

The 20-member JPNC is designed to represent residents on public issues, including development. The public stance the council took earlier this spring has no direct impact on Whole Foods' plans. But it has been 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 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.

The 15-person ad-hoc committee meanwhile is a mix of five of the JPNC's current elected membership and 10 neighborhood residents who are not on the elected council but were selected specifically for the ad-hoc group.

Erica Bial's resignation letter:

An open letter to the JPNC, its Whole Foods Ad Hoc Committee, neighbors and friends:

I am writing to you to formally resign as a member of the JPNC's special Ad Hoc committee regarding Whole Foods and the future Whole Foods site, previously the Hi-Lo grocery store in Hyde Square. My reasons for this relate to serious flaws with the process, intent, and lack of transparency of both the JPNC and this committee.

I have been a longtime resident and homeowner in Hyde Square, and have been privileged to participate in many community discussions during my time here. They have typically been mature, tolerant, and based in reality. I was excited that, in these currently troubled financial times, a business of Whole Foods' calibre would be opening in a previously derelict location nearby to my home, bringing jobs, commerce, access to quality food, and further economic diversity to our community.

With this in mind, in good faith, I volunteered as a member of the JPNC's ad hoc committee. I had anticipated an open and honest dialogue about the betterment of Jamaica Plain, through an equitable and reasonable process, with clear goals and anticipated outcomes. I had hoped that the JPNC in general, and the Ad Hoc committee in specific, would be a venue for productive as well as representative conversation by members of the Hyde Square community on all sides of this issue.

However, the makeup of the Ad Hoc committee consists of several members who do not legitimately reside or necessarily work within JP. The membership is strongly skewed against those who might define themselves as "pro Whole Foods." Members of the community who were not appointed to the committee were nonetheless permitted, and even encouraged, to not only attend meetings, but actively participate in and dominate not only the dialogue but also the document being generated by the Ad Hoc committee. Ultimately, I question the legitimacy of the intended charge of the committee (which was never clearly articulated a priori), the committee's membership, and the

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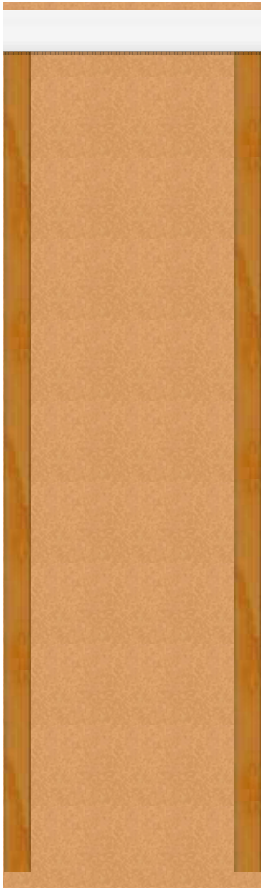
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controlling participation of several JPNC members on the committee.

Within the early meetings of the committee, it became apparent that the goal for the Ad Hoc committee set by the JPNC was to generate a "researched" document to be presented by the JPNC as a means of assessing the current relevant state of our community as well as the possible impacts and future of the proposed Whole Foods on Centre Street. Despite seemingly articulate goals, in actuality, these meetings rapidly devolved into jockeying for attention by various community factions, and dissenting opinions were frequently and aggressively squashed. It is my feeling and disappointment that the lack of clear process yielded a degree of chaos that was unable to foster compromise, let alone solutions. I observed pro-Whole Foods community members' ideas and concerns be treated in a dismissive manner by the majority of the committee (both JPNC and non-JPNC members).

Ultimately, I feel that I cannot participate in a group that cannot articulate a purpose and intent and be transparent with the community about that purpose. I have grave concerns about affiliating myself with a group that cannot equitably behave and define itself and its goals. The sole tangible outcome of the work of the committee, at this time, appears to center on obtaining an aggressive beneficial community benefits package from Whole Foods, with a particular focus on placating noisy special interest groups that do not, in fact, represent what I believe is the majority in JP. This is not an action that has been uniformly applied to businesses (or businesses of a certain size) in Jamaica Plain. While surely any new large-scale business in JP will present legitimate concerns (such as traffic, pollution, waste management, ethical treatment of employees, etc.), these have not been the issues addressed. I do not believe that it is under the purview of the neighborhood council to intercalate itself into a private, legal, and binding business transaction to this extent.

There are many possible futures, and concerns about those possible changes (as as affordable housing, cultural sensitivity, etc.) are worthy of respectful discussion. However, at this time the conversation about Whole Foods has devolved into prophecies regarding social class, race, and constantly shifting demographics in the urban environment in which we live, and deviated dramatically from those issues that we might be able to investigate and solve about a single store.

In good conscience, I cannot participate in the generation of the JPNC's ad hoc committee's actions, and I do not support or endorse the process, intent, or product of the committee.

