

## Packed room, packed agenda at South End Forum meeting

BY MICHELE D. MANISCALCO

After the whirlwind of holiday festivities that took up the December calendar, the South End Forum got back to business on Tuesday January 8 at a meeting at the South End Branch Library packed with hot-button neighborhood issues and a host of public officials present to address them.

The second-floor room at the South End Branch Library was standing-room only with residents and community activists ready for



(Left to Right) Aaron Michlewitz, Kim Janey, Ed Flynn & Jon Santiago. Photo by Michele Maniscalco

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## News from...

## Friends of the South End Library

SUBMITTED BY MARLEEN NIENHUIS

The South End Writes, Coming Up Next

Tuesday, February 26: From Page to Stage. Zeitgeist Stage Company, a resident theater company located at the Boston Center for the Arts, will present the world premiere of *Trigger Warning* by playwright Jacques Lamarre on April 12 through May 4. A discussion about the play, a first for the South End Writes author series, will illuminate the process of preparing a script for presentation in a premiere production. It will include the reading of a scene from the play. Zeitgeist's director, David Miller, a South End resident, has recruited several of the actors in the production to participate in the event. The playwright's focus is on the impact of a school



Building designed by the architectural firm of Mitchell/Giurgola

shooting from the perspective of the shooter's family.

Tuesday, March 12: Does the building's architecture in the picture remind you of the design of the South

End library? No surprise if it does, as it, too, was the product of the same architectural firm of Mitchell/

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Photo courtesy City of Boston

## EMT Academy Graduates 19

SUBMITTED BY  
THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

Mayor Martin J. Walsh together with Boston EMS today celebrated the graduation of 19 Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) recruits in a graduation ceremony at Faneuil Hall held before family, friends and colleagues. Among those addressing the graduates were Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) Executive Director Monica Valdes Lupi, JD, MPH, and Boston EMS Chief Jim Hooley. This graduating class will be assigned to 9-1-1 ambulances, strengthening the city's emergency medical services (EMS).

In his FY19 budget, Mayor Walsh prioritized funding for 20 additional EMTs, increasing the number of budgeted full-time EMS providers from 375 to 395 for the City of Boston. The increased number of EMTs will allow for two more frontline ambulances to be staffed, included a second one in East Boston.

"Becoming an EMT is more than a career – it's a noble commit-

ment to serve our community, and I want to congratulate all of today's graduates on joining the ranks of a proud and historic first responder family," said Mayor Walsh. "Our EMTs and paramedics are saviors on some of the worst days of people's lives, and also make possible some of our city's best days and most beloved traditions, from First Night to Marathon Monday. I'm incredibly proud to welcome this new class of recruits and thank them for their service to our City."

The graduation ceremony formally acknowledges 19 recruits' successful completion of a rigorous EMT post-hire training program. The recruits, already state-certified EMTs prior to hire, completed an additional 27 weeks of classroom and field training, to better prepare them to work as EMTs in Boston. Recruits were trained in a variety of emergency situations, including life-threatening emergencies, transportation accidents, recovery services, hazardous materials ex-

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# Winter Theater Offerings

**Charlie and the Chocolate Factory the Musical,**  
tour presented by Broadway  
in Boston at the Opera House,  
Boston, through January 20.  
BroadwayinBoston.com or 800-  
982-2787

**A Doll's House, Part 2,**  
Huntington Theatre Company,  
Boston, through February 3.  
617-266-0800, 617-933-8600 or  
huntingtontheatre.com

By JULES BECKER

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory the Musical,*

Roald Dahl was a kind of literary master chocolatier. The late Welsh short story writer and novelist skillfully whipped up edgy narratives like "Lamb to the Slaughter" and "Matilda." So it goes with "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." Unfortunately the 2017 Broadway musical version of this popular 1964 classic lacks the delicious nastiness of its dark predecessor. Although the audience for the Opera House tour performance this critic saw gave the show a standing ovation, "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory the Musical" needs the Cordon Bleu caliber that distinguished the stage edition of "Matilda."

