

MEETING NOTES

18-Jun-2025

Meeting Date: 6/9/2026

Location: Curtis Hall Community Center, Boston

Topic: Jamaica Plain Boathouse and Bandstand Community Meeting #2

Attendees:

Panelists:

Kezia Ofiesh – BPRD
My'kel McMillen - BPRD
Alistair Lucks – PFD
Evan Brinkman – PFD
Whitney Hansley – PFD
Ashley Merchant – Annum Architects
Mark Pantano – Annum Architects

Other Representatives:

Representatives from Councilor Weber's office
Representatives from the Friends of Jamaica Pond
Representatives from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy
Representative from Courageous Sailing

Approx. 25 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
- Mark Pantano (Annum) summarized previously presented information about the existing conditions of the boathouse.
- Mark Pantano (Annum) presented a summary of community feedback from the April community meeting and the online survey.

- Ashley Merchant (Annum) summarized the priorities that the project team has heard in the surveys, community meeting, and interviews with Courageous Sailing and the Boston Park Rangers.
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) described the programming process and the goals for the meeting.
 - The project team’s goal is to develop a range of program options that the City can use to evaluate costs and assess technical and design implications as the City defines the scope and budget for the project.
- Ashley Merchant (Annum) presented five draft program options for the project. The program options are cumulative. Each level of scope includes everything in the previous levels of scope plus several new items. Visit the project website to download the presentation and see the details of each level. Any suggested alterations that have an impact on the exterior of the building have been noted as having a preservation impact. The options are ordered from smallest to largest, but the ordering is not intended to reflect priorities. Individual scope items within each option can be moved to different options to better suit the decision-making process.
 - **Level 1 – Minor renovations to support current uses**

Level 1 includes exterior repairs, replacement of systems that are beyond their useful life, replacement of interior finishes, and renovations to make restrooms accessible in their current configuration.
 - **Level 2 – Improve public use**

Level 2 improves the public use of the Bandstand building by adding either an exterior wheelchair lift or ramp to make the upper level accessible. It also includes replacing the existing guardrail with a higher one that meets current code standards (not required, but would improve safety), and the addition of exterior electrical outlets.
 - **Level 3 – Boathouse accessibility**

Level 3 makes the upper level of the Boathouse accessible by adding a wheelchair lift inside of the footprint of the Boathouse and other smaller alterations to make the spaces in the Boathouse more suitable for community programming. This would enable the upper-level room to be used for community programming year round and the Fireplace room to be used for community programming in the off-season. However, this option would require boats currently stored in the building during the off-season to be stored elsewhere (outside of the scope of this study).
 - **Level 4 – Reconfigure existing spaces**

Level 4 reconfigures existing spaces, including enclosing a dedicated Ranger’s Office and reconfiguring the existing men’s and women’s restrooms into three single-user, gender-neutral restrooms, all accessed from the exterior, which has advantages for safety and usage.
 - **Level 5 – Expanded uses**

Level 5 responds to public interest in a Café program by moving the Nature Center to an exterior display only (with the potential to use some of the existing windows as display cases). This allows the Nature Center to be accessed by the public regardless of Rangers being present and enables the interior space to be used as a Café. There will be further study of the feasibility of this space for use as a café, but it is likely to be limited to takeaway of prepackaged items due to

size and facilities. This would be paired with an outdoor seating area with tables and chairs.

Community Feedback and Questions:

- Ashley Merchant (Annum) moderated a discussion of community feedback and questions for the programming phase of this project.

General Scope Comments and Clarifying Questions

- A community member asked what community uses are envisioned for the Upstairs Room in scope Level 3.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) responded that the city will determine programming at a later date.
- Several community members asked whether any of the options would expand the footprint of the buildings.
 - Ashley Merchant (Annum) responded that the only modification presented that impacts footprint of the buildings would be the addition of an exterior lift or ramp for the Bandstand.
- A community member asked about the budget for the project.
 - Alistair Lucks (PFD) explained that a budget has not yet been allocated for the project. The feasibility study final report will include cost estimates which will help the City set a budget. The City hopes to set a budget for the project in 2027.
- A community member expressed concern that a lift inside the Boathouse would be expensive. This community member expressed that they would rather see the City prioritize the restroom reconfiguration over the lift if both are not possible.
- A community member asked whether the restrooms could be accessed from the Fireplace Room in the Boathouse.
 - Ashley Merchant (Annum) explained that the restrooms will have exterior access only.
- A community member asked whether circulation around the pond would be blocked during construction, noting that residents are likely to ignore barriers in order to get around the pond.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) noted the paths immediately adjacent to the Boathouse and Bandstand buildings would be fenced off, but that pedestrian traffic could be diverted to parallel paths which would allow people to walk all the way around the pond.
 - Alistair Lucks added that the City hopes to schedule construction to avoid peak summer months so that residents can enjoy the buildings and the park during the busiest times of the year.

