

# the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

January 2013

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## ANC News

### NOTES FROM THE DEC. 11 MEETING

#### **Proposed Restaurant at 1678 Mass. Ave.**

Attorney Jim Rafferty, of Adams & Rafferty, introduced client Nancy Itjaruek and her business partner Stella Pam, who seek to open a 76-seat Thai and sushi restaurant at 1678 Mass. Ave. The proposed new restaurant requires a special permit from the Cambridge Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) to reduce the parking requirement.

Ms. Itjaruek is also the owner of Spice, a Thai restaurant at 24 Holyoke St. that has operated in Harvard Square for over a decade. She described the proposed new Mass. Ave. restaurant as student-friendly with reasonably priced meals.

The restaurant would be open for lunch and dinner, with dinner entrees in the range of \$12-\$14. In addition to pad thai, curry, and other spicy foods, the restaurant will offer a sushi menu and eventually serve beer and wine.

"I like healthy food and I want my customers to have access to healthy food as well," Ms. Itjaruek stated. "We hope to fit in and contribute to the nearby dining operations."

**Q:** What was at 1678 Mass. Ave. previously?

**A:** In the last decade, 1678 Mass. Ave. has been occupied by the Harvard University Employees Credit Union, the Harvard Coop bookstore, and was used for a political campaign. An attempt to open a Dunkin Donuts at the location in March 2012, which required a fast food zoning variance from the BZA (not granted), was strongly opposed by many neighbors.

**Q:** Will the new restaurant be warm and inviting, or more like fast food?

**A:** It will have a restaurant-like atmosphere.

**Q:** How will you handle trash disposal?

**A:** Because the footprint of the building occupies the entire lot, there isn't space for a dumpster at the rear (Bowdoin St.). We met with the health inspector on this issue and will build a secured trash room at the back of the space. Weekday mornings, trash will be brought to the front and picked up at the curb.

**Q:** Will Spice in Harvard Square stay open?

**A:** Yes, for now. However, the landlord may not extend the lease at that location.

### NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



**JANUARY 8 - 7:30 PM**

Maud Morgan Arts  
20A Sacramento Street  
2D Studio, 2nd Floor

#### **Agenda**

- **Proposed Traffic Calming Measures for Roseland Street**
- **Additional items TBA**

**Q:** Do you know the percentage of people who drive to eat at Spice?

**A:** 60-70 percent of customers are students who walk in.

**Q:** Are you prepared to run two restaurants at once?

**A:** Yes. At the new restaurant, I will work with Stella Pam. I have another partner at Spice.

Carol Weinhaus, long-time Agassiz resident and ANC member, stated, "I think this non-chain restaurant use at 1678 Mass. Ave. is attractive; and I feel Spice restaurant in Harvard Square is very homey."

The BZA will review the case (#10367) on Thursday, December 20, determining, among other criteria, the restaurant's compatibility with surrounding uses and accessibility to public transit.

### **Mass. Ave. Master Plan Finalized**

The Mass. Ave. Master Plan, a two-year collaborative effort between residents of Agassiz and Neighborhood 9, Cambridge city staff, and consultants to improve the streetscape between Harvard and Porter Squares is entering completion. Community members and city staff were invited to an open house on Thursday, December, 13 from 5:00-7:00 PM in the Lesley University Hall lobby. Consultants from Halvorson Design Partnership presented the plan.

As stated by the city: "[the] Mass. Ave. Master Plan includes recommendations and standards to be used in reconstructing sidewalks, planting trees, regulating parking/loading, and implementing elements to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. Standards for street furniture and new lighting are also included. The plan also aims to strengthen [the street and] neighborhood identity, culture and the retail environment."

In 2013, the city plans to create a demonstration

block from Shepard to Garfield on the westerly side. The working drawings for this portion of Mass. Ave. are nearly complete and construction is expected to begin this summer.

In connection with this, the community team working on the plan is writing a grant to the Cambridge Agassiz Harvard Fund, (established resulting from negotiations between the Agassiz community and Harvard University around extensive building in the Agassiz neighborhood). The goal of the grant is to enhance the demonstration block with a historic reference marker and a work of art.

