

the Whistler

Newsletter of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council

November 2021

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ANC News

NOTES FROM NOVEMBER 9TH ANC MEETING

Statement from the Board on Organization Name

We, the Board of Directors of the organization formerly known as Agassiz Baldwin Community will be meeting [in November 2021] to finalize the process by which we will select a new name for the organization. We paused our process to allow the neighborhood name process to be completed, but we are now returning our attention to our own agency name.

The board will be the final decision makers but we plan to collect input from a range of community stakeholders, including members of the ANC, to inform our decision-making. Opportunities for input will likely include an online form and stakeholder interviews. We plan to send a representative to the Dec. ANC meeting with more detailed information.

The board also does not wish to interfere with

ANC in selecting a new name for itself and feels that decision should lie with members of the Neighborhood Council.

Lesley University's New Campus Plan

Janet Steinmayer, President of Lesley University, joined the November 9th Agassiz Neighborhood Council to share the university's plans to update its three campuses. She was accompanied by Chief Operating Officer Joanne Kossuth; General Counsel Shirin Philipp; Jan Devereux, Director of Government Relations & University Communications; Jonathan Austin of Austin Architects, and Sue Wyeth of Centerbrook Architects and Planners.

The proposed capital improvements, which will take place over the next three to five years, are intended to "revitalize historic buildings, improve sustainability and support the university's educational plans," among other goals.

President Steinmayer noted that, because the university owns over sixteen acres of land in Cambridge, it's important to create stronger connections with surrounding neighborhoods and communities. In addition to the meeting with ANC, President Steinmayer and the rest of the

NEXT ANC MONTHLY MEETING



December 14, 7:30 PM
ZOOM - RSVP by visiting
<http://bit.ly/anc-rsvp>

AGENDA

- Discussion of Neighborhood Council name
- Proposed agency re-naming process, led by the ABC Board
- Proposed civility pledge for elected municipal officials, led by a community member

team will also meet with other Cambridge neighborhood groups to share their plans.

Through landscaping, creating more social spaces, and showcasing artwork, President Steinmayer explained that the university hopes to create “distinct but connected identities” between its three campuses: South (formerly Brattle), Doble (located in the Baldwin Neighborhood), and Porter Square. Some of the larger transformations in the initial phase will include turning St. John’s Chapel into a black box theater and renovating the dormitories on South Campus, creating a Welcome Center in University Hall at Porter Square, and improving the grounds and landscaping on all three campuses. The university is also exploring building housing over a surface parking lot near Porter Square and adding a roof terrace to University Hall.

In order to provide funding for all these changes, Lesley is hoping to sell ten properties that are considered underutilized or no longer in line with the university’s missions. Some of the properties for sale are on the Doble Campus, including 6 Sacramento Street, 1627 Mass Ave, and several houses on Mellen Street.

Q&A

Q: “What kind of financial constraints do you have that will make or not make this happen, or happen slower or faster?” - Tom Delbanco

A: “We have the ability to move away from some properties that are no longer working for us, and some of the proceeds of those sales will go a long way to finance the projects for the rest of the campus.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “Could you in some way acknowledge the unique history of 7 Mellen Street as cooperative housing? Such as by making it a cooperative house where students can share a house and memorialize that history? It is really a very historic movement, and very needed in Cambridge, for people to share a house together.” - Fred Meyer

A: “We will absolutely acknowledge that history, so thank you for sharing that. We will bring

that all forward in our thinking.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “Fees for students have been going up dramatically. What is the relationship between your development and student fees?” - Skip Schiel

A: “We are very sensitive to making our offerings affordable to students, and we are one of the few places in the country to do a tuition reset, and lower our tuition levels while also providing financial assistance to meet need and bring in a diverse student body. That’s very much central to what we do at Lesley. This project is a capital project, and we’re thinking about this because we need it to help our students have a good experience here. Some of our buildings are very old and need renovation.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “You mentioned turning the parking spaces across from University Hall into student housing. In what timeframe might you be developing those?” - Ruth Ryals

A: “At this point, it’s just something we’re thinking about. To just have it as surface parking on Mass Ave doesn’t make a lot of sense.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “I know that the city has begun to express some interest in acquiring the properties for sale. I think it would be a terrific opportunity to add affordable housing to the neighborhood, and I very much encourage Lesley to talk to the city.” - Joel Bard

A: “We definitely value our relationship with the city and want to work with them. That’s part of what we’ll be doing going forward, and we understand the need for affordable housing, and hope that’s part of what comes out of this.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “I wanted to ask if you’re engaged yet with the city’s traffic and parking engineer, and if you have some positive ideas for connectivity that can complement the city’s plan for safety and traffic flow on Mass Ave. Are you involved and what level of engagement do you have with the city?” - Steven Beaucher

