

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, November 2, 2017

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

Ex Officio:

John Rice, Ward City Councilor, Ward 5

Richard Blazar, Ward City Councilor, Ward 6

Guests:

Bruce Blakely, Richardson Road

Cathy Chapman, 41 Berwick Road

Carol Clark, Walnut Street

Jonathan David, Pine Crest Road

H. Nevin Yuksel-Ehict

Rena Getz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation

Richard Hutchinson, Lincoln Street

Sarah Lamstein, Pine Crest Road

Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Nancy McCarthy, 940 Walnut Street

Clare McCully, Pine Crest Road

Craig Nesta, Pine Crest Road

Brenda Noel, Candidate Ward 6 City Councilor

Richard Paisner, Pine Crest Road

Abe Polk, 41 Berwick Road

Noah Roffman, 40 Pine Crest Road

Cory Sakakeeny, Pine Crest Road

Barbara Smiley, Newton Highlands Local Historic District Study Group

Leslie Zebrowitz, Pine Crest Road

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

The Secretary's reports for October was reviewed and approved with two minor corrections. The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of October 30, 2017, we had \$17,145.00 in our checking account; \$12,595 .00 is currently available plus \$120.00 available in cash.

Pine Crest Road Neighbors

A large group of homeowners from Pine Crest Road and nearby streets appeared before our Council to brief us on their efforts to establish a positive dialogue with Ward Shifman, a local developer who is planning a major housing development project adjacent to their homes.

Nathaniel introduced affected homeowners Richard Paisner and Cory Sakakeeny. They briefed us on the current status of the project. The developer has already removed an old "Irish Cottage" and approximately 60 trees. Homeowners are also concerned about the project's impact on the Aqueduct that many kids use to walk in the neighborhood.

Richard, Cory and other Pine Crest owners stressed that they would like the opportunity to work constructively with the developer so that the project is designed to integrate as much as possible. with the existing physical character of the street and neighborhood.

Richard and Cory asked if we could write a letter to the developer to state that we are; (1) Aware of the concerns of these neighbors (preserving trees, ensuring visual and audio screening from Walnut St. and Four Corners intersection, preventing a long driveway/road, and building houses that integrate into the neighborhood in terms of design, massing, and scale); and that we (2) Encourage the developer and neighbors to reach consensus on key aspects of the proposal to the mutual advantage of all.

Nathaniel moved that the Area Council sent a letter to the developer (i.e. Mr. Ward Shifman) stating that we have heard the concerns of the affected homeowners and hope that the developer will have a collaborative approach on the design of the project such

that the result is acceptable to both parties. Steve seconded the motion which was approved unanimously on a 7-0-0 vote.

Communications Challenges

It was agreed at last month's meeting to undertake further efforts to expand outreach and communications between the Area Council and the residents of Newton Highlands. This will be a major priority during the next two years.

In an updated report, Steve announced that he's planning to meet with Stephanie Foner, the Mayor's Community Engagement Director. He hopes the City and our Area Council can collaborate on ways to improve communications with homeowners and residents in our service area. One possibility Steve noted would be for the City to help with mailing a post card to all affected residents asking them to share their email address with us. Bob noted that several residents were hesitant to share their email addresses with us for the Local Historic District because they are already suffering from electronic information overload. He thought more residents might be willing to do so if we stressed that we were going to keep emails "few and far between".

Fall Debates and Forums

Sallee Lipshutz reported that the two fall election debates were both great successes. Newton TAB editor Andy Levin moderated the October 8th event that featured the contested races for at large positions in the City Council. Marjorie Arons Barron moderated the October 22nd event featuring the two finalists for Mayor, School Committee contestants, and the proposed new City Charter. The debate between the 2 candidates for the City Council Ward 6 Ward Councilor seat went off as scheduled Thursday, October 12th at the Newton Highlands Women's Club. Steve Feinstein received a round of applause for his stellar performance as moderator.

Items in Brief

- John Rice reported this year's Halloween Haunted House drew a large turnout in spite of bad weather in this annual event. The entire evening was a great gala affair.
- John also reminded everyone that the community celebration for the Hyde Center's 50th anniversary would be held on Saturday, November 4th.
- John added that the ribbon cutting for the renovated Newton Highlands Playground will take place on Friday, November 3th. Everyone is invited to attend the culmination of this truly great success story for Newton Highlands.
- The Grape Leaf restaurant will hopefully be opening sometime this winter.
- Limited Editions has sold their building, but it is still not known who will be occupying the site and when they will be doing so.
- Julius reported that "a lot of work" being done to by the owners of the Buttonwood Restaurant to expedite its opening in the not too distant future.
- Carol Clark and Bruce Blakely noted that they will be running as write in candidates for the Area Council in Tuesday's municipal election. Carol distributed a copy of a campaign paper outlining her background and professional qualifications related to the tasks and priorities of our Area Council. Both candidates asked for everyone's support.
- Sallee noted that she's involved in efforts to upgrade lighting in the Waban village business district. A discussion ensued with Area Council members supporting an initiative to improve lighting in Newton Highlands. This would help increase the desirability to visit the village center in the long, dark winter nights we have.

- Groot announced that the City of Newton will be reviewing how energy is being provided to the City. The project is called “Newton Power Choice” and it involves developing an aggregation plan for purchasing electricity. The goal is to encourage the development of renewable energy and reduce power company emissions. Groot suggested we invite Ann Berwick, Newton’s co-director of sustainability, to a future meeting to discuss this. Area Council members agreed that we should invite her and Groot said he would reach out to her.
- Srdj brought up the topic of Area Council effectiveness over the past term and asked that we have a discussion of focus and intentions for the the next term. Groot suggested that having this discussion is premature as the election is not until next week. Srdj passed out a one-page document with a list of Area Council activities to consider, including Community Activities, Transportation, Development and Change, Local Business District, Community Engagement, and Administrative Tasks. It was decided to continue discussion about this effort in subsequent meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Bob Burke, Secretary, Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council