

BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

I hope that everyone is staying cool! As is typical, midsummer is the least busy time in Bay Village: we canceled the July meeting, lacking much of an agenda, and it's been a while since I compiled a newsletter. We will have an August call, but the agenda will be fairly light. Our June meeting now seems ages ago, and the topic that generated the most heated debate was rendered moot within a few days of the meeting.

Special Guest: Representative Aaron Michlewitz

It was our pleasure again to host Aaron Michlewitz, who gave us a thorough update on the status of the state budget and the issues and trade-offs that the House and Senate were working through at that time, including a variety of initiatives related to housing, transportation, economic development and the replenishment of "rainy day" funds. As most of you are aware, Aaron is the Chair of the House Ways and Means committee, so he plays a large role in determining the spending priorities of the Commonwealth. As an unaffiliated, non-political organization, Bay Village Neighborhood Association does not endorse any political candidates, and we welcome diverse viewpoints. Speaking purely for myself, I would generally welcome more choice in elections ... but regular attendees at our meetings understand why Aaron frequently runs unopposed. It's a fair bet that most residents of Massachusetts couldn't even name their Representative, but ours checks in with us on a regular basis, provides thorough updates, and spends as much time as we can make available to him giving detailed and thoughtful answers to whatever questions our members throw at him. We have a fairly sizable cohort of well-informed and politically engaged people in Bay Village, but Aaron is just as comfortable fielding inquiries from new residents as from the old timers like myself.

I'd strongly encourage even those who aren't super-political to jump on the call whenever Aaron is on the agenda, and to try to meet him at one of our social events. One of the things I've come to appreciate over the past two years is that many people approach the BVNA President with lots of thoughts about what the City or State could or should be doing better ... many of which are good ideas that I do my best to pass along. But let's face it – the BVNA President has no more power (arguably less) than a middle school hall monitor. So, when the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee shows up to an intimate gathering of a couple dozen people, that's a much more effective venue to raise an issue! Do you think the Commonwealth should fund commuter rail to Springfield? Are you confused about how the environmental review of waterfront developments works? Do you think we should have suspended the gas tax? Would you like to better understand the new initiatives to address mental illness? Don't ask me, ask Aaron directly!

Special Guest: Daniel Kim and Sarah Lee, Charles Street Dental

Dentist Daniel Kim is opening an office at 121 Charles Street South, and he approached the Association for input on a tasteful blade sign on the building that also required Bay Village Historic District Commission approval. This seemed routine and highly non-controversial to EC members, and we are happy to welcome Daniel and Sarah to the neighborhood.

Special Guest: Dasha Korol, Immersive Art

The most controversial topic at our June meeting was a last-minute proposal by the Immersive Art team to host “after parties” associated with Pride events that were tentatively scheduled for the Saturday and Sunday nights on the week our meeting. BVNA has long been a supporter of Boston Pride, and many of us lament the loss of the parade and the broader array of events of past years. After all, Bay Village was the hub of the LGBTQ community in Boston for many decades – a topic I hope to explore in future history sections of the newsletter. (There is so much history and material on this subject it can’t possibly be covered in one short snippet).

However, while there was broad support at the EC for Pride events, there was considerable frustration about the fact that the proponent, Immersive Art, had not approached us in a timely manner, as required by the Good Neighbor agreement they signed with us, and there were strong misgivings among many residents about the prospect of a special 2AM liquor license on a Sunday night for an Anheuser Busch sponsored event with music at the Castle. Residents may recall that the last late-night A-B sponsored event at the Castle – admittedly several years ago, and entirely unrelated to Pride – resulted in epic displays of public urination in the parking lot on Arlington Street, on the sidewalks on Piedmont Street, and, well, basically everywhere on that end of Bay Village. When nature called, the limited facilities at the venue didn’t seem capable of answering.

In return for some guarantees about security and crowd control, we ultimately conducted a separate EC vote to offer a compromise to Immersive Art’s representative to allow the event to go ahead with a 1AM limit on Saturday ... but this all turned out to be unnecessary, because the building landlord hadn’t been given advance notice, either, and they refused permission.

We hope to be able to support Pride events in the neighborhood in future years ... just not until 2AM on Sunday, and with enough advance notice and good planning to ensure crowds will be well-behaved. We all love a good party, but we’d like to water our window boxes ourselves.

Parks

Welcome back to Bay Village Domenic Mastrototaro! Old timers will recall that for many years Domenic had a house on Jefferson Street, and he was a stalwart amongst our gardening volunteers. After several years in exile in the suburbs – which, Domenic, we can all agree was a mistake! – he is back, and his impact has already been felt in the Bay Village Garden at Church and Melrose and in the other parks. Between Domenic, Tom K, Aoife, and Carol, I think our parks are looking better than ever, and they seem to be getting a lot of use this summer despite the resurgence of COVID. We’ve continued to fund some plantings, but we haven’t heard back from the Parks Department on the bigger-picture renovations that have been in the works for some time now, with funds allocated. (See below).

Thanks go out to Marie Nolan for replenishing the emergency poop bags at the Dog Park and to Marie, Steve, and others who handled the last wood chip replenishment.

What's going on with the City?

I wish I knew. Mid-summer isn't usually the time of peak responsiveness, but City departments have seemed to be in a state of suspended animation since Marty Walsh stepped down. We thought we were at the two-yard line on the cameras project, but that seems to have stalled with the Police Department ... we haven't heard anything from the Parks Department about the Bay Village Park renovation, except that it has been delayed, and I have no idea about the timing on the Coconut Grove Memorial installation in Statler Park. As we saw in May, the Department of Public Works didn't have its act together to support the neighborhood clean-ups for the first time in my 24 years here, although we were able to pull off our own event with the help of Kim Crucoli ... and if the phone doesn't ring, we know it's the BPDA, which is still holding money dedicated to Bay Village improvement projects, the amount of which will soon be increased upon the official completion of the 212 Stuart Street project.

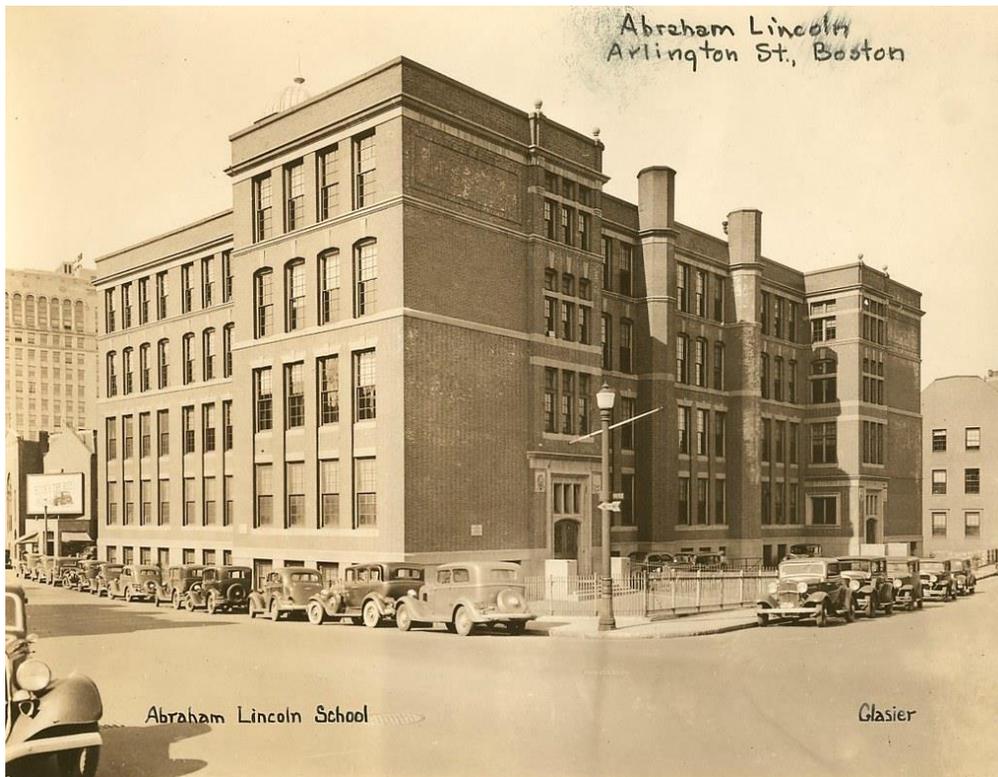
What's the future of the BPDA itself? I don't think we know the answer to that, either – the Mayor has repeated her intention to radically overhaul the agency and to separate the planning and development functions – but in practice the entity retains a host of legal powers and obligations, some of which are granted at the State level. It seems like every month we hear about more departures from the organization, and those whose emails don't yet bounce have been singularly unresponsive. A suburbanite who gauged the activity of the City on the basis of articles in the Globe or Herald or activity on various Twitter feeds might come to the conclusion that this administration has been a hive of activity, but at the departmental level on the ground, it's been crickets. Clearly the City has suffered with the same staffing challenges that have afflicted airlines and restaurants. We will nevertheless step up our efforts to push the open issues to resolution as summer winds down. It's embarrassing to me to be writing about the same topics two years into this role.

Social and Membership

Nan Rubin continues to work on event planning for our 50th annual Block Party on September – mark your calendars for September 22nd! A new treat this year will be music. Neighbor Cel Kulasekaran works with the Boston Music Project – a non-profit dedicated to giving young people in Boston Schools the opportunity to learn how to play a musical instrument and receive musical training. BMP was originally founded at the Josiah Quincy Upper School. Cel has approached us in the past about having some combination of students and instructors perform at one of our events, but we've never been able to make it work ... last year the City didn't have a problem with us holding the party in Melrose Street, but music was going to require a separate permit ... this year the street has been deemed too narrow (forcing us to move the party into the school parking lot for the first time in a half century) but music is now apparently OK, as long as we don't have a stage or amplification. I'm looking forward to this!

Then and Now – The Schools of Fayette Street

As we prepare our Block Party for the Josiah Quincy Upper School Parking Lot, I thought it made sense to visit the history of this building. Steve Dunwell provided me with some interesting historical photos, taken by Herbert Glasier around 1930.



All of you will recognize the former Abraham Lincoln School, which now is temporarily housing the Josiah Quincy Upper School until the new school building currently under construction a few blocks away in Chinatown is completed. Not much has changed about the exterior of the structure in the last hundred years, and the interior also retains much of its historic character.

The Lincoln School was planned and built between 1909 and 1912. The year 1909 was the centennial of Lincoln's birth, and that anniversary kicked off numerous commemorations in Boston and across the nation. That was the year that Lincoln's image first appeared on the one cent coin, where it remains today, displacing the so-called "Indian Head Penny" that had been

minted for the prior fifty years. In Washington, popular demand for a memorial to the former president resulted in revival of a bill to establish the Lincoln Memorial, although the legislation did not pass until the following year, and the Memorial itself was not completed until 1922. Lincoln's birthday, February 12th, 1909 was slated as a meeting date for civil rights leaders horrified by the race riot in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln's hometown, just a few months prior – this is recognized as the founding date of the NAACP. In Boston, celebrations included Senator Henry Cabot Lodge addressing a joint session of the Massachusetts House and Senate and Julia Ward Howe, author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, presenting the new poem, "A Vision."¹

Many Abraham Lincoln schools around the country date from the same era – ours was designed by the architect Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow Jr. (1854-1934). That name should sound familiar – he was the nephew of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The younger Longfellow also had a long and successful career, starting as a draftsman in the offices of Henry Hobson Richardson, famed architect of Trinity Church, then later teaming up with two other architects to found the firm of Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, with offices in Pittsburgh and Boston. Those names should sound familiar, too, at least to foodies – the restaurant Alden & Harlow, on Brattle Street in Harvard Square, was named after the architects who designed the building that houses it, and the Longfellow Lounge in that restaurant commemorates not Henry, but Alexander. Other notable buildings by Longfellow and his firm included Cambridge City Hall, the Hunnewell Building (Arnold Arboretum headquarters), the Brattle Theater, and the impressive Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh.

The Abraham Lincoln building was not the only school on Fayette Street both in 1930 and today: the photo below shows the Skinner School in the same era, which was replaced by a municipal building in 1949.



¹ ("Lincoln's Centennial," *Humanities*, Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Jan/Feb 2009, Volume 30, Number 1).



The municipal building, of course, has also been converted for use as a school in recent decades, and currently houses the Boston Adult Technical Academy.

The future of both buildings is of keen interest to Bay Villagers. What will happen to the Abraham Lincoln building when the Josiah Quincy School relocates in 2024? And what are the city's long-term plans for the Boston Adult Technical Academy? While the Lincoln School is a large, imposing structure with some wonderful interior spaces, the School Department long ago concluded that it was outmoded for twenty first century educational purposes: Longfellow and his colleagues could not have anticipated the present-day requirements for athletic facilities, multimedia libraries, and different sizes and configurations of learning rooms. Everyone understands that the JQUS residence is only a near-term expedient, and with school enrollments declining rapidly, it seems unlikely that the City will be inclined to make the huge investment required to rehabilitate and reconfigure the building for another century of school use. What would you like to see there? It has been suggested that the building could be repurposed for city offices, but it might also be fiscally expedient for it to be sold and converted into what would probably be spectacular condos. Whatever happens, I am hopeful that the structure can be mostly preserved.

Until Next Month,
Tom