

Pilot Block Neighborhood Association Special Meeting

November 16, 2011
South End Branch Library 6:30-8:00pm

Approximately 50 people attended, including members of the press and several attendees from nearby neighborhoods outside of the PBNA.

Meeting notes submitted by Scott Mabel, Secretary

Administrative Announcements:

- **Pending IBA/Villa Victoria events**
 - o Art Show
 - o Dance Party
 - o Contact avrodriguez@iba-etc.org

- **Neighborhood cleanup:** Meet at Tubman Park 9-noon Saturday November 19th.
 - o The cleanup will have two focus areas; Harriett Tubman Park and the Corner of West Brookline & Tremont. Additionally, brooms, rakes & tools are available to clean your alley or yard.

- **The annual PBNA wreath-hanging and sale** is upon us. Please come to the wreath building & hanging party Dec 3rd at the Alley T between Pembroke and W. Brookline St. This is the **annual major fund-raiser for the PBNA**, so donations are encouraged, as are purchases. Please see the Order & Donation Form at <http://pilotblock.org/pbnaeventandhistory.html>

- **House numbers** were available at the meeting, free of charge. Boston Police have requested that every property ensure there is a house number visible from the alley to assist them with emergency response. An attendee mentioned it might also be wise to also check your numbers on the front of your building to ensure they are present and visible.

Zoning variance for 655 Tremont:

General Discussion led by David Mooney.

- This zoning request first surfaced in September and was discussed during the October 12th Pilot Block General meeting.
- The unit at 655 Tremont is currently zoned for retail, but not restaurant or takeout. According to the zoning code;
 - o Restaurant is a 'Conditional use'.
 - o Large takeout (over 2500') is a 'Forbidden' use. Under 2500' would be 'Conditional'.
- Mr Turnbull has described the space he is renting as 2285sf. According to neighbors, ISD plans show the space as over 2500sf.
- The PBNA has requested Mr. Turnbull attend a meeting to review his plans. Thus far Mr. Turnbull has not been ready to meet and we've not been successful. We had set tonight as a 'last opportunity' date prior to a *December* ZBA hearing, and that at tonight's meeting we would vote regardless of his attendance.
- However it was noted that Mr. Turnbull had not yet agreed to meet tonight, and on Tuesday Nov 15th he announced that his ZBA hearing had been postponed to January 10th.
- In order to provide a window for PBNA action prior to the January 10th ZBA hearing, we have requested Mr Turnbull to present to the PBNA on December 15th.
- Until then, the PBNA is in a 'quiet period', which we know can be frustrating. However in the meantime, the ad-hoc neighbors' group "Voices for Fair Commercial Development", group has been very active, creating the website and petition described earlier.
- A neighbor (outside of PBNA on W. Canton St) spoke, relating lessons she learned a few years back when a building's abutters successfully argued against a zoning variance when Upper Crust tried to move into space not zoned for restaurant/takeout. In that instance, neighbors, without formal "Neighborhood Association" backing, campaigned against the variance and the ZBA declined to grant the appeal.
- Judi Wright, a neighbor on Pembroke St, noted that concerned neighbors should not wait for the various organizations to act. She said that people should individually write letters to their councilors and officials.

Neighbor Group Voices for Fair Commercial Development discussion led by Nancy Downer & Anita Polli:

- **Abutters have been considering options** and reaching out to stakeholders including:
 - City Council

- Mayor
- Neighbors and nearby neighborhood groups including PBNA, IBA, Rutland Sq, Union Park, Hurley Blocks, and other area groups.
- Set up website 'faircommercialdevelopment.blogspot.com'.
- Set up online petition with approximately 285 signatures to-date.
- Focus on how best to communicate their key concerns:
 - This is about a Large Takeout restaurant going in where one is expressly forbidden
 - Specific issues include Trash, Vermin, Parking, restaurant density.
- While guided by documented processes, Zoning is a political process. Media reports indicate that Mr. Turnbull has close ties to Mayor Menino.

Discussion of forming a working committee. Led by John

Erdman. Prior to Dec 15th, this committee will be in a formation & planning status. After Dec 15th it will represent the PBNA and advocate to various constituencies regarding the 655 Tremont zoning issue.

- Proposing a Committee of 8-10 people to address development projects within PBNA.
- Members should be diverse, representing more than just immediate abutters of 655 Tremont St.
- Draft official PBNA position (for use after Dec 15th) in both short and long formats.
- Meet with City Councilors
- Meet with abutting/nearby associations
- Meet with Mayor's office
- Meet with State Reps/Senators
- Press Strategy

Initial Membership:

- John Erdman, Chair. West Brookline St
- Karen Oshry, W Brookline St
- Marcia Sassoon. Pembroke St
- Nancy Downer. Tremont St.
- Mary Carroll. Pembroke St.
- Brian Kerr. Tremont St.
- Cecily Stetson. W Brookline St.
- Michael Lustig. W Brookline St.
- Mary Kate Maco
- Anita Polli, W Brookline St
- Patrick Plunckett, W Brookline St
- Brad Shannon (Rutland Street Association), liaison
- Steve Fox (Rutland Square Association), liaison