**Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council**

**July 22, 2025 Minutes**

**JPNC Attendance:** Renée Stacey Welch, Bernard Doherty, Michael Reiskind, David Baron, Lorenzo Bartoloni,

Carla-Lisa Caliga, Nick Chaves, Peter DeCotis, Sarah Freeman, Willie Mitchell, Purple Reign, and

Danielle Sommer Kieta.

**Other attendees:** Celeste Walker, Holly DeMelo, Louise Johnson, Jeri Levitt, Alexandra Rollins, Mark Freudenberger, Gerry Wright, Susan Zebrak, Kay Richards, Kane Scott, Kiera Penpeci, Aiko Miller, Domingos DaRosa, Bonnie Delaune (Office of City Councillor Ben Weber), Caroline Peters (Office of Neighborhood Services), and

Richard Heath (Boston Bulletin).

The meeting was called to order at 7:06pm by Renée Stacey Welch.

**1. Introductions:** The members of the JP Neighborhood Council introduced themselves. The aide to City Councillor Ben Weber, the liaison from the Office of Neighborhood Services, and the reporter from The Boston Bulletin introduced

themselves.

**2. Approval of June 2025 minutes:** There was one correction needed: Bernie Doherty said that under Introduction of Josh Kraft, the first sentence of the last paragraph should read “Bernie Doherty said that there are 55,000 students in the schools, and 15,000 speak different languages.” Motion by Willie Mitchell to approve the minutes from the June 24, 2025

meeting, as amended. Seconded by Bernie Doherty. Passed 10-0-1(1came late).

**3.** **Community Announcements:**.

- Caroline Peters, JP Liaison at the Office of Neighborhood Services, said that JP Centre/South Main Streets is hosting a South Street Fiesta, free outdoor concerts, at the South Street Development at 125 South Street from 6pm to 9pm on Thursdays, July 24 and July 31 (subsequently moved to August 7).

- There will be a JP Summer Stroll, featuring sidewalk sales, discounts, refreshments, and more at various businesses along Centre and South Streets on Sunday, July 27 from 12pm to 4pm.

- The Friends of the Jamaica Plain Branch Library will be having an ice cream social and book sale on Saturday, August 2 from 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the library, 30 South Street.

- Caroline Peters said that this Monday, August 4, will be National Night Out day in Jamaica Plain. It will be at Mozart Street Playground beginning at 6:00pm.

- Claves & Blues will be performing at the Tito Puente Latin Music Series on Thursday, August 7 at Mozart Street Playground starting at 7:00pm.

- There will be a JP Movie Night on Monday, August 11 sponsored by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The movie will be ‘Transformers One’ starting at 7:45pm at Pinebank at Jamaica Pond, 345 Jamaicaway.

- The tenth anniversary edition of JP Porchfest will be on Saturday, August 16 from 12noon to 6pm.

- Caroline Peters said that she will be hosting office hours from 10:30am to 11:30am on Friday, July 25 at Brassica Kitchen + Café, 3710 Washington Street; on Friday, August 1 at Evergreen Eatery, 154 Green Street; on

Friday, August 15 at Don Tequeño y Doña Arepa, 403A Centre Street; and on Friday, August 22 at Brassica Kitchen + Café, 3710 Washington Street.

- Sarah Freeman said that there is a concert series on Tuesdays in Franklin Park starting at 6:00pm at the Playstead sponsored by Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park. There is also a Golf Course Concert Series on Wednesday nights starting at 6:00pm at the William J. Devine Golf Clubhouse in Franklin Park sponsored by the Boston Parks and Recreation Dept.

- Holly DeMelo, Program Director at the Jamaica Plain Recovery Center at 120 South Street, said that the Center is a peer

recovery support center for those in addiction recovery (or love someone that is.) Everything is free. Please stop by.

**4. Introduction of Domingos DaRosa:** Bernie Doherty took over as Chair of the meeting. He asked Mr. DaRosa to keep his remarks brief. Mr. DaRosa spoke for only a few minutes. He said that he is 47 years old and a father of four. He has spent twenty-three years at the Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF) and is a former president of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 888, the BCYF chapter. His campaign focuses on education, public safety and mental health services, affordable housing solutions, youth empowerment and employment access, worker protections, small business economic opportunities, and green space and environmental justice.

