

MEETING NOTES

17-Apr-2025

Meeting Date: 4/15/2026

Location: Zoom

Topic: Jamaica Plain Boathouse and Bandstand Community Meeting #1

Attendees:

Panelists:

Kezia Ofiesh – BPDR
Alistair Lucks – PFD
Evan Brinkman – PFD
Whitney Hansley – PFD
Jason Bowers – Annum Architects
Ashley Merchant – Annum Architects
Mark Pantano – Annum Architects

Other Public Officials:

Carlton Jones – Executive Director of PFD
Ann Cushing from State Senator Mike Rush’s Office
Michael Giodano from Representative MacGregor’s Office
Melissa Beltran from City Counselor Benjamin Weber’s office

Approx. 64 community members, including the attendees listed above

A copy of the presentation can be found on the Parks Department project website.

Presentation:

- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) shared the agenda and expectations for the meeting.
- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained the different stakeholders and goals for the project, including the importance of community feedback.
- Alistair Lucks (PFD) presented the schedule and scope of the project.
 - The current project is a feasibility study which will be followed by a budgeting process, then design and construction. There will be more opportunities for community feedback during the design phase of the project that comes out of this study.
 - This process is likely to extend 3.5+ years from the study through construction.
- Alistair Lucks (PFD) explained the process for gathering feedback for the project.
 - Nearly 300 survey responses were received.
 - There is a project website boston.gov/jamaica-pond-boathouse
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) shared the context and history of Jamaica Pond and the Jamaica Pond Boathouse and Bandstand including historic designations.
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) described the existing physical conditions of the buildings and recommended scope of repairs.

- Many exterior and interior materials are in need of repair or replacement.
- There is a structural issue that will be stabilized in a separate project with a faster schedule than this study.
- Most building systems are at the end of their service life.
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) provided information about the current uses of each space in the buildings which are operated by Courageous Sailing (Boathouse) and Parks Department (Bandstand).
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) shared some of the community feedback that the team has already received from the survey, with a focus on the expanded uses that the community might like to see at the Boathouse in the future.

Clarification Questions from Community:

- Daniel Moon asked whether the Bandstand is part of the project.
 - *Yes, the Bandstand is part of the project.*
- Daniel Moon asked how the project got started.
 - *Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained the ongoing interest in improving the condition of the building and the requirement for structural repairs.*
- Tony Dreyfus from Friends of Jamaica Pond asked about the budget for the boathouse study and whether the money could be used for the repair and improvements.
 - *Alistair Lucks (PFD) explained that the budget might not all be expended, but any leftover money will not be enough for the design and construction of repairs.*
- Deacon Marvel asked about the scope of the project.
 - *The City envisions a repair and renovation project, not an expansion project.*
- Alexandra Rollings asked about the difference between the structural and design projects.
 - *Ashley Merchant (Annum) clarified that the structural issues are being addressed sooner than the design project because the building needs to be stabilized.*

Community Feedback:

- Jason Bowers (Annum) moderated a discussion of community visioning for this project around five key questions.
- *What values should guide decision making on future uses?*
 - Luke Tarbi emphasizes valuing the outdoors and facilitating enjoyment of outdoors for all four seasons. He notes that the site does a great job in the summer and perhaps could do more in the other seasons.
 - Brian Murray stresses preserving as much natural aesthetic as possible and does not support adding bleachers for viewing Bandstand performances.
 - Spencer Baldwin highlights equitability and keeping costs affordable, especially if a vendor is involved.
 - Spencer Baldwin also underscores the need for accessibility.
 - Alexandra Rollins points to long-term preservation. She notes that the buildings are an important component of the community.
 - Evan Berry advocates cultivating a vibrant third space.

- Deacon Marvel calls for a balance between the site's historical significance within the Emerald Necklace and its place in the Jamaica Plain community.
- Anya Guyer encourages analog engagement of kids and youth who might not attend a community meeting or provide feedback in other ways.
- Connor Shea notes in the chat support for a food anchor.

