

## **Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, May 2, 2013**

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Peter Meyer, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Greg Reibman, Robert Solomon

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice and Dick Blazer

### **Guests:**

Joy Huber, Newtonville Area Council representative  
Mildred Hutchinson, 92 Lincoln Street  
Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council  
Ron Mauri, Newton Parking & Residential Development  
Carol Rose, Newton Council on Aging

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Srdj called the meeting to order at 7:40 after determining that a quorum was present. Bob presented the minutes from April's meeting that were accepted as presented.

Groot then presented the Treasurer's Report. As of April 29, 2013, there was \$7,318.20 in our checking account and \$15.00 remaining from cash donations. We are still waiting for a bill from the City for the \$300.00 that is owed for last year's Haunted House and \$100.00 for expenses related to the Council's Parking Survey. If the City does not submit a bill, we may be able to take these items off of future treasurer's reports.

### **1. Village Day and Silent Auction**

Peter has already contacted about 85% of the businesses that he felt would be likely to participate in this year's Silent Auction. Virtually all of them are "on board" including the big ones----Baker's Best, Whole Food and the Rox Diner. The Walnut Grill and O'Hara's are offering gift certificates; Paul Gilbert's company is making a donation of home repairs.

Efforts continue to find new sources to run kiddy rides and other young folk entertainment events. It was again stressed that it would be preferable to have an activity in place in order to keep the attention of parents with young children in the Square for the Silent Auction. Discussion focused on kiddy rides and bouncy houses.

A discussion took place on a proposal to establish a “merchants’ passport” awards program at Village Day. Every attendee would have the opportunity to take a passport book around to each participating village merchant where they would receive a stamp. This would get more people into Village businesses, a promising supplementary boost to business and business advertising. Every attendee who gathered stamps from every participating merchant would be entered in a drawing where there would be 4 winners, each receiving a \$50.00 gift certificate. T shirts would be given to all participants. The Merchants Coalition would be asked to organize and participate and Eunice from the Brookline Bank was mentioned as a promising coordinator among the merchants.

Council members then volunteered to help with the Silent Auction or commit to specific times for manning the central booth. Booth times are below:

12:00 - 1:30 Srdjan Nedeljkovic

1:30 - 2:30 Ron Mauri

2:30 - 3:00 Robert Solomon

3:00 - 3:30 Rodney Barker

3:30 - 4:30 Greg Reibman

Finally, the Council voted unanimously to award this year’s Annual Award to Janet Fagan who has tirelessly run the Silent Auction for the past 20 years.

## **2. Preparation for the May 21<sup>st</sup> Community Meeting**

Final preparations for the Community Meeting were discussed. Srdj noted that he planned to briefly discuss the Newton Highlands Vision Statement and he asked Council Members if there were any other items or issues they wanted to discuss or bring up. There was basic agreement that infrastructure issues including the condition of roads, sidewalks and crosswalks should be added to the agenda. Other items currently on the agenda from last month’s meeting include:

- Village Business Update: one or more business owners will update on various happenings
- Proposed parking plan and parking survey: Groot will present

- Infrastructure issues, streets, sidewalks, crosswalks: Barbara, Robert and Rodney will present
- Envisioning Newton Highlands project: Srdjan will present
- Impacts of Rt 128 Rt 9 add-a-lane project: Chris Steele, if available
- Water quality and environmental issues at Crystal Lake: Srdjan or other CLC member will present
- Summer plans for Hyde Playground, Bandstand: John Rice will present

### **3. MBTA Accessibility Update**

Robert Solomon provided an update on major developments regarding MBTA accessibility over the past month. He talked with Bill McClellan about occasional incidents of lift breakdown, but the major concern of Robert, Rodney and others on the Council is that the City of Newton is not advocating for the construction of a fully ADA accessible MBTA station at Newton Highlands a top priority. An extended discussion took place on developing an effective strategy to elevate this pressing issue to high visibility and a top priority for the City. Robert will talk with disability advocates and organizations to get their thoughts on the most effective ways of elevating our concerns.

