

Fenway Rezoning Off to Rocky Start



Rendering of proposed life science building on Boylston Street

By Cullen Paradis

The first steps in updating the Fenway's zoning code are already embroiled in debate as residents question whether such an impactful

decision should be made with just a few months of public input.

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) is ready to open public debate on revamping the Fenway's urban

planning guidelines after hosting a meeting of the Fenway zoning Community Advisory Committee (CAC) on November 1.

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Great Boston Fire Was Preventable

By Delaney Beaudoin

November 9 will mark the 150th anniversary of the Great Boston Fire of 1872. It decimated

Downtown Boston killing over 20 people and taught the city one of the hardest and most expensive lessons in its history.

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Rent Control Still On Wu's Agenda



By Cullen Paradis

Housing prices and the number of unhoused residents are remaining stubbornly high as officials weigh rent controls and scramble to build new units.

City officials, nonprofit leaders and academics gathered on October 26 for a public forum on addressing Boston's homeless population.

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Rep Santiago Still On The Job But from???

State Representative Jon Santiago is still serving his constituents, but from an undisclosed site in the Middle East.

Santiago normally divides his time between the state legislature and Boston Medical Center where he is an Emergency Room physician. Because of redistricting, he will represent most of the South End in the state legislature starting in January. His last deployment was to Kuwait in the fall of 2020.

A Major in the Army Reserve, he was called to active duty within the last two weeks and will return around New Years. "As a result of the limited number of physicians in the Army, deploying abroad every few years is not necessarily unusual," Santiago told The Boston Guardian during a video chat.

For "operational security"



reasons, he declined to identify his exact location other than "I'm somewhere in Iraq or Syria". Santiago is part of Operation

Inherent Resolve, a multinational task force dealing with the remnant of ISIS.

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Rezoning

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Both zoning changes and the sprawling Fenway-Kenmore Transportation Action Plan will have a public forum in early December, but the process is already coming under fire for giving Fenway residents just a few months to debate the planning future of their neighborhood.

The public was allowed into the November CAC meeting, but it was still a small crowd compared to the likely turnout for full public forums.

No specific changes are yet up for consideration, with the BPDA instead looking to community stakeholders for input on the scope and timeline of the process.

The current zoning rules date back almost 20 years, and it's not yet clear whether this update will be a small tweak or a transformative overhaul. Planners said they wanted to check whether residents still wanted mixed-use developments, whether any

new features are needed, and perhaps most importantly whether the 2004's limits are still flexible enough for Boston's economy today.

The process itself was the biggest point of debate. The timeline as it stands today has one public forum tentatively on December 5 to discuss zoning and transit, a second in January on zoning for height, usage and the frequency of exceptions and a final vote on any proposed changes in Spring 2023.

Spring would also see public forums on urban density, though a vote on any decisions for that topic is yet to be set. Many in the CAC felt that giving the public less than half a year was inadequate.

"I don't think any of us were under any illusions that this wasn't a guise to propose reopening the books on Fenway's zoning, but the last time this happened it was a large-scale collaborative process the likes of which we haven't seen since. It seems quite inappropriate that this CAC is being used as a vehicle for these large-scale changes to the neighborhood," said Alex Sawczynec.

"This timeline seems way too short. We need to have several more public meetings about this. Just because some of these projects are dependent on these changes shouldn't mean we forgo the public process this deserves."

The Fenway's many planned developments will be in limbo until any zoning changes are decided upon. The BPDA has almost 5 million square feet of projects in the pipeline, including a relocation of one of the neighborhood's largest grocery stores.

Commentators also began discussing what changes might be made, with housing and community staples like childcare the predictable focus. It's not clear, however whether it would be most effective to pursue more affordable housing through zoning or whether it should be its own separate process.

"When I served as a member of the rezoning group in 1999, the last question we were asked was whether it should be 15% on-site affordable housing or if it should be 20%, they can pay out," said Tim Horn, president of the Fenway Civic Association.

"The reason we do not have the housing we should from all this development is because we do not require affordable housing to be on-site. We need that middle-class housing. The reason people are moving out of the neighborhood is right there in the zoning."

Another question is whether neighborhood goals or commercial realities should drive the zoning code.

Many during the meeting assailed the idea that zoning should change just because many developments get exceptions to it, but City Councilor Kenzie Bok said setting a zoning code nobody winds up actually following has its own drawbacks.

