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Mission Hill

GAZETTE

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JANUARY 5, 2024 — FEBRUARY 1, 2024

FIRST NIGHT BOSTON PARADE

Photos by Marianne Salza



Thousands of residents from throughout the Commonwealth gathered along Tremont Street to cheer for the First Night Boston Parade, on December 31. See Pages 6 and 7 for more photos.



A girl waving the wings of a bird puppet, one of over 100 Boston Puppeteers Cooperative puppets used by community members during First Night Boston Parade.

BPDA Board approves Parcel 25 Phase 3 NPC

By MICHAEL COUGHLIN JR.

During a meeting last month, the Boston Planning and Development Agency's (BPDA) Board approved the Notice of Project Change (NPC) for Phase 3 of the Parcel 25 project proposed by Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services, bringing a plethora of 100% affordable housing units to the neighborhood.

Ebony DaRosa, a Senior Project Manager in the Development Review Department at the BPDA, explained that the Parcel 25 Phase 3 NPC will bring a six-story building with 94 affordable rental units and 33 parking

spots to Mission Hill.

The NPC brings about a stark change to the proposal, as the plan for Phase 3 was initially for a 160-foot-tall commercial and office building with 185 below-grade parking spots.

Back in October, during a BPDA-hosted public meeting concerning the NPC, Nicholas Zozula, Senior Associate at McDermott, Quilty & Miller LLP, the project's Permitting Attorney, cited factors such as construction costs, low demand for office space and the need for housing as reasons for the change of plans.

Continued on page 2

JPNC holds off sending letter to T about new garage

STAFF REPORT

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, December 21, via Zoom. On hand for the session were chair Renee Stacey Welch, vice-chair Bernard Doherty, Willie Mitchell, Sarah Freeman, Dave Baron, Peter DeCotis, Peg Preble, Purple Reign, Katherine O'Shea, Nick Chaves, Danielle Sommer-Kieta, and Esther Beillard.

The full committee heard reports from their various subcommittees, with the primary discussion of the evening pertaining to a request from the Housing and Development Committee to send a letter to the MBTA outlining the JPNC's requests regarding the new Arborway Garage that will house up to 200 buses of the

T's future electric bus fleet.

The Arborway Garage project has had a long and torturous history dating back almost 25 years to when a new garage was first proposed in 1999 (long before electric buses were even a thought). In 2001, the city (under the signature of then-Mayor Tom Menino) and the T signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the principal features of which were that the city would be abandoning its pole yard adjacent to the garage and that eight acres of the site would be dedicated for community development purposes, such as affordable housing, commercial development, and open green space.

However, the new garage never was constructed and the project essentially was abandoned.

Continued on page 11

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Email stephen.quigley@reverejournal.com or patricia@jamaicaplainingazette.com or call 781-485-0588 for your Mission Hill information

FUNDRAISING EVENT



A fundraiser was recently held at the Butterfly Cafe on Tremont St for Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (second from right) who is shown with some of the attendees including Brendan Behans owner Michel Soltani (third from left).

BPDA

Continued from page 1

Moreover, during December's Board meeting, Zozula walked through a chart comparing the previously approved project to the NPC, which detailed how the new plans will result in a building four stories shorter and around a 26% decrease in gross square footage.

Additionally, of the 94 units, there are plans for 24 one-bedrooms, 55 two-bedrooms, and 15 three-bedrooms, all of which will be affordable and offered at different ranges of area median income.

"Obviously, in recent years, commercial office space has been less necessary and less sought after, so changing to a residential use in the midst of a housing crunch — specifically all-affordable housing — just seemed to make a lot of sense," said Zozula.

Following some words from Zozula, Nick Buehrens, an Associate Principal at Utile, the project's architect, took over the presentation and reviewed some more aspects of the plan.

Buehrens first spoke about the importance of landscape in "stitching together" the previous phases of the project with Phase 3.

"We designed these spaces in coordination with our landscape architects to create clear, safe, and accessible pathways for peo-

ple to circulate through the site while also providing a variety of places for informal gathering and more structured community events within the site itself," said Buehrens.

He also went through some floor plans and discussed the inclusion of a community room on the ground floor and bike parking spaces. Further, Buehrens showed some project renderings and how the building would look from different areas near the site.

Following the presentation, the floor was opened up for the public to provide testimony, and there was a significant amount of support for the project.

A student from Northeastern University said, "Mission Hill is a beautifully diverse community that is at risk of losing its cultural ties and community members if more affordable housing does not become available."

"Mission Hill needs more projects like Parcel 25 coming from a responsible and community-responsive organization such as Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services. There are many students who feel that way and support this project as well," they added.

A more than 15-year resident of Mission Hill also voiced their support, saying, "I fully support this affordable housing project in Mission Hill."

"It is one of the few development projects that is before

the BPDA in the past 10 years that is solely affordable, does not contain studio units but rather contains units that are designed for families and not for transient-oriented populations," they added.

While others made their voices heard during the meeting, indicating support, it should be noted that the project has also garnered support from neighborhood organizations such as the Community Alliance of Mission Hill (CAMH).

Back in November, CAMH voted to support the project by a vote of 22 to 1, with another voter abstaining.

Members of the BPDA Board also had some kind words for the project. "I pass this site every day, and I'm very grateful to the proponents for providing opportunities for people of limited economic means to continue to stay in the area," said Ted Landmark.

