

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, January 9, 2014

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Ron Mauri, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Robert Solomon

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice, Dick Blazer and Cheryl Lappin
Past President: Janice Bourque

Guests:

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation
Dianne Khalaj, Walnut Foods and Liaison from the Highlands Merchants Coalition

Rodney called the meeting to order at 7:40 in his capacity as Dean of the Area Council. He then determined that we had a quorum to conduct business.

The first order of business was to elect officers for the coming year.

- Srdjan Nedeljkovic was nominated for President of the Council without opposition, and was elected unanimously.
- Barbara Darnell was nominated for Vice President of the Council without opposition, and was elected unanimously
- Bob Burke was nominated for Secretary of the Council without opposition, and was elected unanimously.
- Groot Gregory was nominated for Treasurer of the Council without opposition, and was elected unanimously.

Srdj then proceeded to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Ron then presented the minutes from December's meeting. These were approved without correction.

Groot then presented the January Treasurer's Report. As of December 30, 2013, there was \$8,096.57, all of it in our checking account. Expenses for the month of December included \$250.00 as support to the "Sing Along" at the December 13

Holiday Stroll sponsored by the NHV Merchants Coalition, \$495.00 to Mark Taylor for Ice Rink labor, \$75.00 for work on the ice rink to Dave Meulensaere, and \$473.71 to Paul Gilbert for ice rink materials. The Treasurer's Report was then unanimously approved without change by the Council.

The following items were discussed by those present.

Area Council Maps and Boundaries:

Srdj announced that there has been a preliminary meeting with some of the other Ward 5 area council members to work out agreements that would clearly delineate the boundaries of the Waban, Highlands and the Upper Falls area councils. There are several grey areas that are adjacent to one or all 3 villages and other locations where it may make sense to place whole blocks or streets in another area council. It also includes single streets like Richardson Road which Bruce Blakely brought to our attention in October. It will take consultation with affected in these grey areas and approval by the Board of Aldermen to make any changes official.

Merchants Coalition Winter Stroll

Dianne reported that the pre-holiday merchants open house and sing along was a complete success. Attendance and participation were solid despite the cold weather. The merchants did a good business and everyone had a great time.

Winter Soup Social:

The Winter Soup Social will be held on Saturday, January 23rd. Several restaurants and food shops in the Highlands and even some outside the Village will be donating various soups and stews. Cabot's will be donating two large tubs of ice cream which is a great pickup since the Lincoln Coffee Shop closed a few months back.

An extended discussion took place about turning the Social into a fundraiser for the City's food pantries. Attendees would be asked to bring canned foods and other fresh or preserved items as donations. Groot offered to follow up with publicity on this with the Tab, Patch and Village 14 blog.

Allerton/ Center Street Crosswalk:

Srdj announced that Bill Paille informed him that the Allerton/Center Crosswalk project is now in the design phase and will include a curb extension.

Auburndale Edges the Highlands for Parking Plan:

Groot reported that the City has decided to implement the first village parking plan in Auburndale rather than the Highlands despite the fact that our Council pioneered the City's first village sponsored proposal for a comprehensive parking plan. The City obviously feels that Auburndale's parking problems are more acute than ours are. Hopefully, the Highlands will make the cut for a similar village based program in the near future. Implementation and final details of the Auburndale program still haven't been announced.

Responsibilities for Snow Removal:

An extended discussion took place about who is responsible for snow removal on sidewalks and crosswalks in the Highlands. Homeowners are responsible for the sidewalks in front of their homes, while landlords or condo associations are responsible for apartments and merchants are responsible for the sidewalks directly in front of their establishments. Rodney and others voiced considerable frustration about the sidewalks and crossings on the Walnut Street Bridge and the Officer English Garden walkway. The bridge itself is clearly an MBTA responsibility, but coordinating cleanup with the City has been spotty at best.

Skating Rink Update:

Srdj reported that he is crossing his fingers in hope there will be a good deal of skating on the Hyde Rink before the end of winter. The recent cold weather holds promise that the skating rink will be open before, during and after the Soup Social. He reported that there was a kind of "disaster" in late December when a side panel of the rink collapsed releasing a large amount of water. The problem has since been fixed and the water replaced.

MBTA Accessibility and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Update:

Robert reported that he senses great progress in efforts to get the Mayor and other officials behind a request to the MBTA that would move the Newton Highlands Station to a higher priority in terms of a schedule for making it fully handicapped accessible. He is working with Ruth Balser to line up state support and will be meeting with the Mayor later in the month. Robert is optimistic that a breakthrough could result from these efforts.

Newsletter:

John again reported that our January Newsletter will be the last print edition. It will include a notice stating that the next edition will be transmitted wholly by email. Everyone will be encouraged to submit their email addresses to continue receiving the Newsletter in this electronic format. Exceptions may be made for Newton Highlands' residents who do not own a computer or cannot operate one. Bob offered to go around to each table at the Soup Social to get additional email addresses for our electronic newsletter.

Brookline Bank

The Brookline Bank is getting high marks for the design and appearance of the renovated building that formerly housed the Bank of America on Walnut Street. It just seems to be a better fit for the village than the previous structure. Bus commuters also seem to appreciate a large overhang that was constructed over the front of the building to shelter them during bad weather.

Village Liaisons

Ron and Bob agreed to serve as liaisons to the 3 other Area Councils. They will determine how to divvy the work up of attending other meetings as needed. They will also try to fashion ways the Area Councils can work together on issues of mutual concern and interest, and how we can avoid or minimize conflicts between the various councils in the unlikely event they crop up.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council