Admittedly there are Michelin quality performances in a show featuring a David Greig book that ought to be darker—namely Noah Weisberg as factory reopening Willy Wonka and Rueby Wood (at certain performances Henry Boshart or Collin Jeffery) as plucky hero Charlie Bucket. Under Jack O'Brien's skillful direction, Weisberg has the right energy and vibrant singing voice befitting eccentric Wonka—particularly on the Marc Shaiman-Scott Wittman winner "Candy Man" and the Leslie Bricusse-Anthony Newley standout "Pure Imagination."

Disconcertingly, though, this musical makes the hearty entrepreneur—who ensnares



John Judd as Torvald and Mary Beth Fisher as Nora in Huntington Theatre Company premiere of "A Doll's House, Part 2." (Courtesy Kevin Berne)

the other four Golden Ticket-bearing children and their generally unquestioning parent—more charming than menacing. Wood captures Charlie's decency and resourcefulness as well as his devotion to family. James Young as Grandpa Joe convincingly moves from being bed-bound to action with Charlie. The factory-working Oompa Oompas are vividly realized. Basil Twist deserves special kudos for his puppet wizardry and illusion design.

Wonka Bars may be a singular treat, but "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" needs more unprocessed Dahl.

*A Doll's House, Part 2*

Henrik Ibsen ignited a multi-alarm world-

wide cultural fire when profoundly discontent Nora left her Norwegian banker husband Torvald and their children at the end of his provocative 1879 drama "A Doll's House." In 2017, American playwright Lucas Hnath daringly made his Broadway debut with "A Doll's House, Part 2"—a work controversial not the least for its striking title. While speculating on what happens to Nora after that departure, this exhilaratingly thoughtful 90-minute Tony-nominated play possesses a *raison d'être* much more satisfying than simply being a sequel. In fact, the area premiere—tautly directed by Les Waters for the Huntington Theatre Company—both respects its landmark predecessor (in eminent domain for many years) and demonstrates that Hnath himself is a writer of considerable talent.

That gratifying combination of respect and talent has clearly moved Hnath to open his play with Nora knocking insistently—on the very door she slammed in leaving home—and

seeking as much dialogue and understanding as possible. At the same time, the wife now writer admits that she is also looking for Torvald's actual signature having learned that he failed to sign their divorce document. To his credit, the playwright gives fair attention to Nora and Torvald's very different points of view as well as the insights of nanny Anne Marie and her discomfort at being "in the middle" between the verbal combatants. Nora herself expresses sadness at having left her children even as she defends her needs as a woman. Revealing moments are also given to now grown-up daughter Emmy, who has clearly been raised by Anne Marie in the absence of her mother.

Director Waters orchestrates the verbal confrontations and revelations with the nuance of a master conductor. Mary Beth Fisher has all of returning Nora's determination and drive. As a fully empowered Nora, she smartly

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## South End Forum

Continued from page 1

updates on tackling traffic safety and gridlock, the opioid crisis, the continuing off-hours, a community safety update, airplane noise and off-hours construction that have wracked the nerves of many neighbors. Chief of streets Chris Osgood; Inspectional Services commissioner William "Buddy" Christopher; Gina Fian-daca, traffic commissioner; waste reduction superintendent Brian Coughlin; and South End/Bay Village liaison Faiza Sharif. A panel of South End legislators including state representatives Aaron Michlewitz and Jon Santiago, the latter starting his first full week in office; and city councilors Kim Janey, District 7, and Ed Flynn, District 2, discussed their priorities for the coming year as well as sharing new developments on ongoing concerns. District 3 councilor Frank Baker was unable to attend due to a medical procedure to take place the following morning, but his aide attended to hear the discussion.

Inspectional Services commissioner William "Buddy" Christopher offered some follow-up to the well-attended and contentious meeting in October, where many of the approximately 100 residents in attendance told Christopher and representatives of Suffolk Construction about their frustration over frequent noise, vibrations and other disturbances due to weekend and off-hours work.

Addressing the permitting of off-hours, night and weekend construction, which has grown more contentious in recent months, Christopher said. Christopher said that off-hours permits for residential renovations are not being granted, and on some larger projects, "test projects" are being done to attempt to do off-hours work in a manner less bothersome to neighbors. Christopher also talked about the permitting of weekend crane work, explaining that approving cranes on weekends avoids closing streets during weekday rush hours and paralyzing traffic. Fox floated the idea of including the prohibition of night and

weekend work into future Article 80 development approval, except to address dangerous structural problems.

