

East Berkeley Neighborhood Association General Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2022

Location: Zoom

Time: 6:30 PM

Attendance:

Executive Board Members:

- Leslie Fine, President
- Stuart Rose, Treasurer
- Chris Johnson, Secretary
- John Connelly
- Paul Lewis
- Sabrina Sanz
- Sarah Hutt

Members of the Press:

- None

Government Representatives:

- Stefanie Seskin, Active Transportation Director, City of Boston
- Captain Sweeney, BPD
- Sargent Matthew Hogardt, BPD
- Kim Crucoli, Neighborhood Liaison
- Sofia Wang, Policy Director for Councilor Ed Flynn
- Luigi Natale, Legislative Aide for Rep. Michlewitz' office

Agenda

- **Welcome, announcements**
 - Leslie welcomed folks to the meeting and introduced the Executive Board.
 - Meetings through the end of the year will remain on Zoom, but beginning next year, we will plan to begin hybrid meetings, in person and on Zoom.
 - There will be a fundraiser for State Representative John Santiago at the SOWA Power Station tomorrow, Wednesday, September 14 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM.
- **Safety and Security Update - BPD neighborhood report & Q+A**
 - Crime is down 4% compared to this time last year.
 - Captain Sweeney provided detailed crime statistics and updates on various crimes.

- Note: Crime statistics are available on BPDNews.com.
- Sargent Hogardt provided some additional crime statistics specific to the East Berkeley neighborhood.
 - There has been a slight uptick in crime in our neighborhood due to robberies (3 this year compared to none last year) and larcenies (13 this year compared to 11 last year). Four of these are larcenies due to a juvenile flash mob. These juveniles were caught after their last larceny. Larcenies are also up due to bicycle thefts, including Blue Bikes.
- Sargent Hogardt gave an update regarding the bike mob that assaulted a driver on Tremont Street last month on August 16. The assault victim is doing okay, and the individual who assaulted him has been identified and is scheduled to appear in court.
- A member questioned the police presence in Peters Park over the summer. She said the officer sits in his vehicle facing the basketball court. She asked if their methodology could be less intimidating in the future.
- Another member asked about the growing number of people hanging around Tatte Bakery and CVS on Harrison Ave. Captain Sweeney said if anyone feels intimidated, they can call 911.
 - Sargent Hogardt reminded us that people are allowed to be on the sidewalks and panhandling is not a crime unless it is aggressive. BPD has an outreach department that can take the lead if needed.
 - Also, the Good Neighbor line at Pine Street Inn can be called and they can send out the street outreach team if intervention is needed.
- **Underground at Ink Block - Update**
 - Ted Tye from National Development gave an update on the programs at Underground at Ink Block.
 - Ink Block originally committed to up to 24 community events per year, but the number of events slowed during The Pandemic.
 - Demand for community events is beginning to pick up.
 - Ink Block is currently working out plans for the types of events they want to have at Underground going forward. They are working with City of Boston Licensing Board, Mass DOT, and BPD.
 - Working out capacity limitations, sanitary facilities, areas where events will be staged, hours, etc.
 - This is State of Mass property, so both the state police and Boston Licensing Board need to be involved.
 - They already have 23 events pending for 2023.
 - This is a community resource open to all, but events need to be safe and sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood.
 - Note: The Bass River borders Underground on the eastern side.
 - Events with alcohol have not been allowed at Underground. Problems arose during a recent event that was 1) advertised as BYOB and 2) allowed too many people (over capacity).

- **Peters Park Update - including information on how EBNA's donation to the park was used for landscaping**
 - Mary Chowdhury from Friends of Peters Park (FoPP) gave an update on Peters Park.
 - She thanked EBNA for its donation to the landscaping, which was used for the planting beds at the Washington Street entrance to the park across from Laconia Lofts.
 - Fall clean-up is scheduled for Saturday October 1. (Raid date - Sunday, October 2)
 - At that time they will swap out the seasonal plants for fall chrysanthemums.
 - The dog Halloween costume parade will be on Saturday, October 29. The event was very popular last year.
 - Mary noted that the city only provides mowing and hardscape maintenance for the park. FoPP raises funds for additional park maintenance. Dog run maintenance is \$12 thousand per year in addition to renewal of the dog run approximately every ten years.

- **Business Spotlight: South End Frames (105 East Berkeley St.)**
 - Robbie Donahoe introduced himself. He is the new owner of South End Frames.
 - Robbie is a Massachusetts native and currently lives in Beacon Hill.
 - He's working to update the store front and replace the banner signs with a blade sign above the door as well as other improvements to the interior of the store including a gallery wall. He also plans to increase the store's social media presence to better connect in the community.
 - South End Frames will be hosting an end-of season get together on Thursday, September 15 from five to nine.

- **Harrison Ave. Redesign Update**
 - Stefanie Seskin, Active Director of the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) shared information on the Harrison Ave. Redesign.
 - Updates in the final design include:
 - Standardizing the streetlights along the street to match lights in the city core
 - Adding pedestrian protection islands, like those being installed on Tremont Street, removing the median, and reallocating that space
 - Pedestrian islands are a big enhancement to pedestrian safety. They minimize the number of lanes pedestrians have to cross at one time, and they prevent cars from parking in the cross walks.
 - Creates a formal turn lane and a passing lane to address the queueing issues at the Whole Foods drive way
 - formalize a turn lane and a lane to pass

- Include reconstruction of the sidewalks between Traveler Street and East Berkeley Street (on the western side of Harrison Ave., behind Ming's Market and the Tufts parking lot) to match the rest of Harrison Ave. This was not part of the original redesign.
 - These sidewalks will be the same width as the rest of the redesign and the walking surface will be improved.
- BTD is still working out parking meter placement and the types of parking meters - length of time, drop off zones, etc.
- Regarding the time line for the project:
 - BTD is negotiating the scope of work with the design firm. BTD feels the design is mostly finished and revisions can be completed quickly. The design firm has indicated that they need up to a year to complete the revisions.
 - BTD hopes to have design wrapped up by spring so it can be sent out to bid. (In earlier conversation, Stefanie indicated that bids take up to three months to be returned.)
 - After bids are returned and once a contractor is selected, the start date will depend on the contractor's timing. BTD might try to combine this with another contract if possible.