



Newtonville Area Council - Meeting Minutes
Thursday, ___ May 25 ___, 2023 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: Online via Zoom

Attendees:

NAC: Jennifer Bentley (President), , Nancy Greenberg (Secretary), Timothy LeBlanc, Aline Sammut, Ralph Abele, Laura De Veau, Carolyn Gabbay

City Government: Tarik Lucas, Julia Malakie,

Public: Approximately __9__ members of the public

Jennifer called the meeting to order and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

1. Village Center Zoning Survey

Laura De Veau presented, thanked several members who helped.

Laura to provide the latest version, we need to have it available by tomorrow.

Need to decide on a survey service platform. A bit.ly url and QR code will be provided. Collateral to be sent to NAC and city councilors

Collection period from May 26 – Jun 18

Data crunch to follow

June meeting will present the results

Collateral – social media posts, flyers for posting, email text

Possible printing of postcards to distribute through different neighborhoods via door to door, give people the QA code and bit.ly url.

Messaging – try to be objective and clear as possible so results are not skewed.

Great opportunities to be visible in the community, such as Bram Way, Star Market and the Memorial Day parade.

Need to find trends and the raw numbers.

Once survey completes, we will have an opportunity for folks to sign up and be reminded to engage with city councilors. Invites them to attend the meeting on June 23 with other links, such as how to subscribe to councilor newsletters, etc. We can use this forum to put up new messages. Also links to our Facebook page.

Survey link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dKxQdqPn6XFz-pRH2ruxPjhwzrk27Fk5/view>

Tarik notes that his newsletter will go out on Saturday and he can promote the survey. Julia volunteered to put it in her newsletter too.

Distribution options:

Fastest is Google (and free), but not as robust as survey monkey, survey sparrow. Survey Monkey is 25.00 per month billed annually (paid up front). Survey Sparrow similar to Survey Monkey, but costs more, so we won't consider it.

Laura can purchase the Survey Monkey license tonight and can be reimbursed by Treasurer.

A. Do we want to purchase Survey Monkey?

B. Get it out via Google

Survey Monkey has a lot of nice features for us to track, such as tracking neighborhoods, who's responding the most. This is a little harder with Google. People may trust Survey Monkey more. Carolyn notes that Survey Monkey has a better look and backend capabilities are much more robust. This may proliferate to the Highlands area. And can spread more. We can afford it (only 300.00 per year). There is an option to upgrade to enterprise edition.

Motion to authorize the purchase of Survey Monkey basic subscription. If one or more of the other area councils wants to participate, we can spend up to 600.00 Tim second, all moved; (unanimous).

Jennifer has questions on the survey itself:

Who are we targeting?

We put in a statement that it is for people over 18 along with a question confirming that they are over 18. If they hit No, the survey ends. Could ask for zip code and ward as an alternative. Some people don't know their wards. Maybe have a drop down "Ward" list with an option of "don't know". Should we ask for addresses? That may cause busy work to transcribe. Carolyn says you might be able to find ward through secretary of state site. She will discuss with Laura after the call. Carolyn thinks that it's OK to expand to those who are using Newtonville. Laura notes that other surveys ask for zip code and ward.

Tarik says you can use this to find your ward: <https://apps.newtonma.gov/residential-services>.

We can add this to the survey on the Ward question.

Laura pointed out that the Survey states "Sponsored by the Newtonville Area Council". May add that if you frequent Newtonville, your input is welcome.

Maybe we should ask for street address and zip code. And, maybe add a check box on whether the person is a resident or business owner.

Carolyn volunteered to sort on addresses and zip codes.

In sum: Include zip code, include ward, ask for address (or business address)

Motion to authorize Laura to refine survey and issue it. Second by Tim Leblanc, unanimous.

2. Peter Harrington and Peter Bruce on comments on the zoning. Peter Bruce: Request that we publicize the petition being presented on the hearing on June 8th to discuss the ballot written. Ballot will increase voters knowledge and expand people's awareness and participation. Request that councilors vote on this.

