



GMNC Monthly Meeting
January 4, 2021 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
Ruby James Saucer
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
June Joseph
Cynthia Brewington
Vickey Siggers, Treasurer
David Lopes
William King
Joy Gary

Council Members Absent

Mirlande Joseph, Assistant Treasurer
Michel Gray
Nichelle Nicole Purvis-Donnell
Nikkia Jean-Charles
Lenore Perreira

II. Presenter: Kim Janey, Boston City Council President

- Now just wrapping up the first year of Presidency of the City Council, which is the most diverse Council in City history, major female, major people of color, first openly gay person, first Latinx member.
- We're not going to solve systemic racism in just one election cycle, and though we're very excited about the Biden/Harris administration, the real work for change happens at the local level.
- The year has been challenging, between Covid and witnessing George Floyd's death, which led to people getting out into the streets to demand real change. It's important to note that the elected officials of color all work together on getting the work done.
- Last year we passed ground breaking legislation around affirmatively further fair housing, banning credit checks for City employees.
- Big things we look forward to are around climate justice, economic justice, and who is prioritized in our health systems. There is more legislation coming from President Janey and her colleagues on these items. It's important for the community to stay engaged on all of these fronts.
- President Janey hails from District 7, which has a lot of inequity, with a 30 year gap in life expectancy between Symphony Hall and Grove Hall.

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – we just wrapped up the census, but the precincts in Boston haven't changed in decades. Will those be updated with the completed census?

A: I'm a founding member of MassVote, so this is an issue that's really important to me. As far as the census goes, we're concerned about getting a good count first especially due to attacks on the counting from the federal government. We definitely should re-district and re-precinct, though, we've created a whole new neighborhood in Boston since the last census so there's been a lot of changes. With the changing demographics of the community, it's really important to make sure we're giving people a fair chance to elect good representation.

Q: Can you talk more about the work that needs to be done around housing?

A: We need to be more intentional around the planning. Now the BPDA literally has to ask the question about displacement.

Q: Mary Ellis (from Facebook) – will there be any special accommodations for senior citizen housing?

A: Yes that's very important, along with housing for other vulnerable communities.

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – we've heard of a lot of residents who are basically one step away from being displaced. Are there any measures that the City Council can take to stop these people from being displaced?

A: The legislation just passed last year will help fight displacement.

The money the City is spending comes from the property taxes we all pay. So there are contracts for all the various things the City buys that comes from that money. The Council is the primary watchdog on this kind of City spending. We're hearing that more of the money is starting to go toward vendors who are people of color, but it really hasn't changed anywhere nearly enough.

Regarding construction, 51% of the hours of the projects are supposed to go to Boston residents, 40% is supposed to go to people of color. So many times we see license plates from New Hampshire and other places, and it's really important to monitor the construction sites to make sure the right stuff is going on at them.

Q: David Lopes - I have been in the construction industry for 50 years and I have seen the demise of vocational education in the Boston School system. What vision, if any does the council have in giving the young people of Boston a first rate vocational education and having a vocational high school that is open for continued education in the evenings. They have it in just about every community in Mass. except Boston.

A: I've been working really hard with other Councilors on Madison Park voc/tech, which is in District 7, but this is a really hard problem to solve because many construction outfits just like to keep their crews the way they like them. Madison Park is a piece of the puzzle, but there also need to be opportunities elsewhere, too. If you have questions about Madison Park, you should reach out to Kevin over there who's doing a really great job over there.

Q: What steps is the Council taking to assist small business owners who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, particularly POC & women-led businesses?

A: The City has a ton of different programs to help with this, but things the community at large is doing are really the exciting news, such as BECMA especially. We ALL need to be doing everything we can to support small businesses. A huge percentage of businesses won't make it through the pandemic, so we need to support our local commercial districts.

Q: What is the outcome of the opening of equitable cannabis shops as it relates to the ordinance that you drafted and was passed?

A: Now we have a public facing board that allows proponents to make their case, so it's not happening in back rooms. Social equity is really important. The bogus "War on Drugs" was really a war on Black and Brown people, and that's why our prisons are filled with those people. In Colorado, we've seen that all the cannabis shops opening up are controlled by white people. We need equal equity to non-equity applicants in Boston.

Q: What should BPS do relative to the exam school admissions process? Should the move away from entrance exams be made permanent? A: Yes that's very important, along with housing for other vulnerable communities.

