to get needed transportation bonds passed at the State House.

## **5. Committee Reports:**

**5.1. Zoning Committee (ZC):** David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met once on Wednesday, February 5. Four matters were considered and three need votes tonight. **1) 268-274 Centre Street**, a petition by Viva Mi Arepa Restaurant LLC, acting as agent for Centre Street Retail LLC (JP NDC), for a restaurant with take-out. This proposal had lots of support. This is at the corner of Centre and Lamartine Streets which has had parking issues; police officers frequently block the moving lane. The Centre Street curb presently does have a 30-minute parking restriction. The ZC voted to recommend approval, with the proviso that this is for this applicant only. **2) 36-38 Wyvern Street**, a petition by Ben and Nyssa Boardman, to frame two new dormers and finish attic, adding master bedroom, full bathroom and utility closet. This is a condominium whose owners want to expand into the attic. There was enthusiastic support from the other condo owners. There were questions whether the expansion of the dormers would create shadows. It was generally felt that this was not a large change because the ridge line would remain the same. The recommendation of the ZC is to approve. **3) 62 Patten Street**, a petition by Kyle and Samantha Hilberg, for a basement renovation – add bathroom, add walls, sheetrock and plastering, move washer and dryer, install French drain with sump pump. This is for an owner-occupant to expand into the basement with a bathroom and a French drain. The ZC voted to recommend approval. **4) 561-579 Centre Street**, a petition by S-561 Centre Realty Trust, to construct a new four-story mixed-use building with twelve (12) residential units, one ground-floor commercial space. This is on today's agenda for information only. The parcel is an unused gas station between Lakeville and Goodrich Roads. There have been two older proposals for this property. There was lots of resistance from the Lakeville Road neighbors about the activation of a curb cut on that street. Folks also thought the project was too big and also wanted more buffering for the adjacent residences at the back of the property. There was a good process of back and forth discussion. There was also some opposition because of this developer's other projects in the neighborhood. The Committee took no action on this request. Motion by David Baron to accept the recommendations of the ZC on 268-274 Centre Street, 36-38 Wyvern Street, and 62 Patten Street. Seconded by Willie Mitchell. Passed 10-0-2.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, March 5. On the agenda will be only one issue - the Squares and Streets initiative by the City of Boston Planning Department (CBPD). Micro-zoning map amendments are being proposed in Roslindale and Cleary Square. A Roslindale community member and the CBPD will be attending. After that, the Zoning Committee will meet on March 19 for the return of a BMS Paper proposal at 3458 Washington Street.

**5.2. Outreach Committee:** Katherine O'Shea reported that the Committee met on Tuesday, February 11 via Zoom. There was a new community member attending. She has been very active in her neighborhood trying to get the Hennigan School pool repaired. There was a recent Request for Proposals (RFP) issued that includes the Hennigan Pool. Councillor Weber offered to help get the pool fixed. He said that the pool has been transferred from the Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF) to the Boston Public Schools.

The Outreach Committee continued planning for the next JPNC election in 2025. They are proposing Saturday, June 21 as the date for the election (because June 7 and June 14 are holiday weekends). The Committee discussed how to streamline training for poll workers and other logistics related to the election. The election will be the major initiative of the Outreach Committee for the next several months.

The next Outreach Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 11 at 7:00am.

**5.3. Public Service Committee:** Michael Reiskind reported that the Committee met on Tuesday, February 4. On the agenda was a request from Ula Café at 284 Amory Street in The Brewery for a beer and wine license. This is a well-established coffee and lunch restaurant that used to have a beer and wine license a few years ago under different owners. The present owners live locally and have established it as a comfortable gathering spot. While open now until 4:00pm serving coffee, tea, sandwiches, salads, and pastries, Ula Café hopes to be open later with beer and wine. They are also asking for take-out and a three-performer entertainment license, so three approvals need to be considered. The take-out use can be accommodated here, because The Brewery has a large off-street parking lot. The Public Service Committee recommended approval on all three requests. The three requests were presented together for a single vote. Motion by Michael Reiskind to support the request of Triple Coast LLC, doing business as "Ula Café", at 284 Amory Street for a

Common Victualler Seven-Day Beer & Wine License, with the hours of 8:00am to 10:00pm, and an outdoor seasonal patio for 15 patrons, with Michael Behme as manager; and also to support the request of Triple Coast LLC, (acting as agent for Brewery Development Company of Jamaica Plain) to grant a #36A take-out use to Brewery Development Company of Jamaica Plain, owner of 6-22 Bismarck Street, with the proviso that the take-out use will stay only with the current business tenant at 284 Amory Street, Triple Coast LLC, doing business as “Ula Café”; and also to support the request of Triple Coast LLC, doing business as “Ula Café”, at 284 Amory Street for a Live Entertainment (Acoustic) License for up to Three Performers (inside only), with a closing hour of 10:00pm, with Michael Behme as manager. Seconded by Willie Mitchell. Passed 12-0-0.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, March 4 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be discussion of traffic issues in the neighborhood.

