



## BACK BAY ASSOCIATION'S 84TH ANNUAL MEETING

The Back Bay Association's 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was held on May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Four Seasons Hotel Boston. More than 200 members of the Back Bay business community gathered to hear Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, Daniel O'Connell speak about the Commonwealth's economy and celebrate the BBA's accomplishments.



**BBA Board members: Gary Saunders, Chairman of Saunders Hotel Group and Robin Brown, Principal, CWB Boylston, LLC.**

With a power point presentation scrolling featuring many of Back Bay's landmarks, businesses, institutions and leaders, Bryan Koop, Senior Vice President and Regional Manager for Boston Properties (and the Chairman of the Back Bay Association) shared his vision for the Back Bay Association.

The Back Bay Association's "charter has been, for close to a century, to improve, promote and protect Back Bay, America's Most Dynamic neighborhood." We are happy to report that the Back Bay Association had another outstanding year of accomplishments in our three (3) disciplines and that we have an ambitious list of projects for the upcoming year.



**BBA Board Members Bill Taylor, General Manager of the Four Seasons (left) with Charlie Sarkis, CEO of Back Bay Restaurant Group (center) and Harry Collings of the Boston Redevelopment Authority**

In our improvement discipline, the "Boylston Street Improvement Plan" has been a tremendous success. Uniform street lamps, hanging

baskets and seasonal banners are a visible improvement to visitors, conventioners and new prospective retailers reviewing Boston's Grand Boulevard as a location. We continue to support this top priority project of Mayor Menino and surely it had an impact on Apple's decision to locate their New England Flagship on Boylston.



**BBA Chairman, Bryan Koop, Regional Vice President & Regional Manager for Boston Properties**

Transportation is always a focus of the BBA as efficient and predictable access to Back Bay is critical to our mission. We meet with city and state agencies to review future transportation needs and existing weaknesses. We applaud the recent consolidations of agencies and we see it as an opportunity to work more effectively and push for a transportation master plan for the Back Bay with priorities, of greater Mass Pike access and frequency of subway trains."

Mr. Koop outlined the BBA's support of Mayor Menino's efforts to make "Boston Shine," adding "our members must demonstrate leadership by example, own your sidewalk through the curb." Describing the BBA's promotional activities, Koop outlined the organization's networking events, Holly Trolley, map distribution, website and state of the art member database program. "Over the past year, we made investments in media and internet with an interactive database which will prove valuable to serve our members, especially as membership grows.



**BBA Board member Kathy Connor, GM of Loro Piana**

Our last disciplines of Protecting the Back Bay may be were we demonstrated our strength and became “A great organization.”

Over the past year, we made the final push for “Save the Hynes.” What an Important priority and accomplishment. On countless occasions, I have received thank you notes on your behalf. Thank you without the BBA leadership the Hynes could have been lost, merchants, hotels, restaurants, the list of impacted businesses is almost endless. Helping to save one of the Commonwealth’s most valuable assets was one of our finest achievements but it also taught us how valuable lessons. First, appreciate our business generators, second, approach important issues with facts. Present the business preposition, and drive the truth. We did not whine, complain, and make it political. We presented the facts. They say, “The truth will set you free.” In this case, the truth saved the Hynes.

Meg Mainzer-Cohen, President of the Back Bay Association, introduced keynote speaker Secretary Daniel O’Connell, Department of Housing and Economic Development for the Commonwealth. Secretary O’Connell

As a resident of the Back Bay, Secretary O’Connell said he was very pleased to be part of the meeting. Secretary Daniel O’Connell gave a brief history of his background and that this is the first public job he’s had. In addition, he worked at Meredith & Grew and was in the Real Estate industry.

O’Connell said he has been working very closely with Mayor Menino and assured that Mayor Menino and Governor Patrick are working very closely together on initiatives to benefit the State and the City of Boston. The Secretary explained that the organization’s main focuses are jobs and housing and that his new secretariat was a merger of two major offices, the Office of Economic Development and the Office of Housing Development.

O’Connell discussed the creation of housing along transit lines, and incentive programs for communities looking to accept clusters of homes so that the State can create more housing along transit lines. In addition, O’Connell discussed his cabinet’s reorganization, initiatives to expand tourism and business development, the “greening” of Massachusetts, the



Secretary Daniel O’Connell

need for a new marketing slogan, and the Governor’s support for updating the Hynes Convention Center.

The Association’s business continued with the Treasurer’s re-

port and Nominating Committee’s report, offered by Cary Lynch, Senior Vice President & Regional Executive for Sovereign Bank. The Back Bay Association presented two Annual Awards. Meg Mainzer-Cohen presented the Heavy Lifting Award to Jim Rooney, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and said, “The Back Bay Association likes to recognize great accomplishments, so a few years ago, we established the “heavy lifting award” to present to a person whose efforts have dramatically improved the neighborhood. This year, we want to recognize someone whose efforts have helped Back Bay, and the City of Boston as a whole. At a time when everyone was talking about how the price tag and timelines for public construction projects grew higher and longer each day, this person developed two buildings, on time and on budget. Yes, the only person who could have done this is Jim Rooney, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority. Rooney thanked the Association and spoke of the Association’s leadership in Back Bay.



Meg Mainzer-Cohen present the Heavy Lifting Award to Jim Rooney, Executive Director of Massachusetts Convention Center Authority

Alan Snow, Director of Security for Boston Properties presented the Back Bay Security Network Award to Richard Litto and said, “Richie has provided focus to the issue of homelessness in Back Bay and has creatively worked with the businesses and service providers to help tackle this complicated problem.”



