

MINUTES OF THE UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: June 20, 2019

LOCATION: Emerson Community Center

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jo-Louise Allen	Anil Adyanthaya
Julie Irish	Marie Jackson
Maxine Bridger	Susan Huffman
Jeff Riklin	Nina Kochs
Jack Neville	

PUBLIC:

Nancy & Francis Passavant	Hardin He & Ping Zu
Mary Winters	Mark Bridger

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councilor John Rice

A. Approval of Minutes from May Meeting  
Approved unanimously.

B. Public Comment

C. Treasurer's Report  
No change: \$3357.63.

A question was asked about reimbursements. Jeff and Marie said to take theirs as donations. So the books are closed on the Soup Social.

There was a question about whether we thanked Shogun for the coloring pages.

Motion to thank Shogun: Note for the record that we appreciate Shogun's work.

Passed unanimously.

D. Ward 5 City Council Candidate Bill Humphrey

Bill Humphrey introduced himself. He has knocked on over 3000 doors; wants to make sure Newton is a City for everyone. He grew up in Ward 5 on Chestnut Street, and has learned a lot about Upper Falls from attending the Area Council meetings and meeting with the people of Upper Falls. He mentioned that road repair was one main concern as was development, affordable housing, and the environment. He said he has heard about the Northland project and knows the history of Upper Falls, and that a lot of stuff has been dumped here. He said that he wouldn't sign onto Jake's (Auchincloss) letter on Northland parking. He thinks the number of parking spaces is a compromise and is skeptical of going any lower. He doesn't see the need for an Oak Street exit.

Comment (from public): Deb Crossley commented on the size of the buildings, 4 buildings of 8 stories each, and said that if you didn't have 8 stories you couldn't have green spaces. Why 8 stories?

Jeff: I agree they should all be less than 8. Deb is saying that if they are not tall they will spread out.

Bill: Maybe she is referring to the financials. I would give them a fair hearing. It's fair to keep negotiating.

Comment: Wanting to make money isn't necessarily greed. We don't know their books. I'm cynical about large corporations, but we need to know their financials. Why are you opposed to 8 stories? Height? Density?

Bill: Let's not prejudge. Candidates can't make statements during the permitting process. You are in the middle and try to get the best possible deal for the neighborhood.

Comment: Northland picks out some good things from the Needham Street Visioning Committee. Why should we give them 16 variances?

Comment: from Elliot Hill. Over the last year traffic on Rte 9 is just bumper to bumper. Shuttle buses will take a while to get through the traffic. Now there is traffic on Elliot Street. WAVE is causing traffic jams on side streets.

Question: Where do you stand on schools? Giant schools children can't walk to...but also kids who can walk are being driven.

Would you do anything about a new school south of Rte 9?

Answer: I'll keep my mind open, but I'm not privy to a lot of the info.

E. Ward 5 City Councilor Candidate Kathy Winters

She said she could be a strong representative of Ward 5 and will emulate John Rice on community building. She is a lawyer who took a break from Law to raise her children. She was active in the PTO and has spent 5 years on the Waban Area Council, the past two years as president. She believes in respectful dialogue and says "my experience in public service will help me." She supports whatever we can do, on the local level, for the environment. Her general position on bigger development: it's a way to add housing for our region. She would push to have something good for the neighborhood as well as the whole City.

She wants to work to help small businesses and says that it is hard in Newton to open a small business. She said that most of her community service has been north of Rte 9, she has worked on a non-profit board, and would look to partner with the Upper Falls Area Council to help connect with the people of Upper Falls.

She would have signed off on Jake's letter and said it is hard to see how the City would enforce metrics on meeting parking requirements.

Jack: Why 900 parking spaces, why so few?

Question: This project is in a small neighborhood. It shouldn't disrupt the residential area with traffic and noise. What if it doesn't work?

Answer: Limiting parking is appealing to me as they will build in stages, so we can see what parking limits should be.

Comment: Are things good now? We have to do something about cars. People drive their kids to school when they can take buses. Where do you stand on a 16<sup>th</sup> school?

Answer: Read the school department estimates.

Brookline has their own algorithm, but Newton and Needham use their own demographer who has so far been wrong about Needham.

Comment: People living in this development may be working in Framingham, or Waltham, or on Rte 128. You can't take cars away from these people, because there is a lack of infrastructure. You can't expect people to not have cars.

Comment: Not everyone wants a car. There is a need for housing.

