

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, January 7, 2016

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

Guests:

Mildred Hutchinson, Lincoln Street
Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council
Ernest Lowenstein, Hyde Street
Ron Mauri, Bradford Road
Chris Pitts, Waban Neighborhood Area Council
Diane Prunte, Winchester Street
Julius Starkman, Cochituate Road – appointed to Area Council

The first order of business was to nominate and elect a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; Rodney Barker, acting as Chair of the Nominations Committee, opened the meeting at 7:40 PM. Rodney first determined that a quorum was present and then proceeded to the election of officers.

Srdj Nedeljkovic and Barbara Darnell were nominated for the office of President and presented oral statements about why they were seeking the office. Srdj stressed the Council's accomplishments to date and his vision for planning for the Village's future. Barbara noted new initiatives she thought the Council should consider and thought we should find ways to cooperate more closely with City Hall.

The discussion then turned to how the voting should be conducted, i.e. by secret ballot or in the open. It was determined that the vote must be open with each of the 8 current members publicly stating their preference. Srdj was then elected by a vote of 6-2.

Steve Feinstein was then nominated and seconded for the office of Vice President. He was elected unanimously on a vote of 8-0.

Bob Burke was then nominated and seconded for the office of Secretary. He was unanimously reelected on a vote of 8-0.

Groot Gregory was then nominated and seconded for the office of Treasurer. He was unanimously elected on a vote of 8-0.

Attention then turned to the election of the ninth and final member of our Council. Julius Starkman of Cochituate Road was the only candidate nominated. He was unanimously elected on a vote of 8-0.

The Secretary's Report for December was reviewed and approved with one minor correction.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of January 3, 2016, we had \$11,189.00 in our checking account, of which \$8, 549.93 is currently available. In addition, there is \$120.00 available in cash.

\$400.00 is still owed to us for Village Day activities, and may turn out to be a loss with the changes at WholeFoods, and we still owe Steve \$300.00 for expenses related to that event. We owe \$220.00 for support and mailing related to the Halloween haunted house at the Hyde Center. \$1,670.00 is still remaining in our account for garden and bridge projects.

The budget for the coming year was then presented. An extended discussion took place on our financial goals and status and our budget priorities for the coming year. A motion was made to approve the budget and this was approved on a vote of 8-0-1.

Groot once again stressed the need to take understand our reporting requirements under the Open Meeting Law and recommended that area councilors conduct business through our city hall email accounts.

Newton Highlands Local Historic District Update

Rodney and Bob gave a short presentation on the movement and progress of various items discussed at last month's meeting. During January and February, we expect to see the City's Planning Department expedite our request for CPC funding needed to fully document all homes and other structures in the proposed district. A final street list and map of the proposed district will be completed in early February.

Planning for a Better Newton

Srdj, Chris Pitts and Sallee Lipshutz briefed the Council and guests on the goals, objectives and specific items of concern that will hopefully provide a viable framework for a set of joint and coordinated planning initiatives by the Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council and the Waban Neighborhood Area Council. The Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council has been informed of this project and we expect that they will be active participants before too long.

The first organizational meeting will be held later this month where we will discuss the objectives and organizational components of this cross village planning process. Two specific areas we want to concentrate on in subsequent monthly meetings include the always thorny issues of Mixed Use Development in Village Centers and residential change and development.

A spirited discussion followed and concerns were voiced that we not be viewed as trying to preempt the Mayor with this planning process. Groot reminded the council that the Mayor had asked for this type of input during our inauguration. Srdj stated that we weren't doing this to preempt the Mayor's planning objectives or in reaction to development issues in other villages. We look forward to cooperating with City Hall, but want to make certain that our residents and homeowners have a real voice in determining the manner and degree to which our village develops in the years ahead. Public lands in Newton are at risk and the residents here should be aware of developments that could conceivably affect so many things in the Highlands from parking to the ambience of our Village Center. Groot stated that the community should prepare a plan for submission to the City and get it completed for submission to the City in May.

A motion was made to approve this joint planning process between Waban and Newton Highlands and to provide for the involvement of the Upper Falls Council. This was approved on a vote of 7-0-2.

Traffic Plan for Zervas School

Sallee discussed the status and proposals for an effective Traffic Plan for an enlarged student body at Zervas when construction of the new school is completed. They are looking to develop safe routes for students who walk to the school, and issues related to traffic flow on Beacon, Beethoven and Evelyn Roads, and safe and effective drop off and pick up locations at the school itself.

Sallee came to discuss these issues with us because the planning sessions for this should include participation from Newton Highlands since so many of the students who go to Zervas live here. The School Committee is striving to foster community acceptance from all affected villages for addressing what could be the very challenging task of ensuring the safe and effective flow of traffic in and around Zervas

Items in Brief

- The City is still interviewing consultants for the Phase II Zoning Process
- Schuyler Larrabee is a rail expert and aficionado who lives in Newton Highlands. He knows a lot about trains and train stations, as well as state contracting for large construction projects. We are going to try and invite him to our February meeting.
- There will be a public meeting on the City's Housing Strategy on January 25th.
- Ice skating on the Hyde Rink has been disrupted by callous vandals who destroyed part of the rink's foundation. John is working to fix it.
- The Hyde Winter Social will be held on Saturday, February 6th at the Hyde Center. John can use our help in setting things up and tearing things down.
- Planning for the Summer Concert Series at the Hyde Pavilion and bandstand is well underway. John Rice has slots for 15 performers, but 30 have approached John to say they would like to perform.
- Steve said we need to start working on Village Day now. The time to mid-June is shorter than we think

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council