

Bulletin

July 2017

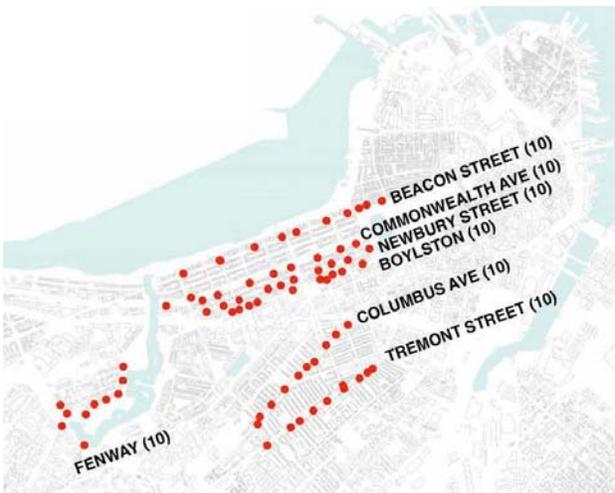
Good News!

New Groundwater Well Caps Housing LEDs and Microcontrollers with Bluetooth Capability Make Their Appearance in the Back Bay



If you are observant, you may have been wondering why there are new Corian caps on the Groundwater wells on Beacon Street. This is a project of the Boston Groundwater Trust to enable neighbors and visitors to read the groundwater level in the wells. The caps will be installed on Beacon Street for a month, and then moved to Commonwealth Avenue, Newbury Street and Boylston Street for a month on each street. During that time, residents and visitors can see real-time groundwater level data digitally displayed on the face of the well caps and interact with the data through the Boston LightWells mobile app, which you can download by going to www.bostonlightwell.com. You can also go to LightWells' website, www.bostonlightwell.com/seven-streets-data-wells, and learn more about this project.

The map below depicts the planned locations for the moving sidewalk well cap installations.



Understanding groundwater levels is critical to preserving the many buildings in the Back Bay that are supported by wood pilings. You can go to the Boston Groundwater Trust's website:

www.bostongroundwater.org

and learn more about everything this important organization does to maintain our groundwater levels here in the City of Boston.

Visit us on the web @ www.nabbonline.com

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Architecture Committee Report June 2017

June was a busy month for our committee, as you will see.

The applicants for **205-207 Newbury Street** returned, asking to revise the proposed front yard dig-outs to make them more consistent with each other and to install additional mechanical equipment. The parlor and basement levels will be retail, and there will be offices above. The applicant showed the Back Bay Architectural Commission (BBAC) various ways of screening the mechanicals, but in the end everyone felt the screening added unnecessary bulk to the installation. The proposed headhouse is to be lowered, and the mechanicals tightly grouped in the middle of the roof.

The French Cultural Center at 53 Marlborough Street is seeking to provide an accessible entrance at its Berkeley Street entrance (shown in the photograph to the right). Our main concern was with the loss of symmetry with the abutting building. We agreed that the proposed was the best location, but requested that the historic doors be retained so that the entry could be converted back should the lift no longer be needed. We also expressed concern about possible homeless issues in the proposed lobby, and about existing air conditioning equipment in the rear yard. We also asked for more detailed landscaping and lighting plans. The BBAC denied the application without prejudice so that these issues could be worked out with us and with abutters.



At **325 Commonwealth Avenue** the owner proposed a roof deck that did not comply with the BBAC's guidelines. We did not support this, and the BBAC rejected it and approved a plan to comply with the required setbacks, and to reduce the height and mass of the proposed headhouse.



At **443 Marlborough Street** we supported the removal of a very large ailanthus that had outgrown its front yard and was damaging the foundation (shown in the photograph to the left). The owner agreed to install a substitute tree, and has in fact installed two. While we regret the loss of such a large specimen, we are heartened that the Parks Department has agreed to install street trees on that block, which is sorely in need of them. The Garden Club and the Charlesgate Alliance were instrumental in effecting this solution, which should greatly enhance this block.