The Board's Chair, Priscilla Rojas, called the project "amazing" and said, "It's exactly what we need, and I'm just very thankful for you just building this housing and having community space."

Ultimately, the Board unanimously approved the NPC for Phase 3 of Parcel 25. To learn more about the project, you can visit <https://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/parcel-25>.

JPNC Zoning Committee hears concerns about Rockview Street housing proposal

By ADAM SWIFT

A proposal to build two single-family, two-story homes in the front yard of 22 Rockview St. failed to win a recommendation for approval at Wednesday night's meeting of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council's zoning committee.

However, a motion to outright recommend denial of the project to the city's Zoning Board of Appeals also failed to pass muster with the committee.

Zoning Board members noted the opposition of a number of abutters to the project in denying a recommendation for approval from property owner Sven Karlsson. But enough members of the committee said they believed there was an opportunity for Karlsson and his project to work with neighbors to help shape a project that could be a better fit for the neighborhood.

Karlsson, who owns the existing home at 22 Rockview St., updated the zoning committee on changes that were made to the building plan in the wake of a Sept. 20 meeting with neighbors. He presented updated construction mitigation and drainage plans, as well as a change in parking.

Initially, Karlsson and the project team proposed a 22-foot curb cut for entry into the property, which would have resulted in the loss of two on-street parking spots. The revised plan called for an 11-foot curb cut, with four parking spots on the property itself.

Karlsson noted that there were also concerns raised by abutters about the density of the project, but he said that the project would "thoughtfully fit in with the landscape of the street." There were several Jamaica Plain residents who spoke in favor of the project, noting that although it was only two units, it would help address the need for housing in the city.

"There is an acute need for the addition of housing in the city," said Gergana Nenkov of Chestnut Avenue. "This is a rather modest (development) but one that could make a difference for two families."

But a number of residents who live closer to the property raised a number of concerns, including potential negative health impacts from potential rock drilling

during construction.

Several JPNC members said it was important to listen to the concerns of the abutters and raised their own concerns about the project.

"The idea that we need to build new housing for the sake of housing is wrong," said Bernie Doherty. "We shouldn't just push something through because it is housing."

Doherty said it might be a different situation if the applicant was proposing affordable, rather than market rate housing.

Marie Turley encouraged Karlsson and his design team to continue reaching out to the neighbors to come up with a more amenable plan for the property.

Zoning Committee Chair Dave Baron noted that Karlsson could choose to withdraw the project before a vote was taken on a recommendation.

Karlsson said he was confused by some of the objections that were raised about the project, noting that there was no way to guarantee that there would be no rock drilling for a construction project such as the one that was proposed.

"It seems like people do not want the density, which is understandable, but we are 10 months into the process, and people ask why housing is so expensive in Boston, and this is the reason," said Karlsson.

A motion to recommend approval of the project failed, as did a motion to recommend denial of the project, so it will go forward to the Boston ZBA without a recommendation from the JPNC zoning committee.

Baron abstained from the vote on recommending approval, and voted against the motion to recommend denial of the special permits for the project. He said he was concerned by objections raised by some of the committee members, noting that the committee did not need to defer to abutters in all cases that come before it. He added that the potential for ledge drilling was not unique to that property.

However, Baron added that the project could benefit from more time with the proponent meeting with neighbors.

In other business, the JPNC zoning committee recommended approval for the building of an outside deck on the second floor of a residence at 470 Center St.

Laughing Monk looks to expand entertainment

By MICHAEL COUGHLIN JR.

In its final meeting of 2023 on December 20th, the Community Alliance of Mission Hill (CAMH) hosted representatives from the Laughing Monk Cafe who are looking to have live entertainment at the establishment a few nights a week after 10:30 P.M.

In the past year, representatives from the Laughing Monk Cafe requested the support of CAMH for a then-proposed expansion of the establishment into an adjacent vacant space. According to Attorney Kristen Scanlon, the expanded area is now close to opening.

Scanlon further explained that the Laughing Monk would like to expand its entertainment options in connection with its physical expansion.

“By right, what they can offer is live entertainment before 10:30 P.M., but what they’ve done is applied to be able to host live entertainment after 10:30 P.M., which requires a conditional use permit from the city,” said Scanlon.

“While they seek live entertainment seven days a week, it most likely will be Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. The plan is typically for one-man shows, maybe every so often a very small band,” she added.

Pae Worachina, Laughing Monk Cafe’s General Manager, also attended the meeting and expanded on the proposal. Specifically, Worachina talked about the potential for students in the area to be involved with the expanded entertainment, among other aspects of the plan.

Following the brief presentation, the proposal was opened up for questions. One attendee had asked about the plans for soundproofing since the build-

ing is mixed-use with residential units above.

Scanlon responded, indicating that the landlord is “aware and supportive of the request” and that renovations are going on with the residential units, meaning most tenants are currently out of the building.

“I can get the details from the landlord and from our architect — what’s been done — but I know that they’ll take steps and efforts as well to mitigate any emanation of sound — I mean, like I said, it’s going to be easy going — no big rock band or anything like that,” said Scanlon.

Another attendee had asked if the kitchen would be open later, with the expanded entertainment hours, to which Worachina explained that there would be something like a late-night menu.

