

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Meeting Minutes, September 7, 2017

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Steve Feinstein, Nathaniel Lichtin, Julius Starkman

Ex Officio: Richard Blazar, Ward City Councilor, Ward 6

Guests:

Rena Getz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Braden Houston, Candidate, Ward 2 City Councilor at-large

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation

Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area 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 noting that we have a quorum to conduct business and record binding votes. The Secretary's reports for July and August were reviewed and approved as written.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of September 2, 2017, we had \$12,410.00 in our checking account; \$7,802.00 is currently available plus \$120.00 available in cash. It was noted that we received checks of \$1,000 each from the Village Bank and Anna's Taqueria that derived from their support of this year's Village Day.

Local Historic District

Barbara, Bob and Rodney provided an update on developments pertaining to the proposed Newton Highlands Local Historic District since our last meeting.

Things are still on hold as we await the results of the City's survey to every homeowner within the proposed district to determine whether or not they support its creation. We are eager to learn how this vote is going to break down. Regardless of the results we will push forward to complete the historical and architectural inventories of every undocumented dwelling. This is extremely time consuming and we are making slow, but steady progress towards completion of this complex task and project.

Rodney Barker stated that he was "amazed and heartened" at how much work and effort has gone into this effort by the Study Group and the intense outreach to homeowners and others in the Village that has taken place. He thanked everyone for their contributions.

Fall Debates and Forums

Sallee Lipshutz reported that the two fall election debates are still proceeding on schedule. Newton TAB editor Andy Levin will moderate the October 8th event. It will feature the contested races for at-large City Council. Marjorie Arons Barron will moderate the October 22nd event featuring the two finalists for Mayor, School Committee, and the proposed new City Charter. A debate between the 2 candidates for the Ward 6 Council seat is tentatively scheduled as part of next month's area council meeting. We're exploring the Newton Woman's Club as a possible venue. A motion was made for our area council to contribute \$200.00 to support this debate schedule. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Tree Trimming Controversy on Lincoln Street

An extended discussion took place centered around a letter sent by Newton Highlands architect Robert Fizek to Marc Welch, the City's Director of Urban Forestry. The letter complained bitterly about the overly aggressive way that certain trees on Lincoln Street were trimmed in response to commercial property owner complaints.

Mr. Fizek complained bitterly about the effects of aggressive trimming like this directly threatens the long term health and survivability of the trees themselves and how the unsightly result runs counter to historic district protection and related quality of life considerations that the City claims to espouse for our villages.

Mr. Fizek also complained about the proliferation of utility poles, wires and associated components in recent years. Srdj wrote a response arguing that what Mr. Fizek observed is another compelling reason we should be starting to underground all these utilities.

Items in Brief

- The Buttonwood Restaurant is still on schedule to open in the Highlands in the space on Lincoln Street formerly occupied by the 59 Lincoln Street restaurant.
- Village Pizza has been sold to new owners, but will remain in business.
- Braden Houston, a candidate for an at-large City Council seat from Ward 2 came before our Council to introduce himself and outline the major issues he is running on.
- Barbara noted that she had been addressing a problem at 219 Lake Avenue where there is no definition between the sidewalk and the street. This poses particular problems for people in wheelchairs and people that have other walking disabilities

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Bob Burke, Secretary, Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council