

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

October 2008

IN THIS ISSUE

ANC News: Join the Crimewatch Network, Lesley Dorm Construction, Mitigation, and Campus Planning, Proposed Improvements to MBTA Park, Electrical Outage Survey, ABC Board Retreat Report, Special Guests	1 - 5
ABC Community: ABC Website Redesign, Cook a Turkey for 37th Annual Thanksgiving Potluck, Boutiques Relocate to Harvard Sq.	5 - 6
ABC School Programs: Arts at Afterschool, Introducing Arts presents Bamidele Dancers & Drummers	6 - 7
Sacramento St. Gallery: 8th Annual Small Works Show	7

ANC News

NOTES FROM THE SEPT. 17 MEETING

Join the Neighborhood Crimewatch Network

Agassiz resident Jennifer Lacroix, founder of the Agassiz Neighborhood Crimewatch Network, told the Council, "I'm aware of recent crime activity in the neighborhood, and I think the big thing here is prevention." She offered the following safety tips:

- Limit cellular phone usage when walking on the street at night
- Stay aware of your surroundings
- Don't leave items visible in parked cars, particularly GPS units, which are popular targets for theft

Several residents at the meeting mentioned recent break-ins and smashed car windows that they had heard of or seen around the neighborhood, including a break-in on Eustis and smashed car windows on Oxford and Wendell Streets.

Neighbors are invited to join the Agassiz Neighborhood Crimewatch Network email list by contacting Ms. Lacroix at cambridge_neighborhood@yahoo.com.

Lesley Dorm Construction and Traffic Mitigation

On September 10, Lesley University held a groundbreaking for its new dorm on the corner of Mass. Ave. and Wendell Street. In attendance were Mayor E. Denise Simmons, City Manager Robert Healy, Agassiz residents, members of the Cambridge City Council, Lesley University President Joe Moore, Lesley administration and employees, the Bruner/Cott architectural team, and members of the city-appointed Lesley/Neighborhoods Working Group.

The dorm is now under construction with the expectation it will be completed by September 2009. According to Mr. Doncaster, construction mitigation appears to be going well. He stated, "William A. Berry & Sons has been very responsive. They are on site quickly if there are problems."

In terms of traffic, other than backed-up traffic during Harvard move-in day, Mr. Doncaster has

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



OCT. 15 - 7:30 PM

Baldwin School Cafeteria
28 Sacramento Street
(Press buzzer for entry)

AGENDA

- Fall Events at **Porter Books**
- Neighborhood Safety Report** with **Police Sergeant Oppedisano**
- Discussion about **Lesley University Expansion at Porter Square**

only received singular reports of issues like trucks driving down the wrong side of Oxford Street. He also noted that while deliveries to the site will continue, the heaviest period of truck traffic is over.

Every week at the site, Lesley University Construction Mitigation posts information describing a two-week outlook of construction activities. The information can be found on a bulletin board attached to a fence at the corner of Mass. Ave. and Wendell Street. Information can also be found online at www.lesley.edu/constructionupdates.

Please enjoy these photos of the groundbreaking event taken by Stephen Diamond and Lesley's photographer, respectively.



AIB Relocation and Re-Zoning Proposal, Campus Planning

Mr. Doncaster reported that Lesley University has been working with University staff, the city-appointed Lesley/Neighborhoods Working Group, Lesley's administration, and other partners to bring AIB to Cambridge in a way that will satisfy Lesley's programmatic needs and also benefit the greater residential community. Bruner/Cott, an architectural firm "known for

its tasteful, respectful renovation of historic buildings," is working on the design.

Following numerous discussions with the Working Group and other neighborhood groups about North Prospect Church and other Lesley properties in Porter Square, Lesley's stated goals are to bring AIB to Porter Square, ideally on Mass. Ave. where the front of the building will have public uses, including an art gallery and an arts library open to the public, and to offer the neighborhoods some predictability for other properties in Porter Square.

Mr. Doncaster stated, "There's been a goal from the community, one that Lesley shares, of Porter Square with night life, foot traffic, funky things happening. AIB, with its galleries, lectures, and events is consistent with that goal and should be good for economic vitality of the square as a whole."

