

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, October 2, 2013

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

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice and Dick Blazer

Guests:

Newton Government:

Alicia Bowman, Pedestrian Coordinator, Newton Transportation
Bill Paille, Director of Transportation

Other Participants:

Bruce Fleming, Floral Street
Caryll Fleming, Floral Street
Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corp.
Ron Mauri, Newton Parking and Residential Development
Alan Radding, Newton Highlands Resident
Carol Stapleton, Newton Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council
Susan Tornheim, Citizen
Carol Rose, Newton Council on Aging
Carol Stapleton, Newton Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council.

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

Groot then presented The Treasurer's Report. As of October 1, 2013, there was \$9,504.30, all of it in our checking account. There were no transactions during the month.

1. Presentation on the Allerton/Centre Street Intersection.

Newton Transportation Director Bill Paille briefed the Council on three options or concepts the City is considering for improving pedestrian safety at the Allerton/Centre Street intersection. The three options, along with their advantages and disadvantages, included:

(1) Replace Existing sidewalks and increase visibility of markings

Advantages:

- Fully compliant with all Americans with Disabilities Act safety Requirements
- Improves Walking Surface
- Improves Visibility and Markings
- Will Accommodate Future Bicycle Lanes

Disadvantages:

- May not reduce speed approaching the intersection

(2) Curb Extensions like the one in Newton Centre at Pelham

Advantages:

- Improves visibility for both pedestrians and drivers
- Reduces the width of the crosswalks, thus inducing vehicles to slow down
- Improves Walking Surface
- Fully accommodates all ADA Safety Requirements

Disadvantages:

- May not allow space for future bicycle lanes

(3) Tabled Intersection like the one on Grove Street in Auburndale

Advantages:

- Improves visibility for both drivers and pedestrians
- Improves Walking Surface
- Reduces Speed Through Intersection
- Accommodates Future Bicycle Lanes

Disadvantages:

- Does Not Reduce the Width of the Crosswalk

Bill Paille stated that the City was still considering all three options for the Allerton/Centre Street intersection, but was leaning heavily to some variation of Curb Extensions as the most suitable for that particular intersection. Srdj requested that discussion on Bill's presentation be held until Alicia Bowman had a chance to brief on the City's evolving Pedestrian Master Plan.

2. Presentation on the Pedestrian Master Plan

Alicia noted that the Pedestrian Master Plan is being coordinated and merged with similar master plans for bicycle use and road travel. She made the following points.

1. One mile of new sidewalks will be constructed this year in Newton and more than 700 sections of sidewalks have been repaired over the last seven years.
2. The DPW has established a new crosswalk design that is safer, more visible and uniform, and easier to use at critical locations like Newton Centre.
3. New and improved snow removal equipment for sidewalks and a greatly improved overall snow removal program have also been implemented.

4. Hawk Signals have been installed at heavily travelled intersections with pedestrian crossings. The Allerton/Centre Street intersection does not appear to be a candidate for this type of improvement.
5. Newton's Pedestrian Master Plan identifies current goals and standards for a pedestrian friendly City and prioritizes future work. The goals of the Plan are to establish pedestrian programs and facilities that are safe, attractive, vibrant, respectful to walkers and dynamic enough to meet evolving future needs.
6. The Master Plan has also been designed to provide a dynamic outreach component to elicit maximum feedback and public input.

An extended discussion followed on both presentations and the following points were made by Council members and guests.

Rodney voiced frustration that promised improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks and intersections in Newton Highlands still have not been completed. Bill responded that he, too, was frustrated and attributed most of these difficulties to serious problems with the initial contractors who have been replaced. He expects things to improve and pick up in the months ahead.

Robert noted that he, too was frustrated with the pace of improvements to make crosswalk designs more visible and uniform, but commended Bill Paille for making a strong, good faith effort to fix some difficult deficiencies and obstacles that were in place when he assumed his position.

An extended discussion took place on these and related matters.

Regarding the Allerton Rd and Centre Street intersection, there was a strong consensus that Option 2 should be implemented. It was felt that this should be done in addition to improving sidewalks and increasing the visibility of markings at the intersection. A recommendation by the Area Council was made to immediately implement a temporary curb extension (perhaps using sand bags or other temporary items) so that we can assess the impact of the change and so that the neighborhood and other interested parties will be informed of the proposed changes.

Bill and Alicia were thanked for their outstanding presentations and frank answers to the many questions and comments posed to them.

3. Other Items

There will be two debates involving the Ward 5 candidates for our 2 at-large seats on the Board of Aldermen.

The first will be held at the Newton Highlands Women's Club on Thursday, October 10th, sponsored by the NHNAC, and the Ward 5 Republican and Democratic City Committees. Susan Huffma, Don Ross, and Srdjan Nedeljkovic are coordinating this effort, but anyone can submit questions for the candidates to Srdj.

The second debate will be held on Wednesday, October 30th at the Emerson Community Center. This debate is being sponsored by the Waban, Upper Falls and Newton Highlands Area Councils.

The Newton Highlands Merchants Association will once again be sponsoring a Holiday Sing and open house in December.

Rodney reported that the dog fence at Cold Springs either has been or is in the process of being implemented.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council