

the *Whistler*

Newsletter of the Baldwin Neighborhood Council | October / November 2022

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who were able to share their initial impressions of living in the Baldwin Neighborhood.

Christine Ulbricht said that she just moved to the neighborhood at the end of the summer from the other side of Porter Square. In the past year and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, she's observed a lot of commercial changes to the neighborhood and has taken note of which businesses have survived the challenges or had to pivot to meet them.

Corene Steinert recently moved to Baldwin from Houston, Texas: "My impressions of the neighborhood are still very early, but it's wonderful coming from a place that isn't really built for public interaction to a place where I can walk around and see things happening."

She said that she witnessed an act of community when her neighbor put out hundreds of plants that he had trimmed for propagation, which helped her replace some plants she had to leave behind in her move.

Longtime residents reflected on the ongoing neighborhood challenges and changes, such as becoming the Baldwin Neighborhood in 2021 and new building projects in the area. Many were also thinking about challenges faced by the Neighborhood Council.

BNC News

NOTES FROM OCTOBER 11TH MEETING

BNC Reflects on the Past Year

Returning from summer recess, Baldwin Neighborhood Council gathered virtually on October 11th and, for the third year in a row, attendees were invited to take up to three minutes to answer the following questions:

- What stands out for you about living in the neighborhood at this time?
- Describe an act of community that you witnessed or participated in.

Phoebe Sinclair, fka Agassiz Baldwin Community Liaison and BNC facilitator, said that these questions are an "opportunity to connect, spark new ideas, and inspire collaborations that strengthen the fabric of our community."

There were two new residents in attendance

NEXT BNC MONTHLY MEETING

Tuesday, February 14, 7:30 PM

ZOOM - RSVP by visiting <https://bit.ly/bnc-rsvp>

AGENDA

- BNC Logo
- Proposed amendments to Cambridge's Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO)

“I feel like we’re on an important cusp like the rest of the country,” Kate Frank shared. “We’re a neighborhood that has become gentrified, and those of us who are most active in the Neighborhood Council are people who have been fortunate enough to find permanent housing. We should make people who are not yet in a position to own feel more welcome in the Council.”

“Because I’ve been working remotely and spending more time around the neighborhood, I’ve spent more time on the street appreciating the little things,” Peggy Kutcher of Neighborhood 9 shared.

She added that she has become very conscious of the discrepancies between those in the neighborhood with a lot of space and those without. She also noted the changing commercial landscape of the neighborhood.

“We’ve lost places that were like social networks,” she said.

Joel Bard said he participates in “acts of community” each Friday when he volunteers for the fka Agassiz Baldwin Community food pantry distribution effort.

“It’s a great [effort], and it feels great to make that small contribution knowing I’m part of a much larger network that’s doing great work,” he added.

BNC Schedule and Updates

Based on the past few years, canceled meetings, and organizational needs, Ms. Sinclair proposed a schedule for 2022-23. The Council met on ZOOM on October 11 and November 8th. Meeting dates going forward include:

- Tuesday, February 14
- Tuesday, April 11 (Board Slate announced)
- Tuesday, May 9 (Annual Meeting)
- Tuesday, June 13

If agenda items arise in months with no planned

meetings, special meetings can be scheduled as needed with advance notice. *The Whistler* will also follow that schedule.

Ms. Sinclair then began a discussion of BNC challenges both new and ongoing.

“I made a list of what I’m aware of through my lens as an employee, as someone who doesn’t live in the neighborhood, and as someone committed to the Council’s health, growth, and relevance,” she said.

This list included the fluctuating numbers of regular meeting attendees, the timing of the meetings being difficult for parents of young children, and thinning connection to the Baldwin School community over the years.

“In my seventeen years here, I’ve been witness to what residents feel is in the purview of a Neighborhood Council: development, relationships with the Universities, city infrastructure projects,” she said. “However, I’m aware there are other topics that could benefit from collective attention.”

Ms. Sinclair noted that there now exists a variety of modes through which residents can engage with civic life, such as through social media, petitions, attending City Council meetings in-person or online, forming focused issue-based groups like Mass Ave For All, and more. While the Council has the benefit of longevity and many successes, residents’ limited time and attention must be considered as BNC continues forward.

