

**NEWTON HIGHLANDS LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT  
WORKING GROUP SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
September 29, 2016**

Those Present were:

Rodney Barker, Robert Burke, Victoria Danburg, Mildred Hutchinson, Nathaniel Lichtin, Carol McPherson, Ron Mauri, Carla Powdermaker, Dan Powdermaker, Bill Roesner, Barbara Smiley, Amy Wayne, Annie Wright, Brian Yates.

Bob Burke called the meeting to order at 10:35 because Rodney was delayed in getting to the Brigham House. Bob stated that there are three overriding issues or tasks that will consume most of our attention from now until the New Year.

1. Completion of the Preliminary Study Report and its submission to the Newton Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Historical Commission
2. Completion of the historical and architectural inventories on 15 representative dwellings within the Proposed Local Historic District that will form the single most critical part of the Preliminary Study Report
3. Outreach and communicate with homeowners and other community groups in Newton Highlands on a continuing basis.

Annie Wright and Carla and Dan Powdermaker stressed that we had to be sensitive about assuring homeowners that the requirements and

control measures could both preserve the character of the neighborhood but be reasonable. Annie has a very large lot and stated that the family wanted to build a small house on the premises for their retirement. We had to be equally if not even more sensitive to older residents and those on fixed incomes when it comes to repairs on their properties, or when they wanted to preserve the equity in their homes that they had built into their retirement options if they decide to sell. They were pleased to learn that we seemed sensitive to these issues, but worried about the sensitivity of those who would ultimately be appointed to the Local Historic District Commission for the Highlands.

Rodney stated that we have made a concerted effort to communicate with everyone in Newton Highlands, but particularly with those in what we believe is the final set of boundaries we will recommend for inclusion in the proposed district. He also stated that we haven't put forward any specific proposal except to recommend the boundaries for a Local Historic District to focus discussion in the community. Just about everything else we have done has been information gathering about the houses and other structures in the proposed district.

Bob stated that we should be able to communicate much more effectively when the Study Report is finalized during the next month or so because the information everyone will be working from will be in this document. Rodney added that we've been delayed in completing the study report by the fact that the archives at the Jackson Homestead were off limits for almost 8 months because they were renovating and updating the facilities. Now, they are back in business and we are moving forward.

That said, there was general appreciation that Dan, Annie and Carla had come to the meeting and expressed their concerns because we are very much aware that whatever we propose and move forward has to be acceptable to the homeowners within the proposed Local Historic District. It's clear that email, letters, blogs, newspapers, and even the latest forms of social media won't involve people the way we want them to be involved. Once the Study Report is completed and submitted to the City and State, we will be going door to door and communicating the broadly and specifically in as many media and communications outlets as possible.

During the meeting, Bill, Ron, Brian and others also made clear 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.

Amy asked Dan, Annie and Carla if they would be willing to work with us to help us fashion a program that would be acceptable to everyone keeping in mind that we sense broad generic support for preserving and protecting the homes here. They said they would be happy to. We agreed to meet again when the Preliminary Study Report is completed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM.

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