Marijuana dispensaries raised a wide range of concerns and ideas. Janey called the development of the cannabis industry "A huge issue. We are trying to figure this out as a city. There are a lot of unknowns." Janey talked about a meeting on cannabis held in Roxbury late last year where the emerging industry was discussed in terms of equity as well as the heavy toll the war on drugs has taken on people of color and Roxbury residents.

Janey described a recent visit to a dispensary as being "like IKEA", and said that there were three checkpoints at which customers had to present ID: at the entrance, inside and at the point of purchase. The proposed dispensary at 633 Tremont Street raised logistical concerns regarding lack of parking and access for deliveries. Flynn concurred with those concerns and added that 633 Tremont is across the street from a daycare run by IBA. He said he supports the Friend Street location for the dispensary to be run by former Suffolk County sheriff Andrea Cabral.

"I'm ready to get to work," Santiago said as he introduced his priorities and objectives, talking about the many drug-related emergencies he sees as a physician in the emergency room at Boston Medical Center. He told the group that he knocked on 8,000 doors over his campaign, and problems surrounding the opioid epidemic were on the minds of many residents. Santiago talked about medically assisted treatment (MAT), which involves the use of methadone, naltrexone and suboxone.

Santiago said that increasing the prescribing availability of suboxone, which currently is prescribed to patients at practices such as the South End Community Health Center, would lead to reduced dependence on methadone treatment. Santiago also wants to see all of the correctional facilities in Massachusetts offer MAT. The newly-minted state rep spoke of a more holistic rehabilitative approach in Kentucky for drug addicted inmates that tackles the

root causes of addiction and criminal activity. "We are not going to solve the problem if people are not able to be whole citizens when they come out of prison," Santiago said.

Michlewitz, whose constituents have been vocal about the disruption of very loud, early-morning airplane noise, announced the passage in the previous legislative session of H.B. 4101, which creates a South End seat on the Logan Airport Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and acknowledged state senator Sonia Chang-Diaz's support for the bill on the Senate side. The news was greeted with cheers from the audience. Michlewitz expects Governor Baker will sign the bill, but urged residents to contact Baker's office to express their support for prompt signing.

Two representatives of Orchard Park United, a parent/teacher group for the Orchard Gardens Pilot School, spoke at the meeting about the danger posed by the proliferation of needles scattered around the grounds of the school and the lack of resources to remove them. They said that the custodial staff is currently tackling disposal in addition to all of its regular duties, which is unsafe and burdensome.

Another thorny topic at the meeting was traffic congestion and possible remedies. Janey said, "Traffic is insane. There are just too many cars on the road. We need to improve our infrastructure and public transit...it's not just a matter of traffic, it also affects our environment." Janey, who does not own a car, uses transportation network companies (TNC) to get around, and said that while they do add to the number of cars on the road, they are also a source of economic opportunity. Janey expressed interest in exploring congestion pricing for TNCs to tackle congestion.

Santiago, who lives in the South End, said that he bikes to work every day, and claimed, "I feel like I am seeing cyclists who were hit by cars every day." Flynn advocated reducing the speed limit in Boston from 25 mph to 20 mph, and, with District 3 councilor Frank Baker, held a hearing of the Committee on

Planning, Development and Transportation on lowering the speed limit. "Pedestrian safety is critical," Flynn said. Flynn also said he supports rebuilding the Long Island Bridge and perhaps providing ferry service in the interim to re-establish services there. He talked about visiting homeless clients on Long Island during his 10 years as a probation officer. Flynn wondered whether it would be feasible to have developers of large projects contribute to a fund to rebuild the bridge.

Fox ended the meeting with the South End Forum's signature topic, trash disposal. Some areas of the neighborhood grapple with trash strewn all over their blocks every trash day, and some groups of neighbors have resorted to hiring help to clean up the streets after trash pick-up.

Concurrently, residents in some areas such as the East Concord Street renovation site of the Cosmopolitan, formerly the Jesuit Urban Center at 771 Harrison Avenue, have seen a rise in the rodent population.

Fox announced a pilot trash disposal program for the South End to test the effectiveness of a new, collapsible polyethylene receptacle that would save space in homes with little storage and that could be used for trash and for recycling. Fox said the receptacles are available at Walmart for approximately \$8.00, and the city is discussing whether to start out by providing them to residents or to require their purchase.