Sincerely,

Erica Bial, M.D. M.P.H.
Jamaica Plain

Anne Mackin's resignation letter:

Members of the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council and Fellow Residents of Jamaica Plain,

This letter makes official the resignation that I have tried to tender to the JPNC's ad hoc Whole Foods Committee for two weeks. It conveys, with my regrets, my lack of confidence in the committee's ability to prepare an unbiased and intellectually rigorous report--despite dedicated efforts on the parts of some members. Please note that two other committee members are

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also resigning in protest at this time.

When I joined the committee, I thought I was signing up to help my community shed light on the issues surrounding the controversy of Whole Foods. I care deeply about the issues of gentrification and displacement. During some of my 22 years in Jamaica Plain, I wrote a book that deals extensively with these topics (*Americans and Their Land*, 2006). I invited Ben Forman, Research Director at MassInc and a JP resident, to address the committee on the ways Boston housing policy causes gentrification and displacement. However, most committee members seemed interested in displacement only in as far as they could blame Whole Foods for it, and interested only in research that confirmed their prejudices. A few seemed unable to believe that anyone who welcomed Whole Foods was not "selfish" or "racist."

Anyone who attended the recent public meeting with Whole Foods representatives can imagine the hostile atmosphere that pervaded some of the ad hoc Whole Foods committee and subcommittee meetings. Four of our committee members attended that meeting in blue tee-shirts and one was arrested for disrupting the meeting. Three of the WhoseFood organizers at that meeting also attended most of the ad hoc Whole Foods Committee meetings, though they were not members; designed and produced portions of the committee's report; and contributed to the divisive atmosphere.

This recipe for a committee seems extremely odd, given the expertise of many Jamaica Plain residents in the issues relating to Whole Foods arrival, which might have helped raise the level of the discussion on the committee. I have worked on many committees composing planning guidebooks for the public. On the ad hoc committee, I missed the cooperation and desire to work constructively that typified those earlier experiences. Thus, my lack of confidence in the committee's work. Will the committee's report even admit that Jamaica Plain needs supermarkets, as shown in the Food Trust's 2010 report, *Food for Every Child: The Need for More Supermarkets in Massachusetts*? I hope so, but I don't know. Will it show that not just Whole Foods but bookstores and public parks and many other amenities we all enjoy have the potential to raise surrounding property values? I don't know.

I look forward to leaving the committee's small world of anger and hostility and healing in my former life of constructive work, family love, and volunteering.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Mackin

Committee chair Steve Laferriere's response to Bial's resignation:

Dear Erica,

It is with sincere disappointment that I except [sic] your resignation, although as you've missed the last 4 meetings it doesn't come as a surprise to me. I feel that you never gave me, this committee, or this process a fair chance to have open and honest dialogue and to work toward compromise and solutions. Since the April 12th meeting, when you and nine other community members were chosen to sit on the committee, we have met seven times, with one more meeting scheduled for Monday night, June 13. Unfortunately, you only

attended two of the first three meetings and have not interacted in any way with the committee or myself since our May 3 meeting, over a month ago. I have reached out to you, individually, via email to ascertain whether you've had concerns about the process or whether something else had come up that had affected your ability to participate in the committee and for over a month you chose not to voice your concerns, until this public statement.

While I am not going to respond to each of your concerns, I would like respond to your concerns about the make-up of the committee. First, all members are residents of Jamaica Plain and/or owners of businesses based in Jamaica Plain, consistent with the by-laws of the JPNC. As I'm sure you recall, all members of the committee were chosen at random, although two slots each were reserved for people who identified themselves as either pro or anti Whole Foods. I acknowledge that the randomness of the process did result in a committee makeup that is more critical of Whole Foods. However, you were selected as one of the two people who identified themselves as pro-Whole Foods. Thus your lack of participation has further skewed the balance. Your decision to claim a "pro-Whole Foods" slot, and then not participate in the committee, has weakened the position you claim to support and the voice you signed on to represent.

Finally, the entire purpose of the JPNC is to engage residents and business owners in decision-making processes. To that end all of our meetings, but especially our committee meetings, are open public meetings, and we actively encourage non-Council and non-Committee members to participate. If our goal is to represent the voices of our community, how can we limit participation? I am truly grateful for the amount of work and effort many people who were not randomly selected to the committee have put into our work. They have chosen to make their voices and perspectives heard, while others, such as yourself, have not.

As you may be aware, we're working on editing our report, which will hopefully be completed next week. I feel extremely confident in saying that not one member of our committee will be 100% behind our final product, but I remain hopeful that our process will create something that begins to move this currently divisive debate toward compromise and solutions and I'm thankful for the people who have stayed with the process as this committee has evolved over the last two months.

Sincerely,

Steve Laferriere, JPNC ad-Hoc Whole Foods Committee, Chair

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