



BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

It was great to see you all at the Block Party on September! This was our 49th Annual Block Party – it would have been an even 50 were it not for the cancellation last year. We had over 160 people in attendance, which is a terrific turnout. Our thanks go out to Social Chair Craig Davis, who lined up the catering and slogged through the process of getting all of the required permits (this gets a little more complicated each year!), and to Nancy Cahn, Jamie Brewer, and Ryan Jones for wrestling with all of the registrations, helping to clear the streets, and leading a team of volunteers too numerous to mention on the fast set-up and take down. We did have a very minor shower later in the evening, but for the most part the weather held, sparing our Social team serious heart palpitations. Next year we hope to be free of COVID restrictions and able to enlist an indoor back-up facility.

While this was one of the best Block Parties ever, there are lessons every year, and I'm hoping that we can make next year's 50th even more enjoyable. One regret this year was that we were unable to accommodate the Boston Music Project Jazz Trio, which Cel Kulasekaran had arranged to join us – sadly, none of the four permits we applied for well in advance covered entertainment, and the City warned us that they would not allow even low-key musical performances. We'll try to make that happen next year.

Politicians joining us at the Block Party included Bay Village stalwarts State Representative Aaron Michlewitz and Councilor Ed Flynn and his wife, Mayoral candidates Michelle Wu and Annissa Essaibi-George, City Council At-Large candidates Ruthzee Louijeune and David Halbert, and State Senate Candidate (and current District 1 Councilor) Lydia Edwards. Among the several police in attendance were Detective Paul Chevrette and our local A-1 Officer, Darnell Toomer. We also welcomed staff members Cheri Hill from Aaron Michlewitz's office, Vanessa Woo from Councilor Flynn's office, and Kim Crucoli from the Mayor's office. We are incredibly appreciative of the efforts that our representatives make to reach out to us individually and to get beyond sloganeering and into the minutiae of constituent services.

After the fun of the Block Party, our Executive Committee agenda this past Monday night was relatively light, as we begin a new fiscal year:

GUESTS AND SPECIAL TOPICS:

- City Council Update: District 2 Councilor Ed Flynn

Councilor Ed Flynn joined us again on Monday night to bring us up to speed on multiple initiatives that he is working on at the City Council. As he noted at the

outset, one of the issues that the Council faces is the process of redistricting on the basis of the 2020 Census. Because the City's population growth has been disproportionately large within the Seaport, Downtown, Ink Block, and parts of Southie, Councilor Flynn's District 2 will need to be reduced in size. I for one sincerely hope that we will not be redistricted out of his constituency, as he has been a tireless advocate for Bay Village. He promises that there will be public meetings to address redistricting once concrete proposals are on the table.

Consistent with his reputation as the ultimate nuts-and-bolts urban mechanic, the Councilor led with a topic of particular interest to Bay Village: rats. As we have experienced, the rat population in downtown neighborhoods has exploded in the past two years, likely in part to extermination efforts being scaled back for part of the pandemic, construction projects, trash issues (also affected by the pandemic), relatively mild winters and a warm-ish, wet summer. Councilor Flynn has held a hearing on this topic, and is pushing for stepped-up extermination efforts in the coming year: in response to a question from Daniel Krulewitch, he noted that the City is looking to increase the use of dry ice, as poisons can have a deleterious impact throughout the food chain.

Councilor Flynn remains steadfast in his efforts to keep short-term ("AirBnB") tourist rental operators from skirting the existing City regulations, e.g., by reclassifying them as "Executive Suites" but never seriously marketing them as such. As he noted, short-term rentals create many problems: first, these "hotel" uses pull units from the rental market at the time of an overall housing shortage; second, some units have become notorious as "party pads," third, an excess of transient rentals leads to a degradation of neighborhoods, as tourists rarely follow rules around trash or upkeep, never mind participating in social or clean-up events. We don't want Boston to become another New Orleans, where entire communities have been hollowed-out in favor of quasi-hotels.

