



BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

As we continue to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, several of us on the BVNA Executive Committee thought it might be helpful to send out a newsletter with regular updates on events and happenings in the neighborhood. While individual meetings and hot topics are often addressed on the NextDoor app, we recognize that it can be hard to keep up with all that's going on, and we know that not all of you are able to join the monthly Zoom calls. We also realize that sometimes it's hard to follow these calls, given the vagaries of internet connections and sometimes fiddly software. Please let us know if you find this format helpful!

And if you have yet to join NextDoor, please do!! It's as easy as typing in your residential address and email address. This way, you'll be sure not to miss out on happenings in the 'hood! To join go to:

https://help.nextdoor.com/s/article/How-to-join-Nextdoor?language=en_US).

Note that NextDoor uses public records to verify your address. If you have a problem joining, please drop me a message or reach out directly to our "Leads" – Sarah Herlihy or Mark Slater. They can verify neighbors as well.

This first edition will largely summarize topics discussed at the December 7, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting. Depending on the level of interest, we may adjust the format or frequency of future newsletters.

SPECIAL TOPICS:

City Pilot Program to replace gas lamps with historic-appearing LED lamps

Michael Donaghy of the Boston Public Works Department gave a presentation to BVNA to invite us to participate in a pilot program to evaluate replacing our gas lamps with LED lamps. Many of the other historic neighborhoods are involved, including Beacon Hill, as you may have read about in the Boston Sun. We will be participating to ensure that we have some say in the matter. The BPW presentation will be posted on Next Door once we get approval from the City to do so.

It is BPW's intent to match the appearance of the current fixtures, right down to simulated "mantles," so the bulk of the questions posed by

neighbors concerned the quality of the light – ensuring that it is “warm” enough, not too bright, and not diffused in a way that creates glare inconsistent with the glow of gas lamps. The motivation for this project is twofold – one, the existing lamps, which were in most cases installed in the ‘70s and ‘80s, are extremely difficult and expensive for the city to maintain, and two, the age of the gas pipes that feed them has led to leaks and loss that threaten the health of our trees in addition to being wasteful of energy. The project is still in the planning stages, but current thinking is that BPW would pilot the new design on Shawmut Street near the 212 Stuart Street project under construction, where lamps have already been temporarily removed. Obviously, the impact of this change can only be judged by seeing the proposed replacements in person. We are hopeful that we can arrive at a solution that creates a minimum of discernable difference to the gas-lit atmospherics that help make Bay Village feel special.

Mitigation Funds Associated with 212 Stuart Street Project

As most of you are aware, the approval of the Greystar tower currently under construction at 212 Stuart Street was contingent on the provision of some community funds for safety improvements (specifically, cameras tied to the Boston Police Department network) and parks improvements. A portion of these funds were payable upon the start of construction, and the balance will be funded upon issuance of a certificate of occupancy, which is a year away. The disbursement of these funds, controlled by the Boston Planning and Development Agency, is complex, with multiple safeguards to ensure that no funds are misappropriated. We appreciate the efforts of Sarah Herlihy and Clyde Bergstresser, who are working diligently to ensure the funds are directed as intended. They are being helped by Joe Kuranda, Aoife Austin and members of the Parks Committee to solidify specific proposals for green space upgrades, and by Bethany Patten, Danny Moll, and members of the Safety Committee to work through the various technical requirements and sign-offs for camera installation with the BPD.

We appreciate your patience on the topic of cameras! There were a few instances of crime spilling into the neighborhood from downtown earlier this year that again illustrated the potential usefulness of having networked cameras at key intersections. Unfortunately, this project has proven more difficult to execute than any of us anticipated. BVNA has almost \$4000 in reserve that was donated several years ago by neighbors to help pay for camera installation that will be used along with the construction mitigation funds, finally giving us enough critical mass to proceed over the course of the next two years.

Standing Committee Updates: Parks

To expand on the topic of funding parks improvements, I'd like to give a shout-out to Joe, Aoife and others who pulled together an application for funds to restore the Bay Village Garden at the corner of Melrose and Church Streets under the City's 2021 Community Preservation grant program. Thanks also to Councilor Ed Flynn for supporting this effort. While there is no guarantee that we will receive an award – there are many projects being proposed in many different neighborhoods – it would be terrific if we were able to secure some targeted support. A priority for the neighborhood is to preserve the mature tree while ensuring that the space remains accessible and safe. While we have access to some other parks funding via donations and construction mitigation monies such as those described above, there are at least six separate greenspaces requiring attention within the neighborhood (!), so we need to allocate our limited funds very carefully between them.

Joe is also spearheading our effort to obtain a longer-term lease for the dog park space owned by the BPDA, with the assistance of Steve Nolan on pulling together and reviewing the contract.

Planning and Licensing

There are three current topics of note in Planning and Licensing Committee for the start of 2021.

- A new developer, KEMS Corporation, has expressed interest in renovating the former Our Lady of Victories on Arlington Street into residential condominiums. A subcommittee led by Ben Beck is vetting their proposal, which we are told will address the detailed and overall negative feedback the Planning Committee gave to prior project proponents on this site: we are concerned that the project stay within the scale of the neighborhood and preserve as much of the look and feel of the church building as possible, while recognizing the inherent difficulty of repurposing the space.
- Representatives of the Related Corporation, managers of The Arlington, and managers from Nusr-Et (the restaurant on the first floor of the 100 Arlington), attended our most recent EC meeting. They have provided contact information, are active on NextDoor and have been responsive to complaints over the last several weeks after a rather chaotic opening in September that raised concerns about traffic and coronavirus distancing, among other issues.
- There are numerous construction projects underway in the neighborhood, and we expect more projects starting or coming down the pipeline soon. The committee will provide regular updates on NextDoor.

