

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

Summer 2021

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ANC News

NOTES FROM JUNE 8TH ANC MEETING

State Representative Marjorie Decker Visits ANC

State Representative Marjorie Decker joined Agassiz Neighborhood Council for the last meeting before summer recess to share her legislative priorities and answer questions.

Elected to the MA House of Representatives in 2012, Rep. Decker's district is entirely in Cambridge, serving Agassiz, Riverside, Mid-Cambridge and parts of Cambridgeport, West Cambridge and North Cambridge. She began her fifth term as State Representative earlier this year.

After a short round of introductions, Rep. Decker jumped into an overview of her past year. Unsurprisingly, much of her work revolved around helping Cambridge navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Response

Since the lockdown was first announced last March, Rep. Decker said she's sent nightly email updates, learned about emergency management and communication, collected information on the pandemic's impact on behavioral health, and pushed for funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, face shields, etc. She also worked with Cambridge Health Alliance, particularly on securing vaccines for Cambridge, conducted wellness check ups and calls for seniors, became House Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health with the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and worked on equity for testing and vaccine distribution.

"Cambridge looks very different from the rest of the state in terms of testing," she said, referring to the free testing offered by the city, which normally returns results by the next day.

She also noted that while Massachusetts was about to hit 4 million vaccine doses, there is a disparity in vaccine rates throughout the state. For these reasons, equity in the face of the pandemic is still a concern of hers and, at the time of the ANC meeting, Rep. Decker was planning on

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



September 14, 7:30 PM

ZOOM - RSVP by visiting
<http://bit.ly/anc-rsvp>

AGENDA

- Harvard University updates on 5 Sacramento Street & 13 Kirkland Place
- Additional items TBD

holding a hearing on vaccination bills as well as an oversight hearing on the plan to vaccinate children under 12, and how to best coordinate that with schools.

Legislative Priorities

In addition to her work facing the COVID-19 pandemic, Rep. Decker said that children's mental health had also taken up a lot of her time and commitment in the past year.

"There are a lot of startling statistics on what mental health looks like in young people," she said. She shared that she spent four months working on a bill related to children's mental health, specifically to address behavioral health in schools, called the Thrives Act.

Rep. Decker has also been focusing on systematically reducing poverty, particularly by lifting the cap on cash benefits on economically underserved families to get more cash in hand. She filed a bill, which ultimately passed in January, with retroactive benefits for the past six months. For the first time in over two decades, she said, she was able to get an increase in cash benefits for the elderly, as well as for parents and guardians of disabled children.

She is also working on bills related to renewable energy and climate change, co-chairing a committee on racial equity and maternal health, and filed a bill preventing Massachusetts gun manufacturers from manufacturing assault weapons with the purpose of selling to private citizens.

Q&A

Q: "I have been interested in transparency and more open communication in healthcare. OpenNotes is a non-profit organization, co-founded by Tom Delbanco, MD, that invites patients to view what doctors write about them so they can become more engaged and active in their care. Now patients having access to these notes has become a federal law. Some doctors believe they own the notes, not the patients. It's a complicated issue. I

would like the state to take the steps to push people to really give patients access to this information, not just pretend to do it." - Tom Delbanco

A: "I would love to talk to you about that. When we look at systemic racism in our healthcare system, we have to look at how those patients are perceived. I have a number of bills I've filed because of constituents who have educated me."

Q: "I've been terribly impressed with the COVID information you've provided on a daily basis. I'm interested in infectious diseases. Zooming with colleagues around the country, I don't know anyone who has the numbers on hand from their city or town like I do because of you. How are you able to have this outlook and work the way you do?" - Richard Goldstein

A: "I have always lived in Cambridge. I'm the first generation of my family to not live in public housing. People made choices that enabled me to have opportunities... I stand on the shoulders of really loving parents who struggled. These communications have been a lot of work. We have an incredible team of people, and my staff works just as hard as me. I love how people have engaged with me, or told me how to do better. It defines my experience of how I want to serve this incredibly diverse community."

Q: "What do you do in your spare time?"
- Richard Goldstein

A: "Drink coffee, run. My children, 10 and 12 years old, take up a lot of my time, and I'm very grateful for that."

Q: "Particularly in the public sector, there's a lot of foot dragging on not forcing people to get vaccinated. I'm curious about your take on the nuance of that." - Peggy Kutcher

A: "I'm not an expert but I'm fortunate to be a legislator who gets to talk to a lot of experts. I'm still in a listening mode. Ultimately what I believe is that anyone in public service needs

to be vaccinated. It's important to not draw a line and shame. That's how things get politicized, like wearing masks. We've seen why each other's health has to matter to us. I am holding an oversight hearing in July at the Museum of Science, separate from the bill on vaccines, to better understand and get the Governor and other public officials to talk about the plan to vaccinate kids. We'll be hearing more on where we fall on mandating vaccines for public workers and on vaccinating kids."