Councilor Flynn has also been the strongest fighter to keep electronic billboards out of neighborhoods from which they are explicitly banned by ordinance. This continues to be a frustrating game of cat-and-mouse as electronic media companies seek special variances for locations all around the City. The Councilor was the **only** official to courageously speak out against the variance recently granted for an electronic billboard at the Pine Street Inn. All of us, very much including the Councilor, respect the Pine Street Inn for its work with disadvantaged and homeless population, and we understand why the revenue that they may collect from an on-site electronic billboard is attractive: however, we are concerned that this precedent will lead to visual pollution and blinking distractions all over the City, far beyond the specific districts (Lansdowne, Theatre District, Convention Center) where such devices are explicitly allowed.

On the subject of homeless individuals, the Councilor also confirmed that further outreach efforts to the individual living in Eliot Norton Park have been unsuccessful. He has been offered a secure place to sleep and even a permanent indoor solution, but he is unwilling to move. The Councilor shares our frustrations, and hopes that as the weather cools, follow-up conversations will be successful.

Although he is running unopposed this fall, Ed Flynn would very much appreciate your vote. As always, turnout matters!

- **Dilara Yavuz, Restaurant Manager, Nusr-Et Boston**

Restaurant Manager Dilara Yavuz joined us to review proposals for signage at Nusr-Et at 100 Arlington Street. The restaurant has suffered considerably during the pandemic, and Ms. Yavuz noted that an issue particular to Nusr-Et is a lack of visibility – they were obliged to remove logos from their windows earlier this year because of an intellectual property dispute, and larger signage is not permitted on the building – they are concerned that prospective customers don't even know they are there, and that even delivery people get confused about which entrance to use.

Ms. Yavuz presented two items for consideration by BVNA. New stencil/sticker logos proposed for the windows are of the same size and similar in design concept to what was there before, so these seem relatively uncontroversial, but some residents gave Ms. Yavuz an earful about a vinyl banner that Nusr-Et would like to install during outdoor dining hours on the low fence that circumscribes their outdoor seating patio. Overall, residents seemed sympathetic to the restaurant's plight in attracting customers and its lack of signage, but several residents felt that the banner was – for want of a better word – “tacky” and out of character for the neighborhood. There was also concern expressed about whether we could trust the restaurant to remove the banner at the end of each evening, as promised, given repeated failure to enforce other aspects of the neighborhood agreement, particularly with respect to prohibiting loading and unloading off of Piedmont Street.

We did not bring this to a vote, and we will discuss it again at the next meeting. I'm not sure that we should be functioning as the “Taste Police,” but I do wonder if a simpler banner might in fact be more effective?

Nominating Committee for 2021-22 Executive Committee Slate:

The Executive Committee formally approved my motion to empower a nominating committee consisting of me, Craig Davis, Trish Gillis, Nancy Morrisroe, and Sarah Herlihy to help recruit volunteers and create a nomination slate for Bay Village leadership in the coming year. In a “normal” year, we would have our Annual Meeting on the last Wednesday of October, as described in our By-Laws; this is when we vote on BVNA leadership for the following year. However, with everything happening via Zoom, we are going to consolidate this with our regular monthly meeting on November 1st.

Note that the nominating committee process is not intended to be opaque ... we are very much seeking volunteers, and you can help us out by sending us an email expressing your interest in helping to lead BVNA, whether in a specific role or in an at-large capacity! There is meaningful turnover in the EC every year, and this year is no exception: there will be changes in the Social team, we will have a new Treasurer and Membership leader.

**Committee Updates:
Social**

Rob Lashway is going to help set up maps for our Halloween / Trick-or-Treat event for children, as he has done in the past – stay tuned on Next Door for more information on that as we get closer to the event.

Parks

Bay Village Park

Aoife Austin reminded us that our next Zoom meeting with the Parks Department and the Copley Wolff Design Group, landscape architects paid for by a generous grant from the Brown Fund, is scheduled for October 14th. Aoife suggested that a walk-through of the Park in advance might be helpful: this is happening at the Park on Friday October 8th at 5:30 PM. Please stop by the Park on Friday afternoon or reach out to Aoife and the team at parks@bayvillage.net if you would like to be involved and like to give some input on the redesign process.