Discussion also focused on other items of concern in the Highlands to both handicapped and non-handicapped residents including the disrepair of some crosswalks and sidewalks and the failure of cabs to stay out of pedestrian crosswalks on Walnut Street.

Robert also outlined plans for an upcoming program on Friday June 7<sup>th</sup> that enlists village merchants to offer a one day program of discounts for T employees to thank them for expediting the portable ramp program and for the T's significantly improved relations with all passengers. The T is preparing promotional banners and Robert will be seeking volunteers to help with the program.

There was general agreement that Robert's articles in the Tab were stimulating general support and a lot of positive discussion in Letters to the Editor and on the City's two major blogs.

### **4. Hyde Bandstand**

John reported that Commodore Construction is still on target to complete the bandstand by Village Day. The formal dedication will take place on "Flag Day", Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. An eclectic musical season is scheduled with a dozen or so

groups ready to perform for the summer season. We are still working on enlisting the services of some very talented theatrical groups from both Newton North and South to put on live theatre at Hyde, but a big problem is that many students are away during the summer months.

#### **5. Non-Conforming Lot Briefing by Ron Mauri**

Ron Mauri reported on follow up actions related to April's vote by the full Board of Aldermen to endorse the decision by the City to revoke permits for the construction of two houses on Goddard Street that were already illegally under construction. A major and unresolved issue involves a proposed amendment that would protect "innocent victims" who own non-compliant occupied houses for which permits were issued before the Bradford Road legal proceedings began, and that were bought and occupied before December 22, 2011 when the Bradford Road Land Court decision was made. Ron hopes and believes these 5-10 homes will be "grandfathered" for protection by the City, but hopes and trusts that this protection will not be extended to another properties that were constructed in violation of the zoning ordinance and that do not meet these criteria for being protected.

#### **6. Cold Springs Dog Park Issues**

Rodney reported that Bob DeRuobeis and the City seem to be moving in the direction of a fenced in area for dogs at Cold Springs Park. It would most likely be something similar to a green snow fence.

#### **7. Officer English Garden**

John reported that there is still no promising water source for the Officer English Garden. Efforts to locate or talk with adjacent owners who might be a source have been fruitless. There are big problems with putting a water system under the bridge because the T's electrical system is located there and it would be extremely vulnerable to water damage. John will talk with Penny at Parks and Recreation about sprinkler costs.

#### **8. Sidewalk Dining at O'Hara's**

John also reported that the O'Hara Brothers met with the City's Inspectional Services Director to expedite plans for sidewalk dining on Walnut and Floral Streets. More room for dining would be provided by curb extensions on both Walnut and Floral Streets resulting in shorter crosswalks and a design whereby

servers would always have every outside patron in their sight. The City will approve the final design and O'Hara's will pay all costs for construction.

### **9. Route 128 Add a Lane project and Waban Area Council Follow Up**

Sallee Lipshutz gave a brief update on the Route 128 Add a Lane developments during the past month. She stated that the Waban Council's main request is simply to be involved in the planning process for traffic mitigation before construction of the Routes 128/9 intersection begins so as not to have to deal with unintended consequences after construction is completed. Their fear then is that neither the City nor the State would step forward to take responsibility for correcting any traffic congestion problems that arise.

### **10. Observer from the Future Newtonville Area Council**

Joy Huber of the Future Newtonville Area Council came to observe an "area council in action." She also gave a brief synopsis of their progress in getting established and some of the major issues they believe their Council will be addressing in the next few years, several of which dovetail with what we are doing.

### **11. Update on Project Envisioning Newton Highlands**

Srdj expects to have a final draft of the Vision Statement for discussion at the June meeting. He hopes everyone will come prepared with comments and suggestions.

### **12. Other Items**

- Peter reported that the Rox Diner expects to be in an operating by Village Day.
- Srdj reported that nomination papers are out and he hopes that many Highlands residents will step forward to run for a full term on the Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,  
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council