Coughlin spoke on a more far-reaching solution, finding ways to reduce output through recycling and reuse of materials, awareness and selection of products with less packaging, composting and reducing overall consumption. Asked whether the city will offer a composting program, Osgood responded that Mayor Walsh is "very interested" in bringing composting to the city.

Janey said she will be holding office hours in the coming year, starting on Saturday, January 26 at 11:30 AM at a joint session with Flynn at the South End Branch Library.

## Library

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Giurgola, first based in Philadelphia, then with a second office in New York. The architects, Romaldo Giurgola (who was the head of the Architecture Department at Columbia University) and Ehrman Mitchell, have since passed away. They designed the South End library's building in the late 1960s. The library opened in 1971. The Philadelphia office is now called MGA Partners; Dan Kelley, MGA's principal architect, has generously agreed to be at the South End library to talk about the branch's architectural history.

Tuesday, March 19: prize-winning author Suzanne Berne will read from her latest suspense novel, *The Dogs of Littlefield*. The New York Times reviewer wrote that "...nothing

sucks a reader in like psychological menace, and Berne is a master of the craft..." Berke, who is the fiction editor of *The Harvard Review*, teaches creative writing at Boston College and the Ranier Writing Workshop. She won the U.K.'s Orange Award for *A Crime in the Neighborhood*. Earlier novels are *The Ghost at the Table* and *A Perfect Arrangement*.

### Annual Members Meeting Of The Friends Of The South End Library

Tuesday, February 5, 6:30 PM:

You are invited to attend the the Friends of the South End Library Annual Meeting on Tuesday, February 5 at 6:30 PM.

- You, the audience, will elect the proposed slate of Friends of the South End Library (FOSEL) directors for our 2019 voting and advisory boards. FOSEL directors serve one-

year terms. (The three officers,—president, treasurer and clerk—will start the second of their two-year terms and do not need to be confirmed.)

- We will have updates about our programs, fundraising efforts, treasury report, and the renovations for park and library. Specifically, we'll have details about the branch's upcoming 'refresh' this spring, to provide new carpeting, paint, furniture re-arrangement and some basic electrical work, as well as the longer-term, multi-million dollar plan for a complete renovation and expansion to meet the South End's need for 21st-century library services.
- And, as always, we provide delicious refreshments.

Are you interested in becoming a voting or advisory board member? Please contact FOSEL through our website. We are a diverse

volunteer board, united in our commitment to making South End branch and Library Park the best it can be. Some members are more active than others, and at different times, depending on their personal and professional obligations, but each has contributed to the improvement of the library.

### Local/Focus window

The January Local/Focus window features a selection of mysteries, suspense novels and thrillers to get you through the dark season and into the light of spring. The thrillers take place in or around Boston, or are written by people from the area. They were compiled by FOSEL advisory board member, Nick Altschuller.

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## News from...

## Pilot Block Neighborhood Association

SUBMITTED BY PBNA

The following is a brief summary of the January 10, 2019 public meeting concerning the request for a zoning variance by Compassionate Organics for the storefront located at 633 Tremont Street.

A public meeting was held at the AC Hotel on Albany Street in the South End, facilitated by a representative of Mayor Walsh. Mike Ross and his team made a brief presentation and then the floor was opened up for comments and questions.

The turnout was huge—over 150 people—and there were many out in the hallway. In 80 minutes of comments and questions, there were four comments in support, and over twenty-five expressions of opposition, many quite passionate.

One person, without expressing an explicit viewpoint, asked a question based on the legally required buffer zone of ½ mile between cannabis establishments. Ross suggested in his presentation, that this requirement would mean that if 633 Tremont were

given a zoning variance, much of the South End would be protected against other, possibly less desirable, marijuana businesses. The questioner asked whether Compassionate Organics would withdraw its application and not seek an additional variance to the buffer zone, if the proposed store at 591 Albany Street was approved by the ZBA. The answer was non-committal; they would decide how to proceed, if this happened.

The subject matter seemed to draw in a huge number of people who came there organically — meaning this was an issue that lots of residents who don't necessarily get involved in local stuff felt compelled to attend. By the end, Ross was asserting that the number of South Enders who had voted to legalize medical marijuana were at work or otherwise too busy to show up — a theory that did not go down well with the audience.