As I noted in last month's newsletter, you can access a video recap of the last Brown Fund meeting here:

<https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/improvements-bay-village-neighborhood-park>

The more input we get, the better! We hope at the October 14th meeting we will also get an update on the timing and funding of the rehabilitation project.

Dog Park

Thanks to Marie and Steve Nolan for coordinating the delivery of a fresh set of wood chips to the BVNA Dog Park, and for the efforts of a small team (Marie, Steve, Mark Slater, Carol Carlson, and some volunteers from Boston Dog Walkers) to get them evenly distributed. The plantings on the edge of the park have been doing well.

All Parks

We will be meeting later this month with Project Place to investigate the possibility of hiring someone to help us for a few hours each week to clean out trash barrels in the parks and generally help keep the neighborhood clean. Again, please email parks@bayvillage.net if interested!

Planning

- Bay Village Historic District Commission

The next Bay Village Historic District Commission (BVHDC) meeting will be on Tuesday October 12th at 4 PM. The key agenda item will be a review of the design of the third-floor addition at 95-97 Broadway that we discussed at the September EC meeting. You can participate in this meeting at the following Zoom Link: [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/88425649817](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88425649817) or by calling 301-715-8592 and entering Meeting ID 884 2564 9817 #.

- Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology

In 2019, the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology announced its intention to sell its site at the corner of Tremont and Berkeley Streets and move to a new, custom-designed building at 1011 Harrison Avenue in Nubian Square. Last year, they reached a deal to sell their current campus to Related/Beal, who has proposed to build a senior care facility to be operated by Atria Senior Living, space for ancillary services and some retail storefronts along Tremont Street. The historic Franklin Union building would be retained. Although this is obviously not in Bay Village, and we will defer respectfully to the Ellis Neighborhood Association, which represents the closest neighbors, we were invited to participate in the community process. Ben

Beck is representing our Planning Committee at these meetings, and will continue to provide us updates.

BFIT has an interesting history – it was originally founded with funds from Benjamin Franklin’s 1789 will, which established a 200-year plan for a sum given to the City of Boston, where he was born. Franklin made a similar bequest to the City of Philadelphia. For the first hundred years, the money was to serve as principal for loans to young workmen; after that, the fund’s managers were given more latitude to decide the best uses of the funds. Boston decided to devote these monies to establish a technical school. Franklin’s bequest was supplemented by a further grant from Andrew Carnegie, BFIT opened in 1908, and has been a South End fixture ever since. It now serves a local student body that is majority first-generation college students, three quarters of whom are students of color, almost all of whom receive financial aid. The program of study includes subjects such as automotive technology, health care data analytics, and mechanical engineering. They have a very small endowment and the early 20th Century buildings on Berkeley Street are no longer suitable to support a modern technical curriculum. By selling the valuable site, they are able to finance state-of-the-art facilities.

As Ben noted, from a neighborhood standpoint the biggest concern will be to ensure that new construction on the site is harmonious and appropriately scaled. We are pleased by the commitment to retain and update the historic structure, to create some publicly accessible green space, and to activate the frontage along Tremont Street, which currently is an underutilized grass strip behind a foreboding iron fence.

City Services

Ian Johnson let us know that the Fall Clean-Up is planned for the Saturday before Thanksgiving (November 20th) and subsequent to the meeting, Kim Crucoli confirmed that date with the City’s “Love Your Block” team. Details will follow closer to the event. We try to schedule this as late in the year as practical – before the snow, but after most of the leaves have fallen.

Safety

The saga of the Safety Cameras continues. We discussed this with Detective Chevrette at the Block Party – he told us that supply chain (microchip) issues have delayed the camera procurement. Danny Moll believes we should have received the approval notice from City Hall for the project, but we haven’t seen that yet. We promise to follow up on this until it’s done.

Thank You for Voting!