In attendance with Mr. Doncaster were George Smith, Lesley's Director of Operations, Dennis Carlone, architect and urban designer, and attorney Jim Rafferty. Mr. Carlone gave an overview of Lesley's study of Porter Square that looked at AIB construction and offered some predictions about what might happen on Lesley's undeveloped sites. Using various maps and diagrams, he recounted a brief history of zoning in Porter Square and how it has changed over the years. Currently, the zoning in the square includes a Mass. Ave. Overlay of a Business C District, as well as a Residential B District.

Mr. Carlone went on to explain that, in order to build AIB at the North Prospect Church site, the University will need to apply for rezoning because the current zoning would not allow a building the size Lesley desires. The University is proposing creation of a Lesley University Overlay District that would include AIB, University Hall (formerly Porter Exchange), the two Mass. Ave. parking lots adjacent to University Hall, and 815 Somerville Ave.

The proposed Lesley University Overlay District could only be applied to university uses, and

therefore would only affect the University. To accommodate first floor retail, Lesley would be permitted additional flexibility in terms of Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR). Creating an Overlay District would allow Lesley to exchange an amount of square footage between sites. Program-wise, for everything to fit, Mr. Doncaster added that some university functions for AIB would need to be “shoehorned” into University Hall.

Additionally, in the future, Lesley will consider making the back of University Hall more pedestrian friendly as it’s frequently used by neighbors, as well as students, as a “cut through” to the MBTA.

While Mr. Carlone noted that the lots across the street from University Hall currently are zoned to allow for residence halls, he told the Council that the University was aware that residents strongly preferred other uses, as well as the inclusion of first floor retail. The overlay district would allow Lesley to transfer FAR to the church site, and restrict Lesley from building residence halls on the lots in the future.

In conclusion, the Overlay District would not result in Lesley building AIB “by right,” but instead require them to apply for a special permit, as well as take part in a public process and design review.

Following Mr. Carlone’s presentation, the Council, discussing their reactions, relayed the following critiques:

- Residents asked if Lesley had considered building AIB in the parking lot behind University Hall

- Some residents felt the zoning change and Overlay District were not adequate responses to the issue of loss of open space in Porter Square
- Residents requested that Lesley better illustrate the trade offs and cost benefit ratio using maps and graphs
- An increase in FAR would require an increase in the number of parking spaces. What are Lesley’s plans in terms of parking?
- Some residents felt that the neighborhoods might support additional FAR for a building that better reflects their preference for less massing and more open space in the square
- A resident read a statement declaring that she believed the zoning petition would result in reduced natural open space; she also hoped the University would consider allowing the church to remain a public performance venue

The Council and Lesley representatives also discussed the following questions:

Q: How would a rezoning affect Gourmet Express Market and Deli at 1868 Mass Avenue?

A: Rafferty explained that the property would not be included in the rezoning as Lesley does not own it. Additionally, the Zone Overlay would be limited to university uses.

Q: While Lesley does not currently have plans for the empty parking lots across from University Hall, what can residents expect they might be used for?

A: The two sites would work best as academic offices that support the institution.

Q: What is Lesley’s timeline in terms of deciding on the height and massing of the proposed building?

A: Mr. Doncaster explained that Lesley has asked the architects to hold off on the design for the time being. He added that the University has heard resident’s requests to not include a sunken courtyard in the design.



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Mr. Doncaster informed the Council that Lesley was planning for another community-wide meeting to discuss their plans with all interested neighbors.

Proposed Improvements to MBTA Park in Porter Square

As part of an eight-year discussion, Agassiz resident Carol Weinhaus and Adriane Bishko, of Neighborhood 9, continue to work on improving the safety and use of the park adjacent to the Porter Square subway stop. In addition, to Ms. Weinhaus' and Ms. Bishko's efforts, Agassiz resident Astrid Dodds has worked tirelessly to increase the number of trash cans and trash pickup at the park. Owned by the MBTA, the park abuts

Commonwealth Lock.



The goal is to improve the park to make it a friendly, inviting streetscape and a respite from active city life. Ms. Weinhaus reported that, as a neighborhood, Agassiz has the least open public space per resident in Cambridge.

The neighborhood will begin to explore with the Cambridge Community Development Department how the Porter Square T park might be turned over to the City of Cambridge. Doing so would permit Cambridge police to have better access to the property (currently CPD must contact the MBTA Police), and Cambridge Public Works would be responsible for trash removal.

Neighborhood residents who are interested in exploring the next steps to improve this park should contact Phoebe Sinclair at psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10.