"The history of the Fenway is that zoning is done project by project. The zoning map is filled with all these little boxes, and I've gotten increasingly uncomfortable with that. The reality is that we're reviewing and changing zoning on a project-by-project basis. From what I've heard it's important that we just square up to that fact, and either decide to keep doing that or have a more joined-up collective conversation," she said.

Boston Fire

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Despite its seemingly unforeseen rampage, this fire could have been prevented, according to Boston-based author, Stephanie Schorow,

"It was a disaster foretold. It was not a capricious act of nature," she said.

The more well-known Great Chicago Fire occurred just one year prior. Boston's Police Chief John Damrell at the time warned city officials of the parallels between the two cities' infrastructure, essentially predicting the Boston fire would occur if preventative measures were not taken, according to Schorow.

Despite Damrell's begging and pleading,

the city took no urgency to his recommendations. On the evening of November 9, the fire was first spotted in a building on Summer Street at around 7pm.

The fire would burn for two days, destroying over 65 acres of downtown and 776 buildings.

Schorow calculated that the fire cost the city over 1.6 billion in damages in today's dollars.

"It burned from downtown crossing to the wharf. If there hadn't been an ocean there, it would have kept going," Schorow said.

There were many factors at play that caused the fire to burn so strongly across the city. "Boston was built to burn," according to Schorow.

The main contributors to the fire's strength involved a lack of proper water

infrastructure, the abundance of wood and flammable materials in the city, a lack of adherence to safety codes and the abundance of gas mains to heat and light buildings.

Additionally, firefighters at the time were not prepared to handle a fire of such size. The water pressure that ran through the residential mains was not strong enough to put out the fire. The fire engines used had to be physically towed by men, since all of the city's horses had been infected with an equine flu that was spreading throughout the northeast.

"It was a wake-up call to the city to start doing something about the water infrastructure. There were some codes, but they weren't enforced," Schorow said. "It finally sunk through into Boston's political structure that they had to take the growth of the city

seriously." Although the Great Boston Fire caused a relatively small number of deaths and did not reach the immense acreage of the Great Chicago Fire, it is considered to be one of the most expensive fires per acre in U.S. history.

In early 2022, to commemorate the fire's 150th anniversary, Schorow published a book on the disaster and will be speaking at several events in the coming weeks.

Despite the age of the occurrence of the fire, there are still many lessons that can be taken from it, specifically concerning forest fires that have run rampant across the western U.S. in recent months, according to Schorow. "Fires are still killing people... We are still losing people to fire even though we know we need to enforce codes and safety," she said.

Rent Control

Continued from Page 1

While Boston boasts statistics far better than some major cities, housing prices continue to skyrocket and the programs in place to find permanent housing for the displaced work slowly at best.

Chief of Housing Sheila Dillon vowed to stay the course and hinted that the Wu administration is considering rent controls as winter promises to once again exacerbate the crisis.

While certain hotspots like Mass and Cass are persistent crisis points, Dillon highlighted Boston's successes relative to other cities. Housing is a problem nationwide and Boston's numbers don't look too bad from an overhead perspective.

"You may have seen on Twitter that Boston's one-bedroom apartments were over \$3,000. That's not accurate. Citywide the median rent is \$2,500, and that's either stable or slightly down from last year," she said.

"Our count in February showed 1,240 individuals in shelters, 119 on the street and 929 families in shelters. We don't want anyone to be homeless, and I hate to do this because it's still 119 people living on the street in February, but it is the lowest unsheltered rate in the county."

That's small comfort, however, to the residents in and around the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass, where the encampment has grown large enough to disrupt a lane of traffic despite a year of concentrated efforts from the city.

New arrivals from elsewhere have proven more than sufficient to overwhelm the limited successes of transitional housing programs. Dillon admits the situation is disheartening even to her but insisted that those programs are having an effect.

"When I see how long I've been in this position and then look at the stats, I think to myself, 'What am I doing wrong?' Rent prices aren't increasing as fast as they are in other places since we're increasing supply, but it's not enough," she said. "It was frustrating to hear that people we had gotten off the

street were heading back to Mass and Cass every day. But each week, each of our six sites say they're heading back less."

A range of tenant protections are expected to be up for a vote next year, and the city has \$200 million in ARPA funding to go toward affordable housing. That will be parceled out by 2024 and spent by 2026.