Q: "When it comes to masks and kids' mental health, weighing against the low prevalence and low likelihood that they will get sick or spread the disease, [I think] it's time for kids to be able to take masks off and run around the playground." - Mr. Delbanco

A: "This is where there's a lot of nuance. Playgrounds and fields without masks are great, but there are instances where kids are on top of each other. I'm happy to have masks off most of the time, but they are not struggling with masks the same way adults are. The hope and belief is that kids will be vaccinated before school starts."

In a final comment, Kate Frank expressed gratitude for Rep. Decker's person-to-person style of representation, and her willingness to advocate for and help her constituents navigate the system.

"When people call me and I am able to provide help, that is a sign that the system is broken," she responded. "I am angry that my assistance, too often, is warranted. While I appreciate that they're thankful, for me this is information about how broken the system is."

Closing out her time with ANC, Rep. Decker noted how she appreciates Cambridge's unwillingness to believe the work is over. "I just love that we live in a city where people continue to want to explore what we can do."

Learn more about Rep. Decker at: malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/MCD1



Community

BALDWIN NEIGHBORHOOD NAME ADOPTED

"It really does matter. It's more than a name."
- Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, August 2021

On Monday, August 2nd the Cambridge City Council voted 9-0 to adopt a policy order to rename the neighborhood after esteemed African American educator Maria L. Baldwin (1856-1922) who taught at, served as Principal, and became Headmaster of the Agassiz School (renamed for Baldwin in 2002).

This change comes following a community-led process begun in January 2020 when resident Maya Counter, then a high school senior at Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, proposed removing the name of Swiss-American naturalist and Harvard professor Louis Agassiz (1807-1873). Agassiz's legacy includes promoting polygenism, a theory that has been used to justify racism and white supremacy. Ms. Counter suggested that instead the neighborhood honor Maria L. Baldwin.

We express our gratitude to all who participated in this process by attending an Agassiz Neighborhood Council meeting, submitting materials to the digital 'context library', writing emails and letters, and contacting and speaking directly with City Councillors.

As Mayor Siddiqui implied at the August Special City Council Meeting where the vote took place, this change marks an important moment in the neighborhood's history. We will keep you abreast of next steps. In the meantime, we invite you to reach out with ideas for how the Neighborhood Council and community might publicly celebrate this occasion. I can be contacted at (617) 349-6287 x10 or psinclair@agassiz.org.

Learn More

Information about this nearly two-year long process can be found on our website at agassiz.org.

We continue to invite you to view the digital ‘context library’ to read letters, statements, testimonies, and watch videos created by your neighbors. (These materials will be archived for future viewing.)

Finally, those interested in the 2002 school name change can read that history on the Baldwin School’s website:
<https://bit.ly/baldwin-school-history>

What about the Organization’s Name?

Now that the neighborhood name change process has wrapped up, agency staff will turn our attention to our organization’s name. Stay tuned! (For reference, please read the Board of Director’s statement from June 2020:
<https://agassiz.org/about/board/>)



RAINBOW PARTY HOUR RECAP, FUNDRAISING GOAL REACHED!

Late last fall, our agency set the lofty goal of raising \$250,000 by June 2021. This amount re-presented both a deficit from pandemic-induced closures, and also what we’d need to continue reopening and rebuilding. Now, just over six months later, we are so excited to announce that we’ve not only reached that goal, but surpassed it!

To celebrate the road behind us, and the exciting road up ahead, we hosted a virtual community celebration, “Rainbow Party Hour,” on Thursday, June 3rd. We chose colorful, vibrant rainbows as our theme because they are often seen as signs of hope after a rainstorm and, in June especially, we felt like we were finally emerging from one long rainstorm.

The evening featured both live and pre-taped entertainment from members of our programs, staff and community, such as a cooking demonstration from our longtime volunteer Annette Needle, a presentation on Leave No Trace principles from former afterschooler Kavita Trivedi, and a video about identifying local trees by Nathan Andac from Barrett Tree.

We had such a wonderful time gathering, albeit virtually, with our community. Seeing smiling faces, getting to share our talents and gratitude - it was a great reminder of exactly how we were able to reach our \$250K goal, and get through the bigger rainstorm to the even bigger (and better) rainbow.

Thank you to all our supporters for helping us to get to this point. We are so grateful, and looking forward to the day where we can celebrate together in person. With this goal in the rearview, we can focus on the continued hard work of rebuilding ahead of us. If you’re interested in making a donation, please visit <https://bit.ly/donatetoabc>

CLEAN UP PORTER SQ & MASS AVE WITH LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

Volunteer with your neighbors & local businesses to help clean up Mass Ave from Beech Street (including Porter Square) to Shepard/Wendell Sts.

- BYO brooms, work gloves, snow shovels (handy as dust pans)
- Some brooms and work gloves available day-of

- Trash bags & trash pick-up provided

Where: Begin at Porter Square
MBTA Plaza

When: Thursday, September 2, 9:30
am-12 Noon

Who: All invited, including kids

RSVP: ANC – psinclair@agassiz.org
or (617) 349-6287 x10, PSNA
- rryals@comcast.net

Sponsors

Porter Square Neighbors Association | Agassiz
Neighborhood Council | Neighborhood Nine |
Lesley University Athletes | City of Cambridge |
MBTA| Saint James Church | The Merchants,
Porter Square & South of Porter and Porter
Square Shopping Center




Maud Morgan Arts

**EMMALINE LIPKA PRINTMAKING
RESIDENCY**

Maud Morgan Arts is thrilled to host artist and teacher Emmaline Lipka for a printmaking residency this summer. Emmaline is a recent graduate of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design with a BFA in painting, and has been



a member of our teaching staff since the fall of 2020.