A: “I’ve had an informal conversation with Joe Barr, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation for the City of Cambridge. That stretch of Mass Ave is not on the front burner right now for the city, but they’ve been asked to contact Lesley when they’re ready to focus on it again. The architects looking at streetscape improvements are aware that the city is also looking at Mass Ave improvements.” - Ms. Devereux

Q: “Are you planning to expand your student body? How many units do you think you would house or build there for the co-living space?” - Kathy Dalton

A: “The co-living spaces entail separate bedroom units but shared common spaces, such as kitchens. We are looking to house graduate students, because they are 50% of the student population. I could see our student body expanding, but not enough to impact our campus.” - President Steinmayer

Q: “The plans are really appealing and will only improve the quality of the whole neighborhood. The only thing that was missing was the red brick building on the corner of Everett and Oxford. I was hoping something would be done with the rather tedious facade. Is there any thought given to that?” - Richard Goldstein

A: “It’s not in this initial round, but I do understand what you’re saying. We do want to soften that corner.” - Ms. Wyeth

Q: “How are you thinking about how the physical facility and landscape will interact with the broader community? In your thinking about housing, would you be open to creative partnerships that involve affordable housing and can include people who aren’t traditionally included in subsidized housing?” - Peggy Kutcher

A: “Yes, we’re really casting a very wide net because we’d love to see people come in and have proposals that could allow that. We’re very open to that. In terms of having the

campus open to the community, it’s definitely part of our design here. What we have in mind is that it will become much more of a community resource.” - President Steinmayer

Next Steps

While these plans are still in early stages, President Steinmayer encouraged anyone in the community with additional questions or thoughts to email: campusplan@lesley.edu. There is also a webpage devoted to the campus plan: <https://lesley.edu/about/lesley-campus-plan>.

Upcoming Mass Ave Changes

Steve Beaucher, Eustis Street resident and owner of WardMaps on Mass Ave, spoke to ANC about proposed changes to Mass Ave from Kendall Square to Alewife Brook Parkway, along which the city has identified areas to install protected bike lanes as part of a 2019 Cycling Safety Ordinance. Mr. Beaucher’s goal at the evening’s meeting was to extend the city’s outreach by introducing a working group, called Mass Ave for All of Us, composed of business owners, bicycle advocates, and other community leaders.

“We got together because on other parts of Mass Ave, it’s gotten bitter,” Mr. Beaucher explained. “It’s parking versus bike safety, et cetera, but everyone is right in a way. We didn’t feel that the city’s original plan incorporated all user groups.”

Through speaking with street designers and bicycle advocates, the group found that Mass Ave could be wide enough to meet most of the needs of all its different users by removing the median strip.

“If we remove the medians, we can really build a Mass Ave for all,” Mr. Beaucher said.

“There will be compromises, but what we’re trying to encourage is the city using this real estate from curb to curb, and taking the opportunity to rebuild Mass Ave since the concrete medians replaced streetcars,” he later explained.

Tom Delbanco asked if there were any principle arguments against removing the medians.

In addition to cost, Mr. Beaucher said that some pedestrians use it as a refuge while crossing, but that creating shorter distances between crosswalks could eliminate that need.

“I was glad to hear you speaking about the width across the sidewalks,” Kate Frank said. “Even with the extended time crossing, I still have a hard time making it all the way across. I have definitely used [the median] as a refuge, but it is also a hazard. My husband once miscalculated the height and fell off.”

“The problem is that the people designing this aren’t transit people, and they aren’t our neighbors,” Ruth Ryals, President of Porter Square Neighborhood Association, said, “We want the city to back up and say we’re designing a street, a streetscape, and a neighborhood that has businesses and people who get around in all kinds of modes.”

Dinah Barlow brought up the restaurants who have set up temporary outdoor dining spaces along Mass Ave, some of which have taken over parking spaces.

“Are they here to stay or this is just a COVID thing so that people have an option to eat outside?” she asked.

“I don’t know what the end horizon is, but each permit isn’t even a year long,” Mr. Beaucher explained. “I don’t know when the city will stop that, but I assume any major construction on Mass Ave would have to preclude or rearrange the configuration of the restaurants.”

“My thought is simply about giving pedestrians sanctity, so that cars and bikes are not favored,” Phil Minervino said. “Lowering speed limits or increasing crosswalk times could be an accommodation to a person walking.”

The city hosted in-person meetings to solicit neighborhood input from November 13th-16th, which Mr. Beaucher encouraged ANC members to attend and “share their voices.”