Dillon also said the mayor's office was reviewing a draft policy of rent controls, but would need state approval to actually implement anything and had nothing further to announce on the subject.

If the city makes a winter housing push it's unlikely to be as dramatic this year as it was in 2021.

Tania del Rio, the official in charge of coordinating the many departments addressing the Mass and Cass crisis, said in a separate interview that while they are going to try and get everyone indoors for the worst of winter weather, the city won't be opening up new shelters to the same degree they did last year.

Speakers at the public forum highlighted the need to loosen overly restrictive zoning

ordinances. "My dream is getting back to where we were in 1982. Homelessness essentially didn't exist then. Why? Because our federal government was making a major investment in housing and we didn't have all these roadblocks to creation of housing across the new market," said Joyce Tavon, senior director of policy and programs for the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance.

"Even if you were poor and struggling, there was a roof over your head. We need to bring those features and combine them with the best of what we've learned since."

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Going to the Dogs

The Downtown BID welcomes everyone as the group hosted a special Halloween gathering for dogs last Saturday.



Photo credit: Downtown BID



Jackson's Dispensary Will Combine Weed & Booze

By Cullen Paradis

Former City Councilor Tito Jackson is on the verge of opening a new combination cannabis dispensary and drinking lounge that he says could represent the future of the cannabis industry.

The establishment is actually two distinct businesses in the same building, the cannabis dispensary going by Apex Noire while the liquor store operates as Apex Bar and Lounge.

The building will have a robust manufacturing backend as well to supply the dispensary. Jackson, the CEO and owner of both companies, says the novel structure could become more common as the cannabis industry matures in the coming years.

Jackson got approval from the city to relocate a liquor license to Apex Bar and Lounge in September, and the Apex Noire dispensary has been waiting in the wings for months. Now the combined package is likely to be up and running on State Street before November is out.

"We've got a beautiful two-story cannabis dispensary to serve all of the community's needs, everything from flowers to drinks to edibles to topicals. We'll have a full menu, and both an expedited pickup option and a full-service concierge," said Jackson. "Then the top floor of the location is a rooftop bar

and lounge with a retractable glass roof." The chance for patrons to access a cannabis dispensary so close to a traditional lounge setup is a novel concept in an industry dominated by rapid-service storefronts moving customers through as quickly as possible. Jackson is confident that more businesses will be heading in his direction as stringent regulations relax and customers come to expect a more complete experience from cannabis distributors.

"It's the first business of its sort on the East Coast, and maybe nationwide. There's a synergy to having the two businesses in the same location, since typically state rules don't allow you to hang out at a cannabis shop. Having a collocated bar and lounge creates opportunities for social consumption. The industry is moving beyond simple purchases toward more of an experience," Jackson said.

While the establishment is among the quicker applicants to win approval, it's certain to face competition sooner rather than later. Licenses are becoming more common and there's already an equity applicant eyeing a location just around the corner from Apex in Quincy Market. Still, Jackson is unfazed, maintaining that Apex can keep ahead of the pack by focusing on variety, wellness and atmosphere.

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Aaron Michlewitz STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Affordable Housing Nearing at Library

By Delaney Beaudoin

Issues of height and capacity dominated the West End Branch Library affordable housing reconstruction project at the sixth public meeting held by the city on October 26.

With slightly over 60 attendees, the meeting was moderated by Joe Backer, the Senior Housing Development Officer with the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) and by Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services for the Boston Public Library.

The reconstruction on the Beacon Hill Library will include redesigning the building to accommodate the public library on the first floor, with affordable, income-based housing rentals above. The exact layout of the building, the number of units, the height and aesthetic design, will be determined in the future.

Many attendees expressed concern over the library's accessibility during construction. Foley noted that although the library would not be able to accommodate all normal services during the months-long period, they would still conduct community outreach programs and services.

A strong point of contention was whether the housing would be built with the intention of housing as many people as possible or creating as many units as possible.

One resident in attendance commented,

"I enthusiastically support the creation of income-qualified family housing on Cambridge Street. I think there is a real need for family housing, relative to the rest of the city, the project area is disproportionately supplied with single occupant housing... I think if we open the conversation and talk about housing as many people as we can, it's very different than talking about creating as many units as we can."

According to the city, the West End Library "site presents a rare opportunity to partner with the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to deliver additional deeply affordable units, thanks to a dedicated rental income subsidy, which could expand and deepen the affordable housing available to residents."