Thanks again to all residents who voted in the preliminary election last month. While we at BVNA aren’t in the business of making political endorsements, and I know that some neighbors are disappointed that their favorite candidates did not make it into the final rounds, I am personally happy with the tough choices that we will have in November. Both Annissa Essaibi-George and Michelle Wu have spent a lot of time in Bay Village over the years as At-Large Councilors, and they are on a first-name basis with many of our neighbors. Indeed, if you haven’t yet met them personally, you haven’t been trying very hard! I’m confident that Bay Village will be in good hands going forward.

Bay Village and UMass-Boston

This month's then-and-now is a view from Statler Park, looking toward Church Street:



The top photo captures a protest by UMass-Boston students in 1969. As old-timers will remember, UMass-Boston began in Bay Village: after the University was chartered by legislation in 1964, it welcomed its first students in the autumn of 1965 to its main building, the former Boston Gas headquarters at 100 Arlington Street, which was at first leased and later purchased by the University. Administrative offices were located across the street in space leased from the Statler Hilton (Park Plaza Hotel), and the Armory of the First Corps of Cadets (Park Plaza Castle) was repurposed and outfitted as a library. Additional space was leased in several other buildings near Park Square.

As might be expected of a new urban university with ambitious goals and an aggressive timeline that was nevertheless dependent upon the vagaries of the state budget for its funding, the first several hardscrabble years entailed some compromises. The 100 Arlington Street building was only “partially renovated:” students got to know each other very well while waiting for the elevators, which had not been configured for the intensive crush of hundreds of undergraduates going back-and-forth to classes. While it wasn’t too difficult to find facilities to lease in the area – such was the state of the Boston economy and the “fringe” reputation of Park Square at that time – the University had to make due with a patchwork of spaces, many of which were in need of investment or updating. Thus, from the time of its founding, there was an understanding that UMass-Boston needed to invest in more permanent physical plant.

But where should it be? On this point, there was disagreement. Students, faculty, and UMass-Boston Chancellor Francis Broderick wanted to remain close to downtown, and were fond of 100 Arlington, despite its obvious limitations. Park Square was easily accessible to public transportation, which mattered a lot for a commuter school that drew students living in all parts of the city. To that end, they investigated a number of options in the immediate area, looking at the site where the John Hancock Tower was eventually built, and kicking the tires on some underutilized buildings and land in the South End nearby. Mayor Collins and the City government were less keen on this solution. Boston already had (and obviously still has) a surfeit of property controlled by public entities and non-profit organizations, particularly universities, and City fathers were determined not to lose more potentially prime parcels from the tax rolls. From the perspective of Boston’s budget, John Hancock was much more welcome than UMass in Copley Square.

The BRA, supported by Collins, came up with another plan: what about an entire greenfield campus at the end of Columbia Point, a former landfill by the sea? That would give the University ample room for future expansion, and facilitate parking and purpose-built construction with fewer compromises. Of course, it was a bit of a schlep from the nearest T station. And overall, Columbia Point was about as remote as you could be while technically remaining “within the City.” Chancellor Broderick was not keen. As he noted in an interview published in the 1969 Yearbook:

“The pace of city life is vigorous. The dirt in the City is real. Granted, a bucolic campus has its values, but I feel that education in 1969 has an awful lot more to do with being 3 blocks away from the Prudential and a street away from the slums.”

We'll need to grant the Chancellor a bit of rhetorical license here – the Prudential is in fact more than three blocks from 100 Arlington, and Bay Village, the only residential neighborhood within the immediate radius of the scattershot Park Square UMass-Boston campus, was not really a slum, even in 1969. But there *was* plenty of grit near at hand. In the photograph above, the sometimes notorious Punch Bowl club (about which more in a later newsletter) is on the right where the South Cove elderly housing development now stands – on the left, a rental car lot and surface parking covered the right half of the parcel where Greystar's 212 Stuart is currently being constructed. And there were plenty of other empty lots and vacant buildings in the Bay Village blocks just out of view. The text and pictures in the UMass-Boston yearbook often seemed to revel in the authenticity of their somewhat grimy urban context. Shots like this one of Arlington Street are representative:



