

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Meeting Minutes, January 4, 2024

Area Council members:

Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Jeremy Freudberg, Srdjan Nedeljkovic, Larry Rosenberg, and Amy Wayne (elected, not yet sworn in). Robert Fizek absent.

Ex Officio:

City Councilors Martha Bixby and Stephen Farrell present, Bill Humphrey not present.

Residents and others:

Jeffrey Freudberg, City Councilor Rena Getz, City Councilor Martha Bixby, City Councilor Stephen Farrell, City Councilor Tarik Lucas, City Councilor Pam Wright, City Councilor Alan Lobovitz, Steven West, Carol Carroll, Jane Hanser, and Alan Spatrack from Fig City News.

Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm. Srdjan Nedeljkovic taking minutes. Area Council President Jeremy Freudberg presiding. The meeting was held in person at the Brigham House as well as via Zoom videoconferencing technology. The meeting was recorded.

Substantive Topics:

Election of Officers:

Earlier in the evening, the following elected Area Councilors were sworn in by Mayor Fuller at City Hall: Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Jeremy Freudberg, Srdjan Nedeljkovic, and Larry Rosenberg. Amy Wayne and Robert Fizek were not present at the swearing-in ceremony. Area Councilor Larry Rosenberg presided over the election of officers. The following Area Councilors were nominated and elected by unanimous acclamation by Area Councilors Jeremy Freudberg, Groot Gregory, Barbara Darnell, Srdjan Nedeljkovic, and Larry Rosenberg. The officers that were nominated and elected are: President, Jeremy Freudberg; Vice President, Barbara Darnell; Treasurer, Groot Gregory; Secretary, Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic.

There are 2 vacancies on the Area Council since 7 candidates were elected for this upcoming term. The Area Council hereby notifies the community that there are two vacancies for Area Council positions and residents who live in the service area may notify Area Council President Jeremy Freudberg if they are interested in serving.

Village Day planning:

Area Councilor Groot Gregory gave an initial report on Village Day planning. Village Day will be occurring on the second Sunday in June, which is June 9 this year. Rentals of the bouncy house and

tents for the band will be necessary. Planning of the Road Race will be pursued. We will re-engage the caricature artist and the face painter. The Area Council will need to obtain permits for certain events and activities. We may consider increasing the number of T-shirts and obtain sponsorship for the T-shirts. Last year, we expended about \$500 to purchase T-shirts. There is hope that more people will volunteer to help out on Village Day and that there will be more community involvement in planning and set up.

The Area Council may need to spend more money on music and Area Councilor Groot Gregory will be in contact with Chris Pitts to assist. The budget will otherwise be similar as in prior years. Income from Village Day has been about \$11K and spending has been about \$7K in recent years. The Area Council will be assuming the costs for barricades and for organizing street shutdown that were previously paid for by the Hyde Center. A discussion ensued regarding police detail and that payment for this service may be required. Area Councilor Groot Gregory will be in contact with local business Bfitt60 to see if they may be interested in organizing the Road Race. John Rice will be contacting Maureen Oates who previously organized the Road Race to help with a possible transition in organizing this event. A discussion ensued regarding which activities were popular with children. The Bouncy House is always a popular draw.

This Village Day will be the 50th year since the Area Council was established. A suggestion was made to commemorate longtime resident George Mansfield, who was a founding member of the Area Council and a long-time Alderman and who recently passed away. A separate Village Day meeting will be arranged to discuss organization and planning of the event.

Lincoln Street Speed Study:

Area Council President Jeremy Freudberg reported on the results of a recent speed study that was conducted on Lincoln Street. The location of the monitoring was at 95 Lincoln Street, and the study took place from December 11 to December 18, 2023. The speed limit is 20 mph at this location. In the eastbound direction, the average measured speed was 20.89 mph, the 50th percentile speed was 21.96 mph, the 85th percentile speed was 27.68 mph, the minimum speed was 6 mph, and the maximum speed recorded was 57 mph. The average volume of cars per day was 2960.7 and the total volume over 7 days was 20,765. The peak volume occurs between 11 am and 12 noon. A compliance threshold was set at 10 mph over the speed limit, and most vehicles were compliant, although Area Council President Freudberg expressed skepticism as to whether this threshold was appropriate. The number of violators traveling more than 10 mph over the speed limit was least at midday, when traffic volumes and parked cars are at their greatest.

