

# **Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, January 5, 2017**

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Steve Feinstein, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Julius Starkman, Amy Wayne

Ex Officio Present: John Rice, Richard Blazar, Cheryl Lappin

Guests:

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation  
Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council

## **Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report**

Srdj opened the meeting at 7:37 PM. The Secretary's Report for December was reviewed and approved with minor corrections.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of January 1, we had \$14,225.00 in our checking account; \$7,289.00 is currently available plus \$120.00 available in cash.

For the Local historic District Planning Group, there is \$8.65 remaining in the original funding from our Area Council. \$3,075.00, available from the April, 2016 fundraiser, which can be used for documentation and outreach. Total expenditures to date stand at \$1,336.35

There is \$1,670.00 remaining for the Officer English Garden and other improvements on the Walnut Street Bridge. Other commitments include \$382.38 for Bathhouse Promotion, \$500.00 for printing in support of the Haunted House, \$200.00 for Soup Social activities and \$1,000.00 for ice rink construction, breakdown, and maintenance.

Projected added expenses during 2017 include items for Mayoral and Charter elections support and lower expected income on Village Day with possible reduction of Silent Auction and losses on road race. We anticipate reduced expenses from the elimination of the printed newsletter.

## **Budget Proposals for 2017**

- Groot conducted a discussion of this year's budget. He made the following major points.
- We expect our income to be lower in 2017 than in 2016 while expenses could be somewhat higher. With budgetary restraint and fiscal prudence, however, we should be okay.
- The road race is expenses and income last year were similar, but it does bring excitement and more people to Village Day who wind up spending more time and are more engaged there.
- We will probably not be getting a donation from Whole Foods because the person we dealt with there has left the company and their corporate headquarters has revamped the way they handle donations to community events.

There was an extended discussion of priorities.

## **Zervas School and Cold Springs Part pathway**

It will be recalled from January's meeting that there was discussion by Srdj and Andrea Downs of the draft of a joint letter that would be sent from Srdj and Sallee Lipshutz to Bob DeRubeis about how improvements at Cold Springs Park could contribute greatly to part of a concerted attempt by the Zervas Administrations, Zervas PTO and the neighborhood to reduce traffic and congestion on Beethoven and Beacon Streets during school arrivals and departures. A supplement to traffic controls would be efforts to improve the trails at Cold Springs Park as part of an overall plan to making the wide area around Zervas more walkable for students.

The draft of the letter was reviewed by the Council which then voted to approve it on a vote of 8-0-0.

## **Letter to Mayor on Needham Street Project**

Srdj then presented a letter that is on its way to being signed by the Presidents of all three area councils to Mayor Warren outlining their thoughts about how the Needham Street Corridor could not only improve auto traffic, but also be a catalyst for enhanced economic vitality in the corridor. This was a significantly revised version of the one we reviewed at December's meeting.

The Letter urged the City of Newton to work with Mass DOT and with local abutters and businesses to place all utility poles underground throughout Needham Street and the section of Winchester Street between Dedham Street and Route 9. The letter made a strong statement that doing this would improve pedestrian access and safety, improve economic vitality and make room for attractive street trees. It called for at a minimum, developing a working plan to place the conduit during construction of the roadway.

The letter was reviewed and discussed most favorably. Our Council voted 8-0-0 to approve the letter as drafted. It will be sent to the Mayor once all three area councils approve it.

## **Newton Highlands Local Historic District**

Rodney and Bob announced that a final draft of the preliminary study report for the Newton Highlands Local Historic District Planning Group has been completed and reviewed by the Newton Historical Commission which approved it in December and forwarded it to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for their review and approval.

Here's what we have planned for January.

1. Send electronic copies of the study report to all 24 members of the City Council;

2. Door-to door Distribution of the first of three or four short and issue specific leaflets to every home and business within the proposed district; This first one will announce the completion of the study, where to access it on line and reference how and where homeowners and others within the district can become involved in the process.
3. Continue compiling computerized email mailing list of homeowners within the District.
4. Continue the inventorying of all undocumented properties within the proposed district.
5. Lay the groundwork for door-to-door canvassing, block and street coffees, outreach meetings, etc.

Groot noted that we should get in touch with all the landlords who own property in the village square since they may not be aware that a historic district is in the offing. Bob said that letters had been sent to Hamilton, Aram Realty and others a year or so back, but we had received no response. He said we would try and get up meetings with all the landlords in early February.

### **Items in Brief**

- The Northland Corporation will be coming to our February meeting to
- Discuss their huge proposal for 950 apartment units, 175,000 SF of office space and 200,000 SF retail space.
- Safety problems discussed from motorists parking on the sidewalk at the Dunkin Donuts on Beacon Street at Four Corners.
- Srdj received a letter from the City about a conclave to discuss Newton's priorities for transportation. Srdj cannot attend and asked if anyone would be available to meet in his place.

- Srdj argued for placing the handicapped ramp on the inbound side at the Highlands MBTA station. Groot will invite abutters to a future Area Council meeting to weigh in.
- John announced plans for “bump-outs” on Hartford Street to further discourage illegal U turns at the intersection of Hartford and Lincoln Streets.
- Amy and John gave an update on the Winter Soup Social. We will have magicians, games, music and food. It’s lining up to be a great time.
- John announced that construction on the ice rink will be beginning tomorrow (Friday). We are just hoping for some cold and clear weather before the warm suns of late February
- Charter Commission votes next week to approve and forward their proposed charter revisions.
- Barbara announced an upcoming food drive by Newton Community Pride. And there was talk about how we could assist others who run food drives.
- Rodney announced that several churches are cooperating to sponsor and settle a Syrian family in Newton.
- Steve noted once again that Village Day is now scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in June and Steve said that there’s a lot that needs to be done between now and then to pull this off. Steve thinks this is the last year he can put this much effort into developing and managing the event.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,  
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council