Alan Snow presents Back Bay Security Network Award to Office Richard Litto

Special and laudable thanks to Bill Taylor and the Four Seasons Hotel Boston for hosting such an outstanding and memorable Annual Meeting!

## STORROW DRIVE OPTIONS

The Back Bay Association is actively involved with the community process regarding the reconstruction of Storrow Drive. We seek input from our membership about the three proposed plans. Please respond to BBA with your comments and which plan you support/prefer:

**REBUILD:** Rebuild the Storrow Drive Tunnel. The plan to rebuild the tunnel would maintain all access points and road configurations. After construction, it would maintain the current envelop of the Esplanade and offer an improved ADA compliant footbridge (Arthur Fiedler) at Arlington Street. This plan would take approximately 2 years, with 13 months of “critical” roadwork. It has an estimated cost of \$52 million and a lifespan of 40 years or more. (This is a shorter lifespan than the other options since not all of the elements of the rehabilitated tunnel will be new.)

**PARKWAY:** Create a surface roadway in both directions with a two-lane underpass and a westbound exit at Arlington Street. This option would add green space to the Esplanade and offer an ADA compliant footbridge at Arlington Street. The Berkeley Street westbound on ramp would be eliminated. The eastbound off ramp at Arlington Street would be eliminated. A new exit ramp would be added at Dartmouth St. This plan would take 3 years, with 23 month of “critical” roadwork. This option has an estimated cost of \$65 million and a lifespan of 75 years.

**TUNNELS:** Create 2 tunnels on Storrow Drive between Arlington and Berkeley Street. This would expand green space on the Esplanade and create a street level greenway footbridge at Arlington Street to the Esplanade. This plan would eliminate the eastbound Arlington Street off-ramp. It would add an eastbound off ramp at Dartmouth St. This plan would take 3.5 years, with 30 months of “critical” roadwork. It has an estimated cost of \$135 million and a lifespan of 75 years.

All of the options call for keeping two lanes of traffic open at almost all times, with some shutdowns to shift lanes and adjust ramps. There will be ramp closures during the “critical” construction periods. The options with new ramps – either the Fiedler Footbridge or at Dartmouth Street – will be ADA compliant. All of the options fit well within national standards for air quality. A number of trees will be removed and replaced to accommodate the temporary traffic lanes; the quantities vary by proposal. A groundwater recharge system will be installed in the rebuild and tunnel options and storm water discharged to the Charles River will be treated.

### BACK BAY ASSOCIATION MEETS WITH MAYOR MENINO

The decisions Of the Back Bay Architectural Commission have, in many ways, enhanced the neighborhood and protected its historic charm. Yet it is increasingly clear that some of the decisions made by the BBAC have made it more difficult to create a successful business environment, especially for retailers and restaurants on Newbury Street. The Back Bay Association Board had a small meeting with Mayor Thomas M. Menino and relayed the concerns, especially of our Newbury Street members.

Recommendation by the BBAC have encouraged characteristics that were prevalent when Newbury Street was residential, including green-space (front yards), residential windows and minimal signage. Yet these attributes, while desired in a residentially zoned neighborhood, are counter productive for a successful business environment. A block by block study of Newbury Street demonstrates that the first 3 blocks (between Arlington and Dartmouth Street) are the most successful for retailing. Predominantly, the first floor spaces have large windows and excellent sight-lines from the street. The sidewalks are expansive and pedestrians can comfortably get close to the windows to window shop and enjoy the retail environment. The signage, while modest, enables pedestrians and drive-by traffic to view which estab-

lishments are there. As you proceed down the block, the retail experience becomes more muddled. Big planters are placed in front of many addresses (some are planted, others are filled with weeds), the entrances to buildings are more circuitous, and some of the windows are smaller and more suited to a residence. Since many entrances are blocked by planters, the signs approved by the BBAC do not present the visual attraction needed by retailers, so a host of sandwich boards line the street. Since planters take space on the sidewalks, the pedestrian experience is more difficult and people have to cue to get through some pinched areas. Planters keep window shoppers at a distance and the windows are commercially undersized for adequate window displays Signage in the Back Bay Architectural District is also a topic of concern. Signs are too small, difficult to see, and not permitted on upper floors. As we look to increase the success of Newbury Street, this is critical to attracting and maintaining top retailers.

Mayor Menino was extremely receptive to the concerns brought forth in the meeting and created a new Committee to focusing in creating business guidelines for the business section of Back Bay Architectural District. Stay tuned!!!

BACK BAY ASSOCIATION



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## BEAUTIFYING BACK BAY

The Back Bay is once again the place to be in the summer! Boylston Street is flowering as part of the Boylston Street Improvement Plan, and hanging baskets are installed on light posts. Project Place is sweeping the street daily. The Back Bay Association works closely with Harry Collings and Jill Zick of the BRA and appreciate the “flowering” of these many efforts.

Newbury Street got some well-deserved attention by the Public Works Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. Frank O’Brien of Public Works organized a major clean-up of Newbury on Memorial Day weekend, with power washing and special sweeping. Antonia Pollack, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation noted that 11 trees were planted this year on Newbury, and 6 more are scheduled for the fall.

The BBA is working closely with Joe Canavan from Public Works and Richard Loring of the Transportation to fix the problems caused by the installation of Jersey barriers on Dalton Street. More soon.

Please do YOUR PART to maintain the neighborhood! Take a moment and sweep to the curb, and water our newly planted trees.

We are part of the solution!