

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
March 26, 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, Leah Simmons Dzintars, Danielle Sommer Kieta, and Gert Thorn.

Other attendees: Carolyn Royce, Louise Johnson, Michael Epp, Lissah Johnson, Carla-Lisa Caliga, Chris Vaughan, Susan Zebrak, Adam Hasler, Bonnie Delaune, Kane Dimasso-Scott, Jordan Frias (Office of City Councillor Ben Weber), Brianna Millor (Chief of Community Engagement), Caroline Peters (Office of Neighborhood Services), 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 February 2024 minutes: Motion by Bernard Doherty to approve the minutes from the February 27, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Peter DeCotis. Passed 14-0-1 (2 came late).

3. Community announcements:

- Bedsweater will be performing on March 29 at 7:00PM at the Band Fridays series at Samuel Adams Brewery, 30 Germania Street.
- Hippie Hour will be performing on March 29 from 6:30PM to 9:30PM at Midway Café, 3496 Washington Street.
- There will be an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30 at Johnson Park, 136 Green Street. More information at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/egg-hunt-tickets-851522515767> (sold out).
- “Behind the Lights”, the spring play hosted by The English High School Drama Department will be on April 4 and April 5 at 6:00PM, 144 McBride Street.
- A concert celebrating women in the arts, performed by the Fabiola Mendez Trio, will be on April 5 at 7:30PM at the Hyde Square Task Force, 30 Sunnyside Street.
- There will be a Singing Circle on April 11 at 7PM at Hope Central Church, 85 Seaverns Avenue. For more information: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/singing-circle-jamaica-plain-tickets-864060737927>
- Open Streets Jamaica Plain will take place this year on Sunday, July 21 from 10:30AM to 5:00PM. Centre Street will be closed to vehicle traffic from The Monument to Lamartine Street.
- Councillor Weber will be hosting a women’s history event celebrating women-owned businesses in District 6 on Saturday, March 30 from 12noon to 2:00PM at Drawdown Brewing, 3204 Washington Street.
- Luke Mathew reported on the public meeting about the Shattuck Campus development proposal held on March 18 at The English High School. He said it was very contentious and people made very polarizing comments. Bernie Doherty attended and was surprised by how the meeting was conducted.
- Love Your Block, Jamaica Plain’s spring clean-up, will take place this year in the morning of Saturday, April 27.

4. Committee Reports/Recommendations:

4.1. Housing & Development Committee (H&DC): Danielle Sommer Kieta reported that the Housing & Development Committee met on March 19 via Zoom. The Committee is trying to reorganize and decide where to put its focus. It is looking at several Jamaica Plain development proposals. The H&DC discussed White Stadium for a short time. Ms. Sommer Kieta would like some guidance about which Committees should take on multi-faceted and multi-neighborhood projects. Renée Stacey Welch thought that White Stadium and Shattuck Campus oversight should be led by the Parks+ Committee.

4.2. Parks+ Committee: Nick Chaves reported that the Committee looked at the results of the survey on White Stadium conducted by the Franklin Park Coalition. There were over 700 responses; 51% from Jamaica Plain. Carolyn Royce hoped that the JPNC would act on informing the community about this project. The Jamaica Plain issues around this proposal are very complicated. There is an upcoming public meeting on April 10 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm about the White Stadium transportation issues, and then there will be further meetings on April 25, May 8 and May 22. Peter DeCotis worked hard to get Boston Unity Partners to come to smaller community meetings and these new events seem to indicate they are open to this idea. Nick Chaves and Danielle Sommer Kieta are meeting tomorrow with Morgan McDavid. Caroline Peters (Office of Neighborhood Services) agreed with the idea of smaller meetings as a way to move things forward. Bernie Doherty hoped people realize how White Stadium’s partial privatization could affect other City parks in the future. The JPNC’s role is to get the word out to Jamaica Plain groups and make sure they know what the proposals are. Michael Epp thinks that the City’s process for this important project is deceptive because it is split into smaller parts and is listed on multiple City websites. Gert Thorn also agreed; the City is “segmenting” the community process by asking for approval with only half the required studies available for review. Carla-Lisa Caliga said that BU’s Nickerson Field is a better place for a women’s soccer stadium.

JPNC has a reserved spot at Olmsted Park for the Muddy River Clean-Up on Saturday, April 20. The capacity is up to 20 individuals.

Gert Thorn brought up the issue of bicycles on the pedestrian-only path around Jamaica Pond. The signage alerting bicyclists is inadequate.

The next Parks+ Committee meeting will be on the second Thursday of the month, April 11 at 7:00pm via Zoom. Carla-Lisa Caliga said she is interested in doing the Parks+ Committee, but she has a conflict on second Thursdays. She has been on the Southwest Corridor Park group, PMAC, for many years.