Part of her work during this residency will include resetting and revamping the printmaking studio space, which has been adapted and used as a space for our school year programs and Outback since we reopened last June. Emmaline hopes to get the studio back up and running for printmaking again.

She will also be focusing her work on collaborative projects with her students, one of which is a quilt made of silkscreens by students at Outback. She has also introduced gelli printmaking to her students, and eventually relief printmaking, with the plan to have them make their own stamps. We can't wait to see and share all that Emmaline and our young artists create!



City Wide

**COMMUNITY FORUM ON
REPARATIONS**

Prepared by Saskia VannJames, Cambridge
resident, lobbyist, and board member MRCC

On June 21st, 2021 Councillor E. Denise Simmons and Councillor Patty Nolan introduced a historical policy for reparations, Policy #141. This policy reflects the work of Evanston, IL City Council which laid the groundwork for first-of-its-kind initiative designed to provide reparations to the descendants of those who were enslaved in this country, utilizing tax revenues from the burgeoning marijuana industry in

Illinois to fund payments of \$25,000 to sixteen eligible Black residents to be put towards home-ownership and generational equity-building.

Cambridge residents have been meeting weekly to discuss what does reparations mean for them so a policy is developed that has historical reckoning of Cambridge's founding role with slavery and reflects the voice of local residents.

MRCC believes the voice of Cambridge residents is an imperative part of developing a policy that reflects the will of its Black residents and stands in solidarity with local residents. To stay informed and learn more join residential discussions at 7:00 PM on Mondays through the month of August 2021 at: bit.ly/cambridge_reparations

What is MRCC

Established since the legalization of cannabis in 2017, Massachusetts Recreational Consumer Council is a BIPOC, women, queer-founded, and cooperatively ran nonprofit in advocacy for transformative justice. Certified through the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, MRCC also invests in public safety, public health, and cooperative education for our communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the War On Drugs. MRCC is an organization that was birthed partially from Cambridge and Harvard with one of the co-founders a Harvard graduate and another a Cambridge resident during the time MRCC was founded.

Policy Order & Feedback

Read about Policy Order #141 on the City's

website: bit.ly/camb-por-2021-141

Offer feedback to MRCC on Policy Order #141 via a Google Form survey:
bit.ly/cambridgepolicy141

To support this campaign please donate at:
massreccouncil.com/donate

To connect for further information and partnerships please contact us at hello@massreccouncil.com

MIT INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STUDY

Prepared by MIT Behavioral Research Lab

Have you used virtual conferencing platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Do you wonder how our interactions on these platforms compare to in-person ones? If so, the MIT Behavioral Research Lab (BRL) invites you to participate in an in-person study investigating how virtual conferencing platforms affect interpersonal communication.

The study will involve your completing surveys and participating in two ten-minute virtual conversations with other participants. Compensation for completing this study is \$25 in the form of an Amazon gift card, plus multiple opportunities during the study to enter a lottery to win one of four \$75 prizes. The study runs for approximately 45 minutes.

Participate: <http://tinyurl.com/mitbrlstudy2021> or
https://survey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cuVpBs6ZP3WTI2y
Contact: jcnlab@gmail.com

Please note that you may only participate in this study once, and you will not be compensated for multiple attempts.

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY FORUM
'WHAT DOES REPARATIONS MEAN FOR YOU?'
OPEN TO ALL CAMBRIDGE RESIDENTS
REPARATIONS POLICY#141
THAT PROPOSES CANNABIS TAX
REVENUE FOR REPARATIONS
REGISTER TODAY:
[BIT.LY/CAMBRIDGEREPARATIONS](http://bit.ly/cambridgereparations)
CANT ATTEND? SEND FEEDBACK NOW:
[BIT.LY/CAMBRIDGEPOLICY141](http://bit.ly/cambridgepolicy141)

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT US AT: [HELLO@MASSRECCOUNCIL.COM](mailto:hello@massreccouncil.com)
BLACK CENTERED SPACE
JULY - AUGUST
EVERY MONDAY 7PM

Community Calendar

September 2021

Monday, September 6th

ABC & Maud Morgan Arts programs and offices closed in observance of Labor Day

Tuesday, September 14th

7:30-9:00 PM

ANC Meeting (agenda TBD)
To receive ZOOM link, RSVP at <http://bit.ly/anc-rsvp>
All are welcome, please join us!

The Whistler is published monthly September-June by the Agassiz Baldwin Community, distribution 750 in 2019. Call (617) 349-6287 to receive by email or mail. The newsletter is available 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. Editorial team: Phoebe Sinclair, Community Liaison & Editor; Jessica Leach, Scribe; Ashley Yee, Guest Writer.

The Whistler Summer 2021



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