“BNC is unusual in that it has paid staff,” she said. “Many of our peers are powered entirely by volunteers. Jess and I can continue to provide institutional support but, with our added time constraints, we need more partners on the ground. What’s the path to growing that capacity at BNC?”

Ms. Sinclair outlined a few needs of the fka ABC staff who support BNC meetings:

- Support to research and set meeting agendas

- Ears and eyes to the ground regarding community needs, possibly including those that may seem too large or complicated for the Council to easily or quickly address
- Help considering how to connect local needs to broader issues and efforts
- Liaising and facilitation help

Discussion

Ms. Sinclair turned the conversation to BNC to discuss and expand on these ideas.

Peggy Kutcher expressed her disappointment in how Homeowners Rehab Inc rolled out its community meetings for the project at 1627 Massachusetts Avenue, noting that there was only two days' notice before the meeting.

"This project is a real opportunity to be a showcase, not just what we already do well," she said. "It would be nice to see the community be part of the process and design."

Tom Delbanco noted two possible discussion topics for future BNC meetings.

"It sounds like the HRI issue is a topic we could discuss on our own," he said. "We've also been hearing a lot about local businesses being impacted by parking. It strikes me that here are two examples where we can rekindle in-person group conversations."

"I think it's important that we plan to meet every month so if HRI or Harvard want to meet with us, we have that time set aside," Joel Bard said.

In regards to attracting more people to meetings, Mr. Bard suggested inviting speakers with expertise in certain topics, such as gardening.

"If we could have knowledgeable people presenting at the council, talking for twenty or so minutes, I think that will bring a certain population, then they'll get interested in other issues."

Ms. Kutcher added that many current regular

meeting attendees are homeowners, and it might be worthwhile to reach out to neighborhood residents in multifamily homes or apartment buildings.

Jill Delbanco suggested shifting some meetings' start times that would be more amenable to parents of younger children with earlier bedtimes that could conflict with the usual 7:30 PM start.

The group also debated between continuing holding meetings virtually, returning to in-person meetings or establishing a hybrid option.

Mr. Delbanco said he felt that hybrid meetings were too difficult, but Skip Schiel added that, with enough money for proper equipment and trained personnel, it could possibly work for BNC.

NOTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 8TH MEETING

At last month's Baldwin Neighborhood Council meeting, Phoebe Sinclair detailed some of the Council's current needs, such as researching and setting meeting agendas, ears and eyes on the ground related to community issues, and liaising and facilitation.

Due to pandemic-related shifts within Agassiz Baldwin Community, Ms. Sinclair and BNC Scribe Jess Leach have new time constraints and are looking for community and volunteer input and support. At the November 8th meeting, Ms. Sinclair re-emphasized these needs, and that fka ABC remains committed to the Neighborhood Council; paid fka ABC staff will remain available for institutional support going forward.

BNC had also previously identified areas of further exploration, and a brief poll sent to attendees ahead of the November meeting determined the first topic of discussion: engagement approaches.

Before delving into that conversation, Ms. Sinclair posed a question to the Council:

What do you see as BNC's current purpose(s)? How does your membership or participation in BNC connect with or meet that purpose?

She invited the group to take thirty seconds to think before calling on each person to respond. She also asked that the group keep everyone's answers in mind as they considered engagement approaches.

Some said they felt that the Council provides them a connection to neighbors and the community.

"I'm a late arrival to Cambridge, spent most of my years in other communities, and I've observed some interesting things," Phil Minervino said. "Now, I view the community largely through the lives of my children and young people. My interest in sustaining this organization is [to feel] connected."

"I am here partly to meet my neighbors," Skip Schiel said. "It's frustrating to [have lived here] since 1989 and to know so few people. Learning about the community and developing relationships with neighbors are two functions that draw me here."

Others shared that the Council offers an opportunity to engage with neighbors about different issues.

"For me, it's a path to having representation on matters that affect the neighborhood," Peggy Kutcher said. "My participation is to engage with things that impact this particular area of the city, and it's the only way I know how to do it."

"The Council has served as a forum and opportunity for participating neighbors to bring up ideas and concerns," Hull Fulweiler, fka ABC-Board Director, said. "Whenever any development issues come along, this is usually where the neighbors get involved."

There were also views of how the Council could evolve.

"My sense is that to the degree the Council exists, it's reactive," Tom Delbanco said. "I wish we were more proactive and more creative."

