



State Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez presents Holiday Card Contest winner Dominic Zheng, a fifth-grader at the Farragut School with a certificate and a \$100 savings bond certificate. Sanchez offered the competition this year to children in his district.

## Pizzeria gets needed slice of JPNC support

**Matuya Brand**

*Bulletin Staff*

Vasiliki Bartzokis won approval from the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council Public Service Committee Monday night for a license to operate a pizza place at 10 Walk Hill Street in Jamaica Plain despite opposition from residents.

"A lot of the problems would be helped with a business with lights on at night," said Jeff Ugino, the only resident present that spoke out in support of the pizzeria. "It wouldn't hurt things to put life on the corner."

Despite the fact that three of

the four residents present -- and five emails sent to the committee -- opposed the pizzeria, the committee chose to recommend that the city's licensing board approve the needed common victualer license, allowing the sale of food, with the condition that the restaurant would close at 10:30 p.m. instead of midnight. The committee also asked Bartzokis to come back to the community voluntarily with detailed plans for garbage, incoming and outgoing delivery, parking and security.

Bartzokis, the owner of the Christo's Pizza Corporation, will manage the pizzeria, which will be called My Big Fat Greek Pizza. The pizzeria will offer

delivery, pick-up and four tables to sit a total of 16 patrons.

The meeting was a follow-up to a Dec. 7 Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council meeting where neighbors were divided on the issue. The committee subsequently asked the licensing board to postpone the decision until Dec. 21 in order for the committee to submit a recommendation to the board. A decision from the licensing board is expected by the end of the week.

Since the early December meeting, Bartzokis, who ran a pizzeria in South Boston for 32

**Pizza**

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## HOPE receives an early present

**Matuya Brand**

*Bulletin Staff*

Jamaica Plain's Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE) received an early holiday gift from the city and local corporate sponsors.

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Vice Chairman Robert M. Mahoney of Citizens Financial Group presented a total of \$160,800 in checks to six non-profit organizations serving the City of Boston. The money was raised through a collaborative fundraiser, Celebrating Community Gems, where \$26,800 was allotted to HOPE along with YouthBuild Boston, Roxbury Multi-Service Center, Children's Services of Roxbury, United Homes for Children of Dorchester and La Alianza Hispana of Roxbury.

HOPE will use the funds to support their youth opportunities program, according to the agency's Executive Director, Jose Duran. Most of the youth programs are geared towards college readiness by helping

students plan and get ready for college as early as the 6th grade.

"We work with them throughout their school career into their final year in high school. Throughout the process, we help them think about going to college and plan courses to develop a pathway, admission applications and the like. We also provide some of the students with after school programming to help support work in school," said Duran.

The after school, weekend and summer programs include mentoring, tutoring, instructional activities, cultural heritage education.

"It gives them a better sense of who they are and where they come from, exploring culture in ways they don't have a chance to in school," said Duran. The students also learn about the political process and what role they might play in it and have a service based volunteer activity of their choosing.

**HOPE**

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## City Council gains added BRA oversight

**Matuya Brand**

*Bulletin Staff*

After intense, multi-day discussions, the Boston City Council passed an order on Wednesday, Dec. 8 that increased the council's oversight

over the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) while at the same time granting its request to extend 19 of its urban renewal plans.

For the past 40 years, urban renewal has resulted in the creation and preservation of every-

thing from City Hall to South Station, but remains controversial due to the BRA's ability to obtain land from private landowners through eminent do-

**BRA**

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Ollie St. Cyr, his wife Jean St. Cyr from Jamaica Plain and their friend Ruth Smith of Roslindale turned out for the American Legion Post #76 holiday party last Wednesday in their holiday finest.

*Photo: John Nihen*

## BRA *continued from page 1*

main. Proponents of the projects claim 30,000 jobs and 25,000 units have been created through urban renewal.

According to the order, the council has called for new oversight controls, including annual reports on the progress of an urban renewal plan, 30 days notice on all land takings and minor modifications so the council can hold hearings, greater clarification on what constitutes a major change and a promise that the BRA will work more closely with city councilors in connection with substantial changes to properties in their districts, such as a change from residential to institutional use of an urban renewal parcel.

"We are pleased with the council's vote and endorsement of the BRA's urban renewal policy," said BRA spokesperson Meredith Bauman in a statement after the hearing. "The extensions will enable us to continue our work to create housing, jobs and economic development opportunities throughout the city."

Council President Michael Flaherty said he was proud of the work his colleagues put into the issue, especially Chairman of the Committee on Planning and Economic Development James Kelly, who led the deliberations.