A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released before the end of this year.

Whether there would be another public meeting to review a draft RFP was left unanswered by Backer but was strongly supported by resident attendees.

"I think there are some sensitivities that the neighborhood has and that nonspecialists have that may not be quite as obvious if you are sitting in the seat of a housing office," an attendee noted. "We will take this input seriously and folks should expect more about that soon," Backer replied.

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Virtual Public Meeting

Parcel 13 Public Meeting

Monday, November 14
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/3FdbVG0
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 161 870 4523

Project Proponent:
The Peebles Corporation

Project Description:
The proposed project consists of 424,400 square feet of development, including a 125-unit, 100% affordable apartment tower and an approximately 300,000 sf, 12-story, lab/office building. The project will make accessibility and compliance upgrades to the MBTA's Hynes subway station, and will not have any on-site parking.

La información de esta reunión es fundamental para usted como residente de Bostony parte interesada. Dispone de servicios de idiomas de forma gratuita. Si los requiere, comuníquese con (sarah.black@boston.gov) antes de la siguiente fecha 11/09/2022.

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mail to: **Sarah Black**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
phone: 617.918.4282
email: sarah.black@boston.gov

Close of Comment Period:
11/30/2022

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CITY of BOSTON  Public Works

Transportation Plan Starts with Skepticism

By Cullen Paradis

City planners have begun the daunting process of unifying the Fenway's many transport projects under a single vision, but some community members remain skeptical the plan will ever be implemented.

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) held an inaugural meeting on October 25 for the Fenway-Kenmore Transportation Action Plan, an ambitious project to set the direction of transit improvements across the entire neighborhood.

It's still got a long way to go, with its first official public forums coming early next year, but already it's facing doubts from stakeholders who remember how the last action plan sputtered to a halt without ever clearing funding negotiations.

This first meeting was mainly to introduce the officials leading the efforts, gauge public priorities and to gather the project's Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a board of residents, stakeholders and community organizers tapped to represent the neighborhood. Nick Schmidt, the senior transportation planner managing the project, said they want to "set a vision and identify priorities" for Fenway's streets in the coming decade. "We've been talking about getting this going the whole year," said Nick Schmidt, senior transportation planner at the BPDA and the project manager for the action plan.

"We're here at the beginning of this process to introduce ourselves and hear what you all have to say. We want real feedback to drive funding and design decisions. We anticipate our first formal public meeting to occur sometime this winter."

The action plan would guide around a dozen city initiatives already underway, including deciding which areas the bus network will expand into, what the Fenway's curbs will look like and where new bikeshare stations are placed.

It's also an opportunity for residents to push for solutions to the Fenway's car traffic issues, which have gotten so bad in recent years they obstruct access for emergency vehicles.

"I'm looking for a plan generated by the needs of the significantly large institutions around us, specifically ambulance traffic on Boylston," said resident Kathleen McBride. "The frightening trips I see and the near misses... I can't even imagine more traffic here. There has to be a master plan about this literally life-threatening traffic, when even ambulances can't get through."

Unsurprisingly, there's a diversity of ideas as to what such a sweeping plan should look like.

While the BPDA continues to push for less car usage by investing in alternate transit infrastructure, Tom Yardley, the Longwood Collective's vice president of area planning and development, said there's a limit to how much traffic the Fenway can put on bikes.

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Community Center Gets New Director



Mallory Rohrig will join the Fenway Community Center as its Executive Director. Her first day will be November. Rohrig has been with Operation P.E.A.C.E, a neighborhood nonprofit which empowers youth, families and for 15 years

Virtual Public Meeting

409 Huntington Avenue

Wednesday, November 16
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Zoom Link: bit.ly/3VHsgbT
Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864
Meeting ID: 160 332 1992

Project Proponent:
409 Huntington LLC and Tremont Asset Management LLC

Project Description:
Proposal to redevelop an existing five-story, apartment building into a nineteen-story mixed use residential building comprising up to 157 dwelling units, up to 2,300 square feet of street-level activated retail space along Huntington Avenue, and improvements to the currently underdeveloped pocket park at the corner of the site along Huntington Avenue.

mail to: **Michael Sinatra**
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
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Close of Comment Period:
12/2/2022

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Tuesday, November 8th.

City and Stakeholders In Different Universes



By Cullen Paradis

A persistent disconnect exists between residents and the city's response to the homelessness crisis at Mass and Cass, with the Wu administration insisting that communication is ongoing while community members say they're not being heard.

