

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2003

Present: Ald. Yates (Chairman), Ald. Lappin, Johnson, Gentile, Lennon, and Baker

Absent: Ald. Mansfield and Sangiolo

Also present: Ald. Merrill

City staff: Steve Gartrell, Associate Director for Housing and Community Development, Amy Yuhasz and Dee Spiro, Senior Planners/Community Development, and Linda Finucane, Clerk

NOTE: Ald. Johnson was back and forth between Zoning and Planning and the Parks & Recreation Commission meetings.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#172-03 DAVID LETENDRE, 992 Chestnut Street, Newton Uppers Falls, appointed an Alternate member of the NEWTON UPPER FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION for a term of office expiring July 1, 2006 (60-day Board action 6/22/03).

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0 (Baker not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Letendre is an eight-year resident of Newton Upper Falls and has attended meetings of the NUFHDC for several months. As a native of Lowell and graduate of UMass Lowell, he has a strong interest in the "history of mill towns and the preservation of the memory and accomplishments of the people who made the area worth preserving." He has virtually memorized Ken Newcomb's book on the history of Upper Falls, Makers of the Mold, which was published by the Friends of Hemlock Gorge on the World Wide Web at WWW.channel1.com/users/hemlock/makerstitlepage, but has not seen the earlier studies prepared by the Jackson Homestead and the Planning Department. Further he feels that the owners of property in the historic district should get more information on their rights and responsibilities. He felt that the bad reaction of some opponents to the proposed Auburndale historic districts was based on incorrect information. Alderman Gentile said that even if he didn't agree with the opponents' conclusions that didn't mean they were misinformed. Mr. Letendre agreed and cited two cases of opposition that he had observed at one the NUFHDC meetings where the issue was discussed. An elderly couple was tremendously upset at the proposed district because of false information that even furniture could not be changed in a district. A woman who owned property in the proposed commented that she had enough burdens in her life and that the process of

applying for permission for exterior changes to her house would add a level of inconvenience that she was not willing to undergo. Her opposition was based on a value judgement of accurate information.

The Committee felt that Mr. Letendre had already proven his dedication to the work of the Commission and all members present voted unanimously to confirm his appointment to one of the two vacant alternate resident seats on the Commission.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#173-03 STEVEN FLYNN, 992 Chestnut Street, Newton Upper Falls, appointed as an Alternate member of the NEWTON UPPER FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION for a term of office expiring on July 1, 2006 (60-day Board action 6/22/03).

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0 (Baker, Johnson not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Flynn is a Brookline native who has been interested in historic preservation since his early twenties. He has attended several NUFHDC meetings in the past year. He has worked restoring structures in Brookline, Brighton, and Cambridge. As the owner of a “Liberty Bronze” (bright orange) house, he is well aware that historic districts do not regulate color. He agrees that current residents and owners need clear information about the district and related procedures, particularly since no such general information has gone out for nearly twenty years. Alderman Yates suggested that the Commission seek printing and postage help from the Upper Falls Community Development Corporation. He promised to bring the suggestion to them. All Committee members present voted unanimously for his appointment to the second vacant resident’s seat.

REFERRED TO ZONING AND PLANNING & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#151-03 ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT requesting Board of Aldermen authorization to submit to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the FY2004 Annual Action Plan for the City of Newton and the WestMetro HOME Consortium. This Plan must be submitted to HUD by May 15, 2003.

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0 (Johnson not voting)

NOTE: Steve Gartrell distributed slightly revised versions of the applications and explained the details to the Committee. The Community Development Plan for Newton includes funds for Housing Rehabilitation, Housing Development, ADA Compliance and Architectural Access, Public Services (up to the statutory maximum of 15%), Economic Development, public improvements in Newton Corner, and program administration (14%; 20% is allowed). He noted that 2000 Census figures would redraw the boundaries of CDBG target neighborhoods. Most notably the parts of West Newton currently covered would be replaced by the triangle starting in West Newton Square formed by Watertown Street, Washington Street, and Cheese Cake Brook. The remaining public projects –proposed for Cherry Street and West Newton Common will not be able to be done next year unless a request by the Mayor to Representative Barney Frank results in a

waiver from HUD or Congress. It's too late to design the work before current eligibility expires. Alderman Gentile urged Mr. Gartrell to do all he could to make sure those projects were done.

The Newton Emergency Shelter Grant will pay for homeless prevention services at Newton agencies and operating funds for shelters in Waltham that serve homeless families and individuals from Newton.

Bedford, Lincoln, and Needham have joined Newton, Waltham, Brookline and Watertown in the WestMetro HOME Consortium. Newton's funds will be used for First-Time Homebuyers Program (\$189,000) (Housing Development will be financed out of CDBG exclusively) and support for the operating and housing development expenses of CANDO, the city's Community Housing Development Organization. The expenses in the other communities will be for housing development and CHDO support.

The Board's only power over these applications is whether or not to authorize the city to submit them. With that understanding and a reminder about completing the West Newton projects, Alderman Gentile moved approval. The motion passed 5-0 with Alderman Johnson still in the Recreation Commission.

#152-03 ALD. YATES requesting the Director of Planning to work with the City unions, the Human Resources Department, and local banks to make the Municipal Mortgage Program of MassHousing, the former MassHousing Finance Agency, available to assist City employees to purchase homes in Newton.

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0

NOTE: Mr. Gartrell said that City employees were theoretically eligible for this program. To make them aware of it, the Department will use inserts in paychecks, general e-mails, and a mention at a mayoral press conference. With all these bases covered, Alderman Yates moved No Action Necessary and the Committee agreed 5-0

All other items were held without discussion and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ald. Brian Yates, Chairman