

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, July 3, 2014

Attending: Rodney Barker, Barbara Darnell, Steven Feinstein, Groot Gregory, Ron Mauri, Carol McPherson, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Robert Solomon

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice, Dick Blazer

Guests:

Diane Khalej, Walnut Market
Chris Steele, Newton Economic Development Commission
Carol Rose, Newton Council on Aging
Bruce Blakely, Richardson Rd.
Bruce Henderson
Sallee Lipsitz, Waban Area Council
Rena Getz, Waban Area Council

Srdj called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM and determined that we had a quorum to conduct business.

Srdj then presented the minutes from June's meeting. These were approved unanimously with a minor correction on a budget item.

Groot presented the Treasurer's Report. As of June 30, 2014, there was \$6,804.73, all of it in our checking account. Four expense transactions totaling \$2,200.00 were reported during the month, all for village Day. These included \$250.00 for the DJ, \$250 for Band Stand Music, \$500 to Rox Café for Ice Cream, and \$1200 for the inflatable rides. Several Village Day expenses and revenue items have not settled and the current estimate is for a net revenue over expenses of about \$2200. The Council has future expected expenses of about \$1,100 for its share of Highland flowers and materials for the Halloween Haunted House. An allocation for \$250 was approved for the village flowers, which will be forwarded to Janet Fagen. The Treasurer's Report was then unanimously approved without change by the Council.

The following items were discussed by those present:

Village Day De-brief and Summary

It was generally believed that Village Day 2014 was a success with many booths and people in attendance. The free “bounce rides” available to children on the Hyde Playground were viewed as valuable addition. The placement of many booths on the Hyde Playground served to separate them from the other activities at the commercial end of Lincoln St. and this was viewed as a negative and something to be re-considered in the future.

The following notes and suggestions were made to enhance Village Day:

1. Include merchants on the organizing Committee
2. Start planning sooner with an initial Committee formed and organizational meeting in September
3. Start solicitations for the Silent Auction earlier
4. Move the center of activity to the commercial end of Lincoln St, near Walnut St and Rodney Barker Square.
5. Do not offer free ice cream because it cannibalizes booth and merchant sales
6. Advertise the event with an overhead banner on Lincoln St.
7. Consider having a raffle instead of, or in addition to, the silent auction

Groot, Diane and Steve will arrange a meeting in September to get an early start on planning for Village Day 2015.

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. Bruce reported he collected 8 signatures from his street. Srdj, Ron and Chris volunteered to canvass the other areas off Beacon St. on two Sunday afternoons in July (13th and 20th). Bob Burke had also previously volunteered to help with this effort.

Village Lights

Dianne reported that she has the funding (from merchants?) and is expects to have everything installed sometime in the fall.

Zervas Update

Srdj Nedeljkovic, Steve Feinstein, Bruce Henderson, and Rena Getz reported on the status of the Zervas re-build project and led a discussion of how the community might influence and improve the site plan and design. Steve reported that 70% of survey respondents expressed a preference for local neighborhood schools and by a 2-1 margin were against the major expansion of Zervas. Steve plans to continue the effort to get additional survey responses. Srdj noted that the City now proposes to spend \$2.7 million to acquire three abutting properties and use that land solely for additional parking. Ald. Blazar noted that he was not in favor of the large expansion as planned and heard similar views from many residents.

Community Visioning Meeting

Srdj gave a “quick update” on our community meeting that was held Thursday, June 12th at the Newton Highlands Women’s Club. Chris Steele will organize a de-brief meeting so that a summary report can be prepared and Srdj will email his summary notes to the working group.

It was suggested that a follow-up meeting be held as part of the Soup Social if feasible.

Architectural Preservation Subcommittee

Rodney announced that he and Laura Fitzmaurice docketed an item with the Newton Historical Commission (NHC) to conduct an inquiry and study the establishment of a Newton Highlands Historic District. After its study the NHC would propose creation of the district to the Board of Aldermen and a public hearing would need to be scheduled. A notice of the public hearing would go to all property owners in the proposed district. Carol McPherson is also working on this initiative and reported that a map has been developed, that 300 NH buildings are on the National Register, and that at least 900 have been documented and would be eligible for inclusion in the district based on age.

The Area Council voted 6 to 0, with 2 abstentions (Groot and Robert) to endorse the Architectural Preservation Subcommittee to continue the process of developing guidelines for architectural preservation.

Other Items

1. Robert Solomon reported that he believes the Rox Café and 51 Lincoln sidewalk dining arrangements are inconsistent with the approved

- applications to the City and do not have the necessary accessibility clearances. He is frustrated in that the City has not been responsive to his request for a meeting on the matter. Barbara Darnell and Groot Gregory offered to try and facilitate a meeting with the mayor to resolve the matter.
2. Robert Solomon gave a brief update on the status of funding for improved MBTA station access and facilities. He is trying to setup a meeting with MBTA manager Beverly Scott to obtain her support for the development of a formal proposal for the project design and its funding.
 3. John gave an update on the activities and musical programs for this year's Summer Concert series. See "Hyde Happenings" in the latest Newsletter.
 4. It was determined to continue efforts to establish a permanent water supply from the City for a sprinkler service at the Officer English Garden. John will contact city personnel to discuss installation of the sprinklers. Water to the new system will still have to be supplied from a hose from a nearby business.
 5. The status of the NHNAC electronic mailing list was discussed. Steve Feinstein agreed to distribute the agenda for the next NHNAC meeting to the city's NHNAC email list. The Council will continue to solicit email addresses of residents for inclusion on the email list. It was suggested that the NHNAC should consider establishing its own website using a URL such as "NewtonHighlands.org" but no action was taken on this suggestion.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Ron Mauri for Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council