In addition to questions, attendees had some kind words for the cafe that has been a staple in the neighborhood and even won the Mission Hill Main Street Business of the Year award back in 2018.

“This is the type of business that we want to support in the neighborhood. They have shown to be an incredible asset, an incredible operator, and just something that folks want to be a part of. So I would highly support this and ask other folks to do the same,” said one attendee.

“We’ve been very lucky and blessed with great businesses like Laughing Monk coming to the neighborhood. It really adds to the character of the neighborhood,” said another attendee.

While there was some support for the proposal, since this was the first presentation, a vote on the subject was not held and will be held at a future CAMH meeting.

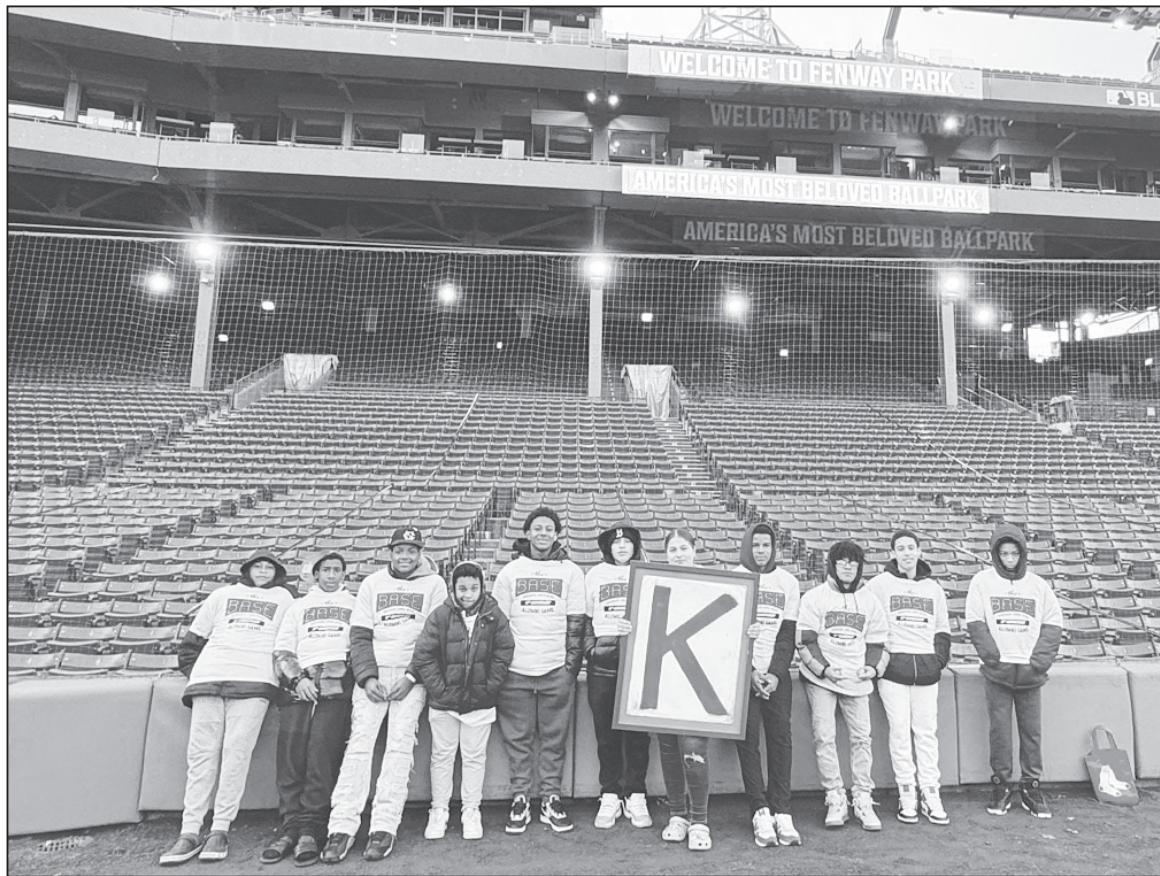


PHOTO COURTESY THE BASE

Shown (L to R): The BASE youth Luis Amgel of Hyde Park, Adrian Baez of Dorchester, Angel Gomez Gustavo of Roxbury, Jael De Leon of Holbrook, Carlos Francisco of Dorchester, Yowelfri Guerrero of Mission Hill, Yana Guerrero of Mission Hill, Justin Arias of Dorchester, Yager Velarde of Jamaica Plain, Yomar Cabrera of Chelsea and Jolty Diaz of the South End hold up a newly painted “K” sign that will be posted on the Green Monster by the Boston K Men next season.

Local youths paint iconic “K” signs at Fenway Park for the 2024 season with The BASE and Boston K Men

Mission Hill residents [Yowelfri Guerrero and Yana Guerrero] was part of special group of youth from The BASE who painted iconic “K” signs at Fenway Park with the Boston K Men. The newly painted “K” signs will be posted above the Green Monster by the K Men every time the Red Sox ace pitcher strikes out a batter next season. The “K” painting event was part of a holiday fundraiser the K Men are holding to support The BASE, selling limited edition t-shirts and hats with 100 percent of proceeds benefitting the Roxbury non-profit at www.bostonkmen.org.