Additional information

Learn about Mass Ave for All of Us:
www.massaveforall.com

Learn about the 2019 Cycling Safety Ordinance, and it’s 2020 update, here:
<https://bit.ly/cambma-cycling-safety-ordinance>



Community

ABC ANNUAL APPEAL

When I go to after school
I feel like I can be myself.



In the last two years, we’ve had to rethink how we do much of our work, but some things will never change. We will continue to be a place that supports and nurtures children, where neighbors can work together, seniors can engage, people can help one another, and all of us can foster community, one connection at a time. For over fifty years, we have been a place for all this and more. With your support, we will continue to be for many years to come.

We are facing a deficit of nearly \$200K this year. We closed the gap last year thanks to the support of people like you. Will you show up again for us this year so we can keep showing up for the community? Here are just a few ways last year's donations helped us remain committed to our mission, and how a gift this year can make an impact:

Children's Programming

Last school year, we ran full day childcare to support children through virtual learning while schools were closed, with over half attending at no cost. With the warmer months came the Outback Summer Program, and we provided mostly outdoors, full day camp for over 100 children to reconnect and regain some sense of normalcy. This fall, we are back running our afterschool programs for nearly 200 children, focusing on equitable access to arts programming and supporting students' social-emotional health. We are still providing scholarships to make our programs accessible to all families.

Community Engagement

Earlier this year, we supported the process to rename the neighborhood in honor of Maria L. Baldwin and, as part of our ongoing anti-racism efforts, we are launching a process to rename the organization and remove the racist legacy of Louis Agassiz. The Whistler newsletter, published several times throughout the year, continues to keep the community informed about this topic and other important civic issues.

Food Distribution

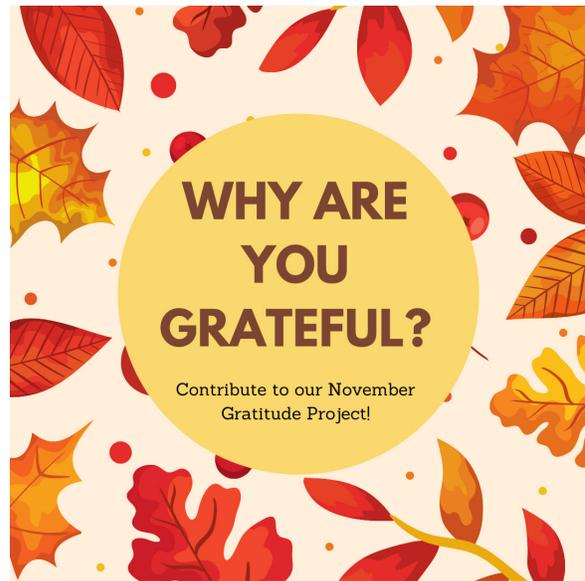
With the assistance from a hearty and dedicated group of cyclist volunteers, we are still delivering food boxes weekly to 25 families and individuals facing food insecurity.

However you choose to support us this year, funds raised will help us close a \$200K deficit and allow us to provide scholarships in all of our programs, manage essential services like food distribution, continue to pay our dedicated teachers when we face COVID closures, provide structure and administrative support for the neighborhood council to address civic issues, and offer programs like the Living Well Network and art classes at Maud Morgan Arts. We rely on community support to make all of this possible.

Donate

Contributions of all sizes can make a difference. To donate, please visit: <https://bit.ly/donatetoabc>

NOVEMBER GRATITUDE PROJECT



Except for last year, our organization has hosted a Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner every November for the past five decades. Although we hoped we could be together in-person again this year, we still don't feel capable of safely pulling off a gathering of that size. However, we also couldn't let another year go by without connecting with our community in the way the potluck dinners always allowed.

This year, we are excited to invite our community to contribute to a gratitude project. We are asking you to write a short blurb about a person, place, moment, item, etc. for which you are grateful. Our students in afterschool and Maud Morgan Arts will be participating in their own version of this project as well!

After collecting these declarations of gratitude, we plan to share them more broadly by posting them online and as an art installation in our kiosk in front of the Baldwin School, with each statement comprising a leaf on a tree. Our hope for this project is that it will remind us of the warmth and togetherness of, not only the annual potluck dinner, but the entire holiday season.

Guiding questions to inspire your gratitude leaf:

- Did your neighbor do something kind for you?
- Is there a staff member at fka ABC who went above and beyond to help you?
- Were you impressed by someone's effort to build community?

How to submit your leaf

Complete this form and our team will make a leaf for you: <https://bit.ly/nov-gratitude-project>

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS: NOW HIRING!

Prepared by Ashley Yee, Special Projects Manager

The return of in-person school this fall has brought back familiar sights and sounds to our neighborhood. Each afternoon children make their way to our afterschool programs, eager to shake off their school day and enter a space where they can be free to explore and play. After enduring such a prolonged period of isolation and quarantine, educators, caregivers, and children alike are navigating the uncertain waters of life as it is now. On the surface everything might look familiar, but the current beneath feels different.

