

**Charlestown Neighborhood Council
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2020**

CNC Chair, Tom Cunha, opened the February meeting of the Charlestown Neighborhood Council at 7:09PM at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Medford Street., Charlestown with 17 members present.

Report from Boston City Councilor Lydia Edwards:

Councilor Edwards has just started her new term. She has been assigned by Council President Janey to Chair the Committee on Government Operations, where she will have the ability to shape and rule policies by reviewing all policies coming out of the City of Boston, and to resume her position as Chair for the Committee on Housing and Community Development in the midst of Boston's development boom.

Reforming the Zoning Board of Appeals:

The ZBA currently gives out too many variances and Councilor Edwards thinks there may be conflicts of interest. There are seven (7) positions by law and Edwards feels there should be twenty (20). In addition to developers, architects, real estate, labor and community reps, we should see environmentalists, urban planners and someone who knows the zoning codes. Right now, with seven members, if one person recuses themselves, the work is done for the day. Points that Councilor Edwards wants to address:

1. Expand and diversify the pool of board members. We should increase membership and add missing perspectives to account for environment, fair housing, tenant and historic preservation concerns and members who are zoning experts.
2. Establish conflict of interest protections. If you're involved in R.E. business in Boston, you shouldn't be on the Zoning Board at the same time.
3. Create a cooling off period. We need a wait time between being on the ZBA and getting back to R.E. business in Boston.
4. Track variances by neighborhood. Way too many variances being given out.
5. Offer translation services. Some Bostonians can't appear before the board if they can't communicate in English.
6. Why all morning meetings? People have to take time off work. Instead of squeezing 80 cases in one day, increase the amount of meetings.
7. LLCs seeking variances should disclose financial interests and member owners. BPDA does it for development. It should be done for variances too.

Charter Reform:

The City Charter are rules that structure local city government, schools and budgets. Ours is a patchwork. Councilor Edwards wants it written down in one place with the ability to amend.

Kudos to Judy Evers:

Judy Evers fought to keep the post office in town. Lydia gives credit to her constant phone calls and getting the job done!

BHA (BUNKER HILL REDEVELOPMENT):

Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) will be filed by February 18th. Hopefully Councilor Edwards gets it beforehand. She plans to go through every single thing in that report.

Once filing happens the IAG will get to work.

They are planning for shovels in the ground this summer? Councilor asks is this realistic? We need to make sure people are not displaced. There should be enough parking on site.

Parking:

Time to reform parking in the Charlestown. Enforcement and timing does not match. Other neighborhoods are asking for meters. Two hour parking kills local businesses. They need cars to move and spots to turn over.

Money needs to be generated to pay for enforcement.

Harborfront Transportation:

Sea Planes will take off from the North End and land in East Boston. There will be no big traffic on the Boston side for this.

Edwards wants a ferry as mitigation for repairing the Sumner Tunnel.

Schools:

East Boston is going to 6th grade this fall. The Edwards School population will drop. East Boston High will be grades 7 – 12 in for the 2020-2021 school year. Charlestown High should follow.

The next question is how best will the Eddie's serve the community, more K-1 and K-2 spots?

Major Developments:

50 Terminal St. development plans

Little Mystic – working on mitigation (owned by BPDA and leased to Massport) for a pathway and greenway from Ryan Playground to the Oilies.

Flatley is looking to develop plots as well though not zoned for residential right now because of the DPA (Designated Port Area)

Traffic Safety Measures:

Stop signs

Cross walks

Lines and lanes for Washington Street construction. Lydia will keep on this and encourages these kinds of comments as to where and needs guidance from the neighborhood.

Tax Questions:

We'll have the person contact Lydia directly.

Proposed Tax Transfer Fee is for properties over \$2 million. 1% is on the buyer and 1% is on the seller and it would go toward a Neighborhood Trust. This program could raise close to \$2 million a year for affordable housing.

There are concerns for Navy Yard sales as there is already a fee in place. Councilor Edwards says there will be a list of exemptions for people already paying fees, owner occupancy, etc. There are many ideas.

Motion to open the floor for questions to Councilor Edwards **Approved**
No questions.

Motion to close the floor **Approved**

Edwards speaks about the YMCA

Currently there are ten (10) families at the Y and have been there for a while now. The YMCA is reassessing and transferring the supportive housing down town – Huntington Ave. In 3-4 years the Y plans to leave their location but NOT leave Charlestown. They are looking for growth. Edwards asks to have them reach out to Turn It Around, the Kennedy Center and Build BPS.

Council Members have questions/comments:

Tom Cunha speaks about the Y and says that the CNC negotiated the Y's presence years ago. There were at least ten (10) spots for women in recovery with children, five (5) had to be filled with Charlestown people in need of care. The LDA states that if the YMCA sells, it has to remain a public facility. They cannot just close and become Condos. Tom hears they may be looking down at Sullivan Square. At one point someone has to get in a room with them and let them know what their responsibility is. This is a killer for the community. Land is BPDA owned.

Council Chair Tom Cunha states that we need traffic help from COB. It is dismal at most and pits neighbor against neighbor. The City could step in and make a decision.

We will also need some kind of monitoring program should be in place when Rutherford Ave changes. Even Somerville dumps every street onto Broadway and into Sullivan Square. Let's make it more difficult for cut through traffic with crosswalks and stop signs.