Questions from the attendees were about bike lanes, White Stadium, rent control, neighborhoods, and parking. Sarah Freeman asked about bicycle lanes. Mr. DaRosa said that some were in the wrong places and the City did not consult with the community. American Legion Highway is a disaster with bad design creating congestion. Bike lanes should be put on major streets such as Seaver Street and Blue Hill Avenue. Sarah Freeman also said she appreciates his stand on White Stadium. Carla-Lisa Caliga asked what distinguishes Mr. DaRosa from Mayor Wu and Josh Kraft? He said that he gets things done. He has personally worked on cleaning up the problems at Mass and Cass. He thinks that better housing is needed. There is badly-designed housing being built with too few family apartments. Danielle Sommer Kieta asked whether the candidate supported rent control. Mr. DaRosa answered that he would not sell away affordable housing. The Mary Ellen McCormack Housing Development is being transferred to Winn Development and the percentage of affordable units will go down. He attended the Massachusetts Affordable Homeownership Alliance (MAHA) Community Action event on July 15 and heard about how hard it is to become a first-time homeowner. One needs $30,000 - $50,000 to start to buy a house. We have to review housing policies to enable families to buy. His neighbors are moving out of the city to Brockton. Renée Stacey Welch said that the city seems to have broken into small silos. How do we bring the whole city back together? Mr. DaRosa said that the answer is culture and music. By physically bringing folks to other neighborhoods and allowing them to learn. The South End has eighteen active community groups, while other much larger neighborhoods have two or three. Purple Reign asked about parking. What is the solution to allow people to have parking near their house? Why did the City remove two whole blocks of useable parking for no reason? Mr. DaRosa answered that he would make parking stickers useable in more than one neighborhood. Finally, Domingos DaRosa said that youth are important for the future of Boston and we

must bring them together. He promised that he would continue “to swing the bat.”

As the agenda was resumed, Renée Stacey Welch again took over as Chair.

**5. Committee reports/recommendations:**

**5.1. Zoning Committee (ZC):** David Baron reported that the Zoning Committee met twice - on Wednesday, July 2 and July 16. There are four issues that need votes tonight. **1) 13 Marmion Street**, a petition by Nathan Hall, to construct a two-story rear addition and add new attic dormer and perform interior renovations. This is a single-family house and the request is for a shed dormer, small rear addition, and to remove the porch to expose a bay window. The next-door neighbor was worried about construction vehicles in the shared driveway. The neighbors agreed to work together. The ZC voted to recommend approval. **2) 3815 Washington Street**, a petition by the Croft School (acting as agent for APW LLC) for a partial renovation of the third floor commercial space for expansion of an existing private school (grades 3-5); including selective demolition, new staircase, gypsum assemblies, finishes, MEP, fire alarm and fire suppression upgrades. The original zoning in this district says that school use is conditional in a shopping district. The school is expanding to pre-school - grade 6 and needs the third floor, so needs to expand the conditional use to the third floor. There was no opposition and the ZC voted to recommend approval. **3) 59 Weld Hill Street**, a petition by Anthony Chaiton, to construct a new three-story, three-family dwelling with roof deck on existing vacant lot abutting 57 Weld Hill Street. Both 59 Weld Hill and 57 Weld His Streets are very small lots. The proposal is for a three-decker that matches all others on the street. The new deck requires variances. There were concerns on the design and parking and about one older tree. The tree is in back and leans on the garage. The developer committed to try to save the tree, but did not give a guarantee. The plans show the parking conflicting with the tree. The neighbors were split between having parking or the tree. The ZC voted to recommend approval, with the proviso of a request for Planning Department design review on the parking and visibility around the corner. **4) 1891 Columbus Avenue**, a petition by IAO Auto Repair, LLC, an existing auto repair business, seeking to add motor vehicle dealer use for purchasing and selling used vehicles; no construction to be done. This existing business does fleet repair on buses and vans. They are applying for a motor vehicle dealer license to be able to purchase vehicles for their own fleet at wholesale prices. Most of the vehicles go home at night with employees. The recommendation of the ZC is for approval.Motion by David Baron to accept the recommendations of the ZC on 13 Marmion Street, 3815 Washington Street, 59 Weld Hill Street, and 1891 Columbus Avenue. Seconded by Willie Mitchell. Passed 12-0–0.

David Baron also asked for a vote on Alessia Shelley to be a community member of the Zoning Committee. She has been attending and participating in Zoning Committee meetings faithfully for several months; she has just turned 16 years old. Her older brother, Madden Shelley, was a past member of the Zoning Committee. Motion by David Baron to add Alessia Shelley of 17 Bowditch Road in Jamaica Plain to the roster of the Zoning Committee as a community member. Seconded by Purple Reign. Passed 12-0-0.

