

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

November 2017

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ANC News

NOTES FROM THE OCT. 10 MEETING

Greek Corner Restaurant seeks to open at 102 Oxford St

The owners of the Greek Corner Restaurant, already with one location at 2366 Mass. Ave. in Cambridge, joined ANC's meeting on October 10 to discuss the possibility of opening a new location on Oxford Street. Themy Boretos the restaurant's owner and Cambridge resident of thirty years and his son Nick have yet to apply for the property and were advised by their attorney Vincent Panico, who also attended the meeting, to get community feedback before doing so. According to the owners, the new location would operate from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM seven days a week, mostly targeting take-out orders and deliveries with approximately 24 seats for in-restaurant service.

Questions and Comments

One concern raised by Willie Bloomstein, long-time Agassiz resident and neighborhood advocate, was that of traffic. He pointed out that additional traffic from delivery vehicles or patrons picking

up food would congest the already busy street, especially during drop off and pick up times at the nearby Maria L. Baldwin School.



Another concern was the smells the restaurant might emit. Mr. Bloomstein, who lives on Crescent St. near the proposed new location, asked how the owners plan to address parking, odor, and other issues. The younger Mr. Boretos (Nick) informed the council that, upon acquiring the location, they would install a new exhaust system to "take care of any bothersome smells." One resident asked how noisy that system would be, and the owners stated that it wouldn't be too noticeable, "[It would be] just like the one you have in your kitchen."

Some residents expressed excitement at having a new restaurant in the neighborhood, especially after the closing of Oxford Spa. Julie Baine, Founder and Creative Director of Pod, a boutique on the corner of Oxford and Sacramento Sts., spoke to that, mentioning the needs of the

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



Nov. 14, 7:30-9:00 PM
Maud Morgan Arts,
20A Sacramento Street

Agenda

- Local **paving with impermeable materials** and the **climate crisis**
- Learn about **Envision Cambridge**
- Additional items TBD

student community in the area. While she thought a 10:00 PM closing time might be too late for the neighborhood, she noted the potential to tweak Greek Corner’s service to match Agassiz’s particular needs.

To specifically fill the void left behind by Oxford Spa, longtime resident and ANC member Fred Meyer suggested that the Greek Corner Restaurant have earlier hours to serve coffee and breakfast food. Mr. Boretos emphasized that he and his father are flexible on the restaurant’s hours and services.

“We really think we’re good at targeting the market of the people living in the area,” he said, speaking to the merits of his family’s restaurants. In addition to the Greek Corner, they also own Arlington Restaurant & Diner at 134 Mass. Ave. “We’ve been in Cambridge for many years, and our food is really good.”

When a resident asked what drew them to Agassiz, Mr. Boretos said that they just wanted to “give some life and character to the neighborhood.”

Next Steps

For their next steps, the Boretos family and their attorney said they’d be looking for more community feedback before moving forward with an application. ANC members suggested the owners take a survey in the neighborhood to get a more accurate understanding of how residents feel and what they want from a new restaurant. Mr. Boretos said if anyone had further inquiries or comments and wanted to get in touch, they could call the Greek Corner Restaurant at (617) 661-5655.

Update: October 2017

On October 23rd, Mr. Panico contacted Phoebe Sinclair with the following message:

“Mr. Bloomstein has a petition signed by 36 neighbors in opposition to Mr. Boretos’s proposal. In view of these developments,

Mr. Boretos decided to abandon his effort to open a restaurant on Oxford St.”

He expressed his gratitude to Ms. Sinclair and ANC for the opportunity to speak with the community.

Update on Affordable Housing Proposal at 1791 Mass. Ave.

Sean Hope and Jason Korb, the developers working to build affordable housing at 1791 Massachusetts Avenue and 1 and 2 Frost Terrace, presented updates to their plans to ANC. Since their last visit, Mr. Hope and Mr. Korb and their team have made a number of changes in response to feedback gathered from abutters and others in the neighborhood. Colleague Jennifer Tamarkin joined them to assist with collecting community responses.

Design Updates

Recent modifications included restoring the mansard roof on the building at 1791 Mass. Ave. to maintain the historical integrity of the project. Mr.



Mr. Korb highlighted his background in historic preservation as Principal of Capstone Communities, a Newton-based developer of market rate, mixed income, affordable and historic apartment communities.

The developers also included updates to their plan to keep green space on the property. They intend to make efforts to preserve the mature trees and have brought on a landscape architect and an arborist to help meet this goal without making any units inaccessible. Another challenge is that the current design does not include on-site parking, either surface or underground.

