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JAMAICA PLAIN

Whole Foods 'disappointed' by JPNC opposition; but maintains optimism

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 9, 2011 02:21 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Whole Foods said the company is "disappointed" that the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council has voted to publicly oppose its plans for a Hyde Square store. But the company, which now holds keys to the commercial space, said it is also "encouraged that it was such a close vote" and "appreciative" of support it has received in the wake of the [council's Tuesday evening decision](#).

"There has been a lot of conversation about Whole Foods Market coming to Jamaica Plain – positive and negative. We have heard both sides. While we are certainly disappointed that the final vote by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council was not in our favor, we are encouraged that it was such a close vote," said a statement from the national supermarket company's regional president Laura Derba e-mailed Wednesday.

"We are greatly appreciative of the resounding support we have been receiving today in response to the council's decision, from JP residents and businesses alike. We remain excited to serve the neighborhood, and eager to prove ourselves as positive community partners," she added.

Company spokeswoman Heather McCready said Whole Foods has received the keys to the 415 Centre St. building it signed a 20-year lease for in [mid-January](#) and "will begin our building assessment shortly."

The company last week expressed it is committed to moving forward with the store's plans despite [increasingly-organized](#) opposition, and the spokeswoman reiterated that sentiment again Wednesday.

"Jamaica Plain has a great, diverse community with diverse thoughts and opinions and that's a wonderful thing. The community being so passionate -- it's such a vibrant community -- and that's part of what drew us there. We're a company full of passionate people," McCready said.

In response to criticism by some at public forums and during neighborhood council deliberations that the company has not been forthcoming, she added "Whole Foods Market prides itself on providing transparency. We've released information as soon as it's available, and we'll continue to do so."

After the renovation process is further along and Whole Foods has a better

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idea of its timeline for opening, she said the company plans to host community-wide meetings at which "we will be happy to address any questions the community has."

After lengthy deliberation, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council passed, by a one-vote margin, a measure to publicly oppose plans for a Whole Foods store in Hyde Square.

The 20-member council, designed to represent neighborhood residents on public issues including development, took an official stance for the first time Tuesday evening on a controversial issue discussed since mid-January when the national grocer announced its intentions. The vote cast by 17 present council members was 9-8 in favor of issuing a public statement to oppose a Whole Foods store.

The council's stance has no direct impact on Whole Foods' plans. But it is a symbol of opposition and also an indicator of future hurdles Whole Foods may face if the company winds up needing additional city licensing or other approval to open. The council, a volunteer, biennially-elected advisory group, would take a separate vote on such matters and pass a majority recommendation to city officials who make the final call to approve or deny requests.

McCready said Wednesday that the company does not yet know what, if any, approval it may need from the city before it can open.

She also confirmed that the company is "seeking additional parking locations," which was first reported by the Jamaica Plain Gazette.

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