



Virtual Community Meeting: Wednesday July 1, 2020

Held online via Google Meet at 6pm EST

Attendees from SBNA

Joan Carragher, President
Gisela Griffith, Vice President
Lorraine Steele, Treasurer
Kathleen Enright, Clerk
Lee Steele, Chair, SBNA Architectural Review Committee
Adel Labib, Director
Claire Dargan, Director

Agenda:

Acknowledgments
New Board introductions
Updates on various new initiatives, by-laws, local developments, communications

Speakers

Jon Santiago, State Representative
Ed Flynn, Boston City Councilor
Shanice Pimentel, Neighborhood Liaison to the Mayor's Office

Questions and Answers

Joan Carragher, Saint Botolph Neighborhood Association (SBNA) President, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, noting SBNA is working towards physical meetings but for now virtual will have to do. She reminded everyone that the SBNA has a new board. Due to the pandemic, an online election was held during April 2020. On behalf of the new board, Joan expressed excitement about taking on these new roles. The agenda for the meeting was reviewed. Joan explained that for the question and answers section, there is a chat function for anyone to comment. Director Claire Dargan monitored the chat function to ensure that anyone who wanted to comment was included.

Acknowledgements

Joan recognized past president Scott Mustard, (unable to join this evening). Scott has been the president for the last 3 years. Due to people moving out of the neighborhood and other



situations, Scott has been carrying the ball completely by himself for the past several years. Heartfelt appreciation goes out to him. Scott continues to be on the board as director and past president, and once physically together again, the SBNA would like to formally recognize him.

Besides the four executive officers, Adel Labib and Claire Dargan have joined the Board. Both are long time residents and very active volunteers: Adel currently serves on the trash and safety teams and Claire Dargan is in charge of communications.

Joan gave a special thank you to a number of residents who have actively supported several key initiatives: Scott Mustard, Adel Labib, Claire Dargan, Didi Laird, Lee Steele and our new Tree Ambassadors, Wendy Hamilton, Dan D'heilly and Althea Wagman-Bolster.

Even though this has been a quiet time in the neighborhood socially, the new board has been pretty active, particularly in the areas of connectivity and revitalization. The board prioritized neighbors staying connected and helping each other. Joan reminded everyone that the SBNA has started a program called "Neighbors Helping Neighbors."

Joan acknowledged SBNA's robust online presence, including the enhanced website (www.stbotolph.org) and refreshed Facebook page. She encouraged everyone to visit the website often and give SBNA a "like" on the Facebook community page. Joan announced that the first edition of the SBNA monthly neighborhood email newsletter called *Neighborhood Matters*, was sent in June.

Executive Officers

President Joan Carragher is an empty nester who recently moved to the neighborhood, and immediately started to volunteer at the SBNA events.

VP Gisela Griffith has lived in the neighborhood for 18 years. As VP and head of the trash management task force, she urged anyone who wanted to "talk trash" to get in touch with her.

Clerk Kathie Enright has lived in the neighborhood for 10 years. She loves the neighborhood, with its friendly people and beautiful architecture. She confirmed that the role of the clerk is the note taker!

Treasurer Lorraine Steele has been involved in the SBNA for over 20 years and held various positions including VP, Treasurer and Events Chair. She is delighted to reprise the role of treasurer after a twenty year hiatus. She noted that she and Lee have been living in the neighborhood for over 35 years.

Trash Management Update from VP Gisela Griffith

Gisela has been picking up litter for the past several years and noted it has worsened over the last five years. She has worked very hard to get the city involved. Gisela's trash task force is



ready to distribute flyers and letters to all residents and management companies once pandemic restrictions are over. Joan encouraged volunteers to join the trash management team.

Bylaws Update from Clerk Kathie Enright

Kathie acknowledged that the lion's share of the bylaws revision was done by Lee Steele and Joan, with Claire's guidance. The board wanted to update the bylaws to reflect the welcoming and inclusive mission of the SBNA. The bylaws needed updating to "bring them into this century," and to recognize new communication and payment methods, and to align with actual board practice. Joan noted that all members will be able to review and vote on the changes at the next SBNA community meeting, and that the goal of the revisions was to make it easier for neighbors to join, whether they are long-term residents or new to the neighborhood, and whether they rent or own residential properties here.

Midtown Hotel Update from Lee Steele

Lee pointed out that the Midtown Hotel is the biggest redevelopment in the neighborhood. The land is owned by the First Church of Christ, Scientist ("Christian Science"). While it is still very early days, he reminded us all to become accustomed to the fact that something is going to happen there eventually. Lee noted that he and the SBNA will be very involved and will keep the neighborhood updated.