Despite the challenges, Mr. Korb emphasized the importance of the development, particularly related to the specific type of affordable housing it would provide. The 22,000 square foot 40-unit building will include 13 one-bedroom, 14 two-bedroom, and 13 three-bedroom units

intended to house area low and middle-income families.

“This project is serving not only a need for affordable housing but also family-friendly affordable housing,” he said. “We’re providing high quality housing for people who really need it.”

Mr. Korb and Mr. Hope both have personal ties to the Agassiz Neighborhood. Mr. Korb’s father’s family home is on Oxford Street, and Mr. Hope is a 3rd generation Cambridge resident who attended the former Agassiz School (now the Maria L. Baldwin School).

Community Response

Residents shared concerns, ideas, and suggestions on a number of issues, including parking, the size of the building, and outdoor green space.

Stephen Diamond, former ANC Meeting Chair and retired architect, was prepared with four main issues that he believed needed addressing by the developers. These included varying housing types, adequate parking, usable open space for children and adults, and the preservation of historic character.

While Mr. Diamond thought Mr. Hope and Mr. Korb succeeded on most of these points, he believed there should be no compromise on parking and made the case for an underground lot.

“I’m requesting that the developers provide sufficient parking for the people living there,” he said. “Some portion of them will have cars, and you have to provide parking for them.”

One resident described the lack of onsite parking as “completely irresponsible.”

“People with lower incomes still have cars,” the resident continued. “Even if only half the tenants have cars, that’s still 20 extra cars [that need to park] in the neighborhood.”

“You ought to consider relocating those two historic buildings in the back,” suggested one

resident. “That would allow you to have a little more land for open space and also for a parking solution.”

“What these gentlemen have designed is simply too big for this property,” stated a Newport Rd. resident. “We want to preserve our neighborhood . . . what you have proposed would detract from that. I would just like our neighbors to think about the scale of what they’re proposing. It’s simply too large for this particular site.”

“We haven’t given up on parking,” Mr. Hope responded. “We’re continuously looking for options.” In the meantime, he added, they’re also exploring deals and incentives for other forms of transportation, such as bikes and public transit.

The developers estimate that about only half the building’s residents would have cars. Numbers to support this estimate are based on other similar affordable housing projects and neighborhood data. The developers will make their sources available to the public on their website.

“This a very rare, unique opportunity,” Mr. Hope said, speaking to the cost of land, permits and zoning, and how difficult it is for those factors to work in favor of affordable housing.

Next Steps

After presenting to ANC, Mr. Korb and Mr. Hope will make a similar presentation to the Porter Square Neighborhood Association at their October 19th meeting. Following that, they will take their plan to the zoning board in November 2017.

Learn More

Learn more online at www.1791massave.com

The current design can be found at:
www.1791massave.com/plans-and-resources

Contact the developers at info@1791massave.com with any questions or comments.

New Harvard Square Re-Zoning Petition

Peter Kroon, Neighborhood 9 resident, shared his presentation on Harvard Square's current zoning requirements, pointing out ways that they could be updated. In his slideshow, Mr. Kroon noted that more than \$300 million worth of Harvard Square real estate will likely change hands in less than four years, and that this portends rapid and unprecedented commercial development which could lead to issues which he said the zoning ordinance did not anticipate when it was last updated back in 2002.

As Mr. Kroon pointed out in his presentation, this recent trend could displace many stores, restaurants, services and small businesses, disrupt sidewalk traffic patterns and raise rents and real estate taxes, which would also impact tenants. He noted that "there is a high risk that the only tenants that will be able to afford the higher occupancy costs will be formula business chain stores."

To address this concern and maintain Harvard Square's local business and residential community, Mr. Kroon described 8 areas or "planks" for residents to consider. These are:

1. Set an explicit policy goal to preserve and enhance the retail ecosystem
2. Revamp the Harvard Square Advisory Committee
3. Revamp Harvard Square Improvement Fund
4. Require formula stores to adapt their signage and decor
5. Require 50% small store spaces
6. Limit non-retail storefronts to preserve street vitality
7. Require give-back if gross-floor-area (GFA) above 60 feet is approved
8. Allow creative use of below-grade spaces to foster retail density

In his time at the meeting, Mr. Kroon wasn't able to expand on each of these planks, so he focused on certain ones that required more explanation, for example improving the Harvard Square Advisory Committee.

In his presentation, Mr. Kroon suggested that the Committee should expand its mandate to include community input and add a second seat for an owner of a service or retail businesses in Harvard Square. He also suggested that these members would have a limit of two three-year terms and that the committee rotate their chairperson annually.

