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BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

It's been a mostly quiet winter month for the Association, I hope that everyone is staying safe!

**SPECIAL TOPICS:**

**212 Stuart Street Update**

Ryan Souls of Greystar joined the February Executive Committee meeting to give us an update on the construction project progress and overall timeline. The good news is that noise was significantly reduced by the agreement with the hotel to hook up power directly to eliminate the big generator last month, and Ryan believes that noise will be reduced further when the concrete work is completed by the middle of this month. They are currently on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor, with two more floors of occupancy and the mechanical deck yet to complete. The installation of the facade panels will begin shortly, followed by windows and eventually the interior build-outs. Ryan anticipates that occupancy won't happen until approximately April 2022.

Ryan also reminded us that they have mock-ups of the materials, which were approved by the BPDA – these are usually erected near construction sites, but given the physical constraints of the parcel and the desire to minimize gathering points during COVID, these are at an offsite location in Braintree. Individuals are welcome to visit them, and Ryan will send us some pictures. He assures us that there have been no changes to the design or materials.

We also discussed the trash problem outside the South Cove building, and we told Ryan that we expect Greystar will uphold its agreement to keep the city-owned Church Street passageway clean and well-maintained. I am hopeful that we can work together with the managers of the South Cove building to eliminate the massive bi-weekly junkpile, which threatens to make a mockery of the much-touted new “gateway to Bay Village.”

**Standing Committee Updates:  
Planning and Licensing**

- 212 Stuart Street Mitigation funds: Sarah and Clyde Bergstresser met with the BPDA last month and are working to get the first

tranche of mitigation funds transferred from the BPDA accounts shortly. A significant chunk of these funds are earmarked for parks improvements discussed below.

- Our Lady of Victories Redevelopment: Ed Doherty and KEMS Corporation presented the last iteration of the proposal we saw to the Bay Village Historic District Commission in January. Feedback seemed to be generally favorable, but several commissioners requested that the developer return with a more complete set of renderings, showing the building from different angles on the street. There will be a follow up meeting with Historic on February 9 at 4 PM. Zoom details are included in a separate link on this email. They are also holding meetings with direct abutters in the Marc building and reaching out to other close neighbors.

## **Parks**

We had a lively discussion about how to enlist volunteers to help with upkeep and oversight of our parks, with a particular focus on the dog park. Basic upkeep like clearing out the trash and spreading or re-distributing wood chips has fallen disproportionately on a couple of our members. Sarah proposed and we approved a plan to post a sign at the park to direct users of the park to sign up with us and we hope to encourage more people to pitch in over time. We will also be shortly sending out a message to all members seeking volunteers and champions for each of our parks.

To be clear: 2021 and 2022 should be “the park improvement years” in Bay Village. Between the mitigation funds discussed above, funds already in hand, grants won, and other funds applied for, we have significant monies earmarked for parks upgrades that we will be allocating this year. And there are very many important initiatives deserving attention. Several of our parks lack permanent water and electric hook-ups which would make upkeep much easier; the dog park would really benefit from re-grading and improved and upgraded fencing; the Bay Village Garden at Church and Melrose needs to have its irregular stone paving re-done; and the Bay Village Park (Tom’s Park) at the end of Broadway deserves a thorough overhaul. We’d also like to replace our dilapidated whiskey barrel planters and replant some trees that have been lost.

We have lots to do, and sufficient funds to accomplish a reasonable fraction of our punch-list. What we need is an expanded group of champions to help complete the vision for each space and to help shepherd individual projects to conclusion. Changes won’t be instantaneous, as we need to adhere to City rules governing contracting and funds disbursement. I assume there will be bid processes and delays in scheduling. Even so, I’d like to ensure that we have enough focus and follow-up on each park space that none of them are neglected.

## **City Services**

We haven't forgotten about the problems with irregular sidewalks and missing bricks, but unfortunately it has been difficult to coordinate timing for a walk-through with the Department of Public Works and recently the weather has been uncooperative. We will return to this topic once we get back to clear days and clear sidewalks.

## **ADCO (Alliance of Downtown Civic Organizations)**

Nancy Morrisroe solicited feedback from the Executive Committee on ADCO priorities for 2021 from a list of potential topics that they circulated. The Alliance continues to campaign against the proliferation of electronic billboards outside the neighborhoods where they are officially sanctioned (Theater District, Convention Center, Lansdowne) and to lobby against the incursion of "Air BnB hotels" into residential neighborhoods.

As most of you are aware, a few years ago the city instituted new regulations strictly regulating and restricting short-term rentals by residential property owners. Along with the other downtown neighborhoods, we are strong supporters of rental limits and registration requirements. Boston's housing shortage is bad enough without the added competition from effectively using residential housing as hotels. Residents also have an interest in community-building in residential neighborhoods that is not shared by tourists. In the past few years, however, would-be Air BnB hoteliers have been attempting to skirt Boston regulations by recharacterizing their properties as "executive suites" subject to less stringent rules. ADCO has vigorously opposed zoning variances to convert residential properties to quasi-hotels, but this is an ongoing game of "Whac-A-Mole," and some of the Zoning Board votes have been disturbingly close.