Our children's programs staff have been presented with a number of challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and it has been difficult to bolster our teaching team with new hires. Yet there is still much to be celebrated. Afterschoolers have planted bulbs for spring, enjoyed an outdoor harvest festival, started a stop-motion animation club, filled our spaces' walls and shelves with art, and are currently working on a visual display based on gratitude and kindness.



"I recently heard someone say that children across the country are 'struggling mightily' due to the pandemic," Kyla McMahon, Director of Children's Programs, said. "We see the effects in our programs, as well. But we also see dedication and camaraderie by leadership and teaching staff to support the needs of students."

"We are building social and emotional skills, providing opportunities for growth and fun, and nurturing one another through these challenging times," she continued. "We are looking for more team members willing and able to join us in our work, which now feels more important than ever."

We are seeking empathetic, resourceful, and creative individuals interested in joining our team of teachers. We are eager to grow our staff by welcoming more individuals committed to providing a caring and consistent environment for the children in our community. It is incredibly rewarding work with plenty of opportunities to make art, have fun, and be challenged. It is not always glamorous, but there can be glitter!

Anyone interested in learning more about our teaching opportunities can visit: agassiz.org/employment-opportunities or email Ashley Yee at: ayee@agassiz.org.



KIDS ONLY! HOLIDAY SALE CANCELED

Since 1986, the Kids Only! Holiday Sale has been an annual tradition that's helped our community ring in the holiday season. Each year, we turn our space into a shop full of unique, fun, and affordable items that kids independently browse and purchase to give as gifts to family and friends. Of course, sometimes they can't help buying something for themselves, too!

Although 2021 has brought many important and welcome updates to our programming, we continue to recover from the pandemic. Unfortunately we are unable to host the Kids Only! Holiday Sale this December. We look forward to when we will be able to share this experience with our community again.

THANK YOU TO OUR HALF-MARATHON RUNNERS

On November 7th, 2021, a team of community members ran the 13.1 miles of the Cambridge Half Marathon on behalf of (the organization formerly known as) Agassiz Baldwin Community and collectively raised \$2,695. The team included Rachael Cobb, Deirdre Logan, Amy Carpineto and Jonathan Schwarz, all of whom have various connections to our organization, such as through our children's programs or Neighborhood Council.

All of us at fka ABC are so thankful to this team of runners who showed up for us at the half-marathon. The funds they raised are critical in helping us sustain our programs and services. As the pandemic continues to have a significant impact on our financial picture, every dollar helps us continue to provide childcare, deliver food pantry boxes, offer enriching workshops through Maud Morgan Arts and Living Well Network, and support the neighborhood in addressing important civic issues.

You can make a donation to support this work yourself by visiting: <https://bit.ly/donatetoabc>

City Wide

DONATE TO SECRET SANTA FOR SENIORS 2021

Agassiz Baldwin Community is a drop-off location for the Cambridge Police Department's Secret Santa for Seniors program. Gifts can be brought to 20 Sacramento Street and placed in the donation box on the front porch from now through Friday, December 17.



Cambridge Police
★
SECRET SANTA FOR SENIORS
DONATION DRIVE

Now in its 15th year, the Cambridge Police Department's "Secret Santa for Seniors" gift drive is focused on bringing much-needed cheer and items for seniors this holiday season.

This year, the gift drive will primarily be online to make it easier and safer for people seeking to purchase gifts for seniors.

DONATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED NOW THROUGH FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2021

Residents are encouraged to support local businesses by purchasing gifts through the various Cambridge business associations.

A Secret Santa for Seniors online Amazon "Wish List" has also been created: <https://bit.ly/CPDSSS>

PROUD PARTNERS

TCHA Beth Israel Lahey Health Mount Auburn Hospital CS MIT
reservoir PRO EMS FOUNDATION MEDICINE The Perettie Family
WHEEL WOOD PHIL'S

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN CAMBRIDGE



Participatory Budgeting
Vote for Projects to Improve Cambridge Dec. 3- 12, 2021
Make your voice heard!

It's time to vote! Let Cambridge know how you want to spend \$1M to help improve our city as part of the 8th Participatory Budgeting Cycle: pb.cambridgema.gov

Community Calendar

December 2021

Tuesday, December 14th

7:30-9:00 PM

ANC Meeting (agenda on page 1)
To receive ZOOM link, RSVP at <http://bit.ly/anc-rsvp>
All are welcome, please join us!

Friday, December 24th

ABC & Maud Morgan Arts programs and offices closed for winter holiday break through **Friday, December 31st**

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The Whistler November 2021



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