The BASE is a Roxbury-based nonprofit that leverages the power and passion of sports to transform lives of urban youths,

providing pathways to higher education and careers for student-athletes. It operates a premier urban youth academy

that offers exceptional athletic training and competition combined with academic and career support.

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Hill Happenings

BY MAURICE 'MOSSY' MARTIN

I was dismayed last month upon the news of the passing of George Curran.

George, who was 70, sadly was the third Curran brother to die in a five-week span. George was an animal lover, and he often could be seen feeding the pigeons at the alleyway by Tremont Pizza. I spent many evenings at the Mission Hill Post shooting the breeze with him. George had a prodigious memory and I'd pick his brain about local occurrences going back to the '70s. George's input often assisted me in writing my column although some of his information I wisely didn't print.

George was kind. Many years ago at the Post a guy attempted to come in for a beer, but he never made it, having fallen headfirst down the stairs. The EMTs took the injured party to Brigham & Women's Hospital, followed by George, who sat in the waiting room for three hours. Upon his release with his head bandaged but intact, George escorted him out of the hospital and didn't leave him until he was safely in

his dwelling. That was typical George.

On our 'I Grew Up On Mission Hill' Facebook page, John Toner wrote about the great loss of the three Curran brothers, aptly posting: "Mission Hill and Pontiac Street will never be the same."

Accolades go to Laura Adams who received the "Building A Better Community Award" presented by the New England Baptist Hospital last month during a ceremony at the Tobin Center.

She is the Director of Senior Services at Roxbury Tenants of Harvard. Laura puts her heart into her job as evidenced by the many great events for our Mission Hill elders. I attended a jolly seniors event at the Tobin Center before Christmas and the food was great, thanks to the generosity of Matt Postal, owner of Lily's Gourmet Pasta and Mission Hill's newest restaurant, Cilantro Latin Kitchen.

We had our wonderful Mission Hill Post Christmas party at Victory Point Restaurant in Quincy, and it was nice that our City Councilor Sharon Durkan

celebrated with us. Councilor Durkan is a fine advocate for our veterans.

With the winter weather upon us there will be no Mission Hill Post meetings until March but any veteran interested in joining the Post may contact our Commander, Col. George Rollins, at 617-510-6598.

Lionel "Sky" King, a megastar on the athletic field and a great guy, died last month at age 89.

Sky lived in Mission Hill for years before recently moving to the Forbes Building in JP. He grew up in New York and Sky was a sensational 6-foot, 5-inch teenage pitcher at Samuel Gompers High School, and upon graduating in 1952, he was the first black pitcher signed by the New York Giants (currently the San Fran Giants).

The 1952 headlines of the New Amsterdam News read: "The Signing of the Brilliant Negro Pitcher is a Significant Move on the Integration Front."

After a year in Minor League ball, Sky was drafted into the U.S. Army. After serving for two years in the military, he

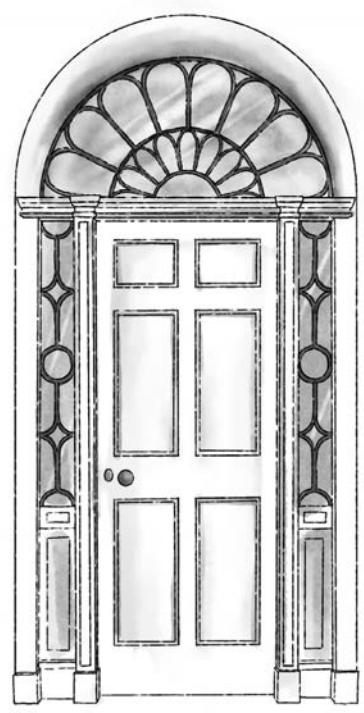
pitched professionally in Mexico and Canada for five years. 12 years ago I interviewed Sky on "The People's Platform," our local B.N.N. television station, and it was so much fun. Old-timers recall Sky during his basketball days in the '60s when he played with Roscoe Baker and other local greats in the Boston Basketball Park League at the Tobin Gym.

More recently, Sky hung out at the Brigham Circle Dunkin' (Donuts), where I often chatted with this gentle giant of a man. I miss you, Sky.

An enthusiastic crowd turned out for a fundraiser for Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley last month at the Butterfly Cafe (1420 Tremont St.). Pressley represents the 7th District, which includes Mission Hill.

Peter Krasinski, the gifted organist at Mission Church, scored an acting bit in the popular movie, "Holdovers," starring Paul Giamatti. Peter plays the role of a choir leader in the movie, set in 1970 at a New England boarding school. I go to the movies about every 20 years, and the last film I saw was "The Town" in 2009 because Mission Hill legend Frank Garvin was in that local flick. I saw 10 minutes of "Holdovers" on YouTube, and it looked interesting. As a youngster, there was nothing better than going to the 'Plaza' a movie theater at Roxbury Crossing in the late 1950s. The Saturday morning price was 25 cents, and it was a double-feature.

Maurice can be reached at mossymartin2@gmail.com.



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LEGAL NOTICE

ZONING HEARING

The Zoning Commission of the City of Boston hereby gives notice, in accordance with Chapter 665 of the Acts of 1956, as amended, that a virtual public hearing will be held on January 10, 2024, at 9:45 A.M., in connection with a petition for approval of the First Amendment to Development Plan for Planned Development Area No. 100, Parcel 25/Parcel 25B ("First Amendment"), filed by the Boston Redevelopment Authority d/b/a the Boston Planning & Development Agency.