"I think the oversight the council called for Wednesday is a balanced step in providing the city with greater oversight which will allow us to better protect the interests of our constituents and the neighborhoods of Boston without unduly disruption the development process," Flaherty said. "Urban renewal has been able to accomplish some great things. Lots of positive affordable housing opportunities and economic developments have come as a result of urban renewal and the BRA having certain tools to work with. Now we have more oversight by way of notice and input. This puts the council in a much better position today than prior."

"As president of the council, I am proud to lead a body where we were able to successfully bring about reform at the BRA. They recognize that they have some shortcomings and they haven't done a good job of communicating with the council in the past."

While most of the council supported the measure, Councilor Maura Hennigan - along with Councilors Felix Arroyo, Chuck Turner and Charles Yancey - voted against it.

"The newer councilors look at it different ways," she said, despite Kelly, who led the council in discussions with the BRA,

20 years of experience.

"The BRA does good things and can do them with urban renewal or not. They have a tendency to abuse power," said Hennigan.

A recent example of what Hennigan feels is an abuse of power is when the BRA took private property from landowners and gave to other developers in Dudley Square in Dorchester.

Hennigan said that when the BRA takes over a building by eminent domain, that the city always pays below market value, leading landowners to take the city to court and losing even more money through bulky lawyer fees.

"What if (they) come into other areas? The reason Dudley has not yet been revitalized is

because it is waiting for (the) state to honor (its) commitment. The city has had a whole year to do this and did it the day before the session closed," Hennigan said. "We can't give them just carte blanche because people promised them x, y and z. They say they have been negotiating with property owners in good faith and those who don't know any better, might believe them. Just because it does not affect you now doesn't mean it won't. They'll just as easily take land in West Roxbury."

Hennigan feels that the concessions on the part of the BRA were not enough and that the BRA remains unaccountable to the public at all.

"They are a very powerful agency, with very minor provi-

sions. I don't think the council should be the development arm but should be accountable to taxpayers through elected officials. This was really our chance, if we didn't get it then, 2015 is the next time they will come to us when need something. We don't have to give away the whole store. Instead, let's begin a discussion to get a better idea of their vision."

Other councilors remain optimistic.

Councilor Jerry McDermott said that within his neighborhood, urban renewal is an important part in North Allston. Harvard University is keenly interested in the Charlesview property and for expansion into Northern Allston and urban renewal would aide the university in obtaining the building.

"Knowing they are covered city-wise, the administration gains leverage with urban renewal powers and the BRA gains leverage with city and Harvard," McDermott said. "If it were a game of cards than we strengthened out hands at the table."

The plans that received extensions through the order to the year 2015 include Brunswick-King, Campus High School, Central Business District (CBD) Bedford West, CBD Boylston-Essex, CBD School-Franklin, CBD South Station, Charlestown, Fenway, Government Center, Kittredge Square, North Harvard, Park Plaza, South Cove, South End, St. Botolph, Sumner Street, Washington Park, and Downtown Waterfront, with active plans at North Station and the West End.

## HOPE *continued from page 1*

HOPE was invited to be one of the recipients of the Community Gems event early in the beginning of the year. "We were very pleased that the amount we were granted had exceeded what had originally been set as goal," said Duran.

The first-time event drew about 800 people at the UMass Boston Student Center to support. DeWayne Lehman, spokesperson for the city of Boston, said that the city aims to do a ton of work with nonprofits since they "know how difficult it is to do the really good work they do during these tight budget times. Obviously a no-brainer to support this effort to work with them."

"I want to congratulate these gems in our community and

Citizens for their outstanding effort and success in this fundraiser," Menino said regarding the grant. "And I want to thank these nonprofits for their commitment to and continued work in our communities. This is another example of how, when we all work together in partnership, we can achieve ambitious goals."

While the cost of tickets covered the cost of the actual fundraiser, Citizens Bank and the City of Boston, with the support of more than a dozen community and corporate partners, raised enough money to surpass event organizers' initial goal of raising \$25,000 for each. The event's major sponsors included Boston Private Bank & Trust Company, the

New England Patriots Foundation, the Liberty Mutual Group, Reebok Human Rights Foundation, Goodwin Procter LLC, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Partners HealthCare, Stop & Shop Supermarket Companies, KeySpan, WCVB-TV 5, Mega Communications and Citizens Bank.

Honorary Committee members who helped choose the award recipients included local politicians U.S. Congressman Michael Capuano, State Senator Dianne Wilkerson, State Representative Liz Malia, and City Councilor Felix Arroyo.

Menino and Mahoney served as co-chairmen of the effort. WCVB's Karen Holmes Ward served as Master of Ceremonies.

"We further hope that this is something that could be done every year so more agencies can benefit," said Duran. "As first time effort the donor list is remarkable. Of course, we are extremely grateful to that long list of donors. But the thing that most impressed with was that the actual event. It was an evening of a lot of fun activities, fundraising event seemed that all the participants were enjoying and having great fun."