

Neighborhood
Association of the
Back Bay



Bulletin

November 2020

Architecture Committee Report Susan Prindle, Chair

This month we reviewed proposals in the residential district. Three of these were roof decks, which proved to be controversial.

At **341 Commonwealth Avenue** we did not support a proposal for a small roof deck which does not comply with the setback guidelines. The Commission denied the proposal without prejudice, which means the applicant can try again. At **353 Beacon Street** a roof deck was proposed which is close to the corner of Fairfield and will be quite visible from Beacon. We asked that rather than raising the party wall (which is forbidden in the guidelines) the applicant seek to lower the deck and pull it away from Fairfield and Beacon. This application was also denied without prejudice. At **166 Marlborough Street** the owner asked for an exterior stair on the front façade between the existing fourth floor deck and a proposed new fifth floor deck. Both the exterior stair and the new upper deck would be highly visible from Marlborough Street and from the alley. We did not support the application, which is contrary to Commission practice. The Commission denied it.

At **208 Beacon Street** we did not oppose the insertion of a bay under an existing oriel on the rear façade. Although we generally support preserving oriels in their original state, this application is on Back Street behind a large garage structure, and will not be visible. The Commission approved the application.

We reviewed the new mockup of a proposed headhouse at **126 Marlborough Street**. (The deck was approved in July.) The new mockup is visible from the Playground, but there are still too many trees in the way to see whether it will impact Clarendon Street. The application was withdrawn until next month when its visibility can be better assessed.

At **53 Marlborough Street and 300 Berkeley Street** the French Cultural Center is undertaking a major renovation requiring an extensive air conditioning system. Since it is not clear that it can be built in compliance with the City of Boston Noise Ordinance we asked the Commission to delay any vote until the equipment is proved to be compliant with the ordinance, and asked the architect to investigate quieter equipment. The application was withdrawn from the October agenda so that this issue can be reviewed and hopefully resolved.

And lastly, our committee voted in September to not oppose two zoning variances for **4 Marlborough Street**, which was heard on October 20. Those of you who follow our reports may be surprised at our nonopposition, so let me elaborate. The most controversial of these is a height variance, which is the result of replacing an existing headhouse which is already over 65' with a smaller and lower one. The other is a rear yard setback which is triggered by widening an existing previously altered bay to permit a garage door to be installed. The bay will not extend further towards the alley. Our nonopposition was supported by the Executive Committee.

Visit us on the web @ www.nabbonline.org

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Join the Homelessness Task Force

Vicki Smith and Kathleen Young, co-chairs

We hope new members will join us in addressing homelessness as the Covid 19 pandemic forces more people deeper into poverty, eviction and joblessness.

Two years ago, a completely new NABB group came together with the objectives of improving safety in the neighborhood and mitigating homelessness through education and advocacy. We learned that homelessness is the intersection of society's cumulative challenges of affordable housing, incarceration, foster care, addiction and mental health. We have met with those who serve this population, including the City of Boston, Pine Street Inn, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program (BHCHP), and the Women's Lunch Place.

In June 2019, our task force's educational forum on homelessness attended by over 300 neighbors was held at the Main Boston Public Library. The program featured leaders of the major provider groups as well as our District Police and the City of Boston Police Commissioner's office and a formerly homeless person. In November 2019, we orchestrated a joint fundraiser with the Women's Lunch Place (WLP) on Newbury Street. The priorities now are for an increase in regional services to relieve Boston's over-taxed shelter system, for better availability and access to affordable housing and for expanded services for mental health and substance disorder.

As the pandemic took hold, we witnessed how Boston's homeless caretakers implemented state of the art screening and social distancing protocols to responsibly provide for homeless individuals and prevent the spread in the community. Despite a robust outreach and shelter system, there are still persons with untreated addiction and mental health problems wandering about the City who do not engage in available services.

As we enter the frigid winter season, many of our fellow citizens are facing new challenges resulting from the devastation of this pandemic. The need for healthcare and shelter for those who will be displaced and without permanent housing has never been more important. We are looking for ways to positively address this very complex issue. We recently listened to an enlightening webinar by the Mass Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHASA). You can learn more by perusing the websites of the homelessness service providers. Please let us know if you would like to join our spirited group at one of our virtual meetings as we brainstorm plans for our 2021 programs. Contact homelessness@nabbonline.org.

Licensing and Building Use Committee Report

Conrad Armstrong, Chair

The Licensing and Building Use Committee received no applications in October, so unless we receive a last-minute application there will be no meeting on November 2. If we receive applications in November, we'll host a virtual meeting December 7, 7:00 pm.

Election Day—November 3rd

Vote in Person on Election Day

Polling locations will be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Tuesday, November 3. To find your voting location and for other information go to: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/election>

No Advertising on the Comm Ave Mall

Recently, the management of an apartment building located in the Back Bay stenciled advertising in chalk on the pavement on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. They were instructed that this was not allowed and the advertising was removed.

