



GMNC Monthly Meeting
April 6, 2020 6:30-8:00 pm
Online Meeting via zoom

Meeting Minutes

I. Council Members Present

Fatima Ali-Salaam, Chair
Janae Tooley, Vice Chair
David Halbert
Lenore Perreira
Ruby James Saucer
Nikkia Jean-Charles
William King
Mirlande Joseph, Vice Treasurer
Nicole Donnell
Joy Gary
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
Vickey Siggers, Treasurer
June Joseph

II. Meeting minutes from March 2, 2020

Motion to approve – Janae Tooley
Seconded – Lenore Pereira
Minutes approved unanimously

III. Presenter: Mayor Marty Walsh

- Today we had 153 new cases, and 4 new deaths.
- Total Boston cases are 2,035 - in Mattapan, 83 total cases as of today, not the lead neighborhood (Hyde Park and East Boston)
- Yesterday we began to ask people to wear masks in public – we believe approximately 25% of the population has Coronavirus inside them now, so it's important to protect everyone else.
- We're also closing down all of the active portions of our parks. The Governor's stay at home advisory allows us to do this. It's really important for everyone to understand the importance of physical and social distancing. 40% of cases are people in the millennial age group.
- We've also begun to recommend a curfew between 9pm and 6am. This allows seniors to get out to the grocery store early in the morning, but keeps people from having any big parties at night.
- 25% of our cases have been reported only in the last three days. We're heading into the surge right now that will take us to the top of the curve and over the peak of the curve. This is the most important time for us to observe social distancing.
- The most important thing we can all be doing is washing our hands. We all need to be doing it repeatedly.
- Dr. Fauci has indicated that this might be a recurring virus, but right now we don't have any medicine for it.

- Mayor Walsh's Cabinet met for the first time in three weeks yesterday, thinking about how to get business back moving again, but Mayor Walsh expects the May 4th stay at home order will likely be extended.

Q: How do we prioritize health care for the essential workers?

A: For hospital employees, they should be able to seek care at the place where they work. For other City employees, if they feel any symptoms they should seek care from their primary care doctor. There should be no shaming for essential employees.

Q: Why aren't homeless people being housed in empty dorm rooms?

A: We have several places where homeless people are being cared for, including near South Street, Pine Street, at Suffolk University, at 1515 Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton, and also at the convention center. We'll eventually have 1,000 beds for homeless people. We do also have additional backup locations, but caring for homeless people in individual rooms can be very complicated.

Q: What are the options when one member of a household is positive and can't quarantine at that house?

A: We need to get back to you with a better answer to that – as of right now we don't currently have a system to help those people.

Q: What's the plan for people who have to pay rent or mortgage?

A: There's legislation out there that's going to help, and some of the larger land owners in the City have agreed not to evict people during this. Also, many banks are willing to hold on mortgage payments if you reach out to them, same thing with credit card companies.

Q: Normally the City would be starting the budget process now – what's happening with that?

A: The Mayor's budget will be going to the City Council on Wednesday, and they're working on figuring out a process to get the budget done by June 30, must be done statutorily. It will be scaled back, but it can't be delayed.

Q: When we do get back to normal, we have some concerns about how the ZBA's going to work. Can you give us some info on that?

A: We did make some changes to the ZBA just before the coronavirus hit, but there will be a lot more disclosures, restrictions on what members of the ZBA can work on. Also working on trying to figure out what to do with 52/54R and trying to get it rezoned to residential.

Q: The State has said districts get to decide for themselves whether or not they'll remain open during April break – what will the plan for BPS be?

A: We hope that BPS will be in session, but that's still a work in progress.

Q: What are we going to do about a potential resurgence in the fall?

A: We're taking it day by day, but we're doing our best to learn from what's going on in other parts of the world to stay ahead of it.

Q: Will race be included in the DPH data?

A: No, that information is not being collected by the state. We're trying to push the federal government to collect it but they're very difficult to work with.

Q: Is ICE detaining anyone right now?

A: We have not heard of ICE detaining anyone during this epidemic in Boston.

Q: Can we use smartphone data to track peoples' movements and figuring out where they were?

A: We have been trying to use that data, in conjunction with Governor Baker.

Q: It seems like we'll probably need social distancing through fall 2020.

A: Yes, that does seem likely.

Q: Will grant money help immigrants get back to work?

A: As far as we know, there isn't any money for that, specifically.