The First Amendment will redevelop the under-utilized Parcel 25H site with construction of a new six (6) story, approximately 120,000 GSF building with up to ninety-four (94) affordable rental units and 33 above ground parking spaces, including eight (8) for the sole use of the Proposed Project residents and the remaining 25 spaces as ancillary parking for the adjacent Phase 1A Project, including residential, office and retail spaces.

This meeting will only be held virtually and not in person. You can participate in this meeting by going to https://bit.ly/BZC_Jan102024. Copies of the petitions and a map of the area involved may be obtained from the Zoning Commission electronically, and you may also submit written comments or questions to zoningcommission@boston.gov.

Interpreting services are available to communicate information at this hearing. If you require interpreting services, please contact the following: zoningcommission@boston.gov or 617-918-4308. The meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2024. Please request interpreting services no later than January 5, 2024.

For the Commission
Jeffrey M. Hampton
Executive Secretary
1/5/2024

What's Happening on Main Streets

SENIOR CELTICS EVENT

ANNUAL MH CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING



The New England Baptist Hospital hosted a Senior Celtics event with special guests Leon Powe of the Celtics 2008 championship team.



Laura Adams and Maurice 'Mossy' Martin attended the Annual Mission Hill Christmas Tree Lighting.





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Also attending was current Celtic member Neemias Queta.

Gazette Pet of the Week

by Sarah Carroll





'COOPER'

Is as loyal as he is handsome. This big boy is affectionate, housetrained, and looking for a person to call his own. This middle-aged guy prefers to be an only pet so that he can steal all of the attention for himself! He loves car rides, squeaky toys, and cuddles with his favorite people.



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FIRST NIGHT BOSTON PARADE DRAWS RESIDENTS FROM ALL COMMUNITIES

PHOTOS & STORY BY MARIANNE SALZA

Thousands of residents from throughout the Commonwealth gathered along Tremont Street to cheer for the First Night Boston Parade, on December 31. The display featured over 100 puppets from Boston Puppeteers Cooperative, brass bands, Chinese dragons, and crowds clad in festive, light-up, “2024” headbands.

“Everything is alright in life if you can make it to First Night Boston. I’m holding a light – and light represents hope,” said Sandy Joneck-Schiff, Winthrop resident. “It’s about celebrating Boston. All the communities get together. You come with family, friends, you meet people, go out to eat, and you’re jiving to the music.”

Joneck-Schiff has been attending First Night Boston since 1976, when she remembers fire pits being lit in Boston Common. For her, participating in the New Year’s Eve celebration marks the beginning of a prosperous and healthy new year.



Campbell Kaynor, of Melrose, playing the Irish tune, “Kid on the Mountain, on violin, in City Hall Plaza.



A dragon from the Greater Boston Chinese Cultural Association, making its way along Tremont Street.



Jordan Brown with Hatch, Betsy and Steve James, of Beacon Hill, Heather and Hayes Brown, 2-years-old.

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FIRST NIGHT BOSTON PARADE DRAWS RESIDENTS FROM ALL COMMUNITIES



Krisztian Gado and Courtney Chan, of Waltham.



Hot Tamale Brass Band performing in the First Night Boston Parade on the corner of Tremont and Winter streets.



Neil Nagpaul, MacKenzie and Isabell Moran, of Grafton.



Mayor Michelle Wu waving to families outside the Park Street Congregational Church on Tremont Street during the First Night Boston Parade on Dec. 31.



Viola Giangregorio, of Revere, and Paula DiMartino, of Winthrop.



Boxford and Belmont residents, Alana, Kat, and Stephen, enjoying the First Night Boston Parade.



Boxford and Belmont residents, Alana, Kat, and Stephen, enjoying the First Night Boston Parade.



Nel Blinman, of East Boston, Rew Denneno, of Downtown Boston, Kaleb McCauley, of Taunton, and Katelyn Norwood, former East Boston resident.

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Kevin W. Fitzgerald Park awarded level I Arboretum Accreditation by Arbnet Accreditation Program

Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services (Mission Hill NHS) is proud to announce that Kevin W. Fitzgerald “Fitz” Park in Mission Hill has been awarded a Level I Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for having achieved standards of professional practices and species count deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. Fitzgerald Park is also now recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta, a database of the world’s arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants.

The mission of the Kevin W. Fitzgerald Park Arboretum is to provide a place of recreation, education, and beauty in the heart of a densely populated urban neighborhood, fostering feelings of repose amidst the constant activity of life in the City of Boston. Many residents and other visitors love spending time in the park to reduce stress and feel a sense of peace. The arboretum also has a sustainability function, helping to regulate local climate conditions, improve air quality, and mitigate urban heat island effect. Arboretum plantings provide erosion and sediment control and assist in the volume and quality management of stormwater runoff.

