

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, August 3, 2017

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Srdj Nedeljkovic

Ex Officio: John Rice, Ward City Councilor, Ward 5

Guests:

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation

Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Council

Susan Mirsky, Hyde Street

Brenda Noel, Candidate Ward 6 City Councilor

Barbara Smiley, Newton Highlands Local Historic District Study Group

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

Srdj opened the meeting at 7:35 PM after concluding we did not have a quorum to conduct official business or record binding votes. He stated that the Secretary's report for August would be voted on at September's meeting along.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of July 30, 2017, we had \$12,410.00 in our checking account; \$7,802.00 is currently available plus \$120.00 available in cash.

Items Discussed

Most of the meeting involved a free ranging discussion of various current and upcoming events and challenges since there was no quorum to transact formal business.

1. Sallee Lipshutz reported that the two fall election debates are proceeding on schedule. The October 8th event will feature contested races for City Council and School Committee and the October 22nd event will feature the two finalists for Mayor and the proposed new City Charter.

2. Sallee also led a “strategizing” discussion about how members of Newton’s four area councils could visibly articulate their opposition to that part of the proposed Charter Reform that would eliminate ward councilors elected only by members of their respective wards. There was broad consensus that the overwhelming majority of area councilors are opposed to this change, but that members could only state their preference individually without formally binding their respective councils. But that shouldn’t prevent publishing all the names of opponents in a single document. Sallee is drafting the letter and hopes to finalize the text and names of opposing councilors in advance of the fall election.

3. Barbara Smiley, Rodney and Bob gave an update on the proposed Local Historic District. The glitch over the fact that many homeowners didn’t receive a survey from the City has been rectified although what caused the problem still hasn’t been determined. The City simply sent out a new survey form to every property owner in the proposed district. They have a “failsafe” system in place to make certain that no survey results are counted twice. We are going to wait until the survey results are compiled and announced by the City, sometime after September 9th before determining our next move(s).

4. There was a general discussion about the problems associated with keeping businesses afloat in the Highlands, particularly in businesses located in or near the village center. High rents, on line shopping, parking and ever changing consumer preferences were identified as the major problems. There was a general consensus that we need to do more to reach out to all businesses to let them know we are on their side and understand the constraints they operate under.

5. John announced that there would be a community get together on Saturday, November 4th to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the building that now houses the Hyde Community Center. More details to follow

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Bob Burke, Secretary, Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council