

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, June 2, 2016

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

Ex Officios Present: John Rice, Dick Blazer

Guests:

Mildred Hutchinson, 160 Lincoln Street
Barbara Smiley, Newton Highlands Local Historic District Planning Committee
Robert Solomon, 82 Lincoln Street

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

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

The Treasurer's Report included the following. There was no change from the previous month. As of June 1, 2016, we had \$13,300.30 in our checking account, of which \$7,585.30 is currently available. \$140.00 is available in cash.

Village Day Progress Report

Steve presented his final progress report before this year's Village Day which takes place 10 days from now. Overall status is that "everything is under control". We have a final budget and the projected profit from all the events, activities and booths. Options for rainy weather were discussed. We have plans to fully recognize all the sponsors that help make this event possible. Plans for the road race are proceeding apace and we are pleased with the number and the quality of people and groups who have signed up for booth space.

Problems with Signs on the Bridge

A discussion took place about the appearance of many of the signs at the Walnut Street Bridge and the number of signs that remain posted on the bridge long after the events they were posted for take place. There were questions about who is really in charge of sign placement on the bridge. This is compounded by the fact

that the merchants already have a specific section on the bridge that is allocated for their signs. It's not entirely clear who has charge of placing and removing signs on the remaining sections. Srdj reminded the Council that there are established rules governing the placement and removal of short term signs for village businesses.

Newton Highlands Local Historic District Update

Srdj presented a historical description of the Newton Highlands Local Historic District (LHD) at a citywide forum on LHDs at Waban's Windsor Club sponsored by the Newton Village Alliance. Representatives from Newton's 4 existing LHD's also gave presentations. Bob moderated the event.

John reported that we have received checks for \$2,875.00 from 25 donors and that most came from homeowners and residents who live within the proposed district.

We are moving toward a major outreach program this summer in at least five venues

1. A public information booth at Village Day near the Area Council operation
2. A public information table at the Hyde Concert Series after July 4th
3. A grass roots organizing campaign beginning in July, focused on finding supporter(s) on each street or block who can serve as street or block captains for outreach to their neighbors. The fundraising checks have already revealed some good possibilities.
4. A continuing effort, spearheaded by Barbara Smiley, to complete as much work on the housing inventory as possible before a professional consultant comes on board.
5. Continued liaison with community leaders and members of the 4 Local Historic District Commissions that oversee development in Newton Upper Falls, Newtonville, Auburndale and Chestnut Hill.

Planning for a Better Newton

The rescheduled meeting of the latest Planning for a Better Newton took place on the evening of Tuesday, May 31st at the Waban Public Library. Srdj gave the major presentation that focused on local historic districts (LHD's) in Newton, zoning and design issues, and issues related to inspection and compliance by the City.

Planning for a New Crystal Lake Bathhouse

It will be recalled from May's meeting, that the Council voted to join with the Crystal Lake Conservancy to sponsor an open house at the old Bath House on Friday June 18th where plans for a new multifunction bathhouse with year round activities would be discussed. In the meantime, Bob De Rubeis requested that we hold off on this until he could coordinate things with other projects and priorities of the Newton's Parks and Recreation agenda. Dick Blazer has been following this closely and said that Bob's request was reasonable.

Charter Commission Update

Nathaniel Lichtin has been our "go to guy" for issues and feedback on what the Newton Charter Commission is doing and saying. This month he distributed a draft of the Commission's initial proposal which details how the Commission believes that area councils would function under a new Charter.

A brief discussion on the revisions took place, but Srdj said we should revisit this in detail at our July meeting. Groot said he had reached out to other area councils to get their feedback and form working groups of the 4 existing area councils.

MBTA Handicapped Access Program for Newton Highlands Station

Robert Solomon and Srdj informed the Council that \$7 million for the handicapped access project at the Newton Highlands MBTA station is in the final CIP for 2017. But Robert emphatically cautioned us not to assume that this would be a done deal without a lot of lobbying to state legislators and City officials including the Mayor.

Items in Brief

- John reported that the Grape Leaf restaurant is close to opening

Anna's is holding a meeting with the professional psychologist whose office is located adjacent to the restaurant. He has complained that very loud noise from old exhaust fans at the restaurant is affecting the quality of his practice. Anna's seems amenable to replacing the fans.

- Steve talked about our new website which should be a corker.
- Barbara reported that the Hope Fountain's water circulation system and other parts of the Fountain's interior are rusting out. The first Hope Fountain was melted down for scrap metal during World War II. This second Hope Fountain and has been operational since the 1990's and our best option may be to simply replace the entire fountain with a duplicate
- Barbara also talked about the status and challenges of coordinating the Hope Fountain, Asian Gardens and the Officer English garden.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council