Petition to the Newton City Council:

We, the undersigned, being voters in the city of Newton, hereby file a group petition under Article X, Section 10.2, of the Newton City Charter, to request the City Council hold a public hearing, using the procedures set forth in the City Council Rules and, where applicable, under Robert's Rules of Order, allowing petitioners and those opposed to said petition to make a presentation of not more than forty-five (45) minutes each, limiting speakers (who must be Newton voters) to speak for not more than five (5) minutes each, alternating speakers for and against the question of inserting a nonbinding referendum on the ballot and to take action not later than three (3) months after the petition is filed with the City Clerk, on the following:

Shall the Newton City Council cause a non-binding question to be inserted on the ballot in the next municipal election, scheduled for November, 2023, to obtain a sense of the will of the electorate on the following question:

"Shall the City of Newton adopt new zoning laws to:

- 1. Allow new buildings of three and one-half and four and one-half stories in our village center business districts;
- 2. Allow the expansion of the lot sizes on which new developments can be built, without obtaining a special permit, from the current 10,000 square foot threshold to 30,000 sq ft;
- 3. Allow the reduction or elimination of parking space requirements in Village Centers;
- 4. Change Newton Ordinances to allow developers to build fewer affordable housing units and allow the affordable units to be occupied by tenants with more income than provided by Newton's Ordinances, unless Newton shows its requirements are economically feasible.

Signature Print Name Street Address Ward/Precinct

Return to Peter F. Harrington, 157 Lowell Avenue, Newtonville

Peter Harrington: Peter said he filed the petition because he thinks so few Newton residents

know what is happening with zoning. Wants councilors to notify people that there is a hearing. People can speak for 3 minutes. Important part of the process to let the community to know of these zoning changes because of the enormity of the changes that will happen with zoning changes.

Peters' asked to send Jennifer the information and she will distribute. Want to get this out before the hearing on June 8th.

3. Washington Street Improvements project and survey

Jennifer showed the mapping of a pilot program to change from Chestnut street to Lowell. (more biking lanes, narrow road, walkable etc). Asked people to fill out the survey. Supposedly a 10 year pilot program. 10 minute survey.

Survey link: <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/transportation-planning/projects/washington-street-pilot>

Peter Bruce says we need to traffic data and studies before the survey. Also particulate study. Tim LeBlanc wants to know why the roads are not adequately paved instead of pulling up Washington Street.

Councilor Lucas has info on which roads will be paved this year:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/84437/638132858292770000>

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/public-works/construction-projects> and

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/97990/638140435866000000>.

Carolyn Gabby: is this being coordinated with remediation of the gas leaks? Per Tarik, if National Grid is replacing lines, they coordinate with DPW.

4. Bramway Piano

Piano on Bramway from cultural alliances. Great location. Sign up sheet to help with taking care of the piano (uncover and cover). Sign up sheet is scheduled up to July. Please sign up, you can buddy. Also looking for emergency people to throw the cover on. Let Jennifer know if you are interested: (<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084CACAC2EABFCC25-piano>). Jennifer sent it out to the mailing list and requests that councilors also send out notices. On Signup Genius. Maybe ask 28 Austin to participate.

5. Newton Railroad Sign Placement

Need to spend more time on this. Need a committee to work on this. Would like to have it up by VillageDay Let Jennifer know if you are interested in working on this committee.

6. Area Council Voting Update

(from last meeting): Election committee and clerk were thinking about moving area council voting off election day. Through a series of meetings, they have decided to keep the vote on the election day. Maybe we can help them by staffing the polling places for area council voting. Another area to tackle: Can't vote for area council by mail, we'll need to fix this for the next election cycle.

7. Discussion of other issues/projects in Newtonville

Peter Harrington: MBTA discussion – Peter requests that the area council consider posting a question to the city council to exempt Newton from the MBTA community act because they are in violation with the American Disabilities Act. State supposedly has funds to conform, but for

many years have not done anything. MBTA is disparaging Newton gov persons for not voting for this. Need to raise that we should not be forced to support the MBTA if they will not pledge to fund/fix the stations. Proposal to add all this housing to have people take commuter rail does not happen. Peter will discuss this more at the next meeting.

8. Cabot Park – pavilion is complete and there will be a celebration on June 3 at 9:45 am, same date as Cabot carnival. (rain or shine)
9. Administrative Issues
 1. Village Day planning update
 - a. On schedule
 2. Council Assignments
 - a. Anyone want the VP slot? Laura is interested.
 - b. Jennifer nominates, Aline second, unanimous
 3. Approval of April meeting minutes

#. Administrative Issues

- Approval of ____April__27, 2023__ meeting minutes

The draft minutes of the ____April__27, 2023 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, ____Aline____ moved, ____Carolyn____ seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the ____April__27, 2023 NAC meeting.

Adjournment

At approximately _8:45_____ PM, ____Carolyn_____ moved, __Jennifer____ seconded, and it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Greenberg

Secretary