Mr. Kroon proposed that if developers proposed to build a structure in Harvard Square that would create GFA above 60' it would require a contribution or "give back" to the community, such as housing.

His other points included transparency in the spending decisions by the Harvard Square Improvement Fund, requiring all formula stores (or chain stores) to adapt their storefronts to "amplify and strengthen the established historical character of the area," and preserve affordable small store spaces.

He suggested requiring larger buildings to designate half their frontage to small storefronts, defined as 1,250 square feet or less. As an example of misused storefront space, Mr. Kroon indicated Webster Bank on Brattle St. with a large plaza in front. He noted that area could be better used as a restaurant with outdoor seating, whereas now it's "dead as a doornail." To prevent similar outcomes in the future, he wrote that offices like banks or administrative spaces should be limited to no more than 25 linear feet of store frontage.

Finally, Mr. Kroon proposed that the new zoning requirements allow creative use of below-grade spaces to foster retail density. He used Urban Outfitter's bargain basement area and the Beat Brasserie restaurant as existing examples of this in the Square.

Mr. Kroon's next steps are to refine these plans, if necessary, and to bring them to the Planning Board on November 14.



Community

CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES' FORUM REPORT

Prepared by John Howard of PSNA & Phoebe Sinclair of ANC

The Cambridge City Council Candidates' Forum, held on Wednesday, October 19th from 6:30 to 9:00 PM, was a success! Nineteen of the twenty-six candidates participated and the hall was full



to overflowing. Several candidates told us that it was by far the best audience they had encountered. We were struck also by the presence of all age groups both among the candidates and in the audience.

During the forum candidates were divided them into three panels and, rather than taking questions from the floor, they responded to a list of topic areas developed using a neighborhood poll. Each candidate choose one topic of particular interest and presented a specific proposal they might bring to the City Council, should they be elected/re-elected. We also asked each candidate to describe their abilities, knowledge, priorities, and experience with consensus-building.

Topic Areas

- **Accountability:** What mechanisms would you propose to hold city officials and developers accountable for their promises around development projects in the city? How should the city council ensure that developers deliver what they promise, and that city ordinances are enforced?
- **Housing:** What are the key issues with housing in Cambridge and how do you propose to address them?

- **Climate change:** What specific actions would you take to ensure that the City has resilience in light of environmental changes and/or catastrophic weather?
- **Social safety net:** What are the holes in our safety net and what would you propose to mend them?
- **Congestion:** Specifically what would you do to improve the balance between the competing needs of drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, and public transit users?

Sponsors & Supporters

The Forum was organized by a steering committee from Porter Square Neighbors Association (John Howard, Susan Hunziker), ABC/ANC (Phoebe Sinclair), Ward 10 Democratic Committee (Ruth Ryals), and Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods (Gary Dmytryk), plus moderator Alice Wolf and timer Susana Segat.

Lesley University graciously donated their auditorium in University Hall, and CCTV taped the forum. We extend our gratitude to Lesley Communications Director John Sullivan, who stayed the entire evening and saw to it that everything went smoothly. We also thank CCTV, who will offer a live show the night of the election at: www.cctvcambridge.org

Honoring John Howard

Susan Hunziker of Porter Square Neighbors Association read aloud a resolution honoring all of the years John Howard has lead PSNA, recounting his work to improve the Porter Square area and, by extension, the city of Cambridge. John and his wife Nancy have retired to Lexington, and will be sorely missed.

Learn More

Watch the Forum on Cambridge Community Television at: bit.ly/city_council_forum_cctv_2017

Photos can be found at: bit.ly/candidates_forum_2017_photos

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING POTLUCK

Come to our 46th Annual Thanksgiving Potluck Feast!

When: Tuesday, November 21
5:30-7:30 PM

Where: Maria L. Baldwin School Dining Hall, 28 Sacramento St.

Chefs Needed

Help make Thanksgiving memorable by volunteering to cook a turkey for the Thanksgiving Potluck. We will deliver a free turkey and roasting pan to volunteers' homes the week of the event.

Volunteers drop off the cooked turkey (no stuffing, please) before dinner begins on the evening of Tuesday, November 21st.

We need six volunteers to cook turkey, and four to help carve just before and during the event. To volunteer, contact Phoebe Sinclair at psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10.

Come Early, Bring Food

Your contributions are important. Bring a side dish ample enough for your family and a few more to share. Salads, stuffings, cranberry sauce, dessert, and more are welcome and needed!