Dave Baron submitted a draft letter on 561-579 Centre Street, the property between Goodrich Road and Lakeville Road. The proposal for a new 12-unit development on this parcel received a recommendations of denial from the JPNC, but the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) approved the project. This draft letter, expressing displeasure at the approval and process, is to go to the ZBA (with copies to the Planning Department and elected officials). It was approved by the Zoning Committee to be sent signed by both the Chairs of the JPNC and the ZC. The letter summarizes that this proposal went though an extensive community process with two hearings before the Zoning Committee and all important issues were discussed. There were affordable units included in the proposal. At the second ZC hearing, the developer said that he had not reached out to the neighbors as agreed, and the request was denied. The Zoning Committee reached out to elected officials to gather support for the denial and Councillor Weber asked for a delay. The Zoning Board of Appeal did not listen to the community; why was this extensive process ignored? Motion by Bernie Doherty to sign and send the letter. Seconded by Carla-Lisa Caliga. She said she feels very strongly about this issue. Willie Mitchell liked the letter and said this is worth fighting for. Passed 10-0-2.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, August 13, the second Wednesday of the month.

**5.2. Public Service Committee:** Michael Reiskind reported that the Committee did not meet in July.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, August 5 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be three requests: Streetcar at 488 Centre Street wants to upgrade its package store license to all-alcohol, Michel Soltani would like to open a new french bistro at 380 Centre Street next door to the Brendan Behan Pub, and there is a request for a new café and patio at 101 So. Huntington Avenue in the Serenity Apartments building.

**5.3. Parks+ Committee:** Nick Chaves said that the Parks+ Committee met on Thursday, July 10. Nate Hinchliffe, Director of Park Maintenance for the Parks and Recreation Department, came and addressed the ongoing conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists around Jamaica Pond. Mr. Hinchliffe is committed to working with the community, especially the Campaign for Jamaica Pond and Olmsted Park (the collaboration of the Parks+ Committee, Jamaica Pond Association Parks Committee and Friends of Jamaica Pond), to enhance safety for both pedestrians and bicyclists in the area. However, as reported before, installing new signage may be a lengthy process due to the need for Landmarks Commission approval. The Parks Department will re-install existing signs and repaint pavement markers annually as interim solutions. The stencil color will change from white to yellow. Mark Freudenberger, representing the Campaign for Jamaica Pond and Olmsted Park, gave a presentation highlighting key areas of concern, including signage and bicycle-pedestrian pinch points, such as at Chestnut Street & Perkins Street. They will also work on advocating for more money for Pond maintenance. Sarah Freeman said that Lucas Gruner has offered to work with the Campaign. Mr. Gruner is a traffic engineer. The Campaign would like to develop a map documenting pinch points and propose costs of solutions.

Bernie Doherty was upset that the Landmarks Commission could delay signage improvements, because this is a safety issue, especially for seniors and people with strollers. Carla-Lisa Caliga said that the Landmarks Commission is not hard to work with.

The new Flaherty Playground at Brookside Avenue and Cornwall Street will be available after August 1 - with a dog park.

The next Parks+ Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 14 (the second Thursday) at 7:00pm via Zoom.

**5.4. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC)/Arborway Yard Committee:** Danielle Sommer Kieta said that the Housing & Development Committee did not meet in July (scheduled for Tuesday, July 15). They encouraged folks to attend the Massachusetts Affordable Homeownership Alliance (MAHA) Community Action event at the Reggie Lewis Center that day.

Whether there will be an August Housing & Development Committee meeting is to be determined.

**5.5. Outreach Committee:** Renée Stacey Welch reported that the Committee met on Tuesday, July 8 via Zoom. The JPNC Election has been moved to September 20. Nominating signatures are due by August 23. We are trying to reach out to encourage more candidates. Renée Stacey Welch is especially encouraging present Neighborhood Council members to run again. Also, volunteers are needed to be poll workers and vote counters. Spouses and family members of JPNC members are usually volunteers. Caliga volunteered to do some trainings. Lorenzo Bartoloni offered to help update the Neighborhood Council website. Bonnie Delaune said that if the Councillor’s office gets some flyers, they can share them in the Councillor’s newsletter.

The next Outreach Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, August 12 at 7:00pm.

**6. Old Business/New Business:** There will be a JPNC meeting in August.

**7. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

*Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind*

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, August 21 at 7:00PM via Zoom.