Electrical Outage Survey Report

Phoebe Sinclair gave a brief report on electrical outages in the neighborhood. Please read below for a summary of her remarks:

Agassiz resident Astrid Dodds submitted a sur-

vey that appeared in the April 2008 Whistler, with a follow-up in the May edition. She received few responses, and what she received seemed to indicate that electrical outages were not a pressing problem.

As ABC continued to hear from residents about the issue, however, we decided to try an online survey using Constant Contact. We created a survey on July 29, sent it to a list of over 300 people, and, over a few weeks, received 68 responses.

We found:

- Most of the people surveyed (82%) had received warning phone messages from NSTAR prior to a scheduled power interruption.
- Most of the people surveyed (80%) experienced interruptions that they were not warned about.
- 40% of respondents received NSTAR warning messages often. (12% never)
- 46% of respondents experienced power outages somewhat often. (14% rarely)
- 41% of respondents reported experiencing power outages that lasted 30 minutes or less. (33% were unsure of how long the outages lasted, 11% thought several hours, 7% thought several moments, 5% thought 1 hour)

We asked what street respondents lived on and invited them to make additional comments to help us better understand the outages' impact

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on their lives. We got a wide range of responses including:

- Many people citing having to reset clocks and fire alarms
- Power seems more often to go off at night
- Outages seeming more frequent
- Residents switching to battery powered clocks due to the large number of outages
- Damage to computer equipment and health-related equipment
- Various lengths of outages
- NSTAR using a variety of methods to contact residents –email, voicemail

What's Next?

The Cambridge Pole and Conduit Commission will be holding a public hearing on the issue. The city also wants to discuss with NSTAR improving their methods for contacting the public about outages. As the initial date for this meeting fell on a holiday, the city will reschedule it. I will relay the information when it is available.

Brief Report from ABC Board Retreat

Stephen Diamond reported that the ABC Board attended a retreat held on Wednesday, September 10. In addition to other items, the Board discussed concerns about how the Council relates to the Board. Mr. Diamond stated, "The Board feels the community doesn't understand the Board's purpose and responsibilities, but I feel Board is equally unclear about

the Council's purpose. This issue is very serious."

Wendy Prellwitz, who also serves on the Board, added, "The consultants reminded us of the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board, which is that we are legally responsible for the programs, but also responsible and connected to the entire community. We need to share more information, more directly, between Board and Council. To that end, we're looking for volunteers from the Council to work on various activities."

These activities include STICK, ABC's aging in place initiative, and advocacy for the Maud Morgan Visual Arts Center. To learn more, contact Phoebe Sinclair at psinclair@agassiz.org or (617) 349-6287 x10.

Special Guests

State Rep. Alice Wolf was in attendance at the Council meeting.

ABC Community

WEBSITE REDESIGN

A team of Agassiz Baldwin staff and volunteers have begun work on updating ABC's website with the goal of producing a more informative and interactive resource for the neighborhood and Children's Programs families. Our goal is to have the new site go live in the New Year. Stay tuned for updates. Additionally, feel free to contact Phoebe Sinclair at psinclair@agassiz.org with any suggestions or comments.

CALL TO CHEFS

Calling all chefs, home cooks, and "foodies", Agassiz Baldwin Community seeks twelve volunteers to cook turkeys for our **37th Annual Thanksgiving Potluck!** We will deliver a free turkey and roasting pan to volunteer's homes on the week of the potluck. Please drop off the cooked turkey before dinner begins on the evening of Tuesday, November 25th. We also need volunteers to help carve turkeys just before

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and during the event.

Interested? Contact Phoebe Sinclair at (617) 349-6287 x10 or psinclair@agassiz.org.

Can't Cook a Turkey? Bring a Side Dish!

A long-standing tradition, the Annual Thanksgiving Potluck dinner welcomes everyone from the Agassiz neighborhood, Agassiz Baldwin Children's Programs, and Baldwin Elementary School communities to come together for an evening of celebration, good company, and delicious food.



Neighbors and friends are encouraged to bring a side dish big enough for their family and a few more to share. We look forward to seeing everyone and enjoying food inspired by one another's family traditions.

