

Tenants react to trespassing policy as hearing nears

David Pomerantz

Residents of Boston's public housing developments are sifting through the language of the Boston Housing Authority's proposed no-trespassing policy in an effort to express their concerns — or lack thereof — as a public hearing on the policy approaches.

The new policy proposal has drummed up controversy in recent weeks, as civil and tenant rights advocates have claimed that it would needlessly criminalize youths and violate tenants' rights.

According to a draft of the proposed policy, individuals "without legitimate business on BHA property" if they are stopped and given a "no-trespass notice" by "a BHA development manager, his or her designee, or a constable, or a member of the BHA Police Department" all of whom are authorized to issue a no-trespassing order.

The main change from the current policy is that alleged trespassers would now be allowed to appeal

their no-trespass notice. That appeal would be decided by the BHA Chief of Police, a fact that has rankled tenant rights leaders.

The BHA has defended the policy, arguing that it "is no more harsh than

"The residents I represent want to ensure that the final version of the no-trespass policy, while it should be fair and balanced, must have the teeth necessary to get the job done!"

— Stephen Laverty

what we had before," according to BHA spokeswoman Lydia Agro.

"It gives people more due process than existed with the policy before, based on concerns that we

heard from our residents," Agro told the Banner last week.

The policy is under public debate until April 30, when City Councilor Chuck Turner will hold a hearing to discuss its merits.

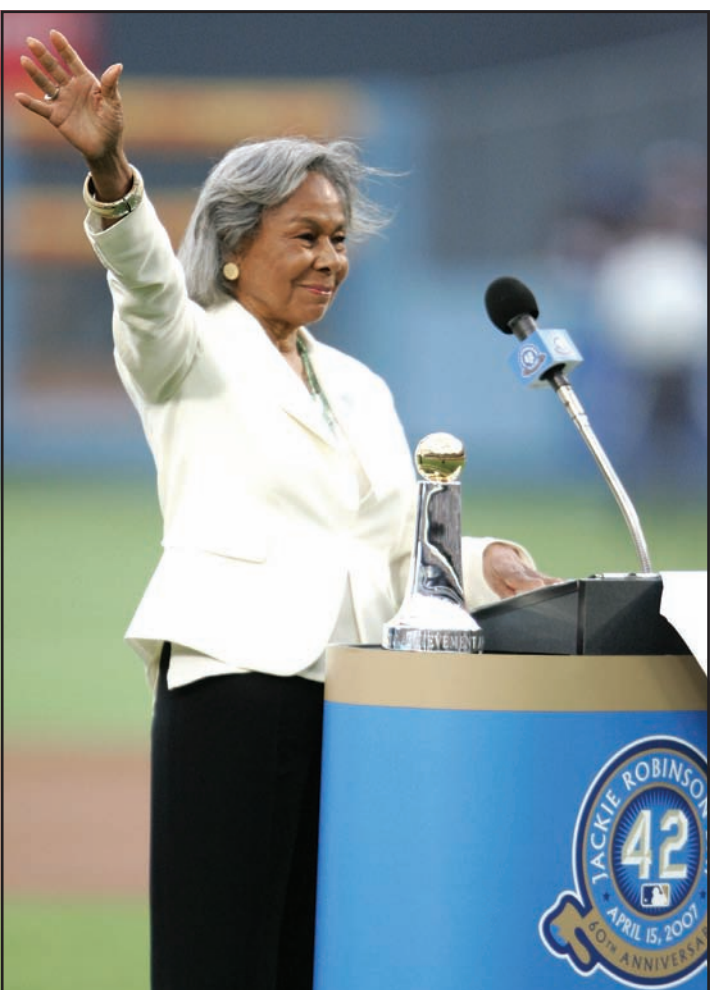
Tenants are taking the interlude to vocalize their thoughts on the policy, with several coming to the defense of the BHA.

"It is important to understand that the BHA's No Trespass Policy is designed to protect the vast majority of law-abiding residents and families from non-residents who commit crimes and disturb the quiet enjoyment in our communities. Our residents deserve to feel safe and secure in their homes," Sandy Ortiz wrote in a letter to the Banner that argued on behalf of the proposed policy.

Ortiz is the chairwoman of the Orient Heights Neighborhood Organization in East Boston. The BHA provided her letter to the Banner.

Stephen Laverty also expressed the need for a strong no-trespassing order in a letter to the Banner.

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Jackie Robinson's widow Rachel Robinson waves to the crowd after receiving the Major League Baseball Commissioner's Historic Achievement Award on Jackie Robinson Day at Dodger Stadium before the San Diego Padres played the Los Angeles Dodgers on April 15 in Los Angeles. (AP photo/Jeff Lewis)

No rush to new gun control after Virginia Tech massacre

David Espo

WASHINGTON — After the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., cautioned Tuesday against a "rush to

judgment" on stricter gun control.

A leading House supporter of restrictions on firearms, Reid conceded passage of legislation would be difficult.

"I think we ought to be thinking

about the families and the victims and not speculate about future legislative battles that might lie ahead," said Reid, a view expressed by other Democratic leaders the day after the shootings that left 33 dead on the

campus of Virginia Polytechnic University.

Democrats traditionally have been in the forefront of efforts to pass gun control legislation, but there is a widespread perception among political strategists that the issue has been a loser in recent campaigns. It was notably absent from the agenda Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., unveiled earlier this year when the party took control of the House and Senate for the first time in more than a decade.

In the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings, a few Democrats renewed the call for gun control legislation, and more are expected to join them.

"I believe this will reignite the dormant effort to pass commonsense gun regulations in this nation," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat who was a leader in the failed drive to renew a ban on certain types of assault weapons that expired in 2004.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., **Massacre**, continued to page 13

RYI founder imparts life lessons to area youth

David Cogger

By the time Leon Tyler-Smith was 13 years old, he had been arrested for assaulting a police officer, he had spent "several nights in jail" on weapons charges for carrying knives and he was a regular at juvenile court.

At the time, running the streets of Charlestown, Tyler-Smith thought respect was gained through a reputation for breaking the law.

Today, he is 26 years old, a successful loan officer with a Boston-based mortgage company and a single parent caring for both a 3-year-old son and his parents.

Tyler-Smith says without his court-ordered stint at Roxbury Youthworks (RYI) when he was 13, he would either be dead or in jail. Dressed in a business suit and tie and ready for work,

he is a grateful man.

"I love what I do," he said.

Julian T. Houston is the backbone of RYI. When he founded the nonprofit group 25 years ago, Houston was a sitting judge in the Roxbury District Court and the courts were looking for an alternative to the standard fare dished out by the Department of Youth Services (DYS).

At 6-foot-4-inches tall, Houston is an imposing presence. Slightly thinning gray hair and the trace of a beard give away his age. The 62-year-old Houston recently retired after serving 27 years as a judge in the Massachusetts court system. His constant companion — a wary, charcoal gray standard poodle named Louie — sniffs and growls at visitors to his Beacon Street apartment.

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Robert Cheruiyot of Kenya crosses the finish line in Boston on April 16 as he wins the 111th running of the Boston Marathon in 2 hours, 14 minutes, 13 seconds. Kenyan runners took

first, second, third and fourth place, and accounted for 9 of the top 15 finishers, all of whom finished in under two-and-a-half hours. See story on pg. 26. (AP photo/Elise Amendola)

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