
ECG MATTERS



FUTURE EVENTS!

1/15/19 **BOT Meeting** (6:30 pm, Tye Room)

1/31/19 **Wine Tasting** (6:00 pm, Tye Room)

3/26/19 **BOT Meeting** (7:30 am, Tye Room)

Introducing the Esplanade Community Group (ECG) & Its Steering Committee: Who are they? What do they do?

The members of the Steering Committee of the ECG (Esplanade Community Group) include Mary Jo Bane, Susan Barron, Nancy Crowley, Jane Hilbert-Davis, Heather Holenthal, and Vibha Pingle. We first met in January 2018. Our mission has been, and continues to be, to encourage and support the Esplanade Community by improving communications both inside the building and with the outside community. With this goal in mind, in addition to publishing our Newsletter, ECG Matters, we organize, sponsor and help develop interest groups and events for the residents. Over the last year, we are very pleased to announce that we have sponsored and coordinated the following new groups and events: a Book Club, an Art Group, an Aging in Place Group, three Potluck and Networking evenings, two resident authors' talks, a wine tasting, and a Newsletter. Plans for the near future include guests from the East Cambridge Planning Team, more resident authors' talks, and a survey of the residents. We also hope to expand our Newsletter to include restaurant reviews, news from the management and BOT, civic events, and features from the condo and our neighborhood.

ECG Matters welcomes feedback, letters, ideas, book suggestions, and comments. All must be signed! Please send to: EsplanadeCommunity@gmail.com

Observer Notes from the BOT (Board of Trustees) Meeting 1/15/19

All members of the Board of Trustees met in the Tye Room at 6:30 pm, attended as well by a full room of residents. As a first order of business, Nancy Stiening was named as the new Secretary. Energy conservation within the building was discussed. Maureen Burg, Building Manager, reported on the engagement of Eversource in 2016 for an energy audit as a result of which the building converted to LED bulbs in all the common areas and installed high efficiency burners and boilers. Beyond energy savings, these steps reaped substantial rebates through the Mass Save program. Board members then discussed concerns of homeowners expressed at the Annual Meeting on the energy rating of windows, and suggested increased communication to all homeowners to engage in-house maintenance (which would be much more cost effective than window replacement) to address concerns of leakage and drafts (which are the responsibility of homeowners). Mass Save will be contacted regarding the rules of energy audits for individual condominium owners. (Continued on p.6.)

January Events!

BOT Meeting 1/15/19 6:30 pm

Wine Tasting 1/31/19 6:00 pm

Spanish wine regions have ancient winemaking traditions using native grapes you may not have heard of yet.

We will explore some of this history and methods of production and delve into tasting methods. From sparkling wines and refreshing whites to full-bodied reds and unique fortified wines, Spain has something to please everyone. We have a few spaces left.

To register: <https://ecgwinetasting-winesofspain.eventbrite.com>

Book Club Suggestions

Helen Luke, a writer and Jungian analyst, speaks, in her short, beautiful 1987 book ***Old Age: Journey into Simplicity***, of the possibility of growing into old age by drawing upon and freeing up one's inner resources. She illustrates the changes in attitude needed for such growth in chapters on the *Odyssey*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *Little Gidding*.

Many Esplanade bookies enjoyed ***Little Fires Everywhere***, by Celeste Ng. Ng is a Cambridge resident, written up by the Boston Globe as one of its 2018 Bostonians of the year. *Little Fires Everywhere*, set in Shaker Heights Ohio, in the late 1990s, opens with the affluent and seemingly perfect Richardson family watching their suburban home being destroyed by fire. In describing the events leading up to the fire, this best-selling novel brings together the lives of two very different families, and explores the dimensions and meanings of motherhood. The book is being adapted for an eight-part Hulu series.

Another favorite of our book club was ***News of the World***. This little gem of a book describes the 200-mile journey of Captain Jefferson Kid, an elderly itinerant newsreader, with a 10-year-old white girl whom he is returning to her closet living relatives. She had been rescued from the Kiowa Indians who had kidnapped her 4 years earlier. The author, Pauline Jiles, a poet and a novelist, displays her talents in this hard-to-put-down beautifully written tale of "the old west" in Texas in 1870 and of a time when news was a precious commodity.

THE ESPLANADE ARTS GROUP

The Arts Group met twice last year and discussed ways that the members could enjoy and/or discuss shared events and performances. Many local venues, such as the Central Square Theater, Kendall Square Cinema, and musical options in and around the Boston area were mentioned. We have used our email list for the members to communicate and generate interest in events. Several key issues emerged in our discussions:

- Communications: Providing flyers of upcoming events of interest to our members
- Bulletin Board: Posting notices and option of resale of tickets that owners cannot use (with the proviso that the interaction take place between the two interested parties)
- Tye Community Room: Expressing wishes for a large-screen TV so that we could enjoy film nights, watch championship games, and other events together.