III. Presenter: Kristen Halbert, Young Professionals Network Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts (YPN – ULEM)

- We work a lot on public engagement, fund raising, increasing membership
- It's a way to give back to your community. Everything we do is to give back to the community.
- The Urban League is a great way to get more involved with your community, and right now they're looking for people in the 18-40 age range.
- It's a great way to level up your professional development, while at the same time giving back to your community.
- Kristen was a part time administrative assistant at UMass Boston when she joined the Urban League, and now she's the director of engagement for Michelle Wu.
- YPN ULEM focuses on helping young people give back to their community, while also helping them get a job that will allow them to stay in their community.
- The YPN is a volunteer organization affiliated with the Urban League, and the Urban League is a national group focused primarily on workplace development. They do resume help, hospitality programs, senior workforce programming, interviewing skills, clothes for interviews if you need those... it's all about getting people safely back into the workforce.
- Get involved here: <http://www.ypnulem.org/>

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – what's the connection between how YPN ULEM works with the City vs the State government.

A: We lobby both the City and the State on various different issues, but things can take a really long time. At the City level things can take a long time, but at the State level it takes a lot longer. We can see every single that the City Council does, but at the State House, a lot of the votes and actions that are taken are anything but transparent. That's a big challenge when it comes to figuring out how get the community engaged on issues. That's why it's so important to be involved with an organization, because it's way too much to try and take on by yourself.

Q: Vice Chair Janae Tooley – how did your organization interact with communities during Covid?

A: We tried to be very safe about interacting with people.

Q: Chad Fletcher – how do we sign up for the coding issues?

A: <https://www.ulem.org/program#program>

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – could Brandy Fluker Oakley speak about the efforts toward transparency at the State level?

A: BFO – I'll be getting sworn in next week, and Act On Mass is a really important program to help move toward transparency. This has been going on for a long time now, but we're really excited about moving forward with it.

Q: Helena Tonge – I agree that transparency in the legislature is really important. Thank you so much to Brandy Flucker Oakley and Russell Holmes for being here to listen to us!

Representative Russell Holmes – I've been trying for the last ten years to be the example of the legislator you folks have been asking for, to bring the legislature to community meetings, and to bring the important issues from the neighborhood meetings, to the legislature. I've even been told sometimes not to come to community meetings unless I'm invited. I'm clear though, you guys are the boss. I sit in the meeting for an hour and 10 minutes without speaking and it's very hard to have a bidirectional conversation like that. I'm looking forward to the new year and

IV – Meeting Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes subject to corrections by Cynthia Beckford Brewington
- Seconded by David Halbert
- Approved unanimously

V. Committee Reports

1. Public Services – Report from Committee Co-Chair Matthew Skelly – Letter to BTD regarding comments on the Blue Hill Avenue project will be circled to committee members this week.
2. Zoning Committee – Report from Committee Chair David Lopes – we reviewed two projects last month:
 - a. 655 Morton Street – proposal was to change from a three family home into a 14 unit boarding house. After listening to the presentation and input from community members, the committee voted unanimously to not support this application.
Council Votes 11-0 in favor of the recommendation opposing the development
3. Housing Committee – Report from Committee Co-Chair June Joseph– Next meeting will be January 28, 2021 and the focus will be discussing the development process, and discussing proposed developments in Greater Mattapan.
4. Environmental Committee – No report this month.

VI – Wrap Up Announcements

- Because of the ongoing pandemic, the GMNC election will be held later in the year on Saturday June 5, 2021.
- Roudnie Celestin – it's been a busy day, so I'll paste my updates in the chat. Biggest update today is the Mayor signed the police reform bill today.
- Annissa Esaibi- George – Happy New Year to everyone! We're all looking forward to the new year, but there's a lot of work, and a lot of healing left to be done. I'm working really hard to get help for people and families experiencing homelessness.
- Brianna Millor for Councilor Wu's office – Happy New Year!
- Judnise Guillet from Councilor Arroyo's office checking in.
- Kenya Beamon from BPDA – Save the date January 20 for the next PLAN Mattapan meeting.
- Nita Holder from Senator Collins office – Small Business relief fund is opened back up, reach out to Sen. Collins office to help signing up for that.

- Brandy Fluker Oakley – new staff person Chris Westfall introduction. Originally from Little Rock Arkansas, went to the High School that the Little Rock 9 integrated, and Little Rock has experienced a lot of the same issues that are currently being experienced in Mattapan.