**2019 Annual Report of the Newtonville Area Council**

**Washington Street Vision and Rezoning Issues**

The Washington Street Vision process and rezoning issues were a major part of the NAC’s work in 2019.

* In January, the NAC hosted a public meeting at the Main Library to inform residents about the results of the NAC’s Envisioning Washington Street public opinion survey released in October 2018 and contrasted it with the recommendations of the Washington Street Vision plan and the City’s overall rezoning plans.
* In March, after attorney Peter Harrington presented an analysis of the proposed zoning changes, the NAC drafted a letter to the City Council requesting that the zoning process be slowed down.
* In July, the NAC discussed the zoning plan’s pros and cons and discussed what the NAC could do about the plan’s shortcomings. (Note: ZAP agreed to postpone its vote on zoning changes.)
* In September, an NAC presentation to the Zoning and Planning Committee emphasizing the extent how much the Washington Street Vision Plan deviated from public opinion.

**Improving Newtonville**

The NAC discussed optimizing the public’s safe use of the new Austin Street plaza. The ideas discussed were (1) expanding the plaza’s area by closing Bram Way to through traffic, (2) making Bram Way one way from Highland, then left into the parking lot, and (3) using movable planters to block the road. We sent a letter, co-signed by Ward 2’s City Councilors and Beautiful Newtonville favoring this.

As part of NewtonServes, the NAC participated in beautifying Newtonville by planting flowers in large wooden buckets around the village center.

**Newtonville Village Day**

Held on September 22, Newtonville Village Day was a great success: more than 60 vendors attended (the most ever), $12,000 was raised, and 1200 residents enjoyed the festivities. The day’s theme, “Celebrating Arts in the Community,” was marked by a big, beautiful cake and numerous performances by Newton musicians, singers, and dancers.

**Local Election Debates**

With the assistance of the other area councils, the NAC hosted two well-attended debates among City Council and School Committee seats at NNHS (October 20) and Zervas Elementary (October 27).

**Community Engagement**

As part of the NAC’s mandate to promote engagement by residents and voters in local politics and “limited self-government,” the NAC allowed residents to raise issues and local experts to speak at regular monthly meetings, especially in our “Burning Issues” segment. In 2019 the NAC addressed such issues as the state’s clear-cutting of trees along Washington Street, AirBnBs, how to put a referendum on the ballot, the Planning Department’s apparent attempt to redefine Newtonville’s boundaries, developer impact fees, the Northland project, and other issues. To redress residents’ grievances, the NAC has at times written letters to the Mayor and City Council urging remedial actions or asking for clarification.

Further fostering public engagement and participation in limited self-government, the last NAC election attracted more than 1200 voters, the most ever for any Area Council election in Newton!

**Finances**

The Newtonville Area Council began the calendar year with $15,282. Total revenues in 2019 totaled $9335, which was raised from booth rentals and donations at Village Day. Investment income in 2019 earned $338 through our account at the City. Expenditures for the year totaled $8247