Mission Hill NHS purchased the site with its One Brigham Circle development partners in 2000 and transformed the upper ledge into a 5.5-acre passive park with a fantastic vista of the Boston skyline. The privately-owned park was renamed “Kevin W. Fitzgerald Park” on November 18, 2006, in honor of the Mission Hill State Representative’s passionate leadership and unwavering commitment to the residents and community of Mission Hill throughout his tenure from 1974 to 2002. The renaming ceremony and dedication were organized by Mission Hill NHS and attended by over 1,000 of Fitzgerald’s family, friends, colleagues, in-



The Kevin W. Fitzgerald “Fitz” Park has been awarded a Level I Accreditation.

stitutional partners, and elected officials. In 2021, Mission Hill NHS, in coordination with the horticulturalists at Northeastern University and a cooperative co-op commitment, embarked on the process to designate the Kevin W. Fitzgerald Park an arboretum. “We are so excited to have the park designated with the status of an arboretum and appreciate all those who worked so hard to make it happen.” remarked John Fitzgerald, son of Representative Kevin W. Fitzgerald. “Over the years the park has only become a more beautiful place for our family, and countless other visitors, to relax and reflect, and we are happy that it continues to give back to the neighborhood in that way, just as Dad would have wanted.”

In collaboration with Chuck Doughty and Stephen Schneider, Director of Horticulture and

Grounds at Northeastern University, and various Northeastern Arboretum co-ops, Mission Hill NHS made key decisions on sustainable improvements to the park that would lead it to becoming an arboretum. Schneider emphasizes that “Open space that is maintained as an accredited arboretum often represents some of the most well-preserved biodiversity within the urban environment. Having individual trees and shrubs accounted for through labeling and cataloging efforts allows us to gain valuable knowledge about the natural world around us all while providing better quality air, water, and soil for our city. At a time when urban tree canopy is of the utmost importance in a changing climate, commitment to thoughtful, urban forestry management is critical. The success story of Fitzgerald Park on Mission Hill



should serve as a concrete example what direction the City of Boston’s many green spaces need to head in.”

Mission Hill NHS, residents, and Northeastern University are all excited to have this opportunity to expand the tree species count at the park, helping them to bring the park to its next level as a unique and important greenspace in the neighborhood and the City of Boston. As Mission Hill NHS board member and Mission Hill resident Ellen Moore noted, “Now our neighbors can learn about the importance of trees and sustainable landscaping while they relax and enjoy the beauty of the park. Our focus on adding native species and removing harmful invasives could become a model for gardeners all over the hill; and the birds will thank us!

The new accreditation was an-

nounced to community members by Mayor Wu at the Mission Hill Road Race on September 30, 2023, marking a new chapter in the Park’s history. Mission Hill NHS believes that with the accreditation will come new opportunities to continue to educate the community and spread awareness about the importance of green spaces in urban communities in the City of Boston.

Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services, the organization that co-owns the park is a community-based nonprofit housing and economic development organization committed to the revitalization and stabilization of the Mission Hill neighborhood. Mission Hill NHS believes that green spaces can improve the lives of residents in a variety of ways, in addition to providing a space for community building opportunities.

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Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill Gazette
2024 Publishing Calendar

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JANUARY

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EDITORIAL

The holidays are over -- now it's back to reality

The holiday season may have provided the usual respite for all of us from the strife and turbulence that has been assaulting us daily for the better part of the past decade, but despite the arrival of the New Year, we still have to face our same old problems.

The war in Ukraine continues to grind on, with Vladimir Putin targeting primarily civilians in cities far from the battlefield. The Israel-Hamas war likewise has no apparent end in sight, with civilians on both sides suffering greatly. In addition, with other Iranian-backed terrorist organizations threatening to expand the war not only against Israel, but also against the United States and world-wide commercial shipping, the potential for a much-larger conflict increases with each passing minute.

China, the other member of the Axis of Evil, continues to encroach its military bases and fleet on the sovereignty of other nations and threatens to launch an invasion of Taiwan at any time.

Scientists have confirmed that 2023 was off-the-charts for being the warmest year in the history of mankind, with the trend looming for an even-hotter 2024, promising to bring more devastating storms and climate change-related catastrophes in the year ahead.

Despite the strong economy, homelessness in the United States grew by 12 percent in the past year, with no imminent solution at any level of government. The increase in homelessness is a direct result of the lack of housing that has accumulated over the past decade to the point where it is estimated that the country is five million units short of what is needed to keep up with our growing population.

The situation at the border with Mexico represents a complete failure on the part of Congress and the White House, with the result that the situation for migrants is dire and American cities are being overwhelmed. Even Democratic governors and mayors are feeling besieged by the influx of immigrants for which our local and state governments are ill-equipped to handle.

The lack of meaningful gun legislation to stop the proliferation of deadly military-grade weapons all but assures that 2024 will see more mass shootings throughout the country.

Drug and alcohol abuse also shows no signs of abating and will continue to claim the lives of tens of thousands of Americans in the year ahead. American life expectancy continues to trail the rest of the industrialized world.

And last but not least, the political turmoil in the coming presidential year promises to be the most turbulent not only in our recent history, but since 1861 -- the start of the Civil War.

The prospects are overwhelming for a grim 2024. About all we can say is that we are living in an era that brings to mind the title from the Kevin Costner movie from the late 1980s -- No Way Out.

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Louijeune newly elected president of the Council

SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Boston City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune has been sworn in as the President of the Boston City Council, making her not only the third Black woman to hold this position, but also the first Haitian-American.

'It was an honor to nominate Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune as council president,' said District 1 Councilor Gabriella Coletta. 'I'm confident the Council will promote collaboration, governance, and accountability this legislative session.'

