

WEST ROXBURY ~ ROSLINDALE BULLETIN

Volume 24, Issue 2

JANUARY 11, 2024



The Parkway is seeing more and more of the glitz and glamor.

COURTESY PHOTO

Parkway Goes Hollywood

Ariane Komyati
Staff Reporter

Two recently released movies, *The Holdovers* and *American Fiction*, have something local in common – they both contain scenes filmed in the Parkway area. Caution: the following article may contain mild spoilers.

American Fiction, starring Jeffrey Wright and Tracee Ellis Ross, is a movie about a frustrated novelist who's tired of the establishment that profits from Black entertainment steeped in offensive tropes. The movie was named one of the top ten films of 2023 by the American Film Institute and has received many awards, including two nominations for Golden Globes and five nominations at the Critics' Choice Awards, including Best Picture. The movie was filmed in September 2022.

The interior of a Victorian house on Bellevue Street in West Roxbury was used as the home of the main characters. "The set was great – lots of interior work. The special part is how the local community and our own union were working on this film," remarked Shadya Ballug, who worked as a Set Decorator on *American Fiction*. She explained that most of the shots of the house were interior, except for a few quick transition scenes that took place outside.

The cast and crew sometimes had difficulty fitting into the narrow hallways of the Victorian home. Santino Tartaglia, who worked in the sound department, explained that the classic and unique interior of the home was key to the plot of the movie.

"Normally, a house of this style and size would be reserved for a certain character type in the media," Tartaglia said. "American Fiction made excellent use of this house in the breaking of that mold. We see wealth and affluence in the walls and on the banister of the house. But, with the set decorations, we also see a family history within the home. So we have this huge stylish home that has been in one family for generations. It looks old, like old money. And that family is Black. It shouldn't be a big deal, but it is. Both in the real world, but also in the story," Tartaglia explained.

Ballug and Tartaglia both remarked that the neighborhood was welcoming and friendly to the film crew, and they enjoyed walking to Centre Street to try the local eateries during her lunch break. Tartaglia especially liked Delini Gelato, which is on the same street as the Victorian home.

The Holdovers, starring Paul Giamatti, is a film about a teacher at a New England prep school who stays on campus during Christmas break to babysit a handful of students. The instructor, played by Giamatti, forms an unlikely bond with one of his troubled scholars. The film takes place in December 1970. About halfway through the film, Parkway residents may recognize a familiar setting in a restaurant scene – the renowned Pleasant Cafe. The landmark cafe's vintage interior is the perfect spot to film a period piece.

Filming took place at the Pleasant

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About 30 residents met with officials on Monday at the Roslindale Library to detail the Squares + Streets initiative for the neighborhood.

PHOTO BY JEFF SULLIVAN

Roslindale meets Squares + Streets

Jeff Sullivan
Staff Reporter

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) met with about 30 Roslindale community leaders, business owners and residents at the Roslindale Branch of the Boston Public Library on Monday for an informal discussion on what the Squares + Streets Program will look like. The program is a rezoning effort focusing on city squares and business corridors to increase housing

density where neighborhoods consider appropriate, or potentially decrease density if deemed necessary.

BPDA Director James Arthur Jemison said that's mainly up to Roslindalites. And he announced then that Roslindale will be one of the first areas to really begin and ramp up the Squares + Streets process.

"The process is a path through which we've identified a large number of density options for the squares in partnership with you in which you

Squares + Streets
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Pepén peppered with Squares + Streets concerns

Matthew MacDonald
Staff Reporter

The Hyde Park Neighborhood Association (HPNA) held its monthly meeting on Thursday, Jan. 4. It drew about 20 people and ran just over an hour.

Enrique Pepén, the new District 5 city councilor, was the featured guest. In his brief remarks, the Roslindale resident – who had made multiple appearances before different Hyde Park neighborhood groups during his winning campaign – revisited past talking points as he touched on his background in public policy and constituent services.

During the Q&A that followed, however, the councilor – who took office on Jan. 1 – was plunged into the present to address a citywide zoning override proposal that has been moving through the community process since early December, and that is scheduled to wrap up in early February before continuing on to the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA).

Squares + Streets (S+S) opened the 40 minute Q&A and took up more than half of it.

This new citywide planning and zoning initiative is being proposed by the Boston

Planning & Development Agency (BPDA). As stated on the BPDA's S+S webpage, Small Area Plans would modify zoning to support housing and healthy business districts, bring about infrastructure projects to address transportation and public space needs, and implement programs and funding to promote small businesses and arts and culture.

These zoning modifications would be captured in five subdistrict categories that – when applied to development proposals in neighborhood squares and main street areas – would supersede the existing codes for those specific zoning districts.

Hyde Park's zoning code – Article 69 – took effect in 2012 after about two years of collaboration between the neighborhood and the City. However, as large scale BPDA backed developments have been proposed for the greater Cleary Square area over the last handful of years, it has been routinely and summarily bypassed by the ZBA through variances granted, thus clearing the way for their construction.

Regarding these large projects, the BPDA's methods of operation and its interaction with the community have also been

HPNA

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The BPS calendar

The Boston Public School calendar has always intrigued me: How many, if any, parents are consulted to give input before it is formalized months beforehand? How much common sense infuses it? Do schools exist for teachers (to work in) or for students (to learn in)?

Let's start in September. Boston Public never returns to school on the Tuesday after Labor Day: school, with few exceptions, opens on the following Thursday; why not open on the Tuesday following Labor Day, and why the delay this past September for pre-K and Kindergarten students to start the next week, on September 11?