Tania del Rio, the official in charge of coordinating the city's efforts in the area, maintains that the city is in regular contact with community stakeholders and that

negotiations over the Roundhouse shelter are ongoing.

Community members themselves, however, report that the city stopped holding meetings on the Roundhouse months ago and hasn't contacted them elsewhere to continue the process. The crisis itself continues unabated, with the number of people still growing and community members losing patience with the city's gentle approach.

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Franklin Institute IAG Being Ignored

By Cullen Paradis

Planning for the sale of the Benjamin Franklin Institute's current real estate on Berkeley Street has turned contentious after city officials moved to close debate despite many questions about the proposal remaining unanswered.

Members of the project's Impact Advisory Group (IAG), a community panel gathered to review the proposal, have submitted a letter to Mayor Michelle Wu and City Council President Ed Flynn asking that a vote on the project be canceled and the review period be extended.

The news that it would be pushed to a December vote despite IAG objection was delivered during an October 25 IAG meeting by James Jemison, chief of planning for the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA).

The recording of that meeting is apparently missing despite it being BPDA policy to record all meetings and upload them within 48 hours.

The public review process for 41 Berkeley Street has been rocky, with meetings pausing during the pandemic and the proposal transforming from an affordable senior housing project to a private healthcare

facility with market-rate condos.

Developers have repeatedly demurred when asked how much the units would cost, revealing only on October 25 that they would be market-rate assisted living condos averaging \$8,000 to \$9,500 monthly.

Several buildings that would be owned and operated by the same companies running the rest of the development were left out of the proposals. Julie Arnheiter, chair of the Ellis South End Neighborhood Association, accused the proponent in a prior meeting of excluding them to avoid affordable housing requirements, calling the explanations given "disingenuous."

The latest documentation addresses the question directly but still doesn't explain why they were left out, simply stating that they were not included and do not require zoning relief.

After the October 25 IAG meeting, it's possible the community will never get answers to those questions.

The BPDA's Chief of Planning joined the meeting, read a prepared statement saying that the project would be brought to a December vote and then departed before any IAG members were given a chance to speak.

Continued on Page 8

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NOVEMBER 16, 2022

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL) of Boston University will hold its annual meeting on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, 6:00-7:00 pm.

This meeting will be held virtually using Zoom. The public is invited to attend.

Please register via www.bu.edu/neidl/register for the Zoom information.

For help registering or accessing the public meeting, please contact gca@bu.edu or 617-358-9180.

Additional information on the NEIDL can be found at bu.edu/neidl.

Boston University National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories

Transportation

Continued from Page 6

“It’s important that we agree on what we’re trying to fix. We have a world-class academic and medical health center with a very unique set of demands,” he said.

“I completely buy into all the multimodal stuff, but when you’re dealing with a regional hub of 20 million square feet, the northeast’s sickest of the sick, there’s only so many people you can get out of cars. It would be ok to conclude that we need more transit capacity. There are real

limitations on what you can do on our streets.” There’s also real skepticism over whether the proposal will even make it through city government.

The last plan drafted 20 years ago amid the Fenway’s new zoning was never actually implemented, a longstanding “unfunded mandate” in

the words of Fenway Civic Association President Tim Horn. Other speakers were even more critical of the process.

“In what universe does it make sense to carry out a plan like this when there are already over eleven million square feet of development in the pipeline? The horse isn’t just out the

barn, it’s in the next state,” said Steve Wolf, a longtime community activist.

“Residents have been asking for this for years, the BPDA has admitted it’s been on its radar but did nothing. What I’m hearing is the same top-down, worst practice planning the BPDA has been guilty of in the past.”

Stakeholders

Continued from Page 7

The Roundhouse was originally framed as an emergency housing measure to get through the winter, but its lease was renewed without notifying community members.

Negotiations to secure a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the community were halted in June when residents insisted on including a specific end date for the program.

Del Rio said in an interview with *The Boston Guardian* that she didn’t know whether meetings had resumed, but said talks were continuing outside of them.

“The effort has definitely not been abandoned. I just don’t have that information, but I do know they’re in conversations and nothing new has come out of it,” said del Rio.

“We’re committed to funding the Roundhouse through June of next year. As far as where that memo is, it’s under negotiation and it’s an active conversation.”

