



GMNC Monthly Meeting
May 4, 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 Lopes
David Halbert
Lenore Perreira
Ruby James Saucer
Nikkia Jean-Charles
William King
Mirlande Joseph, Vice Treasurer
Joy Gary
Machel Gray
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
Vickey Siggers, Treasurer
June Joseph
Cynthia Brewington

II. Meeting minutes from April 6, 2020

Motion to approve – Cynthia Brewington
Seconded – David Halbert
Minutes approved unanimously

III. Presenters: District 5 Councilor Ricardo Arroyo (RA), District 4 Councilor Andrea Campbell (AC), At-Large Councilor Julia Mejia (JM), At-Large Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George (AA), At-Large Councilor Michael Flaherty (MF)

- Thank you from the City Councilors, and best wishes for everyone's continuing health.

Education

Q: Do students have to take the MCAS?

A: AC – No, but many questions remain about exactly how this is going to work. We need to have a better plan right now for making sure everyone has a good remote learning experience now, and make sure things work well in the fall. RA – There's a reality that we may not be in school next September, and there will be no excuse for not having a good plan if that's what happens. We may need to change the start of the school year, change testing, or whatever it takes to have a good school year. We all need to adjust to what our currently reality is.

Q: Will high school seniors who did not pass their MCAS get to graduate?

A: RA – we believe that every student will be promoted unless their parents ask for them not to. AA – Where you stood in mid-March as a student is going to be very important, because summer school might be required in order to advance to the next grade or to graduate.

Q: Has this pandemic interfered with the funds from the Student Opportunity Act (SOA)?

A: AC – this is really a State issue. Last we've heard is that there have been discussions

Q: When can students get their stuff from school, like everything in their lockers?

A: RA – our understanding was that everything should've already been removed. AA – students should be in touch with their guidance councilors about anything like that.

Q: Where do folks get masks for protection?

A: AC – Councilor Essaibi-George has been making a lot of masks, and our office has also been providing capital to another female owned small business.

Q: How are you helping students who were already failing or not doing well?

A: AC – we've been working very hard on improving BPS generally, even apart from the Covid-19 crisis. I have developed an action plan for BPS. We just need to work even harder now during the crisis, but the issues are really the ones we've been working on all along. We've been asking for weekly data from BPS, and we also need to make a plan for what's going to happen this summer. JM – we know there were already young people who were falling behind and not being engaged, and now it's even harder trying to work through a chromebook. We need to make sure these kids all have access to the internet and teachers are engaging them.

Q: What support is being given to students on IEPs and those with special needs?

A: AC – we're advocating as much as we can for these issues, but ultimately the buck stops with BPS. GMNC should be following up with them. RA – we're sponsoring a resolution to make sure we hear what BPS's plan is for this. When it comes to social interaction, I'm not sure how we're going to create that. My sister's a teacher, my niece has an IEP, so I'm aware and I understand how difficult it's been for them to adjust. But we're putting a lot of pressure on them to get answers.

Q: Where should students who need school supplies go for help?

A: AC – BPS is trying to help where they can. AA – our office is working on a plan, so please call our office if you need help, but our plan will hopefully help out everyone more broadly. JM – if you know of anyone who's struggling, please pass them along to the City Councilors so that we can use our networks to help.

Housing

Q: How has the City helped homeless youth?

A: AC – Council Essaibi-George has been doing a lot of work on homelessness. Bridge Over Troubled Waters is doing really great job helping homeless youth. DND Chief Dillon is working all the time to try to find places to house these folks. RA – the City has put together subsidized housing for BPS families. Email kharris@bostonpublicschools.org if you think you might know someone who'd be helped by this program?

Q: How can the rent in Boston decrease for the next generation? POAH just finished 90 units at Whittier Street in Roxbury and three bedroom units are going for \$3,600/month. What middle class family can afford that?

A: RA – the new normal's not going to be the same as the old normal. For example, I have no reason to think that these developers building luxury units are still going to be trying to push those projects. I would be surprised if there's still even a market for that. We see 16 or 18 people being displaced in 3-unit house fires because you need that many people to pool their money together to afford to live there. MF – there's a hearing tomorrow regarding Community Preservation Funds, which could potentially impact housing in the bounce back from Covid-19. Residents should tune in, and also get ready to apply for new grants in the fall. AC – there needs to be intentionality about making better rules for housing development. We need civic associations to step up and not allow developments in our neighborhoods that don't meet those values. We

also need to make sure that their income, health insurance, and everything else they bring in are also of high value.

Public Safety/Trauma

Q: What are your plans on preventing homicides?

A: RA – as a public defender I got to know a lot of people who were in really difficult situations, and none of those people wanted to be in those situations. Now during Covid, people are experiencing even more trauma, whether it be domestic violence, people who are not feeling welcome or comfortable at home. As a person of color who's seeing a therapist, I know how important it is to be able to speak with another person of color about my trauma, and for women of color being able to talk to a woman of color. Today we heard that commissioner said that he didn't care if people in state custody get sick, and that's not fair, because those people are someone's son or daughter, and someone's parents. I'm pushing for increased funding for both mental health and trauma resources. AC – Councilor Arroyo and I share Mattapan, where we're working not only with a lot more people who are getting sick and dying, but where we still are struggling with violence. I've been pushing the council to do more on the topic of youth, such as youth jobs. We're also talking about mental health. We need to be extremely intentional about setting aside some of the money that's coming in and devoting it to mental health resources, especially for people of color. We also need to choose our words and our language extremely carefully around people who are incarcerated. Obviously we don't want people walking around committing violent acts, and those people need to be held accountable, but we can't be lumping all these people together. There are some people who are ready to be released. RA – I will address this issue with the Commissioner myself, because for some people jail is just an abstract thing, but for many others it's a very issue that they deal with every day.

Youth Employment

Q: How will students get to work this summer? Are summer jobs being funded by the City? How can the private sector be involved?

A: AC – The administration did a survey of employers regarding what types of online or remote services that they could use from teens, which we asked for a copy of. Many of these employers are also hurting for money right now and need funding. It's not even new, these employers have needed additional funding for a long time. There are a lot of ways for young people to volunteer as well, reach out to Andrea Campbell to ask those questions, and stay tuned for a hearing coming up. JM – we've been convening non-profit organizations and young people to inform our thinking about what programing needs to look like in the new world. We're also offering young people an opportunity to win a raffle to have their phone bill paid. We also have a youth liaison who we've hired so please reach out to us.

V. Working Committees

Public Services Committee - Report from Matthew Skelly – We spent the last month generating a list of volunteer opportunities both in Mattapan as well as city-wide that will be sent to our mailing list shortly. Meeting tomorrow night will review ongoing issues as well as Councilor Lydia Edwards liquor license proposal.

Environment, Parks, & Energy Committee – Report from William King – We've been talking about the Harvard Street project and how we need to get input from all the neighbors.

VI. – Wrap Up Announcements

- Roudnie Celestin – make sure to sign up for the newsletter at boston.gov/coronavirus
- Briana from Councilor Wu's office – Councilor Wu tested positive for Covid-19 antibodies, but not the virus itself.