VIP Guest List

That's you! We invite everyone from the neighborhood, Agassiz Baldwin Children's Programs, Living Well Network, Maud Morgan Arts, and Maria L. Baldwin

School communities to come together for an evening of celebration, good company, and delicious food.

Please remember that while we will host kids' activities at the event, parents are ultimately responsible for their children.



KIDS ONLY! HOLIDAY SALE 2017

Come to the Annual Kids Only! Holiday Sale. ABC staff members and student volunteers will be on hand to help kids browse and purchase fun and inexpensive



gifts for someone they love. Most items cost between ten cents and five dollars so that everyone can find something special to give to family or friends.

Typically found at the sale:

- Toys
- Games
- Books
- Jewelry
- Kitchen items
- Handmade crafts
- And more!

Date and Time

Saturday, December 16, 10:00 AM-1:30 PM

Monday, December 18, 3:00-6:30 PM

Tuesday, December 19, 3:00-6:30 PM (while supplies last)

Location

Maud Morgan Arts, 3D Studio, 1st Floor, 20A Sacramento St.

Gift Wrapping Station

On Saturday, we will provide a gift wrapping station and FREE hot chocolate. This activity is available while supplies last.

Bring Your Own Bag

Help reduce plastic! Please send your child in with a reusable bag.

Proceeds from the sale benefit Agassiz Baldwin Children's Programs.

**Kid Only! Sale Parents/Guardians
Read This!**

History

Begun in 1986, the Kids Only! Holiday Sale provides an opportunity for school-age children to find gifts to give to family and friends in a safe, supportive, and fun environment. Agassiz Baldwin Community views the event as an opportunity for children to think about special ways to give back to others, as well as learn how to be mindful about money.

How to Participate

The Kids Only Holiday Sale is open to the general public as well as to children participating in Agassiz Baldwin Programs. Parents, grandparents, guardians, aunts, uncles, cousins – bring the young people in your life! As per our tradition, only children (0-18), Agassiz Baldwin teaching staff, and student volunteers may enter the sale space.

More Info

For general information about the sale, contact Phoebe Sinclair, Community Liaison, at psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10.

Thank you to Joie de Vivre of 1792 Mass. Ave. for donating items for this year’s event.

City Wide

MUNICIPAL ELECTION - NOV. 7

Vote for Cambridge City Council and School Committee candidates on **Tuesday, November 7, 2017**. Agassiz residents vote at the Maria L. Baldwin School, 28 Sacramento Street. Polls open at 7:00 AM and close at 8:00 PM.

**CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
CANDIDATE STATEMENTS**

Statements were submitted by the candidates themselves and do not represent the views of

Agassiz Neighborhood Council or Agassiz Baldwin Community. ANC and ABC do not endorse any candidates for Cambridge City Council or School Committee.

Craig Kelley

A sixth-term City Councilor, Craig is a collaborative politician who presses for data-based policy decisions and stresses transparency and clear communications in all aspects of governance.

Craig is particularly focused on how emerging challenges and opportunities, from climate change and community resiliency to technological advances and demographic shifts, can best be addressed by City actions. Craig’s two boys went to the Baldwin School where he served on the School Council.



Hari Pillai

I was born/raised in the Mississippi Delta to Indian immigrants. My parents were both activist educators, and they imbued in me progressive values, sense of social justice, inclusivity, and civic involvement. I made it a point to move to Boston/Cambridge area over 17 years ago because I knew that my convictions to these values are welcomed. I have a BS/MS in Engineering, and I work as an account manager in the Tech Sector. As your Councilor, I want to provide my unique experiences, perspectives, and moral conviction to address issues facing us.



More Candidate Statements

Read more statements in *The Whistler* newsletter excerpt: bit.ly/whistler_candidates_excerpt_2017

More about the candidates can be found on the Cambridge Civic Journal website managed by Robert Winters: at www.rwinters.com and on CCTV’s website: at www.cctvcambridge.org

Community Calendar

November 2017

Tuesday, November 7		Election Day
Wednesday, November 8	6:00-7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St, 2nd Floor Public welcome
Friday, November 10		Veterans Day Holiday
Tuesday, November 14	7:30-9:00 PM	ANC Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Maud Morgan Arts, 20A Sacramento St., 2D Studio All are welcome, please join us!
Tuesday, November 21	 5:30-7:30 PM	46th Annual Thanksgiving Potluck Feast Baldwin School Dining Hall, 85 Oxford St.
Thursday, November 23		Thanksgiving Day Holiday, ABC Programs & office closed through Friday, November 24

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

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DO NOT FORWARD