If a goal was to send a message to the applicants and the City that abutters, near neighbors and residents/stakeholders are overwhelmingly opposed to a cannabis establishment at 633 Tremont—mission accomplished.

Our civic representatives were invited to make statements, initially. City Councilor Ed Flynn, representing the immediate abutting residents in the Ellis, Pilot Block and Villa Victoria neighborhoods, stated his firm opposition to the location, based on his conversations with many of the abutting neighbors, the obvious safety issues on Tremont St., the lack of adequate infrastructure of the location to mitigate the issues of lines of customers outside the establishment, double-parking, delivery, etc. Our State Representatives, Aaron Michlewitz and Jon Santiago, expressed concerns with the location, as well. Rep. Santiago, cited traffic, street safety and the potential impact on vulnerable populations.

Based on comments, a leading driver of opposition is concern about traffic and parking, specifically customers double-parking and making Tremont Street even more congested with traffic and more dangerous to pedestrians trying to cross than it already is. Neighbor after neighbor attested to how

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## EMT

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posture, human trafficking cases and mass casualty incidents.

"It is with deep admiration and respect that we welcome our new EMT graduates to the EMS community," said Chief of Health and Human Services Marty Martinez. "Each of these new recruits is answering one of the highest calls to public service so anyone in Boston can receive the quality care in their time of most need. I congratulate this new class of recruits and I thank them for their service to the City of Boston."

This recruit class responded to nearly 3,000 9-1-1 calls during their training including emergency incidents related to illnesses, injuries, cardiac incidents, motor vehicle accidents, childbirths, shootings, stabbings, overdoses and more. With guidance from seasoned EMT field training officers, recruits are not only prepared to care for patients,

regardless of the circumstance, they also now understand the level of care, clinical excellence and professionalism expected of Boston EMS EMT's.

"Congratulations to these new recruits for completing this rigorous training and joining our exemplary EMT core. The city faces unique challenges today and we are grateful to have these brave individuals choose to serve our Boston with the highest level of care and professionalism," said Monica Valdes Lupi, Executive Director of BPHC.

As one of the busiest municipal EMS providers in New England, Boston EMS responds to over 125,000 emergency medical incidents per year. As a bureau of the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), Boston EMS is committed to serving Boston's residents through clinical excellence, emergency planning and preparedness, and community outreach.

Chief of Department, Jim Hooley stated, "Boston EMS sees great value in investing

in education and professional development for our newly hired EMT's. Completion of academy is only the beginning. As a career EMS clinician, we must continue to learn and evolve along with the field of emergency medical services."

Building on Mayor Walsh's investments in Boston EMS, the FY19 budget includes the replacement of eight ambulances to support EMT's. This commitment by Mayor Walsh will help ensure a high-level of service for all neighborhoods, and aims to have ambulances arrive on scene for Priority 1 calls within six minutes of the initial call. Additionally, the Mayor in FY18 launched the Boston EMS Community Assistance Team that use data to change the way EMT's are deployed to areas including the Boston Common and Recovery Road, improving patient outcomes and ambulance utilization. In its first year alone, the Community Assistance Teams have freed up more ambulances, and resulted in more than 400 referrals to shelters and recovery services.

## Theater

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displays self-motivation with John Judd's rightly conflicted Torvald, tough respect with Nancy E. Carroll's richly feisty Anne Marie and sadness coupled with admiration for Nikki Massoud's arrestingly resolute Emmy. Fisher and Judd finely calibrate Nora and Judd's alternately volatile and sensitive truth-telling with the result some of the play's most moving moments. Body language—particularly as characters turn away or move confidently towards each other—is sharply enhanced by the purposely spare Andrew Boyce set (with Torvald having sold off Nora's items).

Near the end of Hnath's luminous follow-up to Ibsen's prescient drama, Nora voices

the feeling that someday the world will be different and free. "A Doll's House, Part 2" beautifully adds to the on-going blueprint for changing gender mindsets. Huntington Theatre Company's well-drafted premiere is a must-see residence.

## Of note

Small stage best list honoree "Ripe Frenzy" was a collaboration of Boston Center for American Performance and New Repertory Theatre.