This past Christmas occurred on a Monday, but there was no school on Friday, December 22, forcing many parents to scramble for childcare. Why couldn't students go to school on that Friday, 3 days before Christmas? [Interestingly enough, the last day before the Xmas break for BC High, serving 7th graders and above, was December 15. Huh??]

Following the Christmas vacation is the return to school on January 3, again forcing BPS parents/guardians to scramble for childcare, following a nonsensical tradition of having no school on January 2 so that teachers and students can ease back into the schedule with a professional day is the basis for the first calendar stress of every new year.

I understand why there seem



My Kind of Town/
Joe Galeota

to be more snow days called nowadays: the ubiquitous school buses have to negotiate many narrow streets. To its credit, the School Department does call off school the night before to allow for child-care scheduling, although sometimes the huge storms never materialize. Not surprisingly, the announcement of snow days extends the last day even further in June to accommodate the state-imposed 180-day minimum.

I've always bristled at the February vacation: most Boston Public School kids do not go skiing or visit Disney; teachers might but students do not. Delaying the end of the school year

by 4 days—Presidents' Day, occurring on the Monday of the vacation week, is a national holiday—has terrible consequences: very little learning occurs in June, though more might occur this year because of the installation of air conditioning in public school classrooms.

March 17th and June 17th are no longer Suffolk County holidays, meaning that there is school: Evacuation/St Patrick's Day and Bunker/Breed's Hill day have bitten the dust.

While I do espouse the Wednesday before Thanksgiving for being a half day, thus enabling travel for many students and teachers, the half days at the end of the year, in 2024 on June 18 and 20 (June 19 is now a state holiday), cause more childcare problems for working parents. Even if snow days cause the last days of school to occur later in June, there will be at least two half days at the end.

Fortunately, private schools do not have to abide by the state requirement for public schools (except pre-K, K, and 12th grade) to be 180 days. Let's hope the state Department of Education never tries to impose this on schools where equal, if not more, learning occurs in fewer days.

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Parkway Movies

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Cafe around January 2022.

"From the neon signs radiating a sense of old world realness, to the trophies and placards on the wall, I felt that the Pleasant Cafe was perfect for our scenes," explained Ryan Hull, who was the Special Effects Foreman for The Holdovers. "The old school swiveling bar stools, from an era where people were thinner, the booths and the wooden paneling were definitely a hit in eras gone by."

Hull noted that it was slightly difficult to fit the entire crew inside the Pleasant and do camera turnarounds, but they made it work while maintaining film set COVID-19 protocols.

Hull created a smoky atmosphere in the Pleasant Cafe for the movie.

"If this were the 70s, there would be a lot of smoking. Since some of the background actors had lit fake cigarettes, we maintained a perfectly hazy atmosphere down the two long halls of Pleasant Cafe. The booths on each side of the camera were a nice respite for the cramped crew, and by the end of the night, some of us were getting very comfy in those booths," he said.

A set dresser covered the floors inside the Cafe with large rugs since the anti-skid flooring was not period appropriate. Production Designer Ryan Warren Smith removed the modern elements inside, such as the flat screen TVs, and added their own elements for the scene, such as a 1960s pinball machine.

"The Pleasant Cafe is like a time capsule, not much has changed," noted Smith. "One of my favorite details was when one of the owners brought out their own personal Christmas dressing that they'd been using since the 1950s. You can see some of their faux candles in the background behind where Paul Giamatti is sitting."

The film crew said they were thankful for the opportunity to film at the Pleasant.

"The location lent itself well to the atmosphere we were after for The Holdovers in that it felt 'familiar' and very authentic. The story was able to play out perfectly within its inviting atmosphere, the local representatives from the Cafe were friendly and made us feel right at home," explained Justin Sulham, a Grip for The Holdovers. A Grip is responsible for setting up, rigging, and striking lighting equipment on a movie set.

At the end of the day, the crew tasted the famous Pleasant Cafe pizza. "All the new and faded newspaper clippings in the front entryway weren't lying. Pleasant Cafe was actually pleasant," said Hull. "Who would've thought?"

The Pleasant Cafe has been a backdrop in several period films in recent years, including the Boston Strangler starring Keira Knightley, a Whitney Houston biopic, and HBO's Julia. Hull also worked on Julia, which filmed multiple scenes at the Pleasant Cafe. "I had a huge sense of déjà-vu until a crew member mentioned that we had been there eight months prior. It still had its charm, and I was still tickled to see that it was such a perfect setting for shoots from the 1950s to the 1980s. I guess if it ain't broke, don't fix it," Hull said. The Pleasant Cafe shared some screenshots of the movie on their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pleasantcafe.

While most of The Holdovers was filmed in Western Massachusetts, the city of Boston plays a key part in the movie. New England film crew and actors agree that the Boston area is the perfect place to film a period piece.

"It works well for films set in the 1970s (and many other periods) because you can find many locations that have a sense of history and either haven't changed all that much or are easily adaptable for period pieces. In Boston, they were able to use locations that could be altered to look like the period, and changing signage and cars to look like the 1970s made it very believable and really felt like a time machine going back 50 years," said Bill Mootos, who played Mr. Endicott in The Holdovers, alongside Giamatti's character. The Holdovers is predicted to receive multiple Oscar nominations. The movie won three Golden Globe Awards last Sunday for Best Actor in a Musical or Comedy Film, Best Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture, and Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy. In his awards acceptance speech, Giamatti thanked his Boston film crew.

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JANUARY

30

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