

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes,

August 1, 2019

Area Council members attending: Nathaniel Lichtin, Bob Burke, Carol Clark, Bill Roesner, Groot Gregory, Barbara Darnell, Amy Wayne, Bruce Blakely

Ex Officio: Councilors Brenda Noel, Cheryl Lappin, and Susan Albright.

Special Guests: Newton Chief of Police David MacDonald, Sgt. Sean McLean, Officer Michael McSweeney, Officer John Bergdorf

Guests: Residents from the community including Martha Bixby, Judy Wiltenberg, Jack Wiltenberg, Jodi Detjen, Larry Rosenberg, Alan Noguee, Carol Carroll, Karen Sherman, Julie Winsett, Bill Humphrey.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35. Bruce Blakely taking minutes.

Question and answer with Newton Chief of Police MacDonald

Barbara Darnell expressed concern about speed of traffic on Allerton and Chester. Chief: We now have several electronic message boards, only 5 traffic officers, but any officers can be assigned for patrol. The message boards record data so we find out what fraction of cars are over the speed limit. This data is used to determine increased patrols. We write citations to change behavior, but that is always a temporary fix. Resident: Can we get a stop sign at Rogers and Allerton? Chief: Getting a stop sign is a long process. To increase patrols, encourage your neighbors to call too. Darnell: Whom should we call? Chief: Call the traffic bureau. Resident: Needham is using signs with flashing lights. Chief: Talk to Newton traffic engineers. Engineering is constantly experimenting with things like the use of yellow stanchions such as at Austin and Lowell, and bump-outs. Expect to see more traffic devices in coming years. Resident: who paints lines? Chief: Dept. of Public Works – or call us and we can forward the message. Brenda Noel suggests a 311 request for painting lines. Officer Bergdorf: 311 can be used to reach us too. Resident: The issue on Allerton is west of Center. Resident: Is there a limit on handicap parking? I received a ticket for overtime parking but had a placard. Chief: Still subject to time limits with handicap placard. Chief continued by talking about resident permits along Lincoln. These allow residents and guests to park in front of house despite posted limits. Includes Lincoln and some side streets. Brenda Noel: Businesses can purchase permits for their employees. There are a limited number per block so as to not overwhelm any one location. Two guest permits per residence to park in street are free. Assumption is that residents have off-street parking, so permanent resident street permit is \$25. Resident: Is animal control fully staffed to enforce the leash law in Cold Spring Park? Chief: We are aware of problems, dog walkers from out of town using off leash area, animal waste in Little League fields. When we approach people with dogs off-leash they always claim to have a permit but to not have it with them, then they give a false name and address. Worst problems are in Newton Corner. Amy Wayne: Is animal control available on weekends for lost animals? Chief: We sometimes have staff on weekends, not always. Trying to find a place that will take strays. Officer McSweeney: For 24-hour pet

hospitals there is Boston West in Natick, BluePearl in Waltham, Angel in Jamaica Plain. Resident: What about enforcing swimming rules in Crystal Lake? Chief: Not all city councilors are supportive, there are many opinions. Only 14 calls this summer, may be due to increased patrols. We had discussions with previous administration to increase parking next to bathhouse to keep people out of neighborhoods. We once arrested 19-year olds for trespass for swimming after dark, but the judge dismissed the case. Karen Sherman: Concerned about recreational marijuana, traffic at proposed locations in and near Highlands. Chief: We have had conversations about potential problems with proposed locations. Garden Remedies is by appointment only so have not had traffic problems. Resident: Planned locations are specifying by appointment only. Chief: But that can change. Chief favors limiting to appointment only. Officer McSweeney: having done detail at Garden Remedies, there never were problems with parking despite very limited parking. The Four Corners proposed location has more parking. Sherman: Are there any issues in the Four Corners area with the public housing and the park? Chief: Have had issues in the past, not so much now. Officer McSweeney: Garden Remedies customers, both medical and recreational, are very respectful, they are not coming out and lighting up. Amy Wayne: Clark has speed bumps, can we add those to cut-through streets? Cheryl Lappin: Traffic calming used to be in traffic engineering but is now in public works. Doing about ten traffic counts per year. Chief: A lot of the problem with increased traffic is due to cut-through drivers. Darnell: MBTA track work leads to many buses lining up on Walnut, obstructing traffic, blocking pedestrian crossings. Lappin: There are multiple plans for shuttles from office parks and planned developments coming to Highlands MBTA station as well. Chief: The MBTA does not have the fiscal flexibility to do things differently. We try to monitor these situations. Darnell: Has pictures of nine buses in the Highlands, starting as early as 9 pm. They are blocking in parked cars. Chief: Can talk to chief of MBTA police. Resident: Suggest they park buses at Eliot station. Chief: Space would be tight for large buses. Barbara: Use Lincoln as well as Walnut for parking buses. Officer Bergdorf: MBTA is using Eliot to stage materials, so they have large trailers on Lincoln. Nathaniel Lichtin: I am in contact with MBTA people about improvements, will reach out them about bus issue. Resident: Can city block off parking places for buses? Sherman: There was a person going through the neighborhood posing as pest control, I read about it in the Patch. Chief: Traditional crime is way down, but scams and people trying to get information about you are through the roof. We have two section 12 involuntary committals per shift, used to be one or two a month. I encourage you to call about issues like this.