If you missed SpeakEasy Stage Company's inspired production of the Tony Award-winning musical "Fun Home" at the Calderwood Pavilion, you have a second chance June 8-30. Virtually the entire strong cast will return in this 'Best of 2018' staging,

Seth Rudetsky—whose Huntington Theatre Company presentation at the Calderwood Pavilion with Chita Rivera made the special theatrical portion of this critic's 'Best of 2018' list—returns January 26 at 5 and 8 p.m. in the BCA's Calderwood Pavilion. This time the IRNE Award winner will be joined by two-time Tony Award honoree Christine Ebersole ("42nd Street" and "Grey Gardens"). This critic was wowed by Ebersole's brilliant work as the Beales—mother and daughter—in "Grey Gardens." She recently played Elizabeth Arden with compelling tenacity in the somewhat absorbing Broadway musical "War Paint," which also featured bravura work from Patti Lupone as Helena Rubenstein. Gifted Ebersole is always a must-see for her glorious voice and superb dramatics.

40/2

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## Pilot

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traffic safety is already a major problem and few seemed to believe that 633 could/would honor its stated intention to prevent people from double-parking. One neighbor emphasized the number of Uber/Lyft rides would increase and would add to the congestion on the small side streets as they circled the block waiting for customers to come back out after their 5 minutes purchase.

Another woman spoke of how her greatest fear in the world for her child is his getting struck by a car while crossing Tremont Street, and a father described yanking his kid by the arm out of the path of an oblivious motorist. (Note: we have had at least three pedestrian deaths on Tremont in the past 4 years, just between W. Brookline and Union Park, alone. Tremont St. has officially been recognized as dangerous and the City is leading a redesign effort with the collaboration of SE residents.

A number of people argued that a marijuana business is just not appropriate in a residential neighborhood, where a large number of children live and go to school/daycare nearby. They noted that the zoning is for Residential/Local Services only and that Compassionate Organics would be a destination for people coming from all over the city, if they were to open in the next year. The fact that Tremont Street is not zoned as a commercial district but a residential one was emphasized over and over. Individuals who spoke stated that there were commercial areas around the South End that did not require the same kind of zoning

variance that is needed in a residential area.

The Senior Director of Youth Programs at St. Stephen's Church on Shawmut said that many neighborhood children and teens attend her program, and it has spent the last 10+ years helping these children make good life choices. She was gravely concerned about the impact of a marijuana store just a couple of blocks from the program on a street where youth travel daily.

An immediate abutter, and others, expressed extreme skepticism that Compassionate Organics could/would honor its stated commitment to make no use of the alley. A woman who resides a few doors down from 633 feared her stoop would become a trash receptacle/hang-out spot for 633 clientele, just as it already is for the liquor store next door.

In his presentation, Ross reiterated that Compassionate Organics' plan is to open as a medical marijuana dispensary, prove itself to the neighborhood for at least six months, then seek an adult use license. Only a few audience comments touched on the recreational nature of this proposal, but one person questioned why they would wait such a short time before they applied for recreational approval. Ross answered that medical marijuana sales were already seeing a downturn; as more recreational stores open, fewer people with medical needs are paying for the medical registration card and are choosing to purchase their cannabis through the recreational stores, as it is less expensive. He said that in order to have viable businesses, medical marijuana stores will have to expand to recreational.

The 3—4 comments in support were largely to the effect that medical marijuana

is a legitimate thing and there's no reason it should not be in a neighborhood's main business district. Perhaps the most compelling was from a resident living at Mass Ave and Columbus who identified himself as a patient taking medical marijuana and said a dispensary nearby would make a material positive difference in his life and others similarly situated in the neighborhood.

Notwithstanding the strong feelings, with only a couple brief exceptions, people were respectful of other residents' right to speak their minds without interruption, which was heartening.

### Next Steps:

- A Zoning Board of Appeals hearing will be scheduled in the next several months.
- Before that is scheduled, it is very important that you write letters of opinion ASAP to the list of people we've given you over the last year

• We cannot overemphasize the importance of your individual voices to your civic representatives, including the Mayor.

If you would like to write individual letters of opinion, for or against, the use variance at 633 Tremont, below are the city contacts.

### ZONING BOARD OF APPEAL

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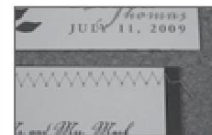
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