The main takeaway was that people want to connect around common interests. I hope that we can meet in the next few weeks to kick-start the new year with ideas...perhaps plan to view the Oscar-nominated shorts that will play at Kendall Cinema in February. We welcome new members and any suggestions to meet our goals. Please contact me at: nancymcrowley@icloud.com



Mingle and Jingle at the Holiday Potluck
Photos courtesy of Bob Kagan

Local Chinese Kitchens: A preliminary report from Ken Winston

Since moving to the Esplanade (and Cambridge) four and a half years ago, I have indulged shamelessly, if intermittently, in one of my favorite pastimes – exploring local eating establishments, especially for lunch. This report is a brief and preliminary review of five Chinese restaurants in Cambridge, three nearby and two that involve a bit of a walk.

The newest addition to Kendall Square – and nearest to the Esplanade – is Sumiao Hunan Kitchen which opened about a year ago, on the corner of Third and Binney Streets. The owner, Sumiao Chen, was born and raised in Hunan province in China. She made a career as a research scientist in pharmaceuticals but has had long-standing aspirations as a restaurateur. This restaurant is her effort to bring Hunan cuisine to East Cambridge, with an emphasis on healthy, seasonal ingredients.

If it makes a difference to your regard for a restaurant, you'll want to know that, when Jeff Bezos was in town recently, he ate at Sumiao, ordering the House Crispy Duck (presumably at the recommendation of the chef). Dishes that I have had at lunchtime include Lava Fish, Beef on Fire, and Grandma's Pork. As these names suggest, most dishes at Sumiao are spicy, although not all. The revered leader Mao Zedong, who was also born in Hunan province, famously said: "If you don't eat red peppers, you're not a revolutionary." So, eating at Sumiao is partly a culinary decision and partly political.

The non-revolutionaries among us might be more interested in Mu Lan Taiwanese Restaurant, on Broadway about half way between Kendall Square and Central Square. Most dishes at Mu Lan are designed for a milder palate "doled out," as it says on the website, "in bright, modest quarters." Perhaps that's an understatement because the bright, modest quarters are very pleasant indeed. One feature I particularly like is that, when you are seated, your table is quickly provided with small plates of pickled cabbage and salted peanuts to munch on while you peruse the menu.

Although Taiwanese, Mu Lan offers a number of dishes marked on the menu with a single pepper, to indicate a bit of heat. In almost all cases, however, the dishes are mild. The one exception in my experience is diced chicken with spicy sauce, which was more fiery than anything

I've had at Sumiao. One of my favorite dishes at Mu Lan is steamed dumplings, for example, pork with leak, which are velvety and flavorful. (Alert: cash is required at Mu Lan for bills under \$20.)

Returning to the Mainland: one Red Line stop away (and a pleasant walk on a nice day) is Shanghai Fresh on Mass. Ave. in Central Square. Chef Ben Gu worked initially at a Shanghai hotel but moved to this country to try his hand at something of his own. Like Mu Lan, Shanghai Fresh draws a largely Chinese crowd, but its décor is plainer – no tablecloths, wiry chairs. It's also modest, one might say, and less bright. However, it has a very attractive menu, in fact several menus – besides the lunch combo plates, there are always seasonal specials, and on weekends a special brunch menu. Although I've ordered lunch combos at Shanghai Fresh, I prefer items from the main menu, such as spicy chicken with peas and asparagus and Yu Xiang shredded pork, bamboo shoots, and wood ears with steamed buns. Just listing these dishes makes me want to return.

Another establishment that I'm eager to revisit is a place I discovered only recently, in doing a bit of online research for this article. The official name is Silk Road Uyghur Cuisine Restaurant; unofficially, it is also called Pronto Café. This is a small halal Chinese eatery on Cambridge Street, about halfway toward Inman Square, owned by a Uyghur family from Xinjiang province in the northwest of China. It has only half a dozen tables, so seems mainly designed for takeout. The menu is accompanied by pictures (which I regard as a plus) and focuses especially, as one would expect, on lamb and handmade noodle dishes. In my one visit to date, I had lamb with scallions, which was quite good (tender pieces of meat in a spicy sauce) and an order of naan. This is not the naan you're familiar with from Indian restaurants, but a kind of dense flat bread flavored with nigella and sesame seeds. I have a distinct memory of enjoying Uyghur naan on a trip about twelve years ago in Xinjiang province and was delighted to encounter it again a few months ago in Uzbekistan. The naan at Silk Road Uyghur Cuisine isn't quite up to that experience – no doubt because the restaurant lacks the cylindrical, wood-fired, clay oven necessary to make the original – but it was a pleasure to encounter a local facsimile, to bring back these memories. (No alcohol is served, and there is no toilet facility.)

More distant from the Esplanade, and with a less defined cuisine, is Changsho on Mass. Ave. between Harvard and Porter Squares. Changsho is a longtime fixture in Cambridge (in the 1970s it was known as Wong Foon), and unfortunately its age is evident in the old-fashioned appearance and tired dinner menu. I mention it, however, because it has an outstanding weekday lunch buffet, accompanied by an excellent hot-and-sour soup. The usual selections include pan-fried dumplings, salt-and-pepper calamari, spicy long beans, as well as many other dishes. The buffet makes Changsho a natural attraction to the Harvard Law School crowd – faculty and students – just a few blocks away. So, it's a good place to go for eavesdropping on the latest arguments for and against impeaching the president.

