

MINUTES OF THE UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: December 20, 2018

LOCATION: Emerson Community Center

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councilor John Rice
Carol Stapleton

PUBLIC:

Dennis Rieske Betsy Hewitt Bill Humphrey

A. Approval of Minutes from the November Meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously, pending corrections.

B. Public Comment

Dennis Rieske, a local architect, who has worked on the Stone Institute and the Price Center, presented his thoughts on the Northland Project, focusing on transportation issues. He felt that some of the things that Northland is planning are not good for Upper Falls, or for Newton, or for Northland.

For the approximately 800 rental units that Northland is planning, he suggests a mix of residential, affordable, and 55+ housing with the 55+ housing restricted by deed. He felt that the buildings should be no higher than 70 feet since buildings above 70 feet are considered high-rise and the building codes are harder to meet. 70 feet would allow for 5 or 6 story buildings, with the 5 story buildings having more flexibility in design.

Mr. Rieske noted that the Northland property does not connect to MBTA mass transit and that Northland's proposed shuttle buses would add more traffic. He did note that Northland has a traffic engineer. He handed out a packet listing his ideas for Northland, and his comments on the MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) plans. The MAPC supports smart growth and regional cooperation. Smart growth will be incorporated in Newton's new zoning ordinances and transportation overlay districts. It was mentioned that the MAPC will only talk to cities and towns, and not to individuals.

Mr. Rieske spoke with representatives from Needham to see what they wanted. In the literature he gave to the Area Council he mentions a proposal to turn the Greenway into a pedestrian/bike trail with a shuttle bus lane that connects to either the Newton Highlands T stop or the Eliot T stop through the DPW yards. He felt that Northland's plans wouldn't work and that access to mass transit had to be part of the plan. Councilor Rice offered to set up a meeting with Northland and Mr. Rieske to discuss the ideas presented.

Question: Why not make a bikeway, like the Minute Man bikeway, on the Greenway, and extend it to the Eliot Station. The proposed bike lanes on Needham street could then become a dedicated bus lane.

Comment: The comments on Northland are valid. Meet with them. A dedicated bike lane on the Greenway would be okay, but not light rail or a bus.

Comment: Thank you for all this work.

Comment: What about moving the bike lane to the Greenway, will that effect DPW plans?

Response: The Greenway right-of-way is 80 feet wide. Why not move the power lines to the edge of the right-of-way instead of along the sidewalks. There are lots of problems with the current Needham Street proposal.

Mr. Rieske noted that the Saco building is currently empty. The AC said that Northland said parking was an issue.

Mr. Rieske felt that retail was a problem because of the traffic generated.

Comment: More retail means more income for the City and less pressure on the schools.

C. Treasurer's Report

The net amount is \$3,763.30.

D. Echo Bridger Railing Committee Update from Lee Fisher

The \$750,000 in funds available have now been spent by the MWRA.

Ruth Balsler has arranged for \$25,000 to be available to hire an historic preservation consultant to help us get Echo Bridge the kind of national level of significance needed to get more funding.

E. Discussion of Northland Land Use Committee Presentation on Housing and Economic Impacts

The School Department said that enrollment is stable for the next 6 years (but they cannot count the impact of projects not yet approved). Countryside is in line for renovations, but other projects come first.

Question: How many new kids from single family homes versus new kids from new projects?

Response: Avalon has 294 units and 108 students. Avalon in Chestnut Hill has 204 units and 80 students.

It was mentioned that Horace Mann might become a 16th school.

The Parks and Rec Dept. met with Northland about an ice-skating rink and spray park. Northland's proposed community building doesn't seem well located since it is near the Greenway and away from parking, but near the Greenway may be better for the building. Northland will be running the programs at the community building and at the pavilion. Parks and Rec will not be running these.

F. Coyotes in Upper Falls

1. Warning Signs Needed?

2. Other Outreach for Residents?

An Oak Street resident, whose dog was killed by a coyote, claimed to be unaware that there were coyotes in the area. There seems to be a family of coyotes living in an unused barn near Oak and Elliot. Jeff said he would contact the Newton police about that family.

It was suggested that we put up posters warning about the coyotes in Upper Falls. It was also suggested that the City put warning notices in tax bill and water bill mailings, and with recycling info. Councilor Rice said we would need to contact the mayor's office about doing that. Anil said he would contact the mayor. It was commented that people get upset when a coyote kills a dog, and then the issue is forgotten about. It was mentioned that coyotes know when food is put out, and they eat the wild turkeys.

G. Upper Falls T-shirt Update

Anil will reorder 50 shirts of the old style so we have some for the Soup Social.

H. Soup Social

The date was discussed, whether it should be March 9th or 23rd.

Motion: Have the Soup Social on March 23rd.

The vote was 6 for, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention. So, the motion passes.

The location was then discussed. Should we have the Soup Social here at the Emerson Community Center, or at the Northland space. There was some feeling that it is our Soup Social, and so should be at Emerson. The time will be 5 to 8. Posters and flyers were discussed. We will have two sign boards, one at the Depot and one at Bob's Sub Shop.

I. General upper Falls News

There was a reminder that members of the Area Council need to do the on-line Conflict of Interest training.

The Oak Street intersection should be done in 2019, and Needham Street in 2020.

Next month Cypress Tree Management will be here.

J. Public Comment/Questions

There will be a special needs adults Bocce tournament in June.

Mounds of dirt have been piling up at the intersection of Chestnut and Linden. Special Services has been notified and will make the owners clean it up.

Betsy has been trying to get the City to paint crosswalks on Elliot and Oak. Councilor Rice said the City is currently working on crosswalk painting in Newton Highlands.

It was mentioned that the yellow lines on Ellis are gone and cars often drive in the middle of that road.

K. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:35.