"I am excited for what's to come for our city, and believe that our collective work can transform our beloved city into one where every person feels honored, safe, housed, and healthy," said Louijeune. "I am hopeful, and I am grateful, because the only way we get through, the only way we thrive, the only way we push forward, is together."

"Councilor Louijeune has shown she knows how to build bridges to address issues that impact all Boston residents from tackling crucial city services to spearheading initiatives that create more affordable housing and uplift our most underserved communities' said District 4 Councilor Brian Worrell. 'I am proud to support her as our next Council President in my capacity as Council Vice President and look forward to partnering with her and all of our colleagues to deliver for our City.'

There is additional significance to the swearing in, as January 1st also celebrates Haitian Independence Day, the most important holiday in the Haitian community. On January 1, Haitians celebrate their role in history as the first free Black republic in the Western hemisphere and the only country in the world founded from a slave revolt. Boston is home to the third largest Haitian diaspora in the country.

As Louijeune was sworn in, the chambers filled with family, friends, and loved ones dawned in red and blue, celebrating both Haitian Independence Day and her history-making appointment.

In her first speech as council



Boston City Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune.

president, Louijeune outlined a vision for the city of Boston that addresses historic inequities while envisioning a future that welcomes everyone to the table. From addressing barriers to homeownership, to creating stronger models for waste collection in all of our neighborhoods, to ensuring that every BPS student has the tools they need to reach their full potential, and working with our unions to make sure that Boston is a city that continues to put people before profit.

Louijeune recognized and offered flowers to her predecessor, Ed Flynn, who served as president during her first term in office. She also welcomed new colleagues Enrique Pepen, John Fitzgerald, Henry Santana, and Ben Weber.

During Louijeune's first term, she met the moment with passion, work ethic, and deep love for Boston. She successfully led the council

through the tumultuous re-districting process, passing a map that met standards set by a federal court order. As Chair of the Committee on Civil Rights and Immigrant Advancement, she pushed for additions in the budget securing funds for fair housing testers, a municipal wage study, expanding the Office of Returning Citizens, increased housing support for vulnerable populations, and initiatives for affordable homeownership. She has been an advocate for legalizing beekeeping citywide, increasing the frequency of trash pickup for cleaner streets, and actively works to bridge gaps and distribute resources to every neighborhood.

As president, Louijeune is committed to building on her previous work, while uplifting the issues that her colleagues hold dearly.

"One thing to know about me is that I unequivocally reject any zero-sum mentality that suggests that for one group to succeed, another must lose," Louijeune stated.

The newly-sworn in council is a profound representation of the vibrancy and diversity that makes up Boston. Louijeune is hopeful that during her tenure, this body will embrace different perspectives and lived experiences, while also acting as a strong collective voice for the people of Boston.

The opinions expressed on these pages are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

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JPNC

Continued from page 1

Fast-forwarding to 2021, the T, now under a mandate by the state legislature to electrify its buses by 2040, revived the plan for a new Arborway garage as one of a number of such garages in the MBTA district to house its future electric bus fleet. In addition, the city said it no longer planned to abandon its pole yard, which it has converted over the years to a DPW storage facility for rock salt and sand. The change in the city's plans had the effect of reducing the originally-promised eight acres of community development land to less than six acres.

The Housing and Development Committee came before the council seeking its approval to send a letter to the MBTA demanding that the T: maintain its commitment to set aside the long-promised eight acres of community development space, but on which the T now is proposing to place a parking area for 150 employees; construct a wall between the garage and the community development property to buffer noise and light pollution; add so-called "green walls" in the project; and rework the proposed bus ramps that run through the community development property that may make meaningful development impossible.

Doherty however, pointed out that the letter only addresses issues related to the eight acres of community development land. He said that the letter ignores the fact that the surrounding neighborhood has changed since the original 2001 MOU. He suggested that the committee needs to focus on the effect of the construction, as well as the end result of the project, on nearby residents.

He particularly focused on the substantial increase in buses to be housed in the new garage, up to 200, compared to the much-lower number (about 125) in the original MOU.

"Sending this letter out makes us look like buffoons and gives up any bargaining chips we may have," said Doherty, "This garage is way too large for this piece of property.

"You don't start out by giving everything away," Doherty continued, referring to the 200 buses that now will be housed there, which is a much-larger number than contemplated in the original 2001 project. "This letter is foolish and does not

meet the needs of the people we represent because we do not understand the full effects of its construction."

Sue Czibulski, a member of the Arborway Garage Sub-Committee, acknowledged that the process with the MBTA "has not been ideal. It would have been better if they had come to us earlier in the process. But the MBTA has revised its plans after hearing from the community and significant improvements have been made to the design and the T has changed its design. This letter represents an overriding perspective that this is not perfect, but we want to get onboard with the MBTA and move this thing forward. We need a new facility and we need electric buses to improve bus service."

Freeman, while acknowledging the validity of Doherty's objections, supported sending the letter because, "We can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

O'Shea suggested that the letter should be reworked "to make it more clear."

Alan Ihrer, another member of the Arborway Garage Sub-committee who has been involved with the project since the 2001 MOU, noted that the increase to 200 buses had been mentioned to the JPNC almost two years ago. However, he noted that the MBTA's proposed ramps will trifurcate the eight-acres, which, he said, makes development all but impossible.