In a follow-up, mayoral Press Secretary Ricardo Patron said they did not have information on whether meetings had resumed or what form negotiations are taking outside of those meetings.

City Councilor Frank Baker was involved in those meetings, and his office said that none had taken

place since June.

Sue Sullivan, Executive Director of the Newmarket Business Improvement District, confirmed that she’s not aware of any meeting since June when “the city just stopped scheduling them,” and said the negotiations were not continuing outside of them. “As far as I’m concerned, there are no ‘active’ negotiations,” she said.

“The city hasn’t contacted me or other businesses,” said Bill Lym, the owner of the Sunoco station adjacent to the Roundhouse and a participant in the MOU meetings.

“I’ve been trying to ask about it but haven’t gotten much information. They said it was ongoing but didn’t give me any details. They tried

to help us during the meetings, but they don’t understand how it really impacts us directly.”

The city allocated just over \$7 million to the Boston Medical Center (BMC) to operate the Roundhouse for a year, which houses 120 people.

Del Rio said it could be misleading to say that translates to \$160 per person per night, since it doesn’t account for the counseling, medical care and security of the Roundhouse. Yet residents have said in public meetings that BMC’s security is lax enough that drug deals happen through back windows.

The city houses 188 individuals in its low threshold shelters but has

recorded only 72 graduating into stable housing since the programs started. Lym and del Rio spoke soon after her interview with *The Guardian*, and Lym said that though she was “very helpful,” he still didn’t think the Roundhouse was being run properly.

“There are so many addicts hanging around the building, it’s affecting my business quite a bit. The city tries to listen, I’ve tried to contact Boston Medical Center and the city... even if you treat people here, they relapse because you allow open drug use and selling. You’re enabling them,” he said. “The city has good intentions, but they’re not running the place. BMC is, and they’re terrible.”

Dispensary

Continued from Page 3

Both new state-level legislation and local reforms are also aiming to make it easier for smaller

dispensaries to make it through the application process.

As it stands, the path to opening a dispensary is years long, prohibitively expensive and plagued by seemingly arbitrary zoning judgements.

The state, however, is moving toward the possibility of opening a fund to assist smaller applicants, and the overburdened Zoning Board of Appeals has come into the crosshairs of both the Wu administration and city

council in recent months. Jackson says things are moving in the right direction.

“In the City of Boston, the issue is buffer zones and how we’re able to equitably spread out cannabis establishments across

the city. We don’t want to wind up in a situation where there’s a ‘Green Mile’ like in Denver. It’s critical that we avoid having seven or eight dispensaries within a half-mile. It just wouldn’t make sense,” he said.

Franklin

Continued from Page 7

“In order to have a sensible and informed discussion about mitigation and community benefit options, the community and the IAG need more than a couple of days to review just received proposals. But before we discuss these crucial elements, issues associated with the actual development proposal need to be fully discussed and resolved. This is not the time to slam the door and rush the project to the BPDA Board for a vote,” reads the letter published shortly afterward by five of the seven IAG members.

“When we raised objections, the comment from BPDA project manager Dana Whiteside was, ‘noted.’ I also requested that the IAG members be allowed to have a dialogue, beyond just Q&A. There’s no opportunity to discuss anything,” said Steve Fox, IAG member and head of the South End Forum.

“His response was astonishing. He said he’d take it under advisement.” The IAG can’t even have a dialogue.”

The project is under an unusual

amount of pressure because the property hasn’t actually been bought by the developer yet, and the Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology is counting on that funding for their move to a new campus.

If the project isn’t approved, the purchase might not go through at all, leaving a cornerstone of the community in the lurch. Typically property is purchased before community negotiations begin, putting the onus on the developers to find common ground with their new neighbors.

Another wrinkle is the video record of what exactly happened at the October 25 meeting. While firsthand accounts are available from the people that attended, Whiteside said the BPDA “does not have a recording for this meeting.”

That runs counter to the agency’s standard procedure of recording all online public meetings and posting them to the project website within 48 hours. As of publication, Whiteside has not responded to questions about whether the recording was lost or never taken in the first place.

The mayor’s office did not respond to a request for comment for this article.

Santiago

Continued from Page 1

“It’s as if I never left. Given Zoom and other technologies, I keep [an intense] schedule of community meetings and constituency calls on a daily basis,” he explained. “I continue to work with colleagues and can vote remotely.”

“The hardest part will not being able to spend Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s with my new child”

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