Save the Date

- Date:** Tuesday, November 25th
- Time:** 5:30 – 8:00 PM
- Location:** Baldwin School Dining Hall, Baldwin School 28 Sacramento St.
- Note:** Please remember that while we will host some kid's activities, parents are ultimately responsible for their children

NEIGHBORHOOD BOUTIQUES RELOCATE TO HARVARD SQUARE

Two neighborhood boutiques, Looks and Topaz, previously of 1702 and 1607 Mass. Ave, respectively, have relocated to Harvard Square. While we will miss having them in the neighborhood, next time you're in the Square, remember to drop by and check out their new digs:

Topaz (jewelry, "artisan baubles," accessories, and clothing)
11 Dunster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Contact: (617) 492-3700
info@topazcambridge.com

www.topazcambridge.com

Looks (women's clothing)
11-13 Holyoke Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone: 617-491-4251
Website to come!



Agassiz Afterschool Programs

ARTS AT AFTERSCHOOL

Prepared by Alice Vogler, 1-5 Site Director

Every Monday the 1st – 5th graders have the opportunity to participate in African Drumming and Dance with Joh Camara. Each week Joh brings drums for the students to use and often some students will be drumming while others are dancing. Joh and his students hope to showcase what they have been learning in a performance in December.

On Tuesdays students can sign up for drama club with Sarvi Moshfegh (one of our 1-3 grade teachers, drama, AND music specialist!). This week inspired by "The Women Who Outshone the Sun," performed by Behind the Mask Theater, Savri did improv theater games inspired by different folktales from Mexico.



Wednesdays both the Kindergartners and the 1st -5th graders have the opportunity to take Dance Classes with Sunny Hitt (also one of our 1-3 grade teachers AND dance specialists.) Sunny has also been working on some great art projects like Knitting Club and all sort of crafts from around the world, as well as doing a Yoga class with the 1st -3rd grades.

Also on Wednesdays, Rachelle Laine runs "Iron Chef" with the 4th and 5th graders, a choice that is always full! Last week Rachelle and

Catherine Aiello (4th & 5th grade teacher) collaborated and made homemade salsa and tortilla chips.

Thursdays are musical days at Agassiz Afterschool! Sarvi is busy all afternoon teaching students piano. They will also be showing off their talents at our performance in December.

Agassiz Afterschool has an amazing team teaching and sharing all their talents with our students! Stay tuned for more great happenings.

INTRODUCING ARTS - BAMIDELE DANCERS & DRUMMERS

Travel across the globe with the Bamidele Dancers & Drummers and experience dances, rhythms, folklore, and songs from West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean.



When: October 22nd, 2:00 PM
Where: Baldwin School Stage, 28 Sacramento Street
Tickets: Afterschool groups free, \$2 per person, \$5 per family. School groups please call ahead.

For more information, call (617) 349-6287. We hope to see you there!



Sacramento Street Gallery

8TH ANNUAL SMALL WORKS SHOW

The Sacramento Street Gallery presents: **Small Works Show 2008** -50 Cambridge Artists support the Maud Morgan Visual Arts Center Building Fund. 50% of all profits benefit the Fund.

Please join us for the opening reception on Friday, October 24 from 5:00 - 8:00 PM. Light refreshments will be served.

The show runs from October 24 to December 5th.

Gallery Hours: M - F, 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM
Saturdays, Noon - 5:00 PM
Special appointments available, call (617) 349-6287 for details.

"The Veil Series - Descending Sky"
Jeannie Motherwell



"Animal in the Forrest"
Peter Haines



"Small Frog"
Jane Ehrlich



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Community Calendar

October 2008

Monday, October 13		Columbus Day Holiday ABC School Programs and Office closed
Wednesday, October 15	6:00 - 7:30 PM	ABC Board Meeting, 20 Sacramento St, 2nd Floor Public welcome
Wednesday, October 15	7:30 - 9:00 PM	ANC Monthly Meeting (see page 1 for agenda) Baldwin School Cafeteria, 28 Sacramento St. All are welcome
Wednesday, October 22	2:00 - 3:00 PM	Introducing Arts Performance presents Bamidele Dancers & Drummers at Agassiz Afterschool Baldwin School Stage, 28 Sacramento St.
Friday, October 24	5:00 - 8:00 PM	8th Annual Small Works Show Reception at Sacramento St. Gallery 20 Sacramento Street, 1st Floor

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 may be submitted for consideration no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date.

THE WHISTLER OCTOBER 2008



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