



BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

It's not quite spring yet, but I hope we are through the coldest months of winter. We had a busy meeting this past Monday night, covering multiple topics, which I will summarize below.

SPECIAL TOPICS:

Townhouses at 10 Edgerly Place, 130-132 Arlington Street

Jonathan Lee and his architect Jonathan Garland presented their plans for four three-story brick townhouses on empty lots on Edgerly and Arlington. The Edgerly property (a 20-foot-wide lot between 6 Edgerly and 14 Edgerly) will have two units, and the three on Arlington (between the BCAE building and 136 Arlington) will be single family rowhouses. Mr. Garland was also the architect of the New Boston Ventures plans for nine townhouses on the opposite side of Edgerly Place that were presented to us last year, and the design is complementary.

These buildings are all being built “as of right,” that is, they are within the 35-foot zoning requirement and have a floor-area ratio of not more than 2. The designs have been vetted by the Bay Village Historic District Commission. (Presentations linked on email) Jonathan and his team have been reaching out to abutters individually as a courtesy: he expects construction to begin in the June timeframe. These buildings seem to fit well and it's frankly refreshing to look at projects that are relatively non-controversial and which do not require us to opine on zoning variances.

If all thirteen townhouses are built according to plan, they would fill the “Redstone lots” that have sat empty for decades. As many of you know, the late Sumner Redstone's father Michael was at one time the owner of the famed Latin Quarter club at 46 Winchester Street, a hot spot when Bay Village was a center of Boston nightlife in the '40s and early '50s. Stars like Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason, Billie Holliday, Tony Bennett, and Eartha Kitt all played the Latin Quarter. From humble beginnings as a truck driver, Michael Redstone parlayed his success with drive-in theatres and clubs into the company that eventually became National Amusements; after joining the Company in 1954, his son added larger and larger ventures to an entertainment empire. At the time of his death at 97 last year, Sumner Redstone and his heirs were the controlling shareholders of the ViacomCBS giant, encompassing Paramount Pictures, MTV, and a host of other companies. I'm not sure why the Redstone family (National

Amusements) held on to the Winchester-Edgerly-Arlington lots for as long as they did without doing anything with them – perhaps there was some sentimental attachment to a place associated with the early days of the enterprise in the 1940s? Or was this property just forgotten in the morass of a business conglomerate worth billions? Whatever the reason, I won't miss the empty asphalt.

Committee Updates: Planning

Update on 212 Stuart Street Mitigation Funds

Sarah Herlihy reviewed the history of the mitigation monies from the 212 Stuart Street development, their intent, and the status of the funds distribution. I've provided a separate link to this presentation.

The news is positive – the first tranche of funds, which had been held for us by the BPDA, was distributed earlier this week, with a portion being directed specifically to BVNA and another portion directed to a Bay Village-specific fund within the Boston Parks Department.

We discussed and confirmed that we will focus first-tranche Parks mitigation funds toward three parks: Bay Village Garden, Bay Village Neighborhood Park (Tom's Park), and the Isabella Street Park. Statler Park will be receiving funds from other sources – there was recently a \$250K CPA grant given for a memorial to the Cocoanut Grove fire. (Eliot Norton was not part of the original scope, and the Dog Park is not eligible for BPDA-administered funds because it's BPDA owned – however, see below).

We will be scheduling Zoom meetings in the near future to collect neighborhood input on priorities for each of the three targeted parks.

Other Developments

Sarah noted that Ed Doherty (KEMS Corporation) has been reaching out to direct abutters regarding the redevelopment proposal for Our Lady of Victories. The proposal remains essentially the same as presented to us before. Once this is formally submitted, we will have an EC vote as to opposition/non-opposition to the required zoning variances, so stay tuned.

There is an active proposal for a recreational marijuana dispensary on Stanhope Street (down the street from the Red Lantern and Friendly Toast). There will be a public Zoom meeting on this topic on Thursday March 25 at 6 PM. Details can be found on a link included with this email.

Parks

Marie Nolan gave a recap of the first meeting of the Dog Park interest group. Mark your calendars: there will be a follow-up Zoom meeting on the evening of March 18 at 7 PM.

In sum, the discussion identified several priorities for improvements at the Dog Park:

- Experienced dog owners agree that the single gate on the property is a hazard: there's a chance that a dog gets loose into traffic. "Official" dog parks in the city all have double gates.
- Our *ad hoc* attempts to line the fencing have been insufficient to keep the wood chips within the property, which is unsightly and forces us to replace chips frequently as they wash away.
- Related to the above, we lack even a basic drainage provision, especially for runoff from the trailer roof – this creates a muddy mess after it rains, and often makes the park an unsafe rink in the winter months.
- We need signage both for liability insurance reasons and to notify interested volunteers to contact parks@bayvillage.net
- Along the way, we've lost the few plantings in the park, which further contributes to erosion.

While specifics are yet to be determined by the Dog Park subcommittee, the **EC voted to approve** the expenditure of not more than \$20K from existing (non-212 mitigation) BVNA parks accounts toward the five above items, subject to permission from the BPDA as land owner. While none of us are under any illusions that this increment will constitute a complete, long-term solution, we believe this will improve the appearance and utility of the park and be a first step to making this a space we can be proud of.