The Commonwealth Avenue Mall is one of the treasures of the Back Bay, revered by residents and visitors alike. Advertising on the Mall detracts from the park experience and should be reported to the Mayor's hotline at 311 and also with an email to: commavemall@nabbonline.org.

Fall Back—Don't Forget to Reset Your Clocks

Daylight savings time ends at 2:00 AM on Sunday, November 1, 2020
Please remember to set your clocks back an hour.

A Message From the NABB President

As we transition from Halloween to Thanksgiving and the colder weather that comes with the holiday season, we hope you are all well and managing in these COVID times. We also hope you know that NABB continues to actively work on your behalf despite, and because of, the pandemic, and we hope you will consider joining us!

We understand from the responses to our questionnaire sent this past summer that information provided on our updated and improved website served as an important resource, particularly early in the pandemic. We also have learned from our questionnaire that our members are looking for ways to actively engage in outreach efforts to assist underserved communities throughout the city and address social justice and racial issues. Please know that even with the limitations COVID imposes, NABB still offers many opportunities to become involved in Back Bay and citywide concerns, as well as attend special events, and participate in social activities, both virtually, and where possible within the CDC guidelines and state and local regulations, in-person. Consistent with NABB's mission, the challenge for all of us is how to stay, or become, actively engaged in our neighborhood and our city. To that end, we encourage you to join one of our many committees and friends and neighbors' groups.

Among others, NABB's many longstanding committees, such as Architecture, Licensing and Building Use, Development and Transportation, Green Committee, Graffiti NABBERS, Commonwealth Mall, City Services and Groundwater all continue to meet virtually to deal with ongoing projects and proposals that affect residents, as well as the business community, in the Back Bay. Our Special Events Committee just held a virtual Evening of African American History in Massachusetts with Rosalyn Delores Elder which was attended by more fifty people and enjoyed by all! A special thank you to Gail Laffer for all of her efforts in putting this program together! We have a new Mom's Group and encourage all who are interested to connect with neighbors with young families and forge new friendships. Many may recall the creation of the Homelessness Task Force (HTF) two years ago to address safety issues and the plight of the homeless through a FORUM attended by three hundred people at the Boston Public Library followed several months later by a joint fundraiser with the Women's Lunch Place. The HTF is continuing with its work planning its 2021 programs, now all the more important because of the impact of the pandemic on the homeless in our city.

There is still so much we can and need to do, and perhaps now have more time for with the limitations imposed by the pandemic. If a committee or group interests you, please contact info@nabbonline.org for more information about how to become actively involved. If you have ideas about creating new social events, virtually or in-person where possible safely, we invite you to share them with us!
We look forward to hearing from you and wish you all a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Patricia Corrigan, President

Committee Meetings:

NABB committees will continue to be actively engaged and operate virtually, as well as via email and phone, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect the health of members and the community at large, at this time, in-person meetings are permissible so long as CDC guidelines and state and local regulations are followed, including masks and "social distancing" as recommended. If a person wishing to attend an in-person meeting does not feel comfortable doing so, then the option to participate virtually should be made available. Committee chairs will coordinate with members as appropriate to communicate and can "meet" via Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms. As we navigate these difficult times, please let us know if you have other ideas about how we can, and you would like to, continue with our ongoing activities safely.

The **Architecture Committee** normally meets on the first Tuesday of each month. *However the next meeting will be on **Wednesday, Nov 4th at 6:00 pm** via Zoom.* For more information contact Sue Prindle at architecture@nabbonline.org.

The **Development and Transportation Committee** will meet via Zoom at 5:30 pm on November 24th. For more information or to RSVP for this meeting, please email Jackie Yessian at dtnabb@nabbonline.org
December meeting: Dec. 22

The **Green Committee** normally meets at 5:30 pm on the second Wednesday of each month. For more information, please contact Michael McCord at green@nabbonline.org

Friends and Neighbors:

NABB Friends and Neighbors Groups, as with our committees, will continue to be actively engaged and operate virtually, as well as via email and phone, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect the health of members and the community at large, at this time, in-person meetings are permissible so long as CDC guidelines and state and local regulations are followed, including masks and "social distancing" as recommended. If a person wishing to attend an in-person meeting does not feel comfortable doing so, then the option to participate virtually should be made available. Chairs of NABB Groups will coordinate with members to communicate as appropriate and "meet" via Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms. As we navigate these difficult times, please let us know if you have other ideas about how we can, and you would like to, continue with our ongoing activities safely.

The **Men's Discussion Group** will meet via Zoom at noon on Nov. 17th the 3rd Tuesday of November.. More information: please contact Grant Schaumburg at: mensgroup@nabbonline.org.

The **NABB Parking Group** will hold a meeting via Zoom on Nov. 17, 2020 at 7:00 pm. For more information and to register for the meeting email: parkinggroup@nabbonline.org

