

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

2021 ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

April 15, 2021

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Public Garden convened at 6:00 pm on Thursday, April 15, 2021 via ZOOM conference.

Welcome

Ms. Adam, Board Chair, welcomed everyone. She noted that this past year, while very, very difficult, was shown to be an important year for greenspaces like the three parks. She thanked the many City Councilors, State Senators and Representatives in attendance. She also thanked Parks Commissioner Ryan Woods for his work in supporting the ongoing 50-year partnership between the Friends and the Parks Department.

Commissioner Woods spoke and he expressed appreciation for the Friends as a leader among the city's friends groups. He highlighted several upcoming events including the return of the Swan Boats after their hiatus last year due to COVID, the completion of the next phase of the Boston Common Master Plan, the planning for the King memorial, and the upcoming completion of the restoration of the Shaw 54th Memorial. He also noted that the Memorial Day flags display will return to the Common this year.

Minutes

Upon a motion being duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2020 Annual Meeting as published.

Governance Report

Ms. Kate Enroth, Chair of the Governance Committee, reported that the Committee recommended the election of Kate Enroth, Barbara Moore, Katherine O'Keeffe, Anne Swanson, and Roger Tackeff to three-year terms on the Board of Directors.

Upon a motion being made and duly seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the slate as presented.

Ms. Enroth also thanked Patti Quinn, Linda Cox, and Bear Albright for their service, as they each step off the Board at this time.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Jim Bordewick, Treasurer, referred to the Treasurer's Report published prior to the meeting. The Friends ended 2020 with a strong cash position and avoided the need to reduce or eliminate any staff positions during the pandemic without taking any PPP loans. Mr. Bordewick noted that was due to several factors including the quick and effective recalibration of the budget, adjustment of expenses and rescaling of activities. He credited the staff, Mr. Clendaniel, the previous Treasurer, and the board for their efforts and stewardship. Income in 2020 was \$3.1M which was down 14% from 2019, and expenses were \$2.5M which was down 16% from 2019. Mr. Bordewick noted some varied results in the development area, as summarized in his report, but highlighted that membership numbers and financial support from donors remains strong. The Friends' invested funds continue to do well and were up 14%, which was in line with benchmarks. He explained that the Friends transferred

surplus in the amount of \$580,000 to temporarily restricted funds for tree work and 50th anniversary projects in 2021, ending the year with a small surplus.

For 2021, the Friends has developed dual budgets. An essential budget has been created which assumes the same basic restrictions on operations and programming as were present in 2020. An expanded budget has also been created which assumes more parks care operations, programming, and development activities. To date this year, the Friends has managed to the expanded budget.

President's Report

Ms. Vizza began her report with a land acknowledgement for the three parks and recognition of the Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

“We acknowledge that our parks occupy what was the unceded land, marshlands, and waterways of the Massachusetts Nation, today known as Boston. We acknowledge the painful history of forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their land, and that the work of repair is ongoing. In the spirit of the Massachusetts people past, present and future, we acknowledge that we live in a bond of reciprocity with the plant and animal relatives who call our parks home. We honor the gifts given to us by this land and return them with our care.”

Ms. Vizza emphasized how essential the parks have been during the COVID-19 shut down. They have been an immeasurable resource to all, not just the immediate neighborhoods. Ms. Vizza mentioned the deepening commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Friends. The upcoming strategic plan will include this as a focus, and a committee of the Board has been created to further this work. The Friends will be sponsoring a series of concerts by the Boston Children's Chorus that will be staged in parks all around Boston, including the Boston Common. Ms. Vizza noted that this is an encouraging first step towards finding and supporting programming that will bring more diverse visitors to the parks and make everyone feel welcome.

Ms. Vizza thanked all the volunteers who were able to work and support the Friends, while still adhering to COVID protocols. She particularly thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication during this past year.

In 2020, the Friends was able to continue with soil analysis and soil amendments this past year. Oversight and management of the irrigation system continued, and the Friends was also able to support some mowing when requested by the BPRD. Disease and insect monitoring, particularly for the Elms, also continued. Thanks to the Lee Sculpture Endowment, the maintenance and care of the sculptures and fountains in the parks continued this past year, uninterrupted. The Friends has also spent a great deal of time investigating how best to preserve sunshine in the parks, following the impacts brought by the permitting of the Winthrop Square garage parcel. A model has been developed showing how much development could still occur in the downtown area without any further impact to the amount of sunshine/shade on the Common and the Garden. The Friends looks forward to sharing this model and the associated findings with elected officials and relevant city departments.

Looking forward in 2021, there is still uncertainty about when and how to safely bring back programming to the Brewer Fountain. The temporary bathrooms in the Common will be installed in June. The Shaw 54th Memorial will be unveiled Memorial Day, and will be rededicated in the Fall. The Friends is appreciative that the BPRD has agreed to fund the initial redesign phase for the Tool Shed in the Public Garden and the Friends is looking forward to helping to raise awareness about this important project. Duckling Day and Making History on the

Common will both be held virtually again this year. The Swan Boats, with COVID protocols, will be returning to the Public Garden this summer.

Ms. Vizza reminded the audience that this year marks the 50th anniversary celebration for the Friends, and its partnership with the City. Three transformative projects are planned to celebrate this: the rejuvenation of the Arlington Street entrance of the Public Garden including restoration of the two child fountains, the professional lighting of the statues along the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, and the Boston Common temporary art installation, “What Do We All Have in Common?”. A virtual Anniversary Celebration Gala will be held on April 30, 2021.

Speaker: How Boston’s Newest Memorial Can Help Build the Beloved Community

Ms. Vizza introduced the featured speaker, Imari Paris Jeffries, the Executive Director of King Boston. Mr. Paris Jeffries provided an overview of the monument to the Kings, The Embrace, which will be installed in the Boston Common in 2022. In addition to the monument, he also spoke about the other elements of the King Boston project which include a Center for Economic Justice in Nubian Square and programming to support the work that the Kings championed both during their time in Boston and later. Ms. Vizza fielded questions from the audience for Mr. Imari after his presentation.

To close the program, Ms. Vizza and Ms. Adam thanked outgoing Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space Chris Cook for his support of the parks and the Friends.

There being no other business, Ms. Adam adjourned the meeting at 7:15pm
Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Bordon
Secretary