



BAY VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hi Bay Village Neighbors:

We had a fairly low-key BVNA Executive Committee meeting this evening, Monday May 2nd, as we continue to make slow but steady progress on a number of initiatives:

Special Guests: Talia Pique and Jesus Figueroa, Caritas Communities

We were happy to host Talia Pique, Resident Services Coordinator, and Jesus Figueroa, Property Manager from Caritas Communities, who have had a lot of recent interaction with Daniel Krulewitch on our membership team. Our goal to improve two-way communications between BVNA and Caritas is shared by Talia and Jesus. Daniel and I reaffirmed that we would welcome greater participation in neighborhood events by residents of the Caritas SRO buildings on Cortes Street, and that we don't want the modest cost of membership to be a barrier to residents. We are told that there are a couple of Caritas residents who are interested in gardening, and we suggested that if they are interested in maintaining/planting a couple of whiskey barrels, BVNA would be happy to provide them – I think everyone would appreciate some efforts to brighten Cortes Street.

We also discussed neighborhood concerns, primarily around trash: Cortes Street has long been “ground zero” for improper disposal and loose trash blowing in the street. Both Talia and Jesus acknowledged the issue, and promised steps to improve compliance. As importantly, they have shared their contact information and asked for timely communication when we see a problem. Jesus believes that in some instances the trash is being left in paper bags by non-residents, and he is working to install more cameras on the front of the buildings to monitor activity. More to come.

Committee Updates:

Membership

Separate from the Caritas discussion, Daniel Krulewitch also summarized his efforts at outreach – as he noted, if all members focused on inviting and bringing just one additional member into the Association in the coming year, we would be a much larger, more powerful, and likely more cohesive organization. We have continued to meet via Zoom given the uncertain trajectory of the pandemic and with an abundance of caution for the well-being of our elderly neighbors in the South Cove building where we have historically convened. However, I think we all recognize that Zoom meetings are less impactful than in-person meetings, and our Zoom sessions tend to be attended by the same three dozen hardy regulars, a small fraction of our active membership. Now that the weather is warmer, we may attempt to hold a Monthly EC meeting in one of our parks. As always, we welcome suggestions about how to improve participation and communication!

Parks

- **Woodland Park (next to Lyndeboro Place, adjacent to Elliot Norton Park)**

As discussed at our April meeting, we took action to replace the dead trees the Parks Department recently removed from this little park with appropriate, native trees using BVNA funds. Carol Carlson did most of the heavy lifting, getting quotes from nurseries and filing paperwork with the City to ensure we had the proper approvals. Subsequent to the April meeting, the EC voted to APPROVE expenditures of up to \$1500 for purchasing and installing replacement trees, Carol obtained quotes from a nursery in Northborough to purchase a Northern Red Oak and a Smooth Shadbush for less than half of the sum authorized, and she strong-armed Daniel and Bill Nigreen for some help to get them planted. Fingers crossed that these little trees will survive and prosper – the space already looks better.

- Dog Park Expenditures and Improvements

Marie Nolan has led our efforts to communicate to professional dog walkers that we can't continue to host huge numbers of dogs at one time, or allow huge ratios of dogs to dog walkers. She has received a positive, constructive response from Boston Dog Butlers, who have promised us that they will no longer send vans full of dogs to Warrenton Street, and have ensured us that they will only occasionally use the park if there is a walker on foot with three or fewer dogs. Please let us know if you see other professional dog walkers with too many dogs in the park, and, if at all possible, get the name of the company they are working for. We've always had clear communications with Boston Dog Butlers, whose owner, Pete Kusinski, has in the past helped us with some clean-up and small repair projects in the past. However, we don't know all of the other companies that use the Dog Park, and we need to get the message out to everyone.

Our Dog Park subcommittee will be gathering at the Park on Thursday evening, May 5th, at 6PM to help clean and organize the space in preparation for the next delivery of wood chips. Volunteers are welcome to join! The chip delivery itself is scheduled for this coming SATURDAY morning, May 7th. Volunteers would also be appreciated on Saturday morning to help us spread and level the chips. Each load costs us about \$750; our temporary fencing improvements have been moderately successful in helping with chip retention, and with the anticipated installation of a better, more permanent fences and gates in the not-distant future, we hope to be able to get by with only two rather than three loads each year.

