

## **Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, June 5, 2014**

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Steven Feinstein, Ron Mauri, Carol McPherson, Srdj Nedeljkovic

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice, Dick Blazer

### **Guests:**

Rena Getz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council  
Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation  
Diane Khalej, Walnut Market  
Chris Steele, Newton Economic Development Commission

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Srdj called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM and determined that we had a quorum to conduct business.

Bob then presented the minutes from May's meeting. These were approved unanimously without correction.

In Groot's absence, Srdj presented the Treasurer's Report. As of May 30, 2014, there was \$7,741.57, all of it in our checking account. Two transactions were reported during the month. These included \$250.00 to the Merchants Coalition and \$100.00 to the Workshop of the Women's Club to cover rental for our annual village meeting in May. The Treasurer's Report was then unanimously approved without change by the Council.

The following items were discussed by those present:

### **Village Day**

There was extensive discussion on plans to move Sunday's Village Day to the Hyde Playground. John made the following points.

- We have finalized the move from the Square and Rodney Parker Plaza to the Hyde Playground. We think we can better hold events for kids there that will keep the parents engaged with things like the Silent Auction and patronizing both the Highlands merchants and the vendors at Hyde

- The reason for the move is quite basic. We simply could not afford the more than \$4,000 it would have cost for the kiddy rides that we had received for free in previous years. The vendor simply could not afford to keep doing this without this payment.
- The alternative and much more affordable option is to spend \$1,200.00 for two “Bouncy Houses” that John says have always been popular with kids. The only drawback is that the vendor can’t place the Bouncy Houses on asphalt. It has to be put on grass which makes the Hyde Playground the natural choice. Without something like Bouncy Houses to hold the kids attention, there is a concern that parents won’t stay around long to participate in the Silent Auction and patronize vendors and merchants at both locations.
- Unfortunately, the merchants have difficulties coming over to the Hyde. So it appears we will have 7-10 merchants in the square and 20 or so vendors with booths at Hyde. It’s frustrating, but this is the best we can do under the circumstances. The Hartford Street Parking lot will be open for vehicles.
- Comments by all Council members indicated support for John’s decision.

Other items pertaining to Village Day were discussed and debated.

- Srdj compiled assignments from Council members for both the T Shirt Booth and the Silent Auction tables.
- Steve said the Silent Auction is proceeding apace and that the combined effort between the Waban and Highlands Area Councils is paying dividends for both villages. Sallee Lipshutz and Maureen Meagher have been a tremendous help.
- Three great bands will be playing including a jazz ensemble, an eclectic folk and roots music group, and a special group of musicians from Newton North.
- The O’Hara Brothers will receive our Annual Award, a move that was enthusiastically endorsed by the entire Council.

- John anticipates that the total cost for this year's Village Day will be in the neighborhood of \$2,000-\$2,500.

The Council voted unanimously to approve two expenditures for Village Day and related beautification activities. These were:

- \$500.00 to cover free kiddy ice cream cones.
- \$250.00 to Janet Fagan for flowers and flower pots in the village.

John reported that the Village Merchants Association is requesting \$250.00 to cover the costs for a disk jockey who would entertain in the village portion of Village Day activities. Council members seemed agreeable to this, but that we want to confirm from the merchants that this specific activity is actually taking place. Diane, John and Srdj will discuss this with the merchants.

### **Area Council Boundaries**

Srdj announced that there are 280 eligible voters in those areas of Newton Highlands we hope to have included in our service area. We figure we will need 62 signatures from this group of voters as a cushion to submit a successful petition for inclusion. The Board of Aldermen must approve the boundary changes before they can take effect. Bob, Srdj, Ron and Chris volunteered to canvass these areas over the summer.

### **Village Lights**

Dianne reported that 32,000 ley white lights will be needed to fully light up the village and that the total cost for these would be approximately \$1,200.00. This would help to eliminate several areas that are very dark at night, particularly on Walnut Street between Lincoln and Center streets. She will try and tap merchants and business contacts for funding and is shooting to have everything installed sometime in the fall.