Comment: for both.

Question: Re: Charter Commission. Where you happy with the outcome?

Kathy: I was happy because I didn't want to eliminate the ward representation, but wanted a smaller size City Council.

Jack: Why a small number of councilors?

Bill: Too many councilors makes meetings cumbersome, when each one has a turn to speak. When was the last time the Ward Councilor was from Upper Falls?

Jack: The ward councilor was the most important rep. Should have been one ward councilor, one at-large. Is this a dead issue?

Comment: There is a ton of business. Reducing the number of councilors would make too much work. There are a lot of committees.

Bill would like to see full-time councilors. Kathy wanted to reduce the size of the City Council to 16.

Susan: Larger groups are more likely to be representative.

#### F. Chandler Place Greenway Signage

A Chandler Place resident whose house abuts a path to the Greenway said that there is dog waste along the path. He put up signs reminding people to pick up after their dogs. But, the City should put up signs reminding people to pick up after their dogs. Maybe the City should put in dog bags along the Greenway.

The problem is trashcans are not allowed on the Greenway, as the City will not collect the trash. The only trashcan is by the Depot.

Julie mentioned that she met a woman who dropped a bag and who said she didn't want to carry it but would pick it up later.

Councilor John Rice said he will talk to Parks and Rec, but the City's 2 animal control people are overwhelmed.

Comment: Since this path is along a house and so more serious than the Greenway, there should be bags.

Maxine suggested there should be police department signs reminding people it is illegal to leave dog poop.

#### G. Land Use Committee Meeting on Northland

People reported on the meeting on Northland. It was a long meeting, lasting until 11:00. Since major negotiations can't happen over the summer, discussions will continue until well into the Fall.

The more people giving input to the Land Use Committee, the better.

Question: What can Northland do by right?

Answer: They can have a huge commercial development, with parking for thousands of cars. Or they can use 40B for a large residential development.

Jack: I'd like to thank Julie Irish for her presentation.

Councilor Rice mentioned that Northland moved the planned townhouses back from the Greenway. He is pushing for more community space with an iceskating rink/water park. Parks and Rec has signed off on a water park.

Note Countryside has now been bumped to the top of the school renovation list.

Re: Emerson. The Condo Association owns the shell, but the City rents the gym and meeting room.

#### H. Village Day Planning Committee

Village Day is planned for Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, from 11 to 2. Councilor Rice will get info about the booths at Highlands Village Day.

The fee structure will be as before: \$40 for vendors and \$25 for political groups and non-profits.

It was suggested that we get port-a-potties.

Question: Should we get people from the community to help?

Answer: Jeff and Marie said no, they were good.

It was mentioned that the Area Council will not meet in July.

#### I. Area Council Candidates Forum

Marie said that nothing has happened yet.

Question: Should we get another volunteer?

Susan volunteered to help.

#### J. Ken Newcomb Upper Falls Book Award Selection

There was interest from one student who didn't then apply. Judy Neville will connect with Anil on who to contact regarding the award.

#### K. General Upper Falls News

Jay talked about Ellen West's letter re: Ellis Street. Ellis street is dangerous for pedestrians as well as for cars. The steps from the Bridge go right to the Street. There is no sidewalk on Evan's side of Ellis Street. Could one be put there?

Question: Could we do something politically to get attention to Ellis street? There should be some traffic calming there.

Question: Was Evan thinking of making Ellis street one way? It was suggested that one-way uphill would be best. But the only way fire trucks can get to Rte 9 there is down Ellis street.

It was suggested that Ellis Street is not going to be a priority until there is an accident.

But it is a pedestrian issue and Ellen wanted the Area Council to know this is going on. We will write a letter of supporting Ellen's letter.

Jeff spoke to Wellesley about the Office Park exit and the problem with people coming from Ellis Street and merging onto Rte 9. Maybe the police could get rid of the cones. The berm extension did help and is now helping people from the Office Park. Note: The Office Park is now closed for renovations. John Hancock owns the Office Park. The DOT rejected their offer of some land to improve the merge.

What happened to Feast of the Falls?

It was postponed until September.

August 6<sup>th</sup> will be the dedication of the bench for Brian Yates. The bench will be by the stone building near Horseshoe Dam.

Suggestion: Announce the dedication in the Upper Falls News.

Nina: Can Northland repurpose the 100 year old Juniper trees?

Jeff: Ask Northland about them.

#### L. Public Comment/Questions

#### M. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:37.