- *What are the most important things for a renovation of these buildings to achieve?*
 - Rani Schloss emphasizes the importance of year-round bathroom access and lists in the chat that climate resiliency, beauty, and accessibility are priorities.
 - Alistair Lucks calls for year-round drinking water.
 - Pamela Hatchfield supports offering winter nature programs.
 - Mark Freudenberger stresses the need for electricity to support programming in the Bandstand, especially for bands performing there.
 - Jeffrey Ferris points out that bathrooms should be open more hours of the day. He notes that runners and homeless people use the bathrooms from dawn to dusk.
 - Luke Tarbi suggests that perhaps other nonprofits could use the Boathouse in different seasons. He notes that the building is currently occupied by Courageous Sailing all year but seems underutilized for the community outside sailing season.
 - Spencer Baldwin highlights the need for publicly-accessible electricity for charging bikes, medical devices, and devices used by homeless people.
 - Alexandra Rollins argues that enough bathrooms must be open for people to use, especially runners. She adds that porta potties are a blight on the landscape, even if adding onto the building or adding a building is required.
 - Mark Freudenberger advocates for free meeting spaces year round.
 - Deacon Marvel envisions a year-round café. He describes it as somewhere to go in the winter for hot cocoa, warming up, or socializing.
 - Nancy Krieger proposes an art gallery mixed with a café.
 - Spencer Baldwin calls for better trash cans.
 - Anya Guyer raises the need for improved access for vehicles supporting a vendor in the space and better drop-off and pickup logistics.
 - Evan Berry references Jane Jacobs in noting the importance of the proximity of commercial locations to activating parks. He also calls for better winter programming that reflects New England identity.
 - Jeffrey Ferris asks whether the fireplace works. He would like to see a working fireplace and hot chocolate.
 - *Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) says that the team does not know whether the fireplace currently works.*
 - Melissa Beltran encourages youth job opportunities, such as for building maintenance or running programs. She also stresses making sure information is available in Spanish. She would love to see young people in the space.
 - Simeon Litchenstein recommends offering sled rentals.
 - Mark Freudenberger calls for more stylish trash cans.

- *How can a renovation improve the functionality of the buildings?*
 - Daniel Moon urges making the second-story spaces accessible, especially in the Boathouse.
 - Mark Freudenberger reiterates the need for bathrooms.
 - Spencer Baldwin recommends installing an ADA accessible wheelchair lift for the Bandstand.
 - Alexandra Rollins encourages adding ramps and lowering thresholds to help people using walkers or canes. She notes that these small interventions would not change the character of the building but would allow for modern use.
 - Spencer Baldwin suggests offering soccer ball and football rentals.
 - Mark Freudenberger calls for an improved and updated Nature Center.
 - Don Haber stresses the need for wheelchair-accessible bathrooms with a push button. He notes that ADA standards on door pressure are not enough for some users.
 - Connor Shea requests private lactation space.
 - Jeffrey Ferris asks what the contract with Courageous Sailing entails.
 - *Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) notes that Courageous Sailing's lease extends through 2027.*
 - Anya Guyer proposes adding a community message board.
 - Spencer Baldwin believes local artist display space would be a draw and an opportunity for young artists.

- *What feedback do you have about the Nature Center?*
 - Mark Freudenberger says the Nature Center hours are not fixed, which is an issue. He notes that the Nature Center feels like it hasn't been updated since 1940s, with stuffed animals and handouts as its content. If a nature center is desired, it must be modernized and have fixed hours known to the public.
 - Deacon Marvel remarks that he didn't know about the Nature Center despite using the buildings for the last 30 years. He says the space seems underutilized and asks whether the space can have a more public use.
 - Luke Tarbi argues that the Nature Center is not the best use of the space. He notes that the center is rarely open; he has never seen it open despite being at the Pond every day. It could be better used for food, artwork, or dining tables.
 - Even Berry notes that the Nature Center is locked all the time. He says the space should be more usable and flexible.
 - Alexandra Rollins says she loves the Nature Center but believes it is not utilized well. She adds that it could be dual use.
 - Mark Freudenberger adds that right now the Nature Center seems like a warming station for the rangers in the winter.
 - *Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained that the Nature Center space is also used as a Ranger Station for responding to communication and safety issues.*
 - Mary Morgan suggests future collaboration with the Museum of Science or Blue Hills. She says it is important to have a space for learning about habitats in the area.