City Services

A shout-out to Brian Boisvert, Allie Fitzgerald, and Ian Johnson from the City Services Committee for coordinating a successful Fall neighborhood clean-up under less-than-ideal COVID-19 restrictions that made it impossible for us to enforce a parking restriction and also kept us from sharing coffee, donuts, and close-quarters camaraderie as we usually do. Thanks also to the Revere Hotel for graciously providing free parking to those who (voluntarily) moved their cars to permit a more thorough street-sweeping. It was also great to see Councilor Ed Flynn, Faisa Sharif and our new liaison to the Mayor's Office Kim Crucoli, albeit at a masked distance!

The City Services team has also been in regular contact with the City as the Arlington Street crosswalk project is approaching conclusion. This much-anticipated and oft-delayed project had a rather star-crossed summer: a gas leak was discovered that held up construction for a time, and then quality issues with a new contractor led to some of the work being torn up and re-done. As of this week, Eversource has finally completed an order the City placed some months ago to connect the flashing lights: our thanks go to Councilor Flynn and our liaisons to the Mayor's office for continuing to press this issue on our behalf. The only remaining issue is replacement of the incorrect color tactile pavers (yellow) with ones compatible with historic neighborhoods (red).

The team is also working on the most urgent sidewalk repairs – on this topic, I counsel patience, as the DPW team has a considerable backlog and some of this work will need to wait for warmer weather.

ADCO (Alliance of Downtown Civic Organizations)

Thanks to Nancy Morrisroe for taking the lead in drafting a letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals to register our opposition to the uncontrolled proliferation of electronic billboards in neighborhoods where they are not permitted under the existing code, and thanks to Councilors Ed Flynn, Kenzie Bok and Annissa Essaibi-George for their steadfast support of our position on this topic. While the most recent specific plans have been floated for billboards in Chinatown and the North End, this issue ultimately affects all neighborhoods, and we do not want to encourage proliferation of large electronic signage outside explicitly-defined areas in the Theater District, Lansdowne Street and near the Convention Center where they are allowed. This is an instance where improved technology appears to have given new life to an old advertising medium. We don't want these large flashing signs to distract drivers on busy streets or add

visual pollution to historic neighborhoods. Councilor Flynn will be holding a hearing next month to discuss the proliferation of these billboards and future zoning enforcement of such billboards. Stay tuned!

Social and Membership

Kudos to Craig Davis, Mark Bocash, Keith Gnoza, Joe Kuranda, and the rest of the Social team (both official and unofficial) for getting the tree decorated and lit and the wreaths mounted on the lampposts – everything looks great. We appreciate all of the neighbors coming out with their ladders to help with the wreaths. Apologies for not getting all of the names but you know who you are and we thank you!! Craig also is making arrangements for Santa and elves to come to Bay Village on Sunday, December 20th. Specifics will also be posted on Next Door.

On the topic of membership: please renew when you receive an expiration notice, and please encourage your neighbors to join us! As Treasurer Tim Kacich has reminded the Executive Committee, BVNA was not immune from the financial pressures of 2020. Because we were unable to host our usual fundraising event, we finished the year in a slightly worse position than we started, despite some very generous additional donations from anonymous members.

We have sufficient cushion to manage this one-off deficit, but we cannot afford to have this pattern continue in future years. As you all know, we are entirely a volunteer organization, and while our overall budget is modest, little costs add up. Expenditures in December alone run the gamut from purchasing wreaths and tree lights to renewing our website hosting services to obtaining additional liability insurance required to assume the dog park lease – a series of small outlays, paid for by your membership dues, which help make our neighborhood a special place. We know that the pandemic has left many families short of funds, but we greatly appreciate donations to BVNA and the Bay Village Parks from those who are able.

Coming Attractions:

- We are working to get the recordings of the recent COVID-era Executive Committee meetings uploaded onto the bayvillage.net website. Going forward, these archived recordings will likely replace formal minutes, and provide a more detailed discussion of goings-on than I am able to provide here.
- Over the next few months we will be proposing minor amendments to the BVNA By-laws to reflect some changes in committee assignments and some other tweaks to our organizational protocols,

some of which have been spurred further by the need to conduct our meetings electronically.

- While it may seem that the Presidential election is barely behind us, we are now entering the all-important Mayoral and City election year! We have already been approached by candidates who would like to present to the neighborhood, so watch NextDoor and meeting agenda notices for more details.

I cannot stress enough how important civic engagement is to Bay Village. Citywide turnout in odd-year elections is depressingly low, and it is only by virtue of our comparatively greater level of involvement that our tiny neighborhood is able to command the degree of attention that it does. I hope that our “meet the candidate” sessions will draw some of our newer residents to our meetings, and I look forward to good questions for the candidates. As I noted on the Monday call, if there are specific questions that you would like us to pose to candidates for Mayor or City Council, please pass them along to me at President@bayvillage.net. While we will certainly be taking questions at the meetings, I recognize that the chat room in Zoom can get a bit chaotic, and I know some of you can't easily turn off mute in noisy apartments. If I have your questions in advance, we will do our best to get as many addressed as possible.

We have been privileged in recent history to benefit from excellent representation at both City Hall and the State House. Our representatives and their offices have invested considerable time and shoe leather to help us resolve a parade of individually minor issues that collectively have a large impact on our quality-of-life. We are grateful for the attention, and whatever the outcome of next year's elections, we would like that tradition to continue.

Stay safe and have a warm and joyous holiday season,

Tom Perkins
President, BVNA