

**NEWTON HIGHLANDS LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY GROUP SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
December 5, 2016**

Those Present were:

Isabelle Albeck from Waban, Rodney Barker, Robert Burke, Mildred Hutchinson, Nancy Morrison, Bill Roesner, Barbara Smiley, Amy Wayne, Annie Wright, Brian Yates.

Rodney called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Bob stated that there are three overriding issues or tasks that will consume most of our attention over the next several months.

1. Discussion of the the Preliminary Study Report that was just completed a few days ago.
2. Discussion of what is involved when we sent this preliminary study to the Newton Historical Commission and once it's approved by the NHC and submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for review.
3. A communications strategy for a sustained outreach and communicating with all homeowners within the proposed LHD and with other community groups in Newton Highlands on a continuing basis.

Hard copies of the Preliminary Study Report were distributed to participants in the meeting. Rodney stressed that it was indeed just a “Preliminary Report” and could be changed based on comments and/or corrections from either the Newton Historical Commission or the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Rodney also gave an overview of the timetable of future activities and what to expect in terms of feedback from both the City and State.

Bob said he was interested in seeing how the City and State would respond to the Preliminary Study Report because it was fashioned somewhat differently than study reports from the 4 other local historic districts in Newton. We view our proposed LHD not as a collection of single homes and other structures, but as almost an organic entity where the whole district is stronger and more substantive than its individual parts. We don’t have any truly ancient homes from the 1700’s as most of the other villages do, but what we do have date from the mid nineteenth century to the first decade of the 21st century, the latter being homes we feel certain will be deemed architecturally significant several decades from now.

The three categories of structures within the proposed district that are included in our study are:

1. Late 19th and early 20th Century “Victorian” homes including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Stick, Italianate, Queen Anne, 2nd Empire and Colonial Revival homes.

2. The three existing, but unprotected historical districts that include the Newton Highlands Historic District along Lincoln Street, the Newton Highlands Historic District Extension that includes the buildings and businesses in the village square, and the Anne Cobb Historic District.
3. 15 representative examples of structures within the proposed district that range in construction age from 1848 to 2010.

A spirited discussion then took place about how to outreach to the homeowners and business owners within the proposed district now that the Preliminary Study Report is in the system.

It was agreed that the first step should be a leaflet distributed door to door to every home and business within the proposed district. Amy and Bob said they would draft a “one pager” and distribute it to everyone on this study group before printing and distributing it. The leaflet will also announce that we will be holding open sessions where anyone can come to talk about their concerns an hour before and for an hour or more after every Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council meeting that is held on the first Thursday of every month.

It was again stressed that a Local Historic District exists to provide protection to historic and architecturally significant houses and buildings that might otherwise be demolished or altered and enlarged to a degree that changes their appearance or the way they fit into the neighborhood.

The other side of the coin is that we want to be able to have a rapid response program in place to counter false or misleading information about a Local Historic District that may circulate in Newton Highlands.

Bob Burke

Secretary, Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council and of this Study Group.

Several speakers stressed the need for total transparency of this process if we are to successfully advance the process and maintain our personal and professional credibility

Bob Burke,
Secretary, Newton Local District Study Group