Q: We have residents who are living with multiple families in one household – where should they turn to for help?

A: Get in touch with Roudnie, and she'll set you up with the right people?

Q: When will Mayor Walsh meet with the youth group?

A: Unfortunately this pandemic arose during the time when we were trying to meet, we can definitely do a zoom meeting now, though.

II. Chris Cook, City of Boston Environment, Energy, and Open Space Chief

- Usually spend a lot of time collaborating with Parks and Recreation Department.
- Primary responsibility is to combat the issues associated with climate change.
- Currently, very busy trying to keep public facilities as clean as possible, helping people get outside to get exercise and stay healthy, but also make sure that social distancing rules are being enforced.

Q: Can you talk about the role your department plans in coordinating with the BPDA?

A: We coordinate on their Article 80 processes, but also on individual planning efforts in support of the imagine Boston 2030 effort.

Q: Does your office work on projects that require coordination with the State? Such as Olmstead Green. What are the next steps with that process?

A: We have a relatively new Wetlands Ordinance as of last December which expanded the Conservation Commission's power. When a new project starts getting evaluated, it should immediately go through Conservation Commission, which will be evaluating a lot of the inland wetland areas, not just coastal areas.

Q: With respect to the Mattahunt Woods – the residents would like to be able to have a say in what happens. How is DND working with your department on that project?

A: DND owns about 70 parcels in that area with some environmental significance. DND heard through public outreach that additional housing is not really wanted by the community there. DND looks forward to reengaging the community on that.

Q: Is the BPDA still approving things during the Coronavirus crisis?

A: They were early on, but as of right now they've basically stopped. We know we can't just hold all City business off until the end of this crisis, because this crisis does not have any end date. The Conservation Commission hearing has held one online hearing which does have the problem with exacerbating inequity around online resources, but it did allow for a significantly higher level of participation from the public.

Q: What's going to happen with the projects that are currently under way?

A: Projects such as the Shattuck, such as the State Hospital site, are both continuing to move through their planning processes, but it's unlikely any final decisions will be made during the crisis. Mattapan residents should continue to use his office as a place to raise any issues with environmental impacts from projects.

Q: We've heard a lot about how great Almont Park is, but we've been asking for security there for years. Norfolk/Walker Park is also at a standstill in getting better security. We've heard the City doesn't have enough money to upgrade these parks, but we need better walking paths and for some trees to be cleared.

A: We'll get back in touch with the capital plan for Norfolk Park, we'll work together with Earl Faulk to make sure it's getting what it needs in terms of security, and Chris will reach out to the Chief of Parks to discuss ongoing maintenance issues at Almont Park.

Rep Holmes calling in – there are a couple million dollars set aside for Norfolk Park, and for now we don't need to be talking about Harambe Park.

Q: We know the City is supposed to be net zero energy moving forward. What is the City doing about that?

A: It's an amazing jobs opportunity to get fossil fuels out of buildings. We believe people energy costs will be going down as people make their homes more efficient. True that natural gas and oil are very cheap right now, but that won't always be the case.

Q: How are urban farms being prioritized knowing that grocery stores are beginning to price gouge during this crisis?

A: Boston Natural Areas used to be really helpful in finding urban agricultural sites, but we're now getting to a point in the climate crisis, and COVID's been a preview for the challenges that urban communities are going to face, that we really need to prioritize focus on making our open space work better for us. Parks now have to work a lot harder for us than they once did.

Q: What are you doing with hydroponic farming?

A: Nothing yet, but we're really looking hard for sites that can handle anaerobic digestion, which could be a source of green power, green jobs, and could work as a site for hydroponics.

Q: Is the City planning anything with curbside compost pickup?

A: Yes, a pilot program is going to be announced very soon. PWD will send messaging out about this soon.

III. Working Committees

Public Services Committee - Report from Matthew Skelly – Meeting tomorrow night will focus on what we can do for the community, and how to volunteer during this time of great need.

V – Wrap Up Announcements

- Vivien Morris – Edgewater neighborhood association will be meeting on Wednesday night via Zoom and the meeting is open to all.
- Allentza Michel – looking for people to participate in a Mattapan Oral Histories project, contact her for more details.
- Rep Russell Holmes – two of the proposals did not meeting the criteria including Neponset Trust and Urban Planning Office. The other four were asked to resubmit their proposals and focusing on a number of issues, and those applications are due on Friday. Also – everyone needs to be filling out the census.