**5.4. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC):** Purple Reign reported for the Housing & Development Committee. She will be leading the H&DC for the next few months.

The proposed redevelopment of Rogerson House was considered. The plan includes 67 new affordable senior housing units and upgrades to the existing memory care facility. While there was some strong support for Rogerson Communities, there was a lot of opposition. Concerns were about the height and design, and about the validity of the traffic studies presented, prompting the developer to promise a new traffic analysis for the project's second phase. Other concerns were the potential loss of mature trees and the lack of responsiveness to community feedback. The neighbors asked for increased resident participation in the development process. Councillor Weber said that there were strong feelings at the meeting and Phase I and Phase II of the project might need two separate community processes.

There was an update on the Arborway Yard and the stalled design due to MBTA funding issues.

There was discussion on the BMS Paper proposal at 3458 Washington Street. Dave Baron said there were two Article 80 processes for this parcel; a first one that did not conclude and a recent one that went through a full Article 80 review, was supported by the Stonybrook Neighborhood Association and received a favorable vote at the City of Boston Planning Department.

The next Housing & Development Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 18. The Hatoff's/Acme's Project (3430-3440 Washington Street) will be on the agenda.

**5.5. Parks+ Committee:** Nick Chaves reported that the Parks+ Committee met on February 6. The Committee is continuing its work with the Jamaica Pond Association's Parks/Parkways/Open Space Committee. They are developing a strategy for a long-term maintenance plan for Jamaica Pond. The Committee is urging the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to rename a portion of Perkins Street (from Jamaica Way to Chestnut Street) as Olmsted Way as an honorary designation only.

The tenth annual Love Your Block spring clean-up will be on Saturday, April 12. Individuals or groups can sign up. The Parks+ Committee may lead a clean-up if there are enough volunteers (Sarah Freeman volunteered).

Folks can sign-up for the Parks+ newsletter. The link is: <https://mailchi.mp/ae158dd6eff0/parks-committee-e-mail-list>.

The next Parks+ Committee meeting will be on Thursday, March 13 at 7:00pm via Zoom (subsequently moved to March 20).

## **6. Old Business/New Business:**

- **JPNC Election Discussion:** Should the JPNC continue to hold bi-annual elections? Peter DeCotis noted that similar neighborhood groups do not hold elections and that the election is an enormous effort. It makes it difficult to recruit some people to join the Council. He thought that elections can be replaced by the outgoing Council electing new members in the manner that vacancies are now filled. Renée Stacey Welch said that she did not like the slates that appear at election time. They are too single-issue and one-sided. David Baron was not enthusiastic about doing away with the election. He said that collecting signatures for the election is the biggest opportunity to raise visibility for the JPNC. He asked what is the legitimacy of a non-elected Council? Katherine O'Shea said that doing away with the election puts too much of a burden on the sitting Council. There is a requirement to change our by-laws. She suggested lowering the burden by reducing the number of signatures needed for nomination. She also thought that doing away with the election changes the nature of the Council too much. Sarah Freeman said the election sets the JPNC apart from other non-profits and neighborhood associations. Caroline Peters noted that the JPNC has good reputation at City Hall because of its clear structure and elections. Nick Chaves said that well-run Council meetings that get things done without personal confrontations would attract more candidates. Richard Heath noticed that the neighborhood attendance at JPNC meetings has dropped. Carla-Lisa Caliga thought the election gives us credibility and would not like an appointed group because it does not represent the neighborhood. Willie Mitchell said the election made him feel that to be on the Council, you have to earn it. It is an unpaid position that takes a lot of time and thought. Consensus was to stay with an election, but will task the Outreach Committee to continue the discussion.

- Juwan Skeens introduced himself. He said he is a candidate for Boston City Council District 4.

**7. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:22pm.

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, March 20, 2025 at 7:00PM via Zoom.