Invited Speakers

Joan recognized Jon Santiago as the first elected official to speak. She noted his recent Op Ed in the newspaper.

Jon Santiago thanked the SBNA for the invitation and began by reminding everyone of the whole host of South End Neighborhood groups coming together.

He believed that he and councilor Flynn are two elected officials that like to keep to the ground and engaging with neighbors. He was recently elected and soon will be wrapping up his first term in office. He returned to Boston ten years ago and lives on Tremont Street. When not in the legislature, Jon is working as an ER doctor in the emergency room at Boston Medical Center ("BMC"). As Joan noted, he agreed that he likes to communicate his opinions on what's going on in the community and what he observes at BMC in local media.

Jon remarked that it's been a really exciting time to be a legislator and to be an ER doctor. He finds that his experience as a doctor, a neighbor, a person of color in the State House has really resonated and amplified all the things he has focused on legislatively, including a \$1.5 billion education bill aimed at closing the education gap. Jon has also been active in promoting a bill restricting distracted drivers and speeders on smaller neighborhood streets where there have been a number of deaths. He noted that he ran for office for a whole host of reasons but one in particular was the opioid epidemic. He reiterated that because he lives in the neighborhood, and works in the emergency room, he sees the quality life issues firsthand.



He said he has been able to work closely with the city and the council to come up with the Mass and Cass (Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard) plan, recommending \$1 million be earmarked for this plan. Covid-19 has delayed the implementation of all these initiatives, but Jon pointed out that despite being a novice legislator he has been on the active task force to speed up government response. Despite the challenges brought on by Covid-19, remote voting has enabled bills that highlight vulnerable communities and keep our neighborhoods safe.

He voted on a bill that put a moratorium on rental evictions. He reminded everyone there is a primary on September 1, 2020.

A police accountability bill he has worked on will hopefully be out in July. Jon finished by introducing Cory Azmon, who works with him in the State House. They publish a newsletter they are happy to send to everyone who asks. Jon has felt very connected to our neighborhood over the last four months and looks forward to staying involved.

Joan recognised Councilor **Ed Flynn** who began by thanking the SBNA for including him. He also wanted to thank Jon Santiago for his hard work particularly in the legislature highlighting the needs of the local people. Ed remarked that he and Jon spend a lot of time working together, visiting a lot of public housing and organizing food drives.

Ed went on to explain that the SBNA community is represented by three councilors. Kim Janey represents most of the neighborhood, Ed a portion of it and we are also represented by Kenzie Bok. They all work closely together on neighborhood issues and all three can be contacted with constituent concerns.

Ed confirmed that he voted to approve the recently passed city operational budget. He felt it had large investments in affordable housing, public education, public health, food access and funding for immigrants. He noted that he represents the largest number of immigrants and the largest number of residents living in public housing of any district. He acknowledged that the city budget is good, but not perfect. He also acknowledged racism as an on-going problem in the city.

Illegal fireworks are also a major problem in the neighborhood, and throughout the city. Ed announced that the mayor just appointed a committee, and Ed hosted a meeting on it. Ed feels it's a quality of life, public and safety issue, and is having a devastating impact on residents. The companies who deliver fireworks were asked not to advertise in the state.

Ed said he has a staff of five people which include four women of color. He introduced Sophia Wang, who also attended this meeting.



Ed wanted to let everyone know that the city will be undergoing redistricting and expects that Jon's district may be affected. Ed reminded everyone this was another reason why the national census is so important as it impacts food stamps and public assistance allocation. After having several hearings on the false notice from the federal government about immigrants not being allowed to fill out the census Ed reiterated that all residents may fill out the census. Joan reminded everyone there is a link to it on our website.

Joan thanked Councilor Ed Flynn and recognized **Shanice Pimentel**, neighborhood representative in the Mayor's office.

Shanice thanked the SBNA for having her, and said she was already familiar with the neighborhood as she shadowed Yisell Guerrero last year at the neighborhood clean up. She went on to say that dealing with two pandemics (Covid-19 and systemic racism) she is truly proud of her office. She reported that as for the Covid-19 pandemic the numbers are falling and control is increasing. As for systemic racism issues, she announced that the recently formed Equity and Inclusion Cabinet is the first in Boston's history, with the goal of stemming systemic racism and embedded inequity by dismantling barriers. Shanice was excited about the appointment of the new chair Caroline Crockett. She is from the community, and is moving forward with a Racial Equity Fund, with a goal of raising \$10 million to invest in communities of color. Shanice pointed out that many community services will be affected by Covid-19, and acknowledged most will go online. For example, she explained that there would be no in-person abutters' meetings.