Many new restaurants today, at least in the Boston area, seem to believe that an energetic level of noise is crucial to success. But noise is not an issue at any of these five. In terms of food, which is what matters, all are reliable (at least for lunch), although not spectacular. Most of them, in my view, are not a match for, say, Myers + Chang on Washington Street in the South End, which is more creative. The one possible exception is Sumiao, but I want to reserve judgment since I haven't yet tried the Crispy Duck. Myers + Chang is far away, and these local restaurants are, well, local (and solid). Of course, there are a number of other Chinese restaurants in Cambridge which I'm not familiar with. If you're aware of nearby restaurants that ought to be on my list of places to try, I would welcome your suggestions. Kenneth Winston: Kenneth_Winston@hks.harvard.edu

THE ESPLANADE AGING IN PLACE GROUP

At the fall Esplanade's Community Group gathering and potluck, the Steering Committee's "Create Your Own Group" list stimulated the suggestion of an "Aging in Place" Group, and this group has formed with sixteen members. We met for the first time in the late afternoon of October 31 to introduce ourselves and to share our views of what the scope, needs, goals, and activities of the group could be at the Esplanade. It quickly became clear that all of the members are strongly interested in developing a wide range of ways to age in place and to connect more closely in the context of the Esplanade, they believe that it is possible given the times that we live in, and they want to explore as many options as possible. With this in mind our first steps have been:

- developing a draft resource list to circulate among our members to comment on and add to, based on their own knowledge, experience, needs, and goals. This will be circulated shortly.
- beginning to explore the model of Beacon Hill Village, just across the river from us and suggested to us by one of our members, and finding out if we can form a relationship to draw on the long experience and guidance of this successful group.
- connecting more closely with the Esplanade Community Group to facilitate communication and coordination on this and all topics of interest to the community, particularly if a ECG website is developed for the wider community.
- finding ways to share any information and expertise that our members have with our wider Esplanade community, including information on the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement <https://hilr.harvard.edu/about-us>, books of interest (including Margaret Drabble's *The Dark Flood Rises* and Helen Luke's *Old Age: Journey into Simplicity*), a potential talk by one of our members on how to use smartphones to get ride shares, and help with personal tech questions with Apple devices.

The Aging in Place Group hopes to meet again in

February to continue our discussions and explorations. We too welcome suggestions and questions. Please contact Jessie von Hippel jvhippel@comcast.net

Getting to know Your Neighborhood: The East Cambridge Planning Team

Have you ever heard of the East Cambridge Planning Team, also referred to as ECPT? If not, it's an organization to get to know! Described as "A Neighborhood Organization for the Betterment of East Cambridge," the ECPT meets at the East End House on Spring Street on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 7 pm to 9 pm. Its mission is "dedicated to nurturing the human and friendly interactions that make neighborhoods special, and to honoring the social diversity of East Cambridge. We are committed to maintaining an inclusive, respectful, multicultural organization."

Nancy Stiening, our Esplanade's BOT secretary, and a secretary of the ECPT for 16 years, reminds us that "there's a whole neighborhood of wonderful people in East Cambridge. They're our neighbors who are looking out for our neighborhood. Get involved!" And, yes, we are in East Cambridge!

The meetings are lively, informative, and full of community spirit. The members, many of whom who have lived in East Cambridge all of their lives, keep abreast of what's going on in their neighborhood. They show up and speak up to the guests who are invited to the meetings to present neighborhood projects, proposed or ongoing. I attended the January 9 meeting and the Agenda included: Police Report/Crime Update; Bill Zamparelli and Todd Lanham of the Eversource Proposed Substation at Fulkerson and Charles; Larry Beals of Beals Associates Proposed Development of 1 Main Street along the Broad Canal; and An Open discussion of a rezoning on Msg. O'Brien highway.

To keep up-to-date about your neighborhood, and for the latest ECPT and neighborhood news and events, find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/EastCambridgePlanningTeam>. And, to get even more involved and informed, attend a meeting!

Observer Notes from BOT Meeting (continued)...

There will be three (3) BOT slots open for election at the 2019 Annual Meeting.

The ECG's (Esplanade Community Group) letter to the BOT was discussed, primarily focused on the request to increase the means of communication of the ECG to reach a broader number of residents. The ECG has its own email list regarding events of interest such as interest groups, get-togethers, author talks, and issues of interest to our residential community. The ECG Steering Committee members present at the meeting also spoke of its Newsletter and the current development of its own website. Discussion included the placement of flyers under the glass in the mailrooms, potential of using Building Link, and the Guidelines that the BOT will use to inform the posting decisions. Resident comments suggested that posting information should not be limited to the ECG and be subject to the same Guidelines which will be established by the BOT.

Next BOT meeting: Tuesday, March 26, at 7:30 am
