

Jamaica Plain Gazette

Wu holds roundtable for small businesses

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By Peter Shanley

At-Large City Councilor Michelle Wu held a roundtable discussion for small-business owners May 1 in Jamaica Plain, where complaints were launched about a complex licensing process and burdensome inspections, according to a recap provided by Wu spokesperson Henry Cohen.

About 20 small businesses, including owners of restaurants, art businesses and tech startups, attended the roundtable at Brendan Behan's Pub in Hyde Square. The roundtable is part of a series of hearings and meetings Wu is holding to improve the permitting and licensing process for small businesses.

Business owners at the roundtable said the current permitting and licensing process is overwhelming, too complex and too long, particularly the zoning appeals process.

"In one example, an owner wanted to open his store in a building where he knew his business wasn't an allowed use, yet he still had to wait a month for a form rejection letter that would enable him to begin the appeals process," wrote Cohen. "The appeal process then took another five months, during which he continued to pay rent."

The owner had also not been made aware of the possibility of operating with an "at-risk" permit during the process.

Owners also suggested at the roundtable that the inspection process be synchronized across departments so all inspections could happen at the same time.

Wu continues to accept comments from business owners at Michelle.Wu@Boston.gov or 617-635-3115.

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