

MINUTES OF THE UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: June 21, 2018

LOCATION: Emerson Community Center

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councilor John Rice
Connie Melia

PUBLIC:

Diana Huang	Xiaojing Li	Kathaleen Brearly	Yuhong Zhang
Richard Zhang	Lynn Kehley	Jen Kohl	Bill Humphrey
Nathaniel Lichtin	Xiaoquan Zhang	Ming-Teh Ma	Xiao Su
Jian Mei	Christine Kumar	Mary T. Dorr	Dongqinj Peng
Jicugno Ma	Tiffany Ting	Micheke LeFevre-Dwyer	Jay Lee
Jerry Reilly	Pam Fenyl	Suzanne Nelsen	Donna Nyquist
Curtis Nyquist	Mark Bridger		

A. Approval of Minutes from May Meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously.

B. Public Comment

C. Treasurer's Report

We have a net amount of \$3250. We have about 50 magnets left.

D. Environmental Affairs Division Presentation by Connie Melia on Recycling and Waste Reduction

There was a presentation on what Newton is doing to reduce food waste. 27% of the total trash stream in Massachusetts is food waste.

Suggestions for preventing food waste were presented. These include shop wisely, don't over buy, cook smart and use leftovers. Some food waste is avoidable, some is unavoidable, like bones and shells which are inedible. The City ran a pilot program in which compostable, food waste was picked up curbside. There was an education component, orientation to the program, and actual pick-ups. The participants were chosen by lottery in the part of the City with Monday trash pickup. There were 200 participants. Half had food waste picked up with their trash and half had food waste pickups on Thursdays and regular trash pickup on Mondays. Participants got a 10 page booklet of information and FAQ, a 5 gallon bucket and a kitchen scrap bucket. Blue Strap Compost was the vendor chosen to collect food waste. They pick up the 5 gallon bucket and replace it with a clean bucket. The waste is composted and regular customers can get compost if they want.

The feedback was positive. Some people were actually willing to pay to have the pickup continue.

There was then a question and answer period.

Q: Can invasives be composted?

A: Probably not.

Q: Is using a garbage disposal ecologically better or worse?

A: No answer to that yet.

Q: What is recommended about the use by, best by, sell by dates?

A: Info about that is in the booklet.

Q: Any work done with restaurants in the area?

A: There are vendors they can use.

Q: Can all compostables be in the bucket?

A: Yes

Q: Could small businesses be encouraged to do composting?

A: We'll do the program first for residents.

Q: Are you working to put the program in place Citywide? Is there State funding?

A: There is City funding and we are open to any grants we can get.

Q: What is the price per household? Is the booklet available electronically?

A: I'll get back to you on the price. We'll put the booklet on the city website.

Comment: We can advertise this program on Village Day.

E. Discussion of Proposal for Registered Marijuana Dispensary at 24-26 Elliot Street

Representatives from Cypress Tree came to give an update on the site changes and traffic issues. There will be "Do Not Block" signs and some landscaping between the CVS entrance and their entrance. Cypress Tree says they understand the parking issues. They are meeting with the Newton police and the traffic engineer. They are open to City discussions of traffic at the site.

On July 10th they go before the Land Use Committee. The petition from Cypress is for medical use.

On July 9th the City will look at Opt-out petitions for the November ballot. One is for not fewer than 2 or more than 4 recreational use sites.

Garden City Remedies is grandfathered in for recreational use. There is a special status for early medical use groups.

It was noted that in Newton the vote was 54.7% in favor of legalizing recreational marijuana.

Q: Will there still be just a one-way entrance to CVS?

A: Yes. The exit from CVS is on the other side of Negoshian's.

Q: Do you have right of way to use that CVS entrance?

A: Yes.

Q: What is the CVS management's objection to your original proposal for the entrance?

A: Maybe they didn't want to deal with it. We are still trying to reach the owners of the property.

Re the rear parking. There will be valet parking for the back lots. Cypress Tree has eliminated the rear building entrance.

There will be unarmed security personnel from a private company.

The original proposal of 29 parking spaces was changed to 27 spaces to allow for more landscaping.

Q: Enough parking spaces?

A: Yes we meet the codes.

Christine Kumar then made a presentation objecting to the dispensary.

She introduced herself: she is a nurse and understands the uses of medical marijuana.