Tera Lally reports that two weeks ago police blocked Rutherford Ave traffic so residents could get out of town. Lally also warns about the Transfer Funds and usage and flow with short term rentals. She'd like to see the tax structured where control stays in the neighborhood.

Lydia Edwards states that if the Transfer Funds can ONLY go into an Affordable Housing Trust. Funds cannot go anywhere else. They do not go into the General Fund.

Does the money go into the neighborhood or can it end up in another neighborhood?
The money goes into a Housing Trust marked as Affordable Housing money.

Suffolk Downs linkage – half stays in East Boston (It was discussed ahead of time).

Short term rental tax is allocated for homelessness, specifically youth homelessness.

Lisa Collins asks how long families have before they move out?
Edwards will get back to Collins on that.

Elaine Donovan reports that no one discussed the YMCA's plans with the McLaughlins. All the Board Members from the McLaughlin House are gone. At one time Charlestown had the highest overdose rate per capita – IN THE WHOLE COUNTRY. The Dennis McLaughlin House should stay in the Community.

JD Mangrum states that the little league fields in the No. End will not be available for the season. Charlestown is in line to pick up players from the No. End.

Karson Tager suggests adding someone from the Historical Society if the ZBA goes from 7 to 20. He also mentions that there are no walk in clinics in Charlestown and we have to go to Medford or Cambridge on a Sunday morning with sick children. No minute clinics in the City of Boston? City regulation? Edwards to look into it.

Lally states that we are losing doctors at MGH clinic.

Rich McCarthy states that when BHA Redevelopment has to relocate families, arrangement should be made to bring students back to their neighborhood for school. Councilor Edwards says the Kennedy Center is working on that. BHA is down to only thirty (30) families that have to leave the property.

Council member Barbara Babin mentions that it took her five (5) months to get a doctor's appointment. Doctors are bombarded. She also says a ferry program is needed down in the Navy Yard. Babin does not agree with the transfer tax. Taxes are too high as it is. She mentions the Harborwalk is a disgrace in the Navy Yard. You need a flashlight to walk at night. She asks where the money is for the Harborwalk?

Nancy Johnsen discusses Flatley area talks. There is no residential zoning there. Will that also fold into the plan for Plan Charlestown?

Edwards says to make "all the plans" talk to each other. Planning will have to involve Massport.

Thanks to Lydia and Gabriella for coming out to the CNC tonight.

Back to regular order of business:

Roll Call:

Present:

Tom Cunha
Barbara Babin
Mary Boucher
Peg Bradley
Lisa Collins
Elaine Donovan
J.D. Mangrum
Shelley Mogil
Eileen Ward
Tera Lally
Nancy Johnsen
Paul Hollien
Richard McCarthy
William Galvin
Scott Holmes
Tracy Shea
Karson Tager

Not Present:

Erin Sullivan
Ed Grace
Tim McKenna
Jean Wilson

Public Safety--Ed Grace emailed January reports to members.

Motion to accept January Minutes.

Approved

Election of Officers:

Anything pressing and the Executive Board would meet and report back to Council.

Tom Cunha, Chair
Peg Bradley, 1st Vice Chair
Karson Tager, 2nd Vice Chair
Tera Lally, Treasurer
Mary Boucher, Secretary

Approved

Committee Reports

The Plan—Nancy Johnsen reporting:

Nancy sent an email on the kickoff meeting at the WP on Jan. 30th. The meeting went well because people could walk around. There were a series of questions to share with residents:

1. Challenges of living in the town.

2. What to change.
3. What to keep.

Are there groups not being represented right now? What is the best way to reach out?

Nancy put up a link to a web page where people can present their comments or questions.

The BPDA wants to put together an Advisory Board and the deadline for applications is March 6th. Meetings will be put together on the ten (10) topics. Nancy will apply for the Advisory Board representing the Neighborhood Council.

Tera Lally participated, wrote notes and asked questions. She found it very helpful talking and listening to other residents that were there.

Tracy Shea seemed cautiously optimistic and said that Ted explained it quite well.

Tom Cunha gave Don Haska and his group the go ahead. Don will appear at the March meeting and give us a 10 minute update on his Battlefield work. All elected officials have been notified. Don's group has done a tremendous amount of work.

Tom Cunha will contact a Public Safety Official asking about the manpower assigned in Charlestown. He wants them to give info on all three shifts – how many assigned for police, fire and ambulance. Let's get some numbers and see if the manpower has been reduced.

Motion to add Master Plan to monthly report.

Approved

Spaulding Partnership Fund--Shelley Mogil reporting:

Shelley requests that members show up for presentations. Two out of three meetings MUST be attended. She is getting a digital version of all applications. We'll have a good two weeks to read.

Tom Cunha asks the Council how we can get more funds for grants. Can we get Flatley, Mass General, Hood to sponsor \$100,000 a year to keep this going?

He suggests we write letters and try to get the funds from the big developers – mitigation.

Nancy Johnsen adds that Ted Swartzberg and Ruggiero will come and talk to the CNC.

Motion to accept as report in progress.

Approved

Lower Regional Working Group—Meeting February 12th:

Proposed Bylaw Change—Peg Bradley reporting:

Proposed change to the election schedule from a two (2) year cycle to a three (3) year cycle:

Vote put forth to change election schedule 16 YES

1 OPPOSED

Approved

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Community Partnership Fund Presentations - Thursday, March 5th 7pm KofC
Public Safety Meeting – Wednesday, March 25th 6PM A-15 Police Station

Motion to adjourn: 8:51 pm

Approved