



Newtonville Area Council - Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 26, 2023 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: Online via Zoom

Attendees:

NAC: Jennifer Bentley (President), Martina Jackson (Vice President), Dana D'Agostino (Treasurer), Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay (Secretary), Nancy Greenberg, Timothy LeBlanc, Aline Sammut

City Government:

- City Council: President Albright, Councilors Baker, Crossley, Lipof, Lucas, Malakie and Norton
- Waban Area Council: President Getz

Public: Approximately 70-80 members of the public

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

1. The NAC Comments at the 1/23 ZAP meeting on Village Center Zoning

Jennifer recapped the points she made on behalf of the NAC concerning the proposed upzoning of Newtonville's village center during the limited amount of time she was afforded to speak at the January 23rd Zoning & Planning Committee (ZAP) meeting. ZAP would not permit images to be displayed at the meeting. The concerns she expressed included the impact of the upzoning on local businesses, and that Newtonville is not actually a transit-oriented area since commuter rail service is limited, bus service has been curtailed and there is no Green Line. Jennifer added that due to the time limit she was not able to discuss concerns about infrastructure and traffic impacts. About a half dozen other groups also spoke about similar concerns regarding upzoning Newtonville to VC3. Jennifer emphasized that the concern she expressed was not opposition to revising the zoning per se, but rather the extent of upzoning proposed for the length of Walnut and Washington Streets.

2. Presentation of Images of Newtonville Village Center Build Out under the New Zoning Guidelines

Jennifer noted that the NAC had previously voted approval of an expenditure to commission renderings of the proposed upzoning in Newtonville village center because the Planning & Development Department (PDD) had rejected multiple requests for images to help the public understand the upzoning proposals. Carolyn explained that she, Dana, and others explored licensing modeling software and interviewed multiple urban

planners, and elected to engage an urban planner using the approved funds. She explained that the resulting images are believed to be overall reflective of the current upzoning proposal, subject to the limitations of the modeling software and not being able to reflect the upzoning proposal on a parcel-specific basis.

Jennifer screen shared the images of the potential buildout of Newtonville's village center under the upzoning proposal. (The images were later posted on the NAC website.) Jennifer and Carolyn narrated the presentation. Images summarized included:

- An image of the proposed village center upzoning map distributed by the PDD.
- Overview images of the current zoning and (outlined in black) the area proposed for upzoning.
 - She noted that the color choice of "green" on the image only denotes the zoning demarcations, not grass or green spaces.
- Overview images of the proposed upzoning area, noting that images did not correctly depict the proposed densification especially in the proposed VC1, and some of the VC3 areas, area due to a modeling software limitation (i.e., the software could not depict the full infill that would be allowable under the proposal).
- Shadow studies of existing conditions and as upzoned at 9am, noon and 4pm for the Spring/Fall Equinox and the Summer Solstice, and at 9am, noon and 3pm Winter Solstice when other than at noon shadows would engulf Highland Avenue, Walnut Street, Austin Street, Madison Avenue and Newtonville Avenue.
- Comparative massing study views of existing conditions and full build-out.
- A series of Google Earth aerial views of Walnut Street as existing and with the insertion of 8 photo-realistic buildings (based on the Trio structure as the model) lining both sides of Walnut Street down to the NewCAL site as potentially built out over time (possibly 1, 3, 5, 10 years) as would be permitted By Right under the proposed upzoning.
- An image of massing structures along Walnut Street and the adjacent areas as proposed to be upzoned.

Discussion with members of the community, members of the NAC and City Councilors attending the meeting ensued for over an hour and a half with comments on the plusses and minuses of the proposed upzoning and the accuracy of the image renderings. Comments included statements to the effect that:

- Walnut Street village center business have been thriving, expanding and moving in and that the Walnut Street Improvement Projects have successfully added activation to the area, whereas ZAP Chair Crossley believes that Newton's village centers are "withering".
- Demolition followed by a construction pause, as is the case with Dunstan East, would have a blighting effect.
- Construction over a multi-year period would involve unrelenting construction burdening and disrupting the businesses and the community.
- Local businesses on Walnut Street would be unable to withstand construction and development such as is being proposed, citing the example of Newtonville Camera which moved to Waltham.
- Parcel assembly would not be difficult given the limited number of walnut Street property owners.
- Some community members pointed out possible shortcomings of the images, including possibly incorrect buildout depictions due to lot size restrictions in the proposed ordinance.

The entire discussion can be viewed on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/b3XR3rc5QLk>

Next, architect Marc Hershman was recognized and he presented images he had created, and recently updated, showing the potential appearance of village centers built out per the upzoning proposal.

4. Administrative Issues

a. Annual Election of NAC Officers

Following a discussion about which members of the NAC were interested in running for officer roles, Jennifer turned the meeting over to Martina for the election of the President for 2023.

Carolyn nominated Jennifer and Aline seconded the nomination. Martina asked for any additional nominations and, there being none, nominations were closed and it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Jennifer Bentley President of the NAC for 2023.

Jennifer resumed running the meeting and opened nominations for Vice President.

Nancy nominated Martina and Aline seconded the nomination. Jennifer asked for any additional nominations and, there being none, nominations were closed and it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Martina Jackson Vice President of the NAC for 2023.

Jennifer opened nominations for Treasurer.

Nancy nominated Dana and Tim seconded the nomination. Jennifer asked for any additional nominations and, there being none, nominations were closed and it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Dana D'Agostino Treasurer of the NAC for 2023.

Jennifer opened nominations for Secretary.

Marina nominated Nancy and Carolyn seconded the nomination. Jennifer asked for any additional nominations and, there being none, nominations were closed and it was unanimously

VOTED: To elect Nancy Greenberg Secretary of the NAC for 2023.

b. NAC Vacancies

Following a review of the procedure for filling NAC vacancies it was the sense of the meeting that Jennifer should publish an announcement of the opening of applications for appointment to fill the 2 vacancies on the NAC, decide on the deadline for submitting applications, and that candidate interviews would be conducted at the February NAC meeting, with a vote on applicants to be held at the March NAC meeting following the voting procedure guidance previously received from the Law Department.

c. Fiscal recap of 2022

Dana provided a financial recap with the following highlights:

- The NAC bank account balance starting the year was about \$18,00 and now is \$21,282.
- The 1st installment invoice for the village center upzoning imaging (\$2,282) has been paid and the 2nd installment (\$2,750) will be paid this week.
- Last year's income was \$5,660.

Dana commented that, with another good Village Day this year, the NAC would have a good position for funding future initiatives.

d. Approval of October, November and December meeting minutes

The draft minutes of the November 2022 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, Aline moved, Martina seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the November 2022 NAC meeting.

The draft minutes of the December 2022 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, Aline moved, Tim seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the December 2022 NAC meeting.

The draft minutes of the October 2022 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, Aline moved, Tim seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the October 2022 NAC meeting.

e. Next meeting

Because of the school vacation week and potential problems fielding a quorum on the usual meeting day, it was the sense of the meeting to hold the next NAC meeting on February 28.

5. Adjournment

At approximately 9:55 PM, Aline moved, Martina seconded, and it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay

Secretary