

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

2025 Annual Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2025

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Public Garden convened at 6:00 pm on Thursday, April 17, 2025, at the UMASS Club, 1 Beacon Street, Boston.

Welcome

Ms. Leslie Singleton Adam, Chair of the Board, welcomed everyone to the 55th Annual Meeting of the Friends. She thanked the elected representatives who were in attendance, including representatives of Mayor Wu's office. Ms. Adam provided brief updates including that the Green & White 2025 raised a record breaking \$550K. She noted that the recent unveiling of the renovated Child Fountains represented the last piece of the 50th Anniversary projects. She gave special thanks to Gene Bolinger for serving as the Interim President of the Friends, and she introduced Liza Meyer as the next President of the Friends with a starting date of May 1st, 2025.

Minutes

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

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the April 9th, 2024, Annual Meeting as published.

Ms. Adam also introduced DA Kevin Hayden who spoke briefly to thank the Friends for their collaboration and partnership over the years.

Governance Report

Mr. Roger Tackeff, representing the Governance Committee, addressed the membership to present the committee's recommendation for the election of new and returning directors in accordance with the requirements of Article V.3 of the bylaws. The Directors being nominated for 3-year terms beginning April 2025 are Pam Albright, Julie Livingstone, and Leon Wilson.

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

VOTED: to approve the slate as presented.

Introduction

Ms. Liza Meyer, the new President of the Friends, spoke briefly to introduce herself and thank the Friends and their supporters for all their work over the years.

Councilor Sharon Durkan presented Ms. Meyer with a resolution from the Council to honor her time and work at the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, where she most recently has served as Acting Commissioner.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Jim Bordewick, Treasurer, referred to the materials presented at the meeting. Mr. Bordewick thanked the generous donors of the Friends and noted that 58% of income comes from donor support, 26% is drawn from investments, and 15% was from money released from temporarily restricted funds. This represented a total spend of \$3.9M. The Friends has \$27.6M in invested funds as of this date. On the expense side, 69% of spending for 2024 was on direct parks care, in line with the mission of the Friends. 8% is spent on administrative costs, and 23% on communications, outreach and development. This resulted in a total expenditure of \$2.6K in 2024. 2024 finished with a net surplus of \$200 after a transfer of \$200K to the 2025 operating budget, as per usual protocols when there is a surplus.

President's Report

Mr. Bolinger, as Interim President of the Friends, began his report thanking the Board, the Council, supporters and volunteers, and the Staff of the Friends for all that they do to support the organization. He provided updates on the ongoing work throughout the three parks.

In the Common, there were 282 trees pruned in 2024 and 36 trees anticipated to be planted in 2025. 60 acres of turf was cared for and 44 pieces of sculpture were attended to. Regarding Capital Projects, the Friends has been supporting the efforts to renovate and enlarge the Tadpole Playground, make the entrance to the Common at the Shaw/54th accessible, and to find a permanent solution to adding public bathrooms to the Common. The Boston Common Maintenance Trust Fund continues to provide funding for important projects – including rat resistant trash barrels, drain infrastructure maintenance and improvement, fence repairs, and work to bring new informational kiosks to the Common.

In the Public Garden, horticulture care and capital projects were a focus. The newly renovated Child Fountains and Arlington Street entrance were unveiled. The volunteers of the Rose Brigade and the Border Brigade continue to do important work in the park.

On the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Holiday Lights were again successful. Capital projects to fund the re-lighting the Women's Memorial and the start of the renovations to the Kenmore Block are on the horizon.

Programming and events throughout the parks continue to bring new and returning visitors. Over 1,000 people participated in Skating with Friends this past season. Upcoming events include Duckling Day and Making History on the Common.

Advocacy continues to be a focus and Mr. Bolinger noted that “there is never a dull” moment in this effort. The Friends is at the table for discussions regarding updated zoning for Downtown and how it might impact sunshine in the Parks, advocating for a Downtown Parks Administrator, and for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department budget overall.

Henry Lee Fund For Boston Parks

Ms. Bordon provided a recap of the newly launched Henry Lee Fund for Boston Parks. The mission of the Fund is to help enhance public greenspaces throughout Boston by providing grants to support the care of trees and turf, sculpture maintenance, and special projects in neighborhood parks where needs are clear, but resources are limited. Applications came in from Community groups, civic leaders, park advocates, and other nonprofit organizations all over Boston. The Friends office worked very closely with applicants to help improve their chances of being funded. The Committee was able to recognize 8 grant recipients for a total of \$42,400 in total grants awarded. Grants include support for community gardens, signage and wayfinding, tree care, sculpture repair, and even an interactive playground structure – neighborhoods represented include the South End, West End, Roxbury, Dorchester, Fenway, East Boston, and Hyde Park. To date, the Fund has raised over \$1.2 million towards a goal of \$2 million to be held in endowment to give out these annual grants. For 2025, applications will open in late summer and run thru fall. Awards will be announced on Jan 13, 2026. Ms. Bordon noted that there is a page on the Friends website with additional information about how to donate, who the awardees are, and how to apply.

Parks Champion Award: Beatrice Nessen

Ms. Adam announced Beatrice Nessen as the recipient of the 2025 Parks Champion Award for her decades of hard work and dedication to the parks and the Friends. Mayor Wu also thanked Ms. Nessen on behalf of the City of Boston. Ms. Nessen spoke to say thank you and to reiterate the importance of caring for our parks and supporting the balance of growth and protection.

Respectfully submitted,
Catherine Bordon
Secretary