"For me, I feel that we believe in diversity of views and diversity can occur across so many parameters," Kate Frank said, "I think the purpose is going to change as we engage with people who are not already part of our regular group."

Future Areas of Focus

Upcoming BNC meeting agendas will include different areas of focus identified at the October 11th meeting.

- Engagement approaches (proactive, reactive, etc.)
- Attracting and retaining new Council Members and participants
- Co-developing meeting agendas
- Exploring "hybrid" in-person / digital meetings

Talk to Us / Get Involved

If you have experienced hybrid meetings, we invite you to share what you've observed and what you think has worked or not worked. Email your thoughts to Phoebe Sinclair, psinclair@agassiz.org or call (617) 349-6287 x10.

The next BNC meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM. RSVP at <http://bit.ly/anc-rsvp>. (Please RSVP by 12 Noon on the day of the meeting you wish to attend.)



Community

ODE TO THE THANKSGIVING POTLUCK

It's now been three years since our last Thanksgiving Potluck - one of our agency's

longest held traditions that has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As beloved as this event is, it still feels unsafe to host a large indoor gathering that involves sharing food.



We are still looking forward to the day when a version of the Thanksgiving Potluck feels possible again.

In the meantime, we have many decades of memories to look back on: many turkeys carefully prepared, varieties of side dishes shared, interesting conversations across tables, and laughter filling the room.

Share Your Memories

We invite you to join us in the reminiscing. If you have a favorite memory to share, we'd love to hear it! Email your memories to jleach@agassiz.org and we'll share them with our community via social media.

You can also look back with us by enjoying our potluck playlist on Spotify, and viewing a collection of photos from past years' events.

- **Potluck Playlist:** <https://spoti.fi/3te54F2>
- **Photos from past years:** <https://bit.ly/potluckphotos>



GIVING TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday, November 29th, officially kicks off our annual fundraising campaign. We invite our community to support our work by making a donation or setting up a Facebook fundraiser on our behalf. Instructions to set up a Facebook fundraiser can be found here: <https://bit.ly/giving-tues-howto>

Donate to fka ABC online by following this link <https://bit.ly/donatetoabc> or by sending a check payable to Agassiz Baldwin Community to 20 Sacramento Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

THANK YOU TO OUR HALF-MARATHON RUNNERS

On November 6th, 2022, a team of community members ran the 13.1 miles of the Cambridge Half Marathon on behalf of (the organization formerly known as) Agassiz Baldwin Community and collectively raised \$2,000. The team included Baldwin School Principal Heidi Cook, Lilly Havstad, and Jana Matuskova.

All of us at fka ABC are so thankful to this team of runners who showed up for us at the half-marathon and raised critical funds for our Equity and Access Scholarship Initiative, which provides financial aid for low-income families, children,

seniors, and people of all ages to attend programs at fka Agassiz Baldwin Community.

Their effort will help us foster and maintain an inclusive and equitable environment at fka ABC, and provide low-income families with access to much needed services, such as stable and enriching childcare, opportunities in the arts, and information on wellness and access to mental health support services. You can make a donation to support this work yourself by visiting: <https://bit.ly/donatetoabc>

KIDS ONLY! HOLIDAY SALE AND MAUD'S HANDMADE HOLIDAY MARKET RETURN

After a two-year hiatus, the Kids Only! Holiday Sale is returning! The sale will take place over two days, December 9th from 3:00 to 6:30 PM and December 10th from 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM, in the studios at Maud Morgan Arts.



Begun in 1986, the Kids Only Holiday Sale provides an opportunity for school-age children to purchase gifts for family and friends in a safe, supportive, and fun environment. Fka Agassiz Baldwin Community views this event as an opportunity for children to learn how to use money as well as enjoy the benefits of gift-giving.

The Kids Only Holiday Sale is open to the general public as well as to children participating in fka Agassiz Baldwin Programs. As per our tradition, only children (0-18) and Agassiz Baldwin teaching staff may enter the sale space, but very young children (0-6) can invite adults to accompany them if they need extra help making a selection.

Proceeds from the sale support the fka ABC Equity and Access Scholarship Fund, which

provides scholarships to children and adults living in poverty or lower middle-income households to participate in fka ABC programs.

