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BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

I hope that everyone is enjoying the holiday season! Members of the BVNA Executive Committee are taking a breather after a very busy month.

The Fall Neighborhood Clean-Up on November 20<sup>th</sup> was successful in making our streets look clean, at least for a while, with many bags full of trash and fallen leaves collected. Thanks go to Brian Boisvert, Allie Fitzgerald and Ian Johnson for doing a great job coordinating this, and to Mayor's Neighborhood Liaison Kim Crucoli for making arrangements with the Department of Public Works and coming out bright and early to make sure DPW provided us a better assortment of brooms and tools than they had this past Spring. Councilor Ed Flynn was present, broom in hand, to take questions from constituents. We are grateful to Laura Corbosiero and LAZ Parking for graciously offering free parking for neighborhood residents during the Clean-Up, and to Larissa Azevedo with Related Management/The Arlington at 250 Stuart, who provided Blackbird Donuts for the volunteers. Related also was able to recruit resident volunteers from The Arlington who pitched in to clean always-messy Cortes Street. We weren't successful in engaging Caritas Communities to participate this year, so the efforts of residents of Isabella Street and The Arlington to remove trash from Cortes and the Turnpike fringe really made a difference.

Two short weeks later, after Thanksgiving, the BVNA Social Committee (Nancy Cahn, Nan Rubin, Alexandra Neuse, Ryan Jones) did a fantastic job coordinating and hosting a series of holiday events. Thanks to all who gathered to help hang wreaths on Saturday morning, and to those who helped to trim our two trees. I'm also grateful for the patience you showed while I was leading the caroling on Sunday evening! We had a strong turnout at the holiday party at MJ O'Connor's following the caroling, especially considering the continuing COVID concerns that understandably kept some of our neighbors from attending. We were joined by Representative Aaron Michlewitz and his Constituent Services Director Cheri Hill, Mayor Michelle Wu and Liaison Kim Crucoli, newly-elected At-Large Councilor Erin Murphy, and State Senate Candidate and current District 1 Councilor Lydia Edwards.

As a reminder, the special election for this Senate seat is TOMORROW, Tuesday December 14<sup>th</sup>. Boston's typically dismal election turnout is likely to be even worse than usual in a holiday-season special election, so our votes really will count on this one. PLEASE VOTE! Having advocates in the State House who understand the day-to-day issues that we face in Bay Village is extremely helpful to getting anything done.

Following all of these events, our Executive Committee meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup> seemed quite the anticlimax. Nevertheless, there were several issues worthy of follow-up.

### **Special Guest:**

#### **- Ryan Souls, Greystar**

Ryan Souls joined us again to update progress on the 212 Stuart Street construction project and to address neighborhood concerns on early start times. While Consigli Construction has done a good job of addressing some neighborhood concerns (for example, they've been extremely vigilant about parking and successful in keeping their workers' vehicles out of Bay Village) there have been persistent issues with early morning starts, most recently associated with dumpster pickups. Ryan assured us that there has been detailed follow-up with the subcontractor, Northeast Recycling, and a new procedure that guarantees their trucks cannot access the dumpster prior to 7 AM.

More generally, Ryan's hope is that disruption will be minimized now that the building is essentially enclosed and construction is entering into the final phases of interior build-out. The final glass should go in shortly, and the only outdoor work in the coming months will be oriented around the landscaping of the Church Street plaza. Greystar is aiming for full completion and issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy sometime in May of the coming year – overall, their timeline has slipped only modestly because of the pandemic.

### **Committee Updates:**

#### **Social**

Nancy Cahn reports that we wound up with 102 members pre-registered for the holiday party and slightly less than that in attendance. We kept our costs under \$2K. The 50/50 raffle generated \$260 to the Greater Boston Food Bank.

#### **Parks**

Joe Kuranda has changed the lock on the Bay Village Garden on behalf of the Parks team. There have been some people poking around the tree late at night, and last year the tree was partially stripped of ornaments ... we're aiming to dissuade that behavior. Contact me if you need access after hours.

### **Planning and Licensing**

#### **- Park Plaza Castle**

Starting in February, the event space in the Park Plaza Castle on Columbus Avenue (not the Arlington Street side) will be hosting *Frida: Immersive Dream* starting in February. This show features the work of Frida Kahlo, along the lines of the immersive Van Gogh exhibit that was organized by the same producers.