## **BVNA Finances: Summary for FY 2019-20 and Planning for 2020-21**

As I indicated on Monday's call, I'd like to share an overview of BVNA finances. As members, you all are entitled to understand how we, as a 501(c)(3) non-profit to which you contribute, conduct business. If you are interested in more details than I have space to cover below, don't hesitate to follow up with me or with Treasurer Tim Kacich.

While transparency is always a good principle, I will also confess that at various times I've heard some conspiracy theories about what money we have and where it goes, and I'd like to bury those for good. Having been involved in other non-profits over the years, and being acquainted with BVNA financials this year for the first time, I'm pleased to report that our

accounts are the cleanest I've ever seen. I'm not patting myself on the back here – our fiscal calendar ends in September, so the numbers I'm reporting here reflect the good stewardship of Bethany and her predecessors, and Tim's careful oversight.

Here are the basics:

- We carry relatively modest balances in two accounts. At the end of fiscal '19/20 we had ~\$43K in the BVNA account, and we also oversee ~\$36K in a Friends of Bay Village Parks account. As noted in the discussion above, we anticipate using some of these Parks funds in combination with 212 Stuart mitigation funds to address a long list of park improvements in 2021 and 2022. BVNA balances include some restricted funds beyond those earmarked for our parks, notably ~\$3800 for the cameras project we also hope to get started this year.
- We maintain records going back many years, and the BVNA account balance hasn't moved much at all - up a few thousand one year, down a bit the next. It is almost exactly the same now as it was (~\$42K) at the end of 2004.
- In a "normal" year we typically have deposits of ~\$15-20K, which is a combination of membership dues, donations, block party and fundraiser receipts, which are usually pretty much matched by our expenses and the charitable donation associated with the fundraiser.
- Fiscal '19/'20, because of COVID, was unusual, since there was no block party, holiday party or other fundraiser event. Our receipts came entirely from membership dues and donations (~\$6000) offset partially by lower-than-usual expenses (~\$9400), so we ran a deficit of a few thousand dollars.
- The ~\$9400 in expenses are pretty easily categorized.
  - ~\$4000 went to insurance (general liability, D&O)
  - ~\$2500 covered the website (credit card fees, Go Daddy and Wild Apricot software fees)
  - ~\$2000 went to holiday decorations (tree, wreaths, lights, etc.)
  - ~\$500 went toward "community building" expenses, the largest of which was a photo gift presented to retiring police officers.
  - ~\$200 was administrative miscellany (specifically, state filing fees and PO box fees)
  - ~\$100 for coffee and doughnuts at the fall 2019 neighborhood clean-up
  - ~\$100 for rental of JQUS because of rain at the 2019 block party

That's it. It's pretty simple. Only a very small percentage of our outflows were reimbursements paid to association members, and these were well-

documented with receipts and all self-explanatory (I can vouch for eating one of the doughnuts myself). Indeed, it's more notable what we did **NOT** reimburse – many of our members incurred expenses on behalf of the neighborhood without seeking either authorization or repayment, tending to plantings, taking T or Uber rides to City meetings, filing our tax returns, and even in some cases doing our own sidewalk repairs.

We obviously have a bit of cushion, but I do not feel that it is excessive, based on my experience elsewhere. We have been fortunate not to have been engaged in any legal battles, and we have the flexibility to pick up new obligations (e.g., additional insurance required by the City for us to obtain a lease for the dog park) while dealing with the ongoing COVID downturn. In a normal year, the block party in September and the holiday party in December are catalysts for us to sign up new members and a natural reminder for members to renew. We haven't had that opportunity this past year, and we do not want to aggressively solicit individuals during a time that is very difficult for a lot of people. As I noted in a past newsletter, I wouldn't want to make a habit of running deficits, but we'll be fine, even with another year of soft receipts. I have been humbled by the generosity of some anonymous individual members, whose donations ensure that we won't be massively in the red this year, and that we can pursue our aggressive parks improvement plans without setting aside significant contingencies.

Going forward, we will maintain our careful oversight and internal controls to ensure that funds are spent consistent with our 501(c)(3) designation. For example, I am not a signer on BVNA's credit card – expenses I authorize also need to pass by Tim. Because of the greater inflows and outflows associated with the mitigation funds and the scope of our ambitions, particularly around parks, we will need to follow a more formal budget. We will also continue to enforce a strict policy around what I expect will be a greater need for individual reimbursement this year and next. The rule is very simple: **get authorization first before you spend any money that you expect to be reimbursed by the BVNA.** Because of our change to a 501(c)(3) and the need to account for how we spend mitigation funds, the BVNA can no longer reimburse members for unauthorized expenses, however well-intentioned. I can approve small (sub-\$250) outlays, but larger expenditures need to be voted on by the EC. Approvals will specify a maximum amount beyond which there will be no reimbursement, and receipts must be submitted.

Also: because the BVNA is a tax-exempt organization, most of our purchases are exempt from sales tax. This benefit allows our funds to stretch even further, but (as you can imagine) requires some paperwork and may be easiest for vendors to manage when funds come directly from our accounts. Tim can provide the tax-exempt information and discuss the most efficient payment methods as needed.

Too much of this past year has been spent by all of us indoors and away from people. I'm looking forward to being outside with you all and enjoying more beautiful greenspaces in the not-distant future.

Tom Perkins  
President, BVNA