She is concerned about the traffic issues hampering the fire trucks from the nearby fire station, and the DPW trucks. She is concerned about the nursery school across Rte 9 and parking issues. She claims that the whole intersection is a bottleneck and will still be a problem.

Q: Would the dispensary cause more traffic than Fabu and Green Tea?

A: There was more staying time with Fabu and Green Tea.

Comment: More than half of the Green Tea business was take-out. Those people didn't stay.

Ming-Teh Ma then made a presentation. He felt that there would be more in/out traffic. He was very concerned that property values would go down near the dispensary and asked how many people would buy a house near a dispensary. He mentioned a lawsuit at Harvard Square re a dispensary there. He felt that renters may not want to rent near a dispensary, especially if children are involved.

Q: Did property values fall in Newtonville?

When it was noted that property near the dispensary in Newtonville has increased in value the question was raised as to whether it increased more or less than other properties.

Comments: Upper Falls voted 798 to 556 in favor of recreational use of marijuana.

(re Cypress Tree) Looks like a good business will spruce up a scruffy place. Local businesses contribute more to local communities.

This is a legal business in a commercial district.

Councilor John Rice mentioned that only several legal issues, such as public safety, can stop a special permit.

Some members of the community want to start a Neighborhood Watch if the dispensary opens.

Q: Would the security guards leave the premises?

A: They will stay on the premises.

It was noted that there has been no police activity near Garden City Remedies (save for one unrelated incident). No traffic detail was needed after 90 days:

Q: Valet parking for 6 months?

A: We said we wanted to revisit valet parking in 6 months. It may not be needed.

Comment: I'm not in favor of the dispensary. NSHS is rampant with marijuana edibles. I don't want it that easy for my kids to get them. I worry about parking behind the building. It's a dark secluded spot.

Reply: The dispensary will have education and a public forum on proper dosing, etc. Modern marijuana is much stronger. There is limited THC in stuff that helps nausea, sleep, anxiety, etc.

Comment: I support medical marijuana; I don't want the other stuff.

Another commenter thought that having the dispensary was great.

Comments: There is an epidemic, but it is not marijuana; it's opioids.

It is not an appropriate location.

If there are only 2 to 4 dispensaries in Newton then each one will have a lot of traffic.

Medical marijuana is the camel's nose under the tent.

Marijuana has been maligned for decades. It is not that bad.

F. Village Day Planning Committee

We need to keep publicizing the Planning Committee.

We can work with the police to make Village Day happen on Chestnut Street.

When the Newton Highlands Village Day moved to the Hyde Playground the businesses wanted it back on Lincoln Street. There was more energy with the businesses.

Reasons for Emerson: playground; bathroom; some businesses closed on Sunday.

Level of expenditures for Chestnut Street will be higher than we are used to because of police costs.

Councilor Rice: If we staff with auxiliary police we can cut costs. Maybe we should try something different this year.

Comments:

Block off the area around the Depot. Area is smaller but you can have booths on the Greenway.

There are ways to make it happen.

We can get vehicles from the City.

Not much for older kids 8 to 9.

Have a parade.

Newton Highlands had a Lego Robotics box.

Jerry Reilly said if we move Village Day to Chestnut Street he will be on the committee.

Motion: Move Village Day to Pettee Square along the Greenway.

Passed unanimously.

John and Jerry volunteered to be on the Village Day ad hoc committee.

It would be good if we can talk to the owner of the Depot about opening for that Sunday.

It was mentioned that Evan Westrate has looked at Knucklebones.

We will need to meet again in August, so the next meeting of the Area Council will be on August 16th.

G. Ken Newcomb Upper Falls Book Award

Motion: Have two co-winners for the Book Award.

Passed with one abstention.

H. Area council Involvement in Greenway Arts launch on June 25

The launch will be at 5:00 on the Greenway, with giant puppets.

Jack will be there to answer questions about the Little Free Library. The official launch of the Library will be on Village Day.

I. Upper Falls T-shirts

Should we buy more T-shirts? Maybe we should get a new design.

Q: Where are they made?

A: Locally, maybe Infinart.

Maybe we could ask Heidi Werner to make a design proposal. She does TourNewton.

We should get more magnets.

J. General upper Falls News

MBTA announced that there will be very loud construction noise along the Greenline tracks on weekends and overnight.

The City Engineering Department and DPW should have information on work at Christina and Oak.

K. Public Comments

L. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.