Shuttle buses in Newton Highlands

Carol Carroll gathered information from public safety to find out how many shuttles are authorized to drop and pick up in the Highlands and to find out where is the city designated area for shuttles, and signage. How do shuttles cooperate? What has happened to the taxi stand? Several responded that the taxi stand is still there. Noel: City says taxi stand wasn't being used. Has been told the only shuttle is Trip Advisor 7:15-10:30 am, 4:15-7:00 pm., five trips per day. Lichtin: The 128 shuttle is also permitted to stop by Officer English garden. Noel: Public Safety and Transportation (PS&T) can pull list of permitted shuttles. Lichtin: 128 shuttle has six stops in afternoon and seven in morning. Karen Sherman: 128 shuttle parks on Lincoln. Lichtin: proposes that land use committee, before permitting Northland shuttles, develop a comprehensive study and issue regulations on how many shuttles can park at Highlands MBTA station at one time. Resident: It is a good problem to have people using public transportation. Carol Clark: But it must be managed and perhaps limited. Carol Carrol: We need the shuttles, but

there is a sign saying no parking on bridge and I often see two shuttles parked on bridge. Amy Wayne: There is a stench of exhaust fumes. Lappin: The idle limit is 5 min. Resident: We can have any rules but they must be enforced. Lichtin: There are plans for using electric vehicles for shuttles. Noel: PS&T could ask for electric vehicles as part of licensing. Lappin: They were too expensive for Wells office park a couple of years ago. Lichtin: Is there a motion for PS&T to develop a comprehensive plan for shuttles in the Highlands including Eliot Station? Bruce Blakely specified electric shuttles. Bob Burke so moved, Carol Clark seconded. Motion passed 8-0-0. Resident: Tuesday night, the Northland transportation plan will be discussed. Resident: Why is Eliot Station not used more? Lichtin: The transportation committee on Tuesday will discuss Northland, also the parking waiver for the proposed health club at 25-40 Lincoln. Darnell: This is in the old Village Kids and Blossom. Groot Gregory: The landlord thanked us for our support.

NewCAL site

Lichtin: City released a list of six final sites and Cold Spring Park was not on it. Resident: The list is Newton Center playground, Cabot, McGrath, Pelligrini, Weeks, and Albemarle. Carol Clark: What about decentralization of senior services? Lichtin: that ship has sailed. Lappin: City wants it in one place, there will still be satellite services. Still looking at private land the city could buy. The sites on the list will be site-tested. Parks and Rec would have to approve using parkland. Sherman: What about the former Aquinas school? Lappin: That will be a preschool, the new Lincoln Eliot. Lincoln Eliot will be the new swing space. City cannot renovate the current senior center. It has 10,000 square feet and 38,000 sq. ft. is needed. Also it is a historic building. Resident: What about using part of the Washington St. development? Lappin: Would have to buy a site. City has talked to the Riverside and Northland developers. Alan Nogee: There were five non-park sites on the list of 24 and none made it onto the list of six. Lappin: It started with 140 sites. Nogee: I appreciate Cold Spring Park is not on the list, federal grant regulations would have prevented using it. Resident: delighted to know Cold Spring Park is off the table but Newton is losing green space, I find it disturbing that the city is looking at parks for development. Green space is important to maintain in light of ongoing climate change.

Exploding manhole at Center and Walnut

Amy Wayne: Two weeks ago there were three explosions in a row. A manhole cover went into the trees, flames were coming out of the manhole. Chief McDonald says it is gas leaks and should be reported. What can we do about this? Albright: DPW chief has an ongoing relationship with National Grid, so report it to him. Darnell: There is an 800 number for gas leaks, they have to respond in an hour. They do actually show up. Humphrey: The ones on Washington St. get reported but never repaired. Long-term we must stop using natural gas. Lichtin: There is a bill in the state legislature mandating they fix more leaks. Let Rep. Ruth Balsler know that you support this. Jim McGonagal said that it may have been an underground transformer, they are working with Eversource to determine the cause.

Lichtin: John Rice will report on how the fountain got up and running. MBTA schedule for track work: Newton Center starting Aug. 5 during weeknights; Newton Highlands on two weekends in December. Aug 24-25 around Highlands station there will be soil boring for the accessibility project. Resident: The MBTA landscapers destroyed some nice plants around Highlands station in addition to weeds. Lichtin: Weekends of Aug. 11, Aug. 24-25 there will be signal work in the

Highlands. The station access project begins after track work is completed in 2020. The design will be done in the spring and will be presented.

Approval of July minutes

Amy Wayne moves to accept the July minutes; Barbara Darnell seconds; approved 8-0-0.

Treasurer's report

Lichtin: John Rice deposited \$4000 in Hyde Community Fund that will be coming to the area council. Gregory: One donation was received during the race, the rest is in the \$4000 from John Rice. Village day cost \$630 before this \$4000.

New business: Lichtin talked to the Waban council about having a debate for the Ward 5 council seat. It will be Thursday September 5 at the next NHNAC meeting time. The primary is September 10. The debate may be at Zervas. Gregory: We have \$150 budgeted for debates, using the school may cost more. Darnell: May have to pay for custodian at school. Lichtin: The Upper Falls council president is also supportive. For the joint area council debates, there will probably be two nights, one for Wards 1-4 and one for Wards 5-8 on Sunday October 20 and 27. Noel: Aug 13 is the League of Women Voters Ward 6 debate. Humphrey: The Ward 5 League of Women Voters debate is on Aug 7.

Meeting adjourned at 8:59.