"Let's put this letter on hold so we can have a discussion among ourselves to better understand this project," concluded Doherty. "Don't do this letter. It is going to handcuff us. We've got a lot to lose if we put out something willy-nilly."

Mitchell reinforced Doherty's point-of-view, saying, "We need to step back and revisit this and look at this letter much more seriously. The T has wasted 20 years going back and forth with this."

The members, with Sommer-Kieta, the chair of the Housing and Development Committee in agreement, then voted to delay sending the letter at this time and referred the letter back to the Housing and Development Committee for revisions.

In other committee reports:

O'Shea presented the report from the Outreach Committee. She requested a vote from the full council to approve the posting of the "JPNC 101" slides to the JPNC's website, which O'Shea said would be a useful resource to the community. The

council unanimously approved the motion.

O'Shea suggested that her committee, perhaps in conjunction with other committees, should hold a "Zoning Reform Workshop/Series" in order to educate residents about the upcoming changes to the city's zoning ordinances.

Baron, the chair of the Zoning Committee, said there is a widespread lack of understanding about what the proposed changes will entail for residents not only for Jamaica Plain, but throughout the city. He also said that the city is rushing the process without involvement from the city's neighborhoods.

Sommer-Kieta noted that the biggest proposed changes involve Article 80, with the goal of fast-tracking affordable housing development throughout the city with less input from the affected communities.

O'Shea agreed to meet off-line with other committee members to discuss the issue.

Welch presented the report for the Public Service Committee in the absence of its chair, Michael Reiskind. She noted that the committee has been discussing the proposal for photo/video enforcement of red light violations.

"I've seen people flying through red lights without even a second thought," said Welch. "Do I think it's a good idea? I don't know, but it's a discussion we should all be a part of."

There also was a brief update on the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association's new contract, with members noting that the new contract for the first time allows the use of trained civilian flaggers at construction details if police or other designees are unable to fill the detail request.

Chaves presented the report from the Parks Committee. He said that the committee sent a survey to members of the JP community and that "a majority of respondents want to see the committee focus on green space preservation/protection and advocacy to improve/upgrade existing parks and playgrounds."

He said that one priority among respondents is to have local playgrounds be lighted in the evening in the winter hours. He said that the lights turn off at 4:00 p.m. in the winter, but that it would be preferable to have the lights stay on until 8:00 p.m., as is done in other countries in the wintertime.

He asked that the full committee approve sending a letter to the city's Parks and Rec Dept.

advocating this change. After a brief discussion among the members, the full committee voted unanimously to send the letter.

Chaves also provided an update on the new bike lanes, some of which have been completed and others that will be completed in the spring.

Baron presented the report of the Zoning Committee, which met twice in December regarding six applications for zoning relief. He asked for approval by the full JPNC of the Zoning Committee's recommendations in which the committee approved five of the applications and rejected one.

The five recommendations for approval were:

-- 11 Edge Hill Street; Purpose of Appeal: Renovate existing single-family home including expanding living area into basement for the owner's growing family. Variance for Floor Area Ratio Excessive;

-- 615-619 Centre Street, Purpose of Appeal: Operate Shay Butter Smoothies with take-out on the site of the former Pho Mu restaurant, with the proviso that the variance for take-out is for the current business and the business-owner only;

-- 75 McBride Street: Remove and replace first-floor rear porch; current porch is 3' x 5'; new porch is to be 11' x 14' with a roof. A variance is needed because the Side Yard setback is insufficient;

-- 77 Woodland Road, Purpose of Appeal: Confirm occupancy as single-family residence, renovate property, create two off-street parking spaces and storage area in basement, add second-floor addition. Variances are needed because the side yard and rear yard setbacks are insufficient; and.

-- 104 Child Street. Purpose of Appeal: Construct addition including a two-car garage and home office; the garage will connect to a second-floor workshop and storage area; add roof garden and solar panels to the roof. Variances are needed for: Extension of Non-Conforming Building; Side Yard Insufficient; Rear Yard Insufficient; Front Yard Insufficient; and Floor Area Ratio Excessive.

The full council endorsed all five of the Zoning Committee's favorable recommendations. The owners now must go before the city's Zoning Board of Appeals to obtain their variances.

Finally, the full council, after some discussion, agreed with the Zoning Committee's rejection of the application by the developers of 61 Montebello Road, who came before the Zoning Committee seeking to construct a multi-family building for which a number of variances were needed which, according to the agenda item, were as follows: "Forbidden Use: Multi-Family Residential; Zoning Violations: Floor Area Ratio Excessive, Building Height Excessive (Feet and # of Stories); Side Yard Insufficient."

Baron noted that there were objections from a neighbor pertaining to the height of a proposed addition to the existing building and that the Egleston Square Neighborhood Assoc. (ESNA) was opposed to the project.

The JPNC's negative recommendation is advisory only and the developer may go before the city ZBA to obtain the needed variances.

The council's next meeting will be January 23.

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CITY OFFICIALS TAKE OATH OF OFFICE



Mayor Michelle Wu administers the Oath of Office to members of the Boston City Council at Faneuil Hall on January 1.

MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY MIKE MEJIA

ADAMS HONORED



Laura Adams was recently honored with the "Building A Better Community" award. N.E.Baptist Hospital President David Passafaro (right) presented Laura with the award at the Tobin Community Center.



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