4.3. Zoning Committee (ZC): David Baron said that the Zoning Committee met once - on March 6. There is only a trickle of projects coming to the ZC. Only one matter was considered and the ZC is not seeking a vote, i.e. the Committee is not making a recommendation on the issue. **305 Chestnut Avenue**, a petition by 305 Chestnut LLC (Colm O'Shea), for a change of occupancy from two-family dwelling to six (formerly seven) residential units; rear addition 40' in width and 38.3' in length with six parking spaces in rear yard accessed via existing driveway. This was the third time being heard at the Zoning Committee. It is the historic Fowle House built in the 1840s, but has fallen into disrepair and had been condemned. The developer had proposed seven units with six parking spaces, and has now changed it to six units with six spaces. They will preserve the look of the front facade. The parcel is very deep and the proposal is to build an additional the rear for the extra units. Neighbors were both in support and opposed to the proposal. Most rear abutters were in favor, but other Chestnut Avenue neighbors were concerned about the number of units, parking and increased traffic, as well as allowing a basement unit. Unusually, the developer has agreed with the previous owner to have one unit available if he comes out of the rehabilitation hospital he is in currently. Dave Baron thought that a proposal of five residential units would have the support of the neighbors, but there is a high cost of repairing the building and preserving the front portion. There were motions to support and motions to deny this petition - both failed. So the Zoning Committee is not making any recommendation on the issue. Gert Thorn commented that the developer may find out during construction that preserving the front portion is not possible.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, April 3. There are no agenda items yet. The next Committee meeting after that will be on Wednesday, April 17.

4.4. Public Service Committee: Michael Reiskind said that the Public Service Committee met on Tuesday, March 5 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda was a presentation by the City on the Bus Route 39 Transit Priority Corridor. The Route 39 is a high-ridership route with poor reliability and poor handicap access. The City's project manager, Maya Mudgal, described some of the 'tools' they could use to improve the route: bus stop relocation, bus priority at traffic lights, sidewalk improvements at bus stops, and more rider amenities. The draft proposal was sensitive to the many users of the Corridor and Ms. Mudgal received high praise.

The Committee is also developing a list of repairs and restriping needed in the neighborhood - sidewalks, streets, bike lanes, crosswalks - that will be relayed to the Public Works and Transportation Departments.

The next Public Service Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, April 2 at 7:00pm via Zoom. On the agenda will be two license requests: a request by Evergreen Eatery and Café at 154 Green Street for a beer & wine license with an outdoor patio for 46 patrons, and a request for a transfer of the beer & wine with liqueurs license of the Blue Nile Restaurant at 389 Centre Street to new owners at the same location.

4.5. Outreach Committee: Katherine O'Shea reported that the Committee met on March 12 via Zoom. Two new neighbors attended based on publicity they saw about the Outreach Committee. The Committee has refined the design of the flyers and business cards based on last month's comments. It had been agreed that the flyers and business cards be in Spanish also. Since most of the Council's and Committees' business is in English only, it was felt that the translated text be modified to reflect the limited Spanish of the JPNC meetings. Materials should be ready for the next Outreach Committee meeting, because that meeting will be in-person at Sam Adams at The Brewery.

A listing of neighborhood groups is being developed and will be posted on the website. JPNC members will be able to add information to the webpages.

The JP Neighborhood Council will have a table at Wake Up The Earth (May 4, rain date is June 1). Volunteers are needed for the event itself - 12noon to 5pm - as well as before the event from 9am to 12noon. Sarah Freeman said that the JPNC may be able to share a table with the Arborway Yard Subcommittee.

The next Outreach Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, April 9 at 7:00pm (subsequently moved to April 15). It will be an in-person meeting at The Brewery at the Sam Adams outdoor patio.

4.6. The Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard: Carolyn Royce reported that Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard met on March 19. The Subcommittee would like the list of Subcommittee members to be confirmed by the Council, There are still some vacancies on the Subcommittee The Subcommittee would also like to put a description of its mission on the website. Dave Baron thought that subcommittees don't need their membership roster voted on by the Council. There was wide-ranging discussion on whether the Arborway Yard group should become an ad hoc committee or remain a subcommittee. It was agreed to have votes today on the Subcommittee's description and roster, and the Subcommittee will discuss and see if it would like to change its status. Motion by Nick Chaves to adopt the description of mission of the Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard. Seconded by Renée Stacey Welch. Passed 15-1-1. Motion by Nick Chaves to adopt the membership roster of the Subcommittee on the Arborway Yard. Seconded by Renée Stacey Welch. Passed 17-0-0.

Ms. Royce reported on a failed motion at the Subcommittee about the January letter on the issue of parking on community land. The motion was to accept the 150 parking spaces if the City or the MBTA paid for the cost. The motion failed to pass. The matter will continue to be discussed.

5. Old Business/New Business:

- Michael Epp had three points of new business. He said that the Shattuck Campus proposal is the largest one of its type in the country. He thought the size of this proposal is experimental and it has a large chance of failure.

- Michael Epp also stated that the long-delayed Centre South Streetscape Design project needs to move forward.

- Michael Epp was also concerned about the process that the City used to install the speed humps in Jamaica Plain. By Federal rules, the law says speed hump installations need a public process. The design is always better when the community is involved. Jordan Frias, from Councillor Weber's office, said that the Walsh administration used an application process for speed humps that was not fair. The Wu administration is using a more engineering/scientific top-down approach. Bernie Doherty said that he is requesting speed humps for Asticou Road. Gert Thorn added that Robinwood Avenue residents have been ignored in their requests for safety improvements such as speed humps and additional signage. Councillor Ben Weber has been out to look at the street. Caroline Peters (Office of Neighborhood Services) offered to do a walk-through with residents. She reminded folks that reports to the 311 system are helpful to help her get things done.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:46pm.

Minutes submitted by Michael Reiskind

Next scheduled JPNC meeting: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 7:00PM via Zoom.

Next scheduled JPNC Executive Committee meeting: Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 7:00PM via Zoom.