While the children shop, adults are invited to enjoy Maud's Handmade Holiday Market. First held in 2019, this market will offer a selection of handmade goods by local artists for excellent holiday gift-giving. This market will run simultaneously with Kids Only! Holiday Sale, -with special extended hours Friday evening from 6:30 to 8:00 PM.

When: Friday, December 9th, 3:00-6:30 PM
Free MHHM Reception, 6:30-8:00 PM
Saturday, December 10th, 10:30 AM-1:30 PM (while supplies last)

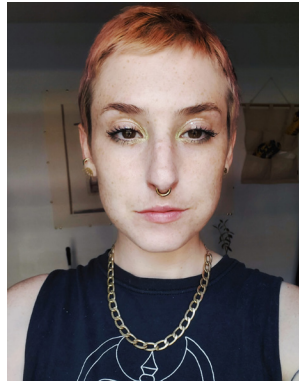
Where: 20A Sacramento Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Volunteer
Former Afterschool alums interested in volunteering to help out at the Kids Only! Holiday sale should reach out to jleach@agassiz.org.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS STAFFING UPDATES

We are very happy to announce that Eli Quinn will be stepping into the role of 3rd-5th Grade Site Director. As an afterschool and Outback teacher, they have proven to be a strong member of our team and a great leader, and have built many wonderful relationships with kids in our programs. We are looking forward to seeing how they grow in their new role! Eli can be contacted at equinn@agassiz.org



Our former 3rd-5th Grade Site Director, Steven Vinolas, moved onto an exciting new position at the MIT Music Library. Join us in wishing Steven the best of luck in this new adventure. We thank them for their leadership and hard work these past few months. They will be missed!

After interning and teaching in our programs for four years, Stephanie Guevara will now serve as our Children's Programs Registration Coordinator. In addition to her responsibilities as Registration Coordinator, Stephanie will still be teaching in the Kindergarten program in the afternoons. Congrats Stephanie! Stephanie can be contacted at registration@agassiz.org



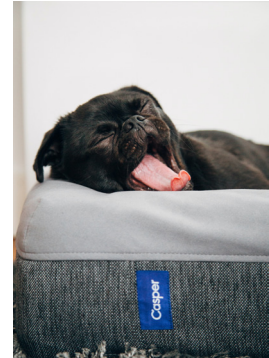
Read more staff bios on our website at: bit.ly/abc-program-staff

City Wide

MATTRESS RECYCLING

Prepared by MassDEP

As of November 1st, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection expanded its waste disposal bans by adding mattresses and textiles to the list of materials banned from disposal or transport for disposal in MA.



Discarded mattresses can be difficult to manage. They are expensive to transport, hard to compact, take up lots of landfill space, and can damage incinerator processing equipment. Yet mattresses are made up mostly of recyclable materials. Once disassembled, more than 75 percent of their components can be reused. This is better for the environment, the economy, and municipal waste management budgets.

Cambridge offers free curbside pick-up. Schedule one at cambridgema.gov/Mattress

For info about MassDEP Waste Disposal Bans, please visit: <http://bit.ly/3GI6JdU>



CITY NIGHT READINGS AT LITTLE CREPE CAFE

The City Night Readings series brings together poets, writers, performers, and lovers of literature, poetry, and writing for an evening of reading every three months at Little Crepe Cafe, 102 Oxford St. Most events run from 6:00-8:00 PM. Produced by Jean-Dany Joachim and sponsored in part by Cambridge Arts, the schedule and other information is available online at: www.citynightreadings.com/events

Community Calendar

December 2022 & January 2023

Sunday, December 18th

Hanukkah begins at sundown

Sunday, December 25th

Christmas

Monday, December 26th

Kwanzaa begins

Monday, December 26th-Monday, January 2nd

fka ABC & Maud Morgan Arts programs closed for winter holidays

The Whistler is published monthly September-June by the Agassiz Baldwin Community, distribution 600 in 2022. Call (617) 349-6287 to receive by email or mail. The newsletter is available online at www.agassiz.org. Items of interest to the neighborhood should be submitted for consideration no later than the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Editorial team: Phoebe Sinclair, Community Liaison & Editor; Jessica Leach, Scribe; Ashley Yee, Guest Writer. ABC is located on the traditional homelands of the Massachusetts people, and their close neighbors and relatives, the Nipmuc and Wampanoag.

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DO NOT FORWARD



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