Safety

BPD is bidding out the agreed-upon cameras installation that we discussed last month. Once that is complete, we can push ahead with final approvals. Following up on an excellent suggestion by Charlie Cabot, we are also getting from BPD a copy of the City's camera policy, so we have documentation of exactly how these units are accessed and used by the police. We'll summarize this in a subsequent newsletter. Obviously, the goal of the cameras isn't to permit open-ended surveillance on neighbors, but rather to facilitate quick action and follow-up when crimes are committed. Historically, Bay Village has often been used as a cut-through by both vehicles and pedestrians leaving the Theater District. While we enjoyed a couple of years of quiet during the pandemic, the clubs now seem to be back in full gear, and once again, there have been multiple violent incidents at closing time. The concentration of trouble between the hours of 2 and 3 AM, despite a very visible police presence, is incredible. Within the past month, two women were stabbed near the corner of Warrenton and Stuart Streets, not many days after two men were shot in Chinatown near Beach and Oxford Streets. We are fortunate that Bay Village itself continues to be extremely safe and relatively quiet, but only a couple of blocks away, the police have their hands full.

Social and Membership

Nan Rubin continues to work on event planning for the Block Party – even though it is still almost 5 months away, there are tons of little details that need to be sorted well in advance. This will be our 50th Annual Block Party, and we'd like to make it special! Nan reports good news and bad news. As

I mentioned in last month's newsletter, the permitting process becomes more difficult with each passing year: our 49 years of successful events notwithstanding, the City has now decreed that Melrose Street, which is 22 feet wide, curb-to-curb, is too narrow to be closed for the event. This strikes me as a rather narrow interpretation of regulations— with one hundred able bodied people, no heavy barriers, and no parked cars in the street, it seems we could ensure safe passage to any emergency vehicles and render assistance in a matter of seconds. Last year we were instructed to keep a travel lane clear, but apparently this is no longer sufficient. Still, there's no fighting City Hall, and obviously if Melrose Street isn't wide enough, no other Bay Village street will pass muster. With the help of Jean Quintal, Nan has scrambled to reach out to the Josiah Quincy Upper School administration to secure us access to the School parking lot, and we are working with the Revere Hotel to secure a backup location in the event of rain. The Revere has also jumped in to donate a free night's stay as one of the raffle prizes.

There is good news on the budget front. Maggiano's has graciously offered us a 40% discount, bringing food costs back in line, and Nan is working with them to ensure that there will be more vegetarian options this year. Daniel Kim and Sarah Lee, who are renovating and opening Charles Street Dental at 121 Charles Street South, have also made a generous contribution to help us defray costs. I'm much more confident than I was last month that we won't require a large subsidy from general funds to keep the party affordable, and I'm looking forward to a really special event. Stay tuned!

City Services

We were disappointed that the City did not get its act together in time to organize a "Love Your Block" board in a timely fashion, so there will be no City-wide clean-up campaign this spring. HOWEVER, Kim Crucoli from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services is jumping in to help us organize an individual, Bay Village only CLEAN-UP on SATURDAY MAY 21st from 8AM to noon. Mark your calendars! As always, we will flyer parked cars to clear the streets to the extent possible and we are working with the Revere Garage to secure resident parking for the morning of the event. The more cars we can get off the streets, the more thorough the cleaning can be. The Bay Village Garden at the corner of Church and Melrose will again be the organizing point. Kim assures us that the administration intends to organize the clean-up in the fall as it has been done historically, so we should be back on track for the second event in November without special arrangements.

Then and Now – Leave the Driving to Us

English poet Brian Howard is credited with the cutting observation that "anyone over the age of 30 seen in a bus has been a failure in life." While this sentiment may seem too elitist for any of us to admit sharing today, it wasn't too long ago when the long-distance bus stations on the edge of Bay Village were scrupulously avoided by anyone who could afford alternative modes of transport. While none of these facilities were technically within the limits of our neighborhood, for several decades they (along with a scattered group of dive bars, clubs and empty parking lots) were seedy anchors of the dividing zone between the respectable Back Bay and the then much sketchier Bay Village and South End. A surprising percentage of the lots in this transition zone were empty – in the '70s there were places where you could see clear through from Stuart Street to the Public Garden.