Based on these results, the Newton Police Department concluded that there is no need to implement permanent speed reduction interventions at this time at this location. The police memo to the Area Council stated that some of the higher speeds noted during the week of the study are the result of emergency vehicles responding to calls for service in the area. John Rice noted that the Newton Highlands village enhancement plan includes bump-outs in the village center that may further serve to slow traffic.

A discussion ensued about speed monitoring signs that have been placed in Waban near the intersection of Beacon Street and Chestnut Street and what the process entails to have one of those

permanent speed signs installed. If there is interest in getting a speed monitoring sign in Newton Highlands, John Rice suggested that the Area Council may work with the director of the Senior Center with our local City Councilors to ask for a permanent speed monitor. The monitor could be placed on Lincoln Street at the Hyde Center, as there is substantial pedestrian activity in this area.

Goals and Priorities:

Area Council President Jeremy Freudberg asked about priorities and goals of the Area Council for the next term. Area Councilor-elect Amy Wayne suggested that the Area Council might consider initiating further study of establishing a historic district. A discussion ensued about obtaining the various documents that were collected several years ago when a prior effort was made to establish a local historic district. It was suggested that a new effort may be more successful if it was initiated by residents within the proposed district.

Area Councilor Darnell suggested that further outreach by the Area Council to the community should be an Area Council priority. Developing a pamphlet regarding the Area Council and improving the Area Council website would be good ways to outreach to the community. City Councilor Rena Getz noted that the Waban Area Council pays an annual fee to maintain their website.

Newton resident Jeffrey Freudberg brought up the topic of traffic at Route 9, Winchester, and Centre Streets. Backups at this intersection have had a spillover effect on surrounding streets into the Highlands. The intersection is under jurisdiction of Mass DOT and the state at this point and is expected to revert to city control once the project has been completed. However, it is unclear when the city will assume control of the roadway. Carol Carroll asked about collecting data about the traffic problems at this location.

It was suggested to have the mayor speak with state representatives about this problem intersection, and then ask the state representatives to reach out to Mass DOT, as the Mass Department of Transportation may be more responsive to our state representatives. City Councilor Alan Lobovits offered to discuss this issue with the mayor and the state representatives. Area Councilor Larry Rosenberg noted that the new traffic lights had temporarily been changed to blinking yellow several days ago, and that traffic seemed to flow better during that time.

Area Councilor Rosenberg also pointed out that more enforcement is needed along Lincoln Street to improve safety in the village center. Speed signs and roadway marking will have little effect without having additional enforcement of the road rules.

Administrative Items:

Review and Approval of December Minutes: The draft minutes from the December NHNAC meetings were considered for approval. The minutes were approved 5:0.

Treasurer's Report: Area Council Treasurer Groot Gregory reported that the Area Council has had a surplus of \$1683 in funds over the past year, which is the annual excess after recent payments were

made to the Hyde Center and for Election poll workers. City Councilor Rena Getz stated that the Waban Area Council had requested that the City Clerk allocate funding for Area Council elections in future budget cycles. The total cost to pay for poll workers to staff the 4 Area Council elections was around \$2500. A discussion ensued regarding how to organize staffing for Area Council elections, since the boundaries of the Area Councils do not match the boundaries of Wards and Precincts. It was noted that it is difficult to find people to staff the polls during elections. Shorter shifts for poll workers may make staffing more attractive. Carol Carroll suggested that a line item is included in future city budgets to pay for the expense for area council elections.

New Business:

The Soup Social will be taking place on January 27, starting at 5:30 pm, and it will be taking place outside at the Hyde Center this year. There will be entertainment at the Bandstand.

Next Area Council meeting: The next meeting of the Area Council will be taking place on Thursday, February 1st.

Meeting Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.