(Architecture Committee Report
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Licensing and Building Use Committee Report June 2017

The committee heard one application at its meeting on June 5th.

The Catered Affair, Boston Public Library – This is an application to extend the existing beer and wine license that covers any location within the building to an outdoor café. The café would be located on Exeter Street extending roughly from the door into the Newsfeed Café toward the end of the building at Blagden Street. It would be located entirely on BPL property, extending out to the property line. There would be 50 seats. Patrons would order and be served outdoors, and seating would not be available to those who ordered indoors. Beer and wine service on the patio would be offered from 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM Monday to Friday and 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM Saturday and Sunday.

The committee voted not to oppose with one in opposition. The Executive Committee ratified the committee's position.

In preparation for future applications, the committee also had an extended discussion about medical marijuana dispensaries and to a lesser extent recreational marijuana dispensaries. Councilor Zakim and Rep Livingstone, along with a representative of the Boston Police Department, answered questions about the regulatory process as well as the experience with the existing medical marijuana dispensary in Downtown Crossing.

At our next meeting on July 10th, we will be considering a proposal for a medical marijuana dispensary on the second floor at 331 Newbury Street along with several other applications that do not involve marijuana.

Architecture Committee Report (continued)

At **13 Hereford Street** the applicant returned with documentation that the proposed deck was not on the recent addition. He also eliminated the exterior stairs. Since the deck now has been shown to comply with the BBAC's guidelines, we supported it. However, we asked the BBAC to look into the legality of the existing deck, which had an extremely visible railing at the edge of the front bay and for which we could not find an approval.

Two Bay State dormitory buildings at **260-262 Commonwealth Avenue** came to the BBAC for a preliminary hearing. They are being converted to condos. We had many concerns about the proposal—the main one being that they plan to demolish the rear façades of both buildings in order to enlarge the existing bays and first floor--and hope that when the applicant returns the proposal will be more in keeping with the BBAC's guidelines.

Next month: A **Marathon Memorial proposed for Boylston Street** is scheduled to be heard by the BBAC at City Hall on the evening of July 12th. There already have been hearings in front of the City's Arts Commission, and NABB has supported funding for such a project, but we are hopeful that there will be more public discussion of the design as it moves forward.

Friends & Neighbors Events

MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP - This group of working, semi-working and retired men with diverse backgrounds meets for lunch and discussion at noon on the 3rd Tuesday of this month (July 18th). For more information, contact Grant Schaumburg at mensgroup@nabbonline.com.

We encourage all NABB members to receive the Bulletin by email instead of by snail mail. If you do, you will also receive our weekly NABB e-News and other occasional electronic communications that provide you with more information about what is going on in the neighborhood. Simply contact the NABB office (by calling (617) 247-3961 or emailing info@nabbonline.com) and provide our Office Administrator with your email address so that we can add you to our growing list of electronic Bulletin and e-News recipients!

Important Meeting Dates

The **Architecture Committee** is meeting on the first Thursday instead of the first Wednesday this month. Next meeting: July 6th at 6:30 pm in the Clausen Room of the New England College of Optometry, 424 Beacon Street.. For more information contact Sue Prindle or Susan Shafer at architecture@nabbonline.com.

The **Green Committee** meets at 5:30 pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the Learning Project, 107 Marlborough Street. Next meeting: July 12th. For more information, please contact Michael McCord at green@nabbonline.com.

The **Licensing and Building Use Committee** is meeting on the second Monday instead of the first Monday this month. Next meeting: July 10th at 7:00 pm at the Lenox Hotel. For more information contact Elliott Laffer at lbu@nabbonline.com.

The next **Police Panel / Public Safety Forum** will take place at 6:00 pm on Thursday, July 27th, in the Sanctuary of the First Church in Boston, 66 Marlborough Street. For more information, please contact Don Carlson at publicsafety@nabbonline.com.



Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, Inc.
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