

MINUTES OF THE UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: May 17, 2018

LOCATION: 156 Oak Street

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councilor Deb Crossley
Councilor Andreae Downs
Carol Stapleton
Srdjan Nedeljkovic from Newton Hlds Area Council
Nathaniel Lichtin from Newton highlands Area Council

PUBLIC:

Betsy Hewitt	Jack Fidler	Milssa Laurence	Jen kohl
Chris Steele	Curtis Quitzan	Randy Hart	Kent Gonzales
Sento Dettore	Peter Standish	Alan Schlesinger	Stephen Buchbinder
Dennis Rieske			

Due to the Northland presentation and change of venue for the meeting the original agenda order was not followed.

G. Proposed Art Installation on the Upper Falls Greenway

The proposed art installation will be voted on on Monday night by the Parks and Rec department. There will be a public hearing. Direct abutters have received a letter about the installation.

D. Village Day Planning Committee

The creation of a committee including non-Area Council members to plan Village Day was discussed. The chair of this ad hoc committee would be an Area Council member.

Motion: Create a Village Day committee for purposes of planning and organizing next Village Day.

The motion passed unanimously.

Marie and Jeff will be cochairs. We will advertise this committee in the usual venues.

E. Little Free library Dedication

We should have some kind of opening ceremony, and publicity. We need to decide on a date for the dedication. June 24th was suggested to coincide with the Art Installation.

I. Presentation by Northland Properties regarding traffic impacts of proposed Needham Street Project.

There will be curb cut consolidation. The Charlemont intersection will be redone.

The intersections being worked on by Mass DOT or the City include the Dedham St/Winchester St intersection, the Nexus site, Oak Street at Christina, and the Second Avenue intersection.

The State will adjust the timing of the Oak/Christina light.

Northland will donate land to facilitate aligning Charlemont and Needham St.

For the Northland site, they plan to consolidate from 5 to 4 access points. One is planned for Oak Street opposite Saco Street, and 3 will be on Needham Street.

A strong pedestrian and bike environment is a goal for the area.

Northland is planning separate rental for car parking. They are also planning a mobility hub offering transit opportunities such as local and regional shuttles, bike sharing, and storage and car sharing. The 128 Business Council is working with Northland on this.

Northland is looking at a circular route connecting to Greenline stations like Riverside and Newton Center. They are also considering express shuttles to North Station/South Station, the Longwood Medical Area and Kendall Square.

Northland would like to have pedestrian friendly streets linked to the adjacent neighborhoods.

Q: Who will pay for the shuttle buses?

A: Local businesses and Northland will pay for these.

Q: When will the shuttle routes be finalized?

A: This is clearly a key element and we need to have a reasonable idea to present to the City.

Q: Have you talked to the MBTA?

A: Not yet. But, the Riverside project also has these issues.

Q: Trip Advisor already runs shuttles. What have they found out about usage?

There was an expression of concern about having all these shuttle buses running through Upper Falls. Route 9 was mentioned as “the monster in the room.” The impact on Route 9 should be considered. A Greenline extension was proposed.

Q: How would Uber and Lyft affect things?

A: Haven’t focused yet on those.

It was then suggested that they could be charged for parking.

Q: Would Avalon residents use these new transportation options?

Q: How long a period of time for the traffic studies?

A: Maybe over one week. The DOT has also done this.

The egress onto Oak Street was then brought up. The latest plan calls for this to be opposite Saco Street. It was stated that this egress is a non-starter as far as Upper Falls residents are concerned.

Comments about the Oak Street egress included:

At the last Area Council meeting 50% of the discussion concerned the exit onto Oak Street.

Maybe the exit could be for emergency vehicles only.

There is a backup now at the light at Christina. There will be a big backup onto the Northland property.

Run a traffic study on Oak Street.

Where is the traffic heading that is coming out on Oak Street?

A: It’s about balance between Needham Street and Oak Street.

Comment: Needham Street is cars. Upper Falls is people.

Q: What will be the parking in the development?

A: There will be 2000 parking spaces. There will be a separate charge for resident parking.

Comments: Kendall Square charges a lot for parking.

Work with the T. Maybe have subsidized T passes, and signal prioritization for buses.

Bike sharing with electric bikes is coming.

A: there is no magic bullet to make traffic go away. There can be positive and negative incentives. You have to be flexible. Try things, mix and match.

Q: Contact e-mail?

A: markhart@vhb.com

Q: Are there any models being planned?

A: There will be a 3-D model on the City website.

Comments: This project, if it comes to fruition, will generate a lot more projects, like what is happening in the Seaport District.

If new projects come then absolutely a new school will have to be built. The schools are now overcrowded.

Q: What about Winchester Street? Are you looking at nearby streets?

A: We look at historical trends.

Q: The Greenline is already overcrowded. How are you projecting for the future? Are the MBTA numbers correct? Shuttle buses to Eliot will take people to already overcrowded trains.

A: We'll look into that.

H. Proposal for curb cut on Elliot Street at former Green Tea site.

CVS will not allow changes to its entrance. So, the plan is to reduce the current curb cut on Elliot Street and have a speed bump. The CVS property managers object, but why? The proposed changes make their entrance better. So, the new Green Tea property owners are trying to contact the actual owners of the CVS property, instead of dealing with the management company. Councilor Rice will also try to talk to the Mall owners.

Mr. Negoshian has been very helpful.

It will probably be 6 -9 months before the dispensary opens.

The Area Council would be happy to write a letter to the owners of the CVS property supporting the original plan on the Green Tea site.

Q: Who is parking parallel to Negoshian?

A: Don't know.

About parking, there will be about 30 spaces at the Green Tea site, 16 in front, with right of way to the rest in the back.

A: Approval of minutes from the April Meeting

There was a request to change the order of some wording. With that, the minutes were approved unanimously.

C: Treasurer's Report

We have an additional \$175 from the Upper Falls magnet sales.

F. Ken Newcomb Upper Falls Book Award

We need to extend the deadline for applications. The NSHS PTO has listed this award.

J. General Upper Falls News

K. Public Comment/Questions

Dennis Rieske, the architect from the Stone Institute and Barry Price Center, spoke on the connections between Upper Falls and the Stone Institute, and offered himself as a resource for us. He has been on the Board of the Stone Institute for 23 years, and has also served on the Historical Commission. He mostly does work recycling old buildings.

He said that the dining hall at the Stone Institute is available for evening meetings.

It was mentioned that UF children used to perform at the Stone Institute for the residents. Mr. Rieske said that the residents now are older than in the past, and those in the skilled nursing facility are older still.

The Stone Institute is reaching out to other non-profits such as Golda Meier House and the Scandinavian Living Center, etc. on how they can work together.

The Public Discussion then returned to the Northland project.

Q: Should we reissue the letter about the Oak Street egress for the new City Council?

It was agreed that we do so.

Northland owns the TJMaxx site. We should find out what they are planning for that site.

It was mentioned that above six stories high rise and fire codes are more severe.

Councilor Downs is running walks in the community.

L. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.