We also discussed replacements and the issuance of new planter barrels. Several of the wooden barrels that were distributed in the neighborhood years ago are in an advanced state of decay, and residents who have moved to the neighborhood over the last decade have expressed interest in sponsoring a barrel. To that end, the **EC voted to approve** the expenditure of not more than \$4K from existing funds to issue new barrels and potting soil to residents who agree to maintain them. These may replace existing dilapidated barrels or may be new installations. The conditions will be as follows:

- Maximum one barrel per active membership
- Requester must identify a place in a public space that does not block egress or access (next to a tree is often ideal – some of our sidewalks are too narrow for barrels)
- Requester should agree to a good faith effort to keep the barrel planted and looking nice (at least during the sunny months)! We will provide the soil, but residents will provide the plants

and variety is welcome. We will certainly not be policing plantings, but sadly - and I speak from long experience - untended barrels are treated by passers-by as trash cans and end up as reservoirs for bags of dog excrement and other detritus. The presence of even a single flower or hosta apparently is necessary to trigger a pang of conscience in some people.

- Once we get this effort rolling, barrels will be issued first come/first serve.

We'll ask for a bit of patience as the Parks committee works out the administrative details on this initiative and a COVID-appropriate distribution plan. One important question is whether the barrels will be wood or resin. The former presents the possibility of aesthetic advantages but (as we've experienced) raises questions of durability.

We will make further reminders as the weather gets warmer, but email us at parks@bayvillage.net if you know you want a barrel.

As of this writing, Mark Bocash, Keith Gnoza, and Joe Kuranda have pretty much completed their street-by-street effort to take down the holiday wreaths and retain the ribbons (we try to get several years' use from these). Given the limited number of ladders in the neighborhood and the challenges of doing group events during COVID, we decided not to make this a group effort – our thanks to Mark, Keith, and Joe for making the time.

Safety

We had our first Safety Meeting in quite a while last month, and Sergeant Moy of the BPD gave us a detailed synopsis of recent events. There was apparently a rash of auto thefts from the Hertz garage on Park Plaza, and, as many of us are aware, package thefts have been off the charts in the past few months. Thankfully, we have been relatively free from violent crime, but in these difficult times, there have been increasing reports across the downtown neighborhoods of threatening encounters with individuals experiencing mental illness and substance abuse issues. Sergeant Moy encouraged us to keep our eyes open and keep the police informed of threatening or dangerous behavior and individuals who appear to be at risk. Even if the police do not have the appropriate resources, they may be able to link individuals to organizations that do. Ignoring individuals in distress is not neighborly.

Now that we have the relevant funds in hand, the **EC voted to approve** the expenditure of not more than \$25K from safety-dedicated 212 Stuart mitigation funds and our previously-earmarked “camera fund” for the installation of a dozen or more BPD-linked cameras. Danny Moll recently completed a walk-through with BPD personnel to try to finalize down the

precise location of these cameras – the goal is to have a fairly complete network around the perimeter of the neighborhood along major streets (Charles, Arlington, Tremont, Stuart, Columbus) and at neighborhood ‘entrance points.’

ADCO (Alliance of Downtown Civic Organizations)

Nancy Morrisroe summarized the hearing held by Councilor Flynn and Councilor Bok on the proliferation of digital billboards in residential neighborhoods. The issue around these has been discussed in previous newsletters: while digital billboards are only officially conditionally permitted in three specific areas of the city (Lansdowne, Theater District, Convention Center) there have been multiple attempts to approach the Zoning Board of Appeals for variances to convert or install electronic billboards in other neighborhoods. These appeals have often been “withdrawn without prejudice” by proponents when opposition materializes, but threaten to reappear at a lightly-publicized hearing in August or a snowy day. We need a consistent, hard-and-fast rule, since some agencies seem to be of the view that the rule we have isn’t as hard-and-fast as we thought.

Administrative Topics:

Introduction to Andrea Campbell

Mayoral Candidate Andrea Campbell, District 4 City Councilor, is scheduled to speak to us at the April 5 Executive Committee Meeting. While we will certainly queue up live questions, if you are a bit Zoom shy or plagued by imperfect internet connections, please forward questions to president@bayvillage.net and we will forward these to the Councilor’s team. We expect to have many presentations by political candidates this year, we are determined to be fair and open, and we’d like to get questions from more than just garrulous regulars like myself.

Website and Bay Village History

With the support of web design whiz Paul Buta, we are slowly updating and making improvements to the website. We’ve been adding these newsletters and will be putting up videos of the meetings as well. One improvement that I’d like to see is an expanded section on the history of the neighborhood, which is mentioned only briefly. I’d like to add more photos and pull together a more text in a dedicated section of the website. Following the Monday meeting, I’ve already received good feedback and suggestions from Bill Bernarduci and David Wright, and anyone else interested in helping with this project (or with other suggestions for website improvements) should contact me at president@bayvillage.net. Older photos are particularly welcome!

Tom Perkins
President, BVNA