

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

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Julius Starkman, Amy Wayne

Ex Officio Present: City Councilors John Rice, Dick Blazer

Guests:

Jean Artin, Crystal Lake Conservancy
Mildred Hutchinson, 160 Lincoln Street
Schuyler Larrabee, Crystal Lake Conservancy
Robert Fizek, Crystal Lake Conservancy

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

Srdj opened the meeting at 7:45 PM. The Secretary's Report for March was reviewed and approved.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. There was no change from the previous month. As of April 2, 2016, we had \$10,525.30 in our checking account, of which \$8,185.30 is currently available. \$140.00 is available in cash.

\$400.00 is still owed to us for Village Day activities and we still owe Steve \$304.63 for expenses related to that event.

Planning for a New Crystal Lake Bathhouse

The first item on the agenda was a continuation of last month's robust discussion about a proposal and plan for a new Crystal Lake Bathhouse and Arts Cultural Center on the site of the current bathhouse that all acknowledge is in a terrible state of decay.

Three members of the Crystal Lake Conservancy briefed us on this proposal and plan for the new bathhouse and Arts Cultural Center. This included an annotated sketch of the future Center.

Schuyler Larrabee stated emphatically that there is no way the existing bathhouse can be renovated or rehabbed effectively. It is “clearly passed its prime. He showed a design for a rather huge year round use complex that would be capable of hosting swimming, skating, boating and a wide range of cultural and civic events. The project approximately \$8,000,000 for the entire project.

Julius questioned the \$8,000,000 figure saying he was pretty certain that a facility with the same capabilities could be constructed for considerably less.

Srdj stated that cost containment was important, but so to was a guarantee that the facility would be used more than 10 months a year. Additional activities involve moving programs from “The Hut” at the Newton Center Playground to this new center on the lake once the building of it is complete.

John asked Schuyler, Jean and Robert how they think the neighbors will react to a multiuse facility. They were pretty certain that there would be acceptance if the scale of activities and levels of noise were as reasonable as possible.

Srdj added that we really need a public meeting to launch the proposal and allay any lingering concerns by nearby residents. This will help build public support for the proposal and support within the Newton City Government as well.

A motion was made to lend the Area Council’s support to this proposal and to hold this community meeting on Thursday June 9th the community and government support we need to move it forward. The motion was carried unanimously on a 6-0-0 vote.

Village Day Planning

Steve was absent, but Srdj gave a short update on Village Day activities. 10 coordinators and activists attended an organizing meeting at Steve’s home that helped to iron out several of the logistical and leadership issues. Steve will have a detailed update at May’s meeting.

Newton Highlands Local Historic District Update

Approximately 40 Highlands residents and others attended the April 3rd fundraiser at the Newton Highlands Congregational Church. We collected over \$1,000.00 from those in attendance and we expect another generous amount from solicitation envelopes that were included in the mailing to all the homes and businesses within the proposed Local Historic District.

Srdj's presentation was very well received and there were a number of questions from the audience that related to what he had to say as well as to specifics about a Local Historic District in the Highlands.

Rodney and Bob gave a special thanks to Amy Wayne, Barbara Smiley and Bob's sister Joanne who provided hours of help developing and proofreading the letter and with writing personal handwritten addresses on more than 500 envelopes.

Rodney again went into detail about why we needed the \$20,000 in Community Preservation Funds to complete the documentation of all undocumented houses within the proposed Local Historic District. The upshot is that our consultant Gretchen Schueler strongly recommended that we not try to do most of this work with volunteers. It takes a trained professional to know how the most intricate parts of these requirements must be done.

We are planning another meeting of our Local Historic District planning committee sometime near the end of this month or in very early May.

Planning for a Better Newton

It will be recalled from last month's meeting that the next Planning for a Better Newton community meeting on housing and residential change and development in the Highlands and Waban villages was to have been held at the Waban Library on Monday, March 29th. This meeting is being rescheduled because the City claimed that the official notice for the event had been released too late to meet provisions of Newton's Open Meeting Law requirements.

Items in Brief

- Nathaniel announced that the telephone and email list of all Area Council members is nearing completion.
- Julius discussed traffic problems at the intersection of Woodward and Erie Avenue.
- John announced the Anna's Taqueria is "packed" throughout the day. He has his fingers crossed that this will draw more people to the Village and be good for other businesses as well.

- Andria Downes and Sallee Lipshutz are still putting together the community meeting on parking and traffic at the enlarged Zervas School before the new facility comes on line next year.
- The kitchen fan at the back of Anna's Taqueria is noisy and is disturbing some of the neighbors. John said that the owners are working on a solution.
- Srdj announced that several people have stepped forward to succeed Janet Fagan with flower planting in the Village. Srdj thought we should invite them to an upcoming meeting as soon as possible. Everyone concurred.
- Rodney stated that it's imperative we keep on top of how the Charter Commission's decisions may be affecting the Highlands and villages in general. Rodney believes these changes could have profound implications on our Council's priorities.
- Srdj noted that a parking improvement district is being set up in Newtonville and that more are on the drawing boards in other parts of Newton. We should look at the feasibility of a district here.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council