

**Fresh Pond Residents Alliance**  
**Wednesday, July 22, 2015**  
**Tobin School, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM**

**Present:** FPRA Board Members Jan Devereux (President), Terry Drucker (Treasurer), Langley Keyes (Officer), Peggy Barnes Lenart (Secretary), and Jay Yesselman (Vice President); and Pardis Saffari (Project Planner, Cambridge Economic Development Department).

**1. Pardis Saffari, Project Planner with the city's Economic Development Department,** briefed us on a **retail customer intercept survey in the Fresh Pond/Alewife area, to be conducted September 12<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup>.** She asked us for our suggestions about when and where to best conduct the survey, and also for volunteers to help with two-hour shifts; one-hour is fine if two hours are not possible. Suggestions for survey sites and times included: Fresh Pond Mall (weekdays at 4 PM, and weekends, especially Sunday), Tobin School (weekdays at student drop-off and pick-up times), and the FPRA PARK(ing) Day location. Trader Joe's, Alewife T station, and other places in the area will also be survey locations.

**2. PARK(ing) Day on Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>** – Jan announced that FPRA will have a space in this year's PARK(ing) Day, a global event where the city allows groups of residents, artists, activists to creatively repurpose parking spaces into parklets or themed displays to call attention to the need for quality urban open space and to generate discussion around how public space is allocated and created. Jan asked for volunteers who are interested in helping conceive and execute a concept and/or in helping out on the day of the event to contact her. The design and construction of the display can be very simple. The parking spot will be available 8 AM – 5 PM on September 18<sup>th</sup>. (Post-meeting update: The FPRA PARK(ing) Day installation will be on Vassal Lane in front of the Tobin School. The installation is being planned by Jan along with Amy Munsat, Regina Googins and Ellen Aronson. The concept is “What makes a great neighborhood?” Other volunteers are needed to be in the space throughout the day — we need at least 1 person there, ideally with a second person.) Please email Jan ([jan.devereux@gmail.com](mailto:jan.devereux@gmail.com)) if you are available to help on Sept 18<sup>th</sup>.

**3. Tokyo Restaurant site (307 Fresh Pond Parkway)** – Jan gave updates on the proposed development of this site. The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) was scheduled to hear on August 27<sup>th</sup> the request of property owner (Mr. Elie Al-Lakkis) for a special permit and variances that would enable the former restaurant to be used as an extension of his auto repair garage located next door. (Post-meeting update: BZA hearing was postponed on the day of the hearing to **October 22<sup>nd</sup>**.) A number of questions and concerns regarding this proposal were discussed, including importantly why the Parkway Overlay District (Sec. 20.60 Ordinance) was not being applied. Jan has tried to get answers from CDD and also has spoken with a Planning Board member. In general, the purpose of this overlay district is to create a sense of place, and “to encourage development which will protect and enhance the use and enjoyment of public open space resources” ([https://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Ordinance/zo\\_article20\\_1363.pdf](https://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Ordinance/zo_article20_1363.pdf)). As mentioned, Jan arranged for some

members of the FPRA Board and Councilor Dennis Carlone to meet with the property owner's lawyer to discuss the design and use of the property, and the need to create and maintain safe pathways alongside it. One of the residents' greatest concerns with the current design was for attractive and adequate screening of the parking lot with natural plantings and quality fencing alongside Vassal Lane and the Tobin School. Creating and maintaining safe pedestrian, bike, and auto pathways alongside the property also was emphasized at the FPRA meeting, and a resident made the suggestion that a design needs to include clear sight lines for safe exit onto Vassal Lane from the Tobin School driveway that abuts the site. This intersection has been a problem. Residents may look for updates about possible revisions to the plans on the FPRA blog, and submit comments to the BZA by emailing Maria Pacheco at [mpacheco@cambridgema.gov](mailto:mpacheco@cambridgema.gov)

**4. Presentation of the three finalist firms for the City-wide Master Plan** will be on Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at City Hall. Jan encouraged residents to attend, there will be some time allowed for the public to ask questions. The three finalists' Request for Qualifications ("RFQ") submissions may be read online and at a few public libraries. (Post-meeting update: the Boston firm *Utile* was selected.) Generally, concerns about the previous planning of the Concord-Alewife Fresh Pond area were mainly that the process lacked a wide participatory spectrum of neighborhood stakeholders on the Advisory Board, and that the final report lacked grounded action steps and timelines. In addition, a resident expressed the opinion that the special permitting guidelines in the last Concord-Alewife study were not followed in the recent development approval decisions. Residents were encouraged to be actively involved when the chosen firm begins to engage with the Fresh Pond-Alewife area community this fall.

**5. Forbes Plaza** (open space in front of *Au Bon Pain* at Harvard Square) – James Williamson presented concerns about Harvard University's proposed design for extension of its Smith Campus Center building at that site, and the resulting reduction to the outdoor open space plaza available to the public, especially at this central location in Harvard Square. The public may go into the Smith Campus Center (previously, "Holyoke Center") arcade to view the plans. The BZA was scheduled to hear the proposal on July 30<sup>th</sup>. Letters and emails may be sent to the BZA. (Post-meeting update: The case was continued in light of public opposition and Harvard is working on a revised plan.)

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Minutes submitted by Peggy Barnes Lenart