We are a bit frustrated that the proponents have moved forward and are selling tickets to the public before meeting with us. They will present to the Planning and Licensing team at the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting at 6:30 PM. Please join us if you are interested.

- **New Boston Ventures and Jonathan Lee Projects (Edgerly Place & Arlington St)**

Construction proceeds on the townhouses at 1-19 Edgerly Place, which have topped off. Steel framing is being installed on the townhouses at 130-134 Arlington, and foundation work is being completed at 10 Edgerly. It won't be long before we are welcoming new neighbors in all these buildings. Neighbors wishing to receive more detailed biweekly emails describing work to be completed should contact me, and I'll put you in touch with the developers.

- **Eversource – Warrenton and Charles Street South**

As you will have noticed, Eversource has finally begun work on the Substation expansion project on Charles Street South. This project, which was reviewed by BVNA a couple of years ago, will take approximately three years to complete. When it's done, the project should provide us with a more aesthetically pleasing streetwall and a new plaque commemorating Poe's birthplace – however, there's going to be some disruption over the course of the next couple of years, beginning with some jackhammering as they remove the existing concrete pad. Eversource is also offering a regular email detailing bi-weekly construction plans for those interested in signing up.

**City Services**

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Councilor Ed Flynn hosted a meeting at Eliot Norton Park with the Boston Transportation Department to address crosswalk safety on Charles Street South, an issue raised by Kim Kulesakaran at the November meeting. Kim, Brian Boisvert and I represented BVNA at this meeting, and we were joined by residents of Chinatown and parents of Josiah Quincy School students who use crosswalks at all ends of Eliot Norton. BTD Transportation Planner William Moose was attentive and promised to get back to us early in the New Year with some shorter-term alternatives and potential longer-term ideas to improve the crosswalks on Charles Street South that concern us most. We'll need to be patient, as even "light duty" re-striping of pavement and installation of the plastic lane barriers similar to those used elsewhere downtown requires warmer weather than we are likely to experience for the next few months.

We'll also need to be realistic about how proper crosswalk design may impinge on another neighborhood hot button, resident parking spots. As Mr. Moose pointed out, the current crossings are far from "best practice" as they cut diagonally across the over-wide street, increasing crossing time, and sight lines are terrible for both pedestrians and drivers, in part because large vehicles like vans and SUVs can legally park right up to the edge of the crosswalk. Therefore, any reconstruction or reconfiguration might cost us a resident space or two as the crossing is upgraded to meet current standards.

**Safety**

We have reached out to Councilor Ed Flynn to help us force some action on the cameras project. We are getting conflicting answers from different parts of the City bureaucracy about what next steps are required, and the turnover in the BPDA continues to make interactions very difficult.

## Archives

We welcome Olga Galkina of Broadway to the BVNA team. Olga is going to help us catalog our archives over the course of the next several months. Over the past year, Sarah Herlihy and Tim Kacich have compiled the hardcopy records that Past Presidents of BVNA have accumulated over the years and we have had these all digitally scanned. Some of the records go back to the early years of BVNA, which was founded in the late 1950s. Our ultimate objective is to make the most interesting items available for residents to explore on-line, and to that end, Olga is sifting through the quotidian meeting notices and bank statements of long ago, eliminating duplicates, categorizing documents and highlighting items of greatest general interest. If you have old records of BVNA-related topics and would like these included in the project, please contact me!

## Then and Now – From the top of the Bradford

This month's historic photo set comes to us courtesy of neighborhood photographer Steve Dunwell, who has taken the time to carefully recreate a series of shots that were taken by Leslie Jones in the '20s and '30s from the rooftop of the Bradford (now Courtyard Marriott) hotel and are held at the Boston Public Library.

Views from roof of Bradford Hotel, now Marriott Courtyard



New views, aligned, Nov 2021 © Steve Dunwell



"View towards Castle Square, from Hotel Bradford" 08\_06\_015749 L. Jones 5/26/1931



"Section between Broadway and Castle Square...Bradford" 5/12/1932 08\_06\_015742



Leslie Jones "Columbus Ave Birds-eye" from Bradford Roof, 1926 BPL

Photographs by Leslie Jones, from his collection at the Boston Public Library 1926 - 1932

This is a very rich set of photos, and I'm grateful to Steve for taking the time to line up the views and share them with us. There is much that could be commented on here, but you may need to zoom in to see more of the detail.