She noted that she is following the Midtown Hotel redevelopment plan and is committed to supporting all communications between all parties. Joan thanked Shanice for that update and opened the meeting to questions and answers.

Joan began this section with a question directed to Ed and Shanice about recurring concerns raised by SBNA members regarding improperly discarded trash and needles in the neighborhood: She asked whether SBNA should encourage residents to use the city line 311 to report these issues.

Ed and Shanice both agreed that 311 was the most appropriate avenue, and both encouraged residents to obtain the reference number, and email the reports to them and include the reference number.

Trash issue question from resident David Reed

David explained there are two dumpsters behind his building. He noted that increasingly, people are digging through trash and taking off their clothes, and the situation has deteriorated lately. He pointed out that it is really hard to lock the dumpsters. Shanice promised to look into it and informed the meeting that Back Bay and Fenway have a group that meets to discuss these very



issues. (Pine Street Inn management and Boston Police Department representatives attend). She acknowledged the issues of substance abuse and homelessness are complex, but these groups

have been very productive, and she encouraged SBNA to participate. Shanice will put SBNA in touch with this group and Joan confirmed SBNA will get the information up on the website so that neighbors can get involved. Jon Santiago added that as a neighbor living with similar issues, he found having walk arounds with neighbors has produced some solutions as well.

End of Follen needles and bedding issue from resident Leslie Lipschitz

Leslie asked what can be done about the cardboard boxes, needles and various personal items left at the entrance to the Southwest Corridor Park at the end of Follen. Jon Santiago confirmed that he had met with Scott Mustard and Officer Litto and walked that area to figure out what can be done. A suggestion of installing needle kiosks was met with split opinions. Claire noted that a few residents had contacted 311, and the city responded very quickly.

Inclusiveness question from Dayron Miles

Dayron sought clarification on inclusiveness particularly in the bylaws . Having recently moved from Dallas, he shared that he has experienced micro-aggressive behavior within the neighborhood. Discussions on needles and the problems for systemic racism and homelessness needs to include understanding about the underlying problems. Joan and Claire reiterated that SBNA can't be successful unless we are thoughtful about our processes, and language, and strive to be inclusive and transparent. Claire encouraged Dayron to join the SBNA team.

Snow removal at intersection question

A question was asked about snow removal at the intersections during heavy winter storms. Shanice promised to follow up later in the year. Kathie Enright asked for the MBTA to do their part outside their building at the intersection of West Newton and the Southwest Corridor Park.

Loose bricks on Cumberland Sidewalk from Marsha Cohen

Marsha explained that the temporary solutions that the city provides don't address the underlying challenge of the tree roots displacing the bricks. She asked if anyone had any permanent solutions. Ed Flynn suggested a meeting with the mayor and public works to get some recommendations from the parks commission. He confirmed that it was a problem citywide. Joan inquired once Covid-19 was over that would it be possible to look into this ? Ed recommended contacting Chris Osgood, and including Shanice..



Extending Street Cleaning from Lorraine Steele

Lorraine asked to extend the street cleaning as the leaves on the trees don't fall until the end of December. Ed Flynn offered to look into it. He confirmed that a written request to him and Chris Osgood providing some good background would help. Shanice reminded everyone to keep the Mayor's office in the loop by including her in all correspondence.

Pine Trees on SWCP question from Kate Howerton

Kate raised the issue of the pine trees at the end of Durham on the Southwest Corridor Park ("SWCP"). She noted that they provide a lot of coverage which encourages people to loiter there. The branches also need pruning. Lorraine confirmed this was DCR property. It's up to DCR to maintain those trees. Kate was encouraged to write a description to DCR and include Jon so he can follow up with it. Kate also brought up the after hours activities on the Southwest Corridor. Lorraine Steele offered a suggestion which was agreed upon to form a subcommittee on activities on the corridor and Jon will follow up.

Kate mentioned a friend living in a San Francisco neighborhood solved similar problems by hiring a person to patrol the area.

Fireworks issue

Illegal fireworks was raised, and recognised as a nationwide challenge. Joan asked that elected officials update the SBNA board with possible solutions and recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 7.25pm.