



GMNC Monthly Meeting
April 5, 2021 6:30-8:00 pm
Online Meeting via zoom

Meeting Minutes

I. Council Members Present

Fatima Ali-Salaam, Chair
Janae Tooley, Vice Chair
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
June Joseph
Joy Gary
David Halbert

Council Members Absent

Mirlande Joseph, Assistant Treasurer
Michel Gray
Cynthia Brewington
Nichelle Nicole Purvis-Donnell
William King
Vickey Siggers, Treasurer
Nikkia Jean-Charles
David Lopes
Lenore Perreira

II. Presenter: Tom Callahan, Executive Director of MAHA

- Works with GMNC member Jessie Dambreville
- All about promoting home ownership for lower income folks, especially focused in greater Boston.
- MAHA runs a 12 hour class for future homeowners, as well as a 6 hour class for folks who've already purchased their homes.
- The inspector, insurance people, real estate people – they all come into the class so you can get to know them and new buyers won't be as intimidated by the process.
- MAHA has also organized a de facto home buys union. It's really important to represent the interests of future home owners against prejudiced/predatory practices around lending and red lining.
- MAHA makes a big effort to get banks to give out more loans through the One Mortgage Program.
- There are 4 major mergers going on right now that could impact the lending the scene in Boston. All of those mergers may have an impact on the number of loans available.
- MAHA has a big focus on first generation home buyers. A lot of wealth in the country get passed down through our homes, which obviously doesn't work for everyone. Disproportionately home owners are white, so this is a big problem in terms of racial equity. Looking for more funds to improve the buying power of first generation home buyers.

- We don't have enough homes for sale that are affordable. When the average home price in Boston is more than \$600,000, you're not going to be able to afford that on a \$60,000 a year salary. We need subsidies to make this more possible.

Q: Dane Fletcher – also a West Milton resident. What is the current medium income for Mattapan and how does the median income match up to the city of Boston's metrics for affordability? We are interested in what is considered affordable for developers coming in to the City.

A: Mattapan AMI is about \$44,000 for a family of four, but generally these are calculated using the Greater Boston AMI. There's been a movement to use neighborhood median income, but it could actually backfire because places like Wellesley could also do the same thing. It really just means that in Mattapan, affordable needs to start at like 50% AMI.

Q: Matthew Skelly – are there ways to increase the number of affordable housing opportunities using the existing housing stock? Does it mean we need new development?

A: New development is essential. There are some other options that people are working on, but nothing concrete.

Q: Sarah Mayer – if our AMI in Mattapan is way lower, aren't we allowing gentrification by not making the housing affordable for our neighborhood?

A: It's two ways to get to the same goal. Basically everyone in the country uses the same model of area median income, and it's been basically impossible to get rid of. Using the current AMI tabulation

Q: Follow up – is it possible to get preference for the affordable housing for people who already live in Mattapan?

A: There's basically no model for that, and in fact in Milton they're trying to do away with such rules, but perhaps in Mattapan it could be. Also, maybe through the lens of redress, some policies could make sense to have different rules for people in different races.

Q: Rachel Idowu - I am the trust administrator for a housing trust fund that assists City residents who are employees of the City of Boston with the cost of maintaining residency in the City. One of the areas of concern I have is that although we are able to assist with the purchase of a home, the problem is there are very few programs available to assisting people in maintaining ownership of the home. Too often, the assistance we might be able to provide is inadequate to help some of our applicants to remain in the home because of the amounts past due, whether it is mortgage, utilities, or even taxes. There seem to be very few programs available to assist homeowners in keeping the property. Could you offer some resources or information that can be provided to help homeowners who may need help in maintaining their homes?

A: MAHA is working on this, it's definitely needed, and it can be seen as an anti-gentrification problem. The housing crisis further accelerates the gentrification that's happening. Working on combatting the "We Buy Ugly Houses" advertising trends.

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – what is MAHA doing with Dorchester Bay City?

A: We're actively working with them to try to figure out how to expand the pie – the linkage payments should be paid the year according to the rate the year the building is built. It's in a draft MOU, but it's not actually agreed upon yet. We also want them to invest in more home ownership instead of rental properties, which they generally also agree with but haven't formally agreed to. Also hoping that they'll go with a higher percentage of affordable units. They're at 15% now, which is higher than the City minimum of 13%, but not by much.

Follow up – we all need to make it a goal for ourselves and our Civic Associations to push for better equity around affordability. 80% AMI might be good in Milton, but it's not good enough in Mattapan.

III. Presenter: David Meshoulam and Elizabeth Lohr from Speak for the Trees

- Free tree giveaway in Mattapan at the end of the month! 100 trees available, probably the last weekend of the month, possibly at the Foley.
- Looking for a cohort of youths from Mattapan to participate in the program.
- Take this survey: <https://sftt-mattapan.questionpro.com>
- Here's the Speak for the Trees website: <https://treeboston.org/get-involved/opportunities/>

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – What type of trees? How do you make a decision on what types of trees?

A: DM – We want to diversify the types of trees, hopefully native, but we also want to keep in mind the barriers people may have toward planting very large trees.

IV. Committee Reports

1. Public Services – Report from Committee Co-Chair Matthew Skelly – Meeting last month was to discuss BlueBikes – meeting this month will be to discuss the MBTA's new planned Fare Collection program.
2. Community Benefits Committee – Report from Committee Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – Councilor Arroyo will be attending this month.
3. Environmental Committee – Report from Council Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – Wrote a letter to Commissioner Woods requesting 10 more lights along the walkway. May 10 (next meeting) there will be an update from Commissioner Woods a schedule of when the parks will be cleaned. Jessie and Vivien from Burmah Street will come on next month to talk about a food forest.
4. Zoning Committee – Report from Council Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – special zoning meeting 63-65 Violet, the developer will be submitting a construction management plan to GMNC so the residents will know what to see from the developer. There was also an agreement that DND would work with the abutter to deal with the shared retaining wall. For 844 Morton Street, there was an agreement between the direct abutter and the developer to deal with some damage to a fence and to control flooding on the site. The developer is going to be submitting a construction management and mitigation plans to GMNC. Next meeting is May 20 and we will hear from KFC and 1525 Blue Hill Avenue, who wants to convert the business space to mixed use.
5. Housing Committee - Report from Committee Chair Joy Gary – last meeting was on the Article 80 process. Next meeting will be May 27 with the BPDA. Email Joy for more info.

IV. Wrap Up Announcements

- Chris Westfall – Last week was budget week in the house. Saturday May 8 will be 100 days in office for Rep Fluker Oakley! Also starting up a community cabinet. <https://www.electbrandy.com/community-cabinet>
- Vivien Morris – Mattapan Food & Fitness Coalition is trying to encourage physical activity during these trying times. Program is walking in blue and green spaces. Go to MFFC for more info. Working on getting a date solidified for the community bike ride (maybe July 17) <https://www.mattapanfoodandfit.org/mattapanwalkspring2021challenge>