Sailing Program, Park Rangers, and Nature Center

- A community member expressed disapproval of the visual appearance of the items Courageous Sailing stores on the pond-facing terrace at the Boathouse. They also commented that the terrace space could be utilized in a more meaningful manner.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) responded that BPRD may modify the next RFP to regulate how vendors are allowed to store items at the exterior of the building.

- A community member asked whether the City assumes Courageous Sailing will be a permanent tenant of the space. Another member expressed a desire for greater transparency from the City regarding the vendors and organizations utilizing the space.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained that the sailing vendor is chosen based on responses to an RFP, and that the contracts last for two years. The City is committed to having a boating program, but the City does not have a stance on whether Courageous Sailing will always be the vendor.
- A community member expressed that the Boathouse space is better suited to community uses than the Bandstand space, and therefore the Boathouse space should be turned over for community use rather than used by Courageous Sailing.
- Several community members expressed support for Courageous Sailing for the programs it provides and its positive impact on the community.
 - A project team member noted that the study has received feedback from several non-sailing community members who nevertheless appreciate the positive visual impact of having sailboats on the pond.
- A community member asked whether anyone other than Courageous Sailing typically responded to the Jamaica Pond Boathouse RFP.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) will research the answer to this question.
- Friends of Jamaica Pond expressed frustrations about the Rangers' operations of the Nature Center, and suggested that bringing in another operator may allow the Nature Center to be open more regular hours and be more accessible to the public.
- A community member asked why the Park Rangers have a space in the Bandstand, and asked whether their space could be better utilized for more community-facing uses.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained that the Rangers have a historical connection to the site, that Jamaica Pond is a geographically central location for the Rangers, and that Rangers play a role in public safety and animal programs.
- A community member expressed that she enjoys seeing the Rangers at the site, and that the Rangers serve a civic function expressing the City's investment in the parks.
 - Several community members expressed support for this sentiment.
- Several community members expressed support for the idea of an outdoor Nature Center, which Annum presented as part of Level 5. Community members liked that an outdoor nature center would always be open for use and be visible to the public.
- A community member asked the project team to consider adding outdoor Nature Center exhibits in the lower scope levels, even if it is a smaller exhibit that exists alongside an indoor Nature Center.
- A community member suggested enabling food carts/bikes to sell refreshments seasonally at the site.
 - Ashley Merchant (Annum) replied that a seating area with tables and chairs could be separated from the café program to be included in a lower option.

Food and Beverage

- A community member questioned whether it is appropriate to give over space in the Bandstand for a profit-driven enterprise such as a café.
- When discussing the possibility of a café as part of scope Level 5, a community member expressed that the Boathouse would be a better space for the café than the Bandstand.

- Alistair Lucks (PFD) explained that regardless of the location of the café, a real estate analysis would need to occur to explore whether a full-service café could be viable as a business venture for a vendor at the site.
- A community member expressed concern about trash management issues that would come with opening a café. They noted that increased outdoor seating could encourage more visitors to bring and consume food on-site, resulting in additional waste.
- A community member observed that the existing trash cans are often full and should be managed better. This person also noted that there is not a recycling bin.
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) explained that BPRD does not recycle.
- A community member asked whether small bike food carts could be brought to the site instead of vending or a café.
 - Several community members expressed support for this idea.
- Courageous Sailing explained that for festivals, they typically need to provide electricity connections for vendors.
- Courageous Sailing supports more permits being issued and more electrical connections being available for food vendors in the vicinity of the site.
- The project team will consider what infrastructure might be needed to support bike vendors.
- The project team will consider moving outdoor chairs and tables to a lower scope level so that people will have somewhere to sit and eat should there be increased food options on the site.

Park and Open-Air Pavilion

- Several community members expressed that they value Jamaica Pond as an outdoor community meeting space and that the community would like to have more of the comforts of home nearby so that they can spend more time in the park.
- Several community members expressed concern about the footprint of a ramp if a ramp is selected as part of scope Level 2.
- A community member asked whether fees will be charged to rent the Open-Air Pavilion after the Bandstand is improved
 - Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) responded that BPRD has a policy of making all permits free to allow park access for all residents.
- A community member suggested that any increase in lighting or sound at the Bandstand should be studied to understand how wildlife and local ecology may be impacted.
 - Project team members responded that a new built in sound system would not necessarily mean an increase in sound as events currently bring portable sound systems to the bandstand.

Process and Future Meetings

- Several community members expressed a desire to see more Spanish language materials related to the Boathouse and Bandstand project.
 - Project team members noted that translations services for the meetings are available upon request and that publicly-posted flyers for the meetings appeared in both English and Spanish language versions.
- A community member requested larger text on the slides the next time there is a presentation.

- There was widespread consensus that both Zoom meetings and in-person meetings are valuable as part of the community engagement for the Boathouse and Bandstand project.
 - Alistair Lucks (PFD) noted that the project team will consider adding an additional community meeting to accommodate preferences for both in person and virtual community meetings.

Next Steps:

- Kezia Ofiesh (BPRD) directed participants to the project website for updates and shared her contact information for further feedback.
- The next community meeting for the Boathouse project is tentatively scheduled for September, location TBD.

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.