

## **Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Greg Reibman

Ex Officio Aldermen: John Rice, Dick Blazer and Cheryl Lappin

Past President: Janice Bourque

### **Guests:**

Bruce Blakely, Richardson Road, Newton Upper Falls

Carol McPherson, Newton Historical Commission

Mildred Hutchinson, Newton Highlands Community Development Corporation

---

Srdj called the meeting to order at 7:40 after determining that we lacked a quorum to approve any proposal, report or measure.

Bob presented the minutes from October's meeting. The Council was unable to formally approve them, but no objections or reservations were noted. They will be resubmitted for final approval at December's meeting.

The Treasurer's Report was discussed from a draft submitted by Groot who could not be present. As of November 3, 2013, there was \$9,429.30, all of it in our checking account. This included \$75.00 that was paid for expenses related to the October 10<sup>th</sup> Candidates debate at the Newton Highlands Women's Club. We still owe \$20.00 for refreshments for this event. We also owe \$40.00 for chair rental at the October 20<sup>th</sup> debate at Emerson Community Center sponsored by the three Ward 5 Area Councils. A motion to approve funding for these expenses had to be postponed to December's meeting due to the absence of a quorum.

The following items were informally discussed by those present.

### **Newton Highlands Playground:**

Alderman John Rice reported on the project to restore and rebuild the Newton Highlands Playground off of Dedham Street. The project is ranked 98 in priority on the City's latest Capital Improvement Plan, with \$320,000 prior year funding and a budget of \$1,829,384 allocated for FY 2018. Apparently, Community Preservation Act funds may be used for part or all of the construction. John asked for support from the Area Council regarding this project. Srdj expressed concern

that the current plans call for paving a portion of the park to accommodate parking. It is hoped that the final plans do not remove open space for parking and that parking can be accommodated otherwise.

### **Charter Changes Affecting Financial Record Keeping by Area Councils:**

John reported that a charter change has been approved by the Board of Aldermen that will allow area councils far greater autonomy in handling their financial books and records. Area Councils will be able to regulate their financial affairs outside the general audit for Newton's Government, although the City will still retain authority to oversee the finances of any council if specific conditions warrant. Overall, this change to the charter will streamline and simplify record keeping and reporting.

### **Highlands Village Crosswalks:**

Robert was not present, but Srdj reported his concern that the crosswalks on Walnut, Center and Lincoln Street still have not been painted. Rodney stated that he and Bob actually saw crosswalk painting underway as they were heading up to this meeting.

### **Allerton/ Center Street Crosswalk:**

Srdj gave an overview of the key points made by Bill Paille and Alicia Bowman at last month's meeting on the City's road and pedestrian programs. Dick Blazer announced that Bill Paille will be holding a meeting some evening next week to discuss findings, options and recommendations on the Allerton/Center Crosswalk. Bob said he would like to attend and Dick said he would keep him posted as to time and place. Dick added that he thought Bill Paille and his office were making commendable results in view of multiple obstacles they faced when Bill took office last year.

### **Candidates Forums at Women's Club and Emerson Community Center:**

Srdj reported that our Council played a major supporting role in recent debates that featured the candidates for Mayor, the 2 Ward 5 at-large Aldermanic seats, the Ward 2 Aldermanic seat, and the Ward 2 School Committee seat. The first debate on Thursday on October 10<sup>th</sup> was sponsored by the NHNAC, the Ward 5 Republican and Democratic Committees and took place at the Newton Highlands Women's Club. The second was held at the Emerson Community Center in Upper Falls on Thursday, October 30<sup>th</sup> and sponsored by the three Ward 5 Area Councils. Attendance was good at each debate despite the fact that both fell on evenings when major Boston sporting events were taking place.

### **Halloween Haunted House:**

John reported that this year's Halloween Haunted House at the Hyde Center drew more than 700 people. This has turned into a citywide event that is drawing parents and kids from all parts of Newton. Attendance at the event continued to be strong even though we are no longer using a popular slide as part of the program due to safety concerns.

### **Tour de Newton and Paddles and Pumpkins events:**

There was great participation by Newton Highlands groups and residents in both events. Attendance exceeded expectations despite bad weather that moved the Tour event ahead one week to October 12<sup>th</sup>, and reduced attendance at the Paddles to Pumpkins event on October 6<sup>th</sup> at Crystal Lake, which proceeded on schedule anyway.

### **MBTA Accessibility and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Update:**

Srdj reported that efforts are underway to obtain support from 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. Robert will give an update at next month's meeting.

### **Hyde Playground:**

John reported that installation of all sprinklers on the playground field has been completed. The entire field will now be watered by sprinklers.

### **Newsletter:**

John 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. Some exceptions may be made for Newton Highlands' residents who do not own a computer or cannot operate one.

### **Items Related to Area Council Boundaries and the City's Webpage:**

Bruce Blakely from Richardson Road introduced himself to the Council and he first sought to clarify what area council he and his family belonged to. He noted that there was some confusion about whether his house is located in Waban, Upper

Falls, or the Highlands. He also asked us to monitor and update current information about our area council on the City's Webpage.

### **Newton Highlands Parking Plan Update:**

Srdj noted that the detailed Parking Plan for Newton Highlands has essentially been "stagnant" since we submitted it to the City in June, but there is evidence of new life. He has suggested a meeting with Candice Haven to discuss ways in which the Highlands plan could serve as a model for a range of parking initiatives in Newton that would advance the City's overall parking goals and objectives. Srdj senses some positive movement in our direction, but our plan must still be endorsed by the Planning Department before it can proceed.

### **Development and Overdevelopment:**

Srdj surmised that several issues pertaining to development and overdevelopment would be high on the City's agenda during the Council's next term. A general discussion took place about planned development at Riverside and Wells Avenue, several heated issues related to residential development, and the upcoming Stage 2 Zoning Reform. Carol McPherson described several problems residents have had with developers in Upper Falls and other parts of Newton. Srdj believes that Envisioning Newton Highlands is an excellent vehicle for the Council to express its preferences for future development priorities and practices.

### **Lincoln Street Coffee House is Looking for Renter**

It's reported that the Lincoln Street Coffee House which Peter Meyer sold just six months ago is planning to close as soon as a new renter for the space can be found. The new owner found that he simply could not make a go of it because of the high rent that was being charged.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,  
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council