For much of the twentieth century, there were two bus stations, one (most commonly known in its later years as the Trailways Station) in Park Square, and another, the Greyhound Station, a few blocks away on St. James Street. The Trailways station was active until 1980, while the Greyhound Station continued to function into the early '90s. In the first half of the twentieth century, bus travel had not yet solidified its lowest-common-denominator reputation, and a

prewar postcard below shows a bright cocktail lounge at the Greyhound Terminal at 12 St. James – but by the time I started riding the bus to Boston from upstate New York in the ‘80s, the attached refreshment facility was notoriously skeezy Burger King. I remember this station as cramped, crowded, poorly signed, and inhabited by a semi-permanent cast of shady characters. Diesel fumes fought to overwhelm other unpleasant odors. At the end of the ‘90s, this plot was cleared for the office building at 10 St. James, which has a public lobby between Stuart and St. James that could not be more different from its predecessor.





I never had the privilege of patronizing the Trailways station, but I'm told that if anything, it was worse than Greyhound, and available photos of the station below seem to corroborate that assessment – I can't find one where it doesn't look run-down. Over the course of the twentieth century there were actually multiple bus stops and small stations around Park Square, but the final, best remembered iteration of the Trailways facility occupied a plot across the street from the now-dismantled Lincoln Memorial, parts of which I believe lie under the north end of the One Charles condominium building, and parts of which were subsumed into the much-widened Charles Street South. The obliteration of Eliot Street and Carver Street, once fairly major (if somewhat narrow) arteries, and the imposition of an entirely different street grid make this end of Park Square one of the areas of downtown Boston most changed in the past fifty years.



Of course, Boston was hardly the only city in the country with a sketchy point of entry in the '70s and '80s. I also made several trips to pre-Giuliani-era Port Authority Terminal, where the same issues that bedeviled Boston's Greyhound station had metastasized in a much larger facility. It seemed like every first encounter with New York was memorable for all the wrong reasons – the station was a den of pickpockets, aggressive panhandlers, and stone-faced veteran commuters who walked past fistfights, lewd displays, and every manner of solicitation without changing focus or breaking stride. Most of the crime was relatively petty, but there seemed to be little acknowledgement that typical bus riders – people who didn't have access to cars or trains – included many of the more vulnerable members of society: younger people, older people, less wealthy people, and tourists from other countries and small towns unaccustomed to securing their possessions tightly in inner pockets and adopting the requisite “game face” necessary to expedite passage to the street.

The establishment of a consolidated bus terminal in South Station has made a huge difference to the development and city-wide awareness of Bay Village. Even now, a significant percentage of Boston residents can not locate Bay Village on a map, but when real estate agents cite a neighborhood as a “hidden gem,” the implication is that it was “discovered” by buyers a long time ago. Sotheby's does not pioneer.

While there were early shoots of redevelopment in the '70s, gentrification really got rolling when the Playboy Club, the Hillbilly Ranch, the empty lots, and the grimy bus stations – especially the bus stations – made way for shiny offices, high-end condos, and the State Transportation Building. While much of the resulting architecture is rather charmless, the BRA's efforts to rehabilitate the Park Square area, measured on its own terms, have been among the agency's most spectacular successes. When “two blocks behind Trailways” became “two blocks behind the Four Seasons” in the 1980s, Bay Village real estate values went thermonuclear, and there really hasn't been an extended slowdown since. Rising property values have certainly resulted in some displacement and some collateral damage to our commercial diversity, but our neighborhood is undeniably safer and cleaner, and long-term homeowners have benefitted enormously.

As for the bus station itself, it's hard to see where the transformation has been less than a complete win. One could argue that South Station is a bit less central than Park Square, but the convenience to bus passengers of having all buses in the same facility, with direct covered access to commuter rail, Amtrak, the Red Line, and the Silver Line connection to the airport is far superior to the prior arrangement. The station itself is also much nicer and larger, and the expansion and renovation currently underway should make it even better. Arrival in the city is more pleasant than it was in the twentieth century, and the prospect of a bus ride perhaps no longer necessarily the last choice alternative.

Until Next Month,
Tom