One of the clearest differences between the photos is the presence of a much larger green canopy in the current photo set, even though these were taken in November, while two of the three older photos were taken in May. We tend to think of trees as if they've always been here, but actually they were few and far between in Bay Village during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Trees were introduced in the '60s and '70s as part of an effort to make the neighborhood seem less gritty, and to fill in substantial fringes and open spaces that were created as part of urban renewal projects. They look great, but our narrow streets were never really configured for trees: more than one property owner is now grappling with foundation encroachment from a tree planted 50 or so years ago.

Were we able to zoom in a bit closer on the older photos, we would also see fewer brick sidewalks and no gas lamps. Like the trees, these, too, were enhancements that BVNA advocated for fifty-odd years ago, which were perceived by both the BRA and residents as mitigation for the encroachment of urban renewal projects on virtually all sides of the neighborhood, and tangible proof that the City was committed to the preservation of the neighborhood. You'd also see fewer shutters in the earlier era. Functioning shutters were commonplace in early c.19 when Bay Village townhouses were originally constructed, but the installation of decorative, non-functioning shutters was very hit-or-miss by the early c.20 as windows were updated and many residences converted to commercial uses.

Overall, the implicit goal of BVNA members from the late '50s through the '70s was to make the neighborhood look more like Beacon Hill and Back Bay. Of course, the appearance of Beacon Hill and Back Bay was (and is) itself more than a little ersatz, as these neighborhoods have also played up their history with a thumb on the scale toward aesthetic appeal. Minus trees, brick sidewalks, gas lamps, and shutters, Bay Village looked a lot more like parts of the North End or (importantly, at the time) the West End, the New York Streets area of the South End, and the residential sections of Chinatown/South Cove, all of which were largely obliterated by urban renewal between 1955 and 1970. Like Bay Village, all of these neighborhoods featured a hodgepodge of original nineteenth century townhouses, later nineteenth century tenements, and more recent commercial buildings. City Planners of the time didn't see much inherent value in the older brick rowhouses that dominated many downtown neighborhoods, so solid visual evidence of investment and homeowner care were the best way of forestalling the wrecking ball. If the result was a bit twee ... well, the alternative was clearly worse.

Another difference clear in a close look at the photo sets is the comparative prevalence of small gable dormers on the rowhouses. Several of these still exist in the neighborhood – 45-49 Winchester Street are good examples. However, during the '60s and '70s many homeowners modified the roofline of their buildings with much larger shed dormers, which offered much greater ceiling height and more usable space in top floor rooms. Some of these additions were carried out with much more skill and aesthetic sensitivity than others, a parade of which are visible on Melrose Street. There was a bit of a rush to get these permitted before the establishment of the Historic District in 1983, which established an architectural review process that frowned on mutilation of the original structures. While in public spaces, the thrust was toward visually pleasing historicity, in private spaces, twee took a back seat to square footage.

Other points of note: in the 1926 photograph looking toward Columbus Avenue, the Park Plaza Hotel is still under construction, and while the site of the Gas Building (100

Arlington) is cleared, the new building is not yet visible. In the contemporary photos, these venerable landmarks are overwhelmed by more recent construction at a larger scale. At the other end of the neighborhood, looking toward the South End, the demolition of the Castle Square Theatre and Hotel complex in 1933 and the expansion of the rail trench to accommodate the Turnpike extension several decades later make these adjacent neighborhoods seem much more distant than they once were. One of the objectives of oft-mooted Turnpike Air Rights projects would be to reconnect us with the South End as we were historically. Proposals to build over the Pike corridor have historically run aground because of the vast expense entailed, but with air rights projects now proceeding again in the Back Bay/Fenway, it seems only a matter of time before rising real estate prices put proposals back on the table. Any such project would present risk – we would not want to be cast in the shadow of a giant skyscraper – but also opportunity to create an even more walkable and bikeable connected neighborhood. We'll get back to that topic in a future newsletter.

Until Next Month,  
Tom