**Q:** Is the concrete island down the center of Mass. Ave. staying?

**A:** As Mass. Ave. is a state highway, the city reports that they're unable to change the roadway. There may be plantings added in the center island, at the far ends near Harvard Law School and Lesley University.


**Q:** Will traffic-calming measures be installed on Mass. Ave.?

**A:** The crosswalks will be improved with "bump-outs," making it easier for pedestrians to cross by decreasing the distance from sidewalk to sidewalk.


View a draft of the Mass. Ave. Master Plan online at: <http://bit.ly/master-plan-draft-2012>.

### **Plans for Beacon St. Reconstruction**

Hayes Morrison, Director of Transportation



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and Infrastructure for the City of Somerville, presented plans for the reconstruction of Beacon St. from Oxford to Hampshire (Cambridge city line.) This project, funded by the federal government, has been in the works since 1999.

“One of Somerville’s goals is to better accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic,” stated Ms. Morrison. “There’s been a huge increase in bicycle traffic so that Beacon Street is now the #1 most traveled route in the Boston area for cyclists between Arlington and Cambridge. At this time, the roadway is about 25% designed.”

Ms. Morrison, who works closely with the Cambridge Department of Public Works and Community Development, admitted that Somerville’s plan has been viewed as controversial because it would remove a significant amount of parking on either the right or left side of Beacon St. to install a cycle track (a travel lane reserved for bikes.) The cycle track would be similar to the one on Vassar St. near Kendall Square.

Some Council members expressed concern that removing parking spaces from Beacon will increase parking pressure in the neighborhood. Ms. Morrison responded by explaining that Somerville is considering how to recreate some of the lost spaces. Additionally, Beacon St. will be converted to metered parking, although residents will still be able to park for free.

**Q:** Will you address the issue of traffic convergence at Oxford, Beacon St., Roseland Ave. and Somerville Ave.?

**A:** Yes. We’re considering how to improve that intersection.

**Q:** Will there be a new survey of cyclists using Beacon St.?

**A:** We surveyed bikes in spring and fall 2009/2010/2011. The commute pattern shows that there are about 300 bike trips per hour.

**Q:** Will Somerville install a new traffic signal somewhere on Beacon St. to help slow vehicles?

**A:** We are evaluating traffic calming measures, although, at the moment, there’s no plan for a traffic signal. We’re looking into mid-block pedestrian crossings.

Ms. Morrison agreed to return and report back to the Council, particularly addressing improvements for the Oxford/Beacon/Roseland/Somerville intersection.

View the proposed plans online at:  
[www.somervillema.gov/beaconstreet](http://www.somervillema.gov/beaconstreet).



## Agassiz Baldwin Children’s Programs

### SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 17TH ANNUAL HIP HOP FESTIVAL

The 17th Annual Hip Hop Festival, a showcase of hip hop dance and music, features talented young performers from all over Cambridge.



Held on stage at the Maria L. Baldwin School, this wildly popular event has included MC Naheem Garcia, The FloorLords, OrigiNation and more! Stay tuned for this year’s line-up.

**What:** 17th Annual Hip Hop Festival

**When:** Thursday, February 21,  
2:00-3:00 PM

**Where:** Baldwin School Stage (basement level), 28 Sacramento Street

**Tickets:** \$2 per person, \$5 per family;  
Agassiz Baldwin Children’s  
Program families free;  
Afterschool programs free,  
but please call ahead

View photos from the 2012 event:  
<http://bit.ly/hip-hop-fest-2012>.

# Community Calendar

## January 2013

Tuesday, January 8	7:30-9:00 PM	ANC Meeting, see page 1 for agenda Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St., 2D Studio All are welcome
Wednesday, January 16	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St., 2nd Floor Public welcome
Thursday, January 21		Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, ABC School Programs and office closed

The Whistler is published monthly September - June by the Agassiz Baldwin Community, distribution 2,000. Call (617) 349-6287 to receive by mail or e-mail. The newsletter is also posted each month online at [www.agassiz.org](http://www.agassiz.org). Items of interest to the neighborhood may be submitted for consideration no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date.

## The Whistler January 2013



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