### **Duplicate Street Name Game**

Srdj presented copies of a letter he sent on behalf of the Council to Alderman Allan Ciccone, Jr, Chairman of the Public Safety and Transportation (PS &T) Committee, and to all other members of that Committee about the City's proposal to change duplicate street names.

Srdj acknowledged that misdirected calls are a serious health and safety problem and that human error is an unfortunate possibility that may lead to misdirected calls; but pointed to several promising technology and geography based solutions that should be considered before any final decision is made to actually change street names in Newton.

He went on to say that “based on information we have received, input from our constituents and neighbors, and based on public data that has been provided, the NHNAC respectfully requests that the PS & T Committee explore a more comprehensive understanding and approach regarding misdirected emergency calls in Newton.”

Srdj concluded with “It is clear that renaming streets will cause a certain amount of hardship for our residents, while perhaps not addressing the problem comprehensively. We request that the Committee defer a resolution in support of the proposed process (Item#28-14(2)) to change 11 duplicate street names.

### **Zervas Update**

Srdj presented a letter that the Zervas Working Group of the NHNAC had drafted to the School Committee that posed questions and challenged assumptions in the School Committee’s draft plan for enlarging and replacing Zervas including costs, parking, traffic, bussing, etc. Srdj also compared relevant aspects of the costs and community dislocations of the proposal to replace and enlarge Zervas School with Brookline’s Heath School Reconstruction project. Srdj said that some of the comparisons were “startling” and raised questions that he hoped our School Committee might address.

Srdj stated that “I’m, not suggesting that these projects are the same. But I wonder if there are aspects of the Heath Street project that can inform us regarding planning for the Zervas project?”

Work is also underway on a questionnaire that Steve and others hope will elicit a response from several hundred to a thousand residents of Newton about a range of issues related to an expanded Zervas School. Steve and Srdj are hoping that proponents of the Zervas Expansion will participate in the survey and help craft the questions so they can be unbiased as possible.

## **Community Meeting**

Srdj gave a “quick update” on our community meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at the Newton Highlands Women’s Club.

Steve has agreed to be the general moderator for the meeting.

For the breakout groups, each of the following is in the process of being confirmed:

- Sustainability, (Rob Garrity)
- Village Development, (George Mansfield)
- Community Engagement, (Carol Rose)
- Residential Development, (Bob Burke)
- Parks/Recreation, (Janice Bourque)
- Zervas School, (Steve Feinstein)
- Transportation, (Srdjan Nedeljkovic)
- Parking, Ron Mauri
- Wrap up and note taking; Groot Gregory and Barbara Darnell

Publicity and provisions for easels and other briefing materials were discussed and coordinated.

Chris Steele said he would bring food and refreshments to the meeting.

There was also discussion as to how those attending the meeting could be encouraged to volunteer to help advance the various issues the breakout groups would be considering and how we can build on the June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting to get community involvement in issues such as creating a Newton Highlands Historic District, village transportation and handicapped access programs, etc.

## **Other Items**

1. John announced that the Newsletter has gone out to our electronic mailing list in time to inform residents of Village Day and the June 12<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting. Half of the funds will be covered by our Area council and half by the Hyde Community Corporation.

2. Rodney announced that the Newton Highlands Historic District Planning Committee will meet on Monday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Brigham House. All are welcome to attend and participate.
3. Carol MacPherson gave an update on the increasingly tenuous position of the historic Weatherall House in Newton Upper Falls.
4. Srdj gave an update on a letter sent by the Transportation Advisory Group to Bill Paille commenting on the Needham Street project. Srdj stated that he sensed that the actual project is “way off in the distance”, but he asked all council members to read and comment on his letter.
5. John gave an update on the activities and musical programs for this year’s Summer Concert series. See “Hyde Happenings” in the latest Newsletter.
6. The City will give a quote about what it will take to set up a sprinkler service at the Officer English Garden.
7. John will find out if the DPW can connect a line to the Hope Fountain which currently is being watered from the hose of a resident on Forrest Street.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,  
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council