- Daniel Moon says the agreement with the Ranger is for the Nature Center to be open whenever Rangers are present. He notes that this is not what he observes because it appears the Rangers aren't there frequently. He says he doesn't see the Rangers as being available to the public and thinks the arrangement needs to be revisited.
 - Jonathan Brush asks how the public can contact the Rangers if needed.
 - *Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) notes that one would need to call the Parks main line and ask to connect.*
 - Spence Baldwin calls for better signage explaining the history of the Pond and the Park.
 - Anya Guyer supports more collaboration with the JP Historical Society.
 - Connor Shea highlights the need for a "Rangers are Here" sign so people know when the Center is open.
 - Hope Olson advocates keeping the Nature Center. She suggests considering hiring an educator to keep the space consistently open.
 - Spencer Baldwin states that the content inside the Nature Center needs updating.
 - Hope Olson adds that the Nature Center needs updated signage and consistent hours and advocates for it to be kept as a nature center.
- *How can these spaces better serve the surrounding neighborhood?*
 - Evan Berry envisions the space being used for cultural convening and notes that the paths adjacent to the boathouse can get blocked when crowds congregate.
 - Jonathan Brush calls for better signage designating bike use.
 - Mark Freudenberger recommends updated signage about nature.
 - *What new uses would you like to see in this location?*
 - Luke Tarbi proposes outdoor movie screenings.
 - Jonathan Brush suggests adding a café.
 - Spencer Baldwin recommends a partnership with Coolidge Corner Theater.
 - Mark Fruedenberger also supports adding a café.
 - Connor Shea calls for family restrooms.
 - Alexandra Rollins proposes a community bulletin board to post events and environmental issues, such as warnings when the Pond is polluted.
 - Melissa Beltran suggests adding a smoothie bar.
 - Deacon Marvel supports more infrastructure for public events in outdoor areas.
 - Spencer Baldwin recommends installing a pollution meter for water and signage indicating smokey wildfire conditions.
 - Jayme lerna cautions that adding food and drink will result in more trash.
 - Tony Dreyfus argues that a serious environmental education program with daily air and water quality information could replace the Nature Center.
 - Mark Freudenberger advocates for upstairs space for community use, musicians, artists, and meetings.

Next Steps:

- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained that the team will save the chat, update the Miro board, and post both on the project website.
- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) directed participants to the project website for updates and shared her contact information for further feedback.
- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) sent a link for another community survey with discussion questions. That survey will be open until May.
- The next community meeting for the Boathouse project will be in June, in person.

Notes prepared by: Mark Pantano

This is Annum Architects' understanding of the issues discussed during our presence; please issue any clarifications/omissions to Annum Architects within five working days of receipt of these minutes.



What values should guide decision-making on future uses?

enjoyment of
the outdoors
for 4 seasons

Preserve
nature

Equitability,
affordability,
accessibility

Long-term
building
preservation

Community
Connection

Sustainability

Cultivating
a vibrant
third space

Analog
engagement

Gem of the
Emerald
Necklace



What are the most important things for a renovation of these buildings to achieve?

Year-round/more
hours bathroom
& drinking water
access

Accessibility

Electricity
for
Bandstand

Use in Winter,
broader
programming

Public
Charging

remove
porta-
potties

Reservable
space for
public
meetings

Full-
year use

Small
vendor
space

Profits from
boathouse
going back
to



How can a renovation improve the functionality of the buildings?

Accessibility
to upper
levels

Bathrooms
/ Accessible
bathroom
entrances

Youth job
opportunities
- information
in mult.
languages

Thresholds -
small
improvements

Sports
equipment
rentals
(soccer/footba
ll)

Sled
rentals

Private
lactation
spaces

Fireplace

Better
looking
trash cans

Space
for local
artists



How can these spaces better serve the surrounding neighborhood?

More
predictable
nature
center hours

More
dynamic
nature
center

Concern
about vehicles
servicing
vendor
program

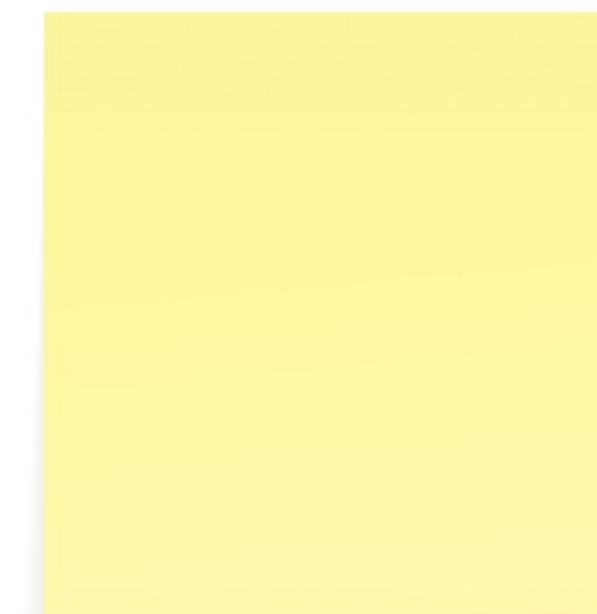
More
inclusive,
accessible use
of Nature
Center

Improved
Nature Center
- shared
programming

Better
historical
signage

Support
for
musicians
in space

Pedestrian
flow during
music
performances





What new uses would you like to see in this location?

Outdoor
movies
(infrastructure)

Cafe,
smoothie
bar

Community
Signage
Board

Environmental
conditions
information

Upstairs
Community
Room for
musicians &
artists

Community
Meeting
Space

Family
Restrooms