A group of students opposed to the relocation to Columbia Point seized upon another reason to shun the move: the other significant buildings on that peninsula were a deteriorating Boston Housing Authority complex, once the largest in New England, which was rapidly earning a reputation for violence. In the '60s and '70s, as Boston's school segregation and busing crisis built toward its apex, the BHA abetted residential segregation, even when that meant swimming against the demographic tide. Projects in Southie remained overwhelmingly White, while projects in Roxbury and Dorchester, including Columbia Point, became overwhelmingly Black. UMass-Boston students protesting in the photo wondered why the huge waterfront greenspaces touted for the new campus could not instead be used to build new, better housing, and a more integrated neighborhood.

The Chancellor and his allies continued for some time to press for alternatives. They looked at other parcels in the South End – neighborhood response was negative. They looked at properties near North Station – the Bruins and Celtics made their disapproval clear. Some Dorchester residents close to the peninsula weren't keen on UMass as a neighbor, either, fearing student competition for apartments – they, and the students, argued for the construction of dorms. Ultimately, however, the enticement of such a large parcel was too difficult for many interested parties to resist, and the BRA got its way, as it usually did in those days. There were LOTS of protests by UMass Boston students in that era, and marches against the Vietnam War, agitation for changes to the curriculum, and calls for increasing the diversity of the faculty probably competed for attention to some extent with the fight against relocation. The State ultimately coughed up the money for the new campus, construction began, and in 1974 the University moved.

The embarrassing state of the dangerous and increasingly vacant Columbia Point Housing Project wasn't addressed until the 1980s with the successful mixed-income Harbor Point development. And fifty years later, in 2019, UMass-Boston finally opened dorms.

It is doubtful, however, that students, faculty, trustees or politicians of that era would ever have anticipated the reversal that would lead to so much housing – very expensive housing – being built in and around the environs of the dilapidated buildings of their former campus, which had been chosen for their affordability and availability at a time when Boston was rapidly depopulating in favor of the suburbs. The city, less gritty, is back in vogue.

Perhaps the most famous student at UMass-Boston during its Bay Village days was men's fashion icon Joseph Abboud, Class of 1972. Abboud's family was part of the Lebanese/Syrian immigrant community of the South End that I mentioned in the newsletter discussing Khalil Gibran. (This oft-forgotten group, forcibly scattered by the BRA with the razing of the New York Streets area and much of what is now residential Chinatown, and by construction of the Turnpike Extension, contributed tremendously to Boston culture in the past century). His father was a master mechanic, his mother was a seamstress, and like many UMass-Boston students, he was the first in his family to go to four-year college.

Even then, Abboud had a reputation as the best dressed man on the makeshift campus – although it should be acknowledged that, based on the pictorial evidence provided by the contemporary yearbooks, the sartorial benchmarks at UMass were rather modest. While attending the University, the Roslindale High graduate worked part-time at high-end men's retailer Louis Boston; ambitious and charismatic, he purportedly outfitted some of the handful of faculty members who could afford the stiff tariff for Louis's Italian suits. The comparative literature major was a strong student who earned a scholarship to spend his sophomore year at the Sorbonne, and later had the opportunity to do graduate work at Yale; instead, he moved up the ranks as a buyer for Louis, ultimately leaving in 1981 to join Ralph Lauren in New York and making the transition from retail haberdashery to design. A few years later, he struck out on his own. The rest is history.

One wonders what the now-71 year old Abboud would think of the outfits typically worn by the wealthy patrons of Nusr-Et in the ground floor of 100 Arlington, the building where he once fidgeted in jacket and tie waiting for the overcrowded

elevator to take him to class. The “dirt in the City” is far less obvious now than it was during the tenure of Chancellor Broderick, but, ironically, we’ve also lost some of the style and sense of occasion that flourished even during the hippie era.

Until next month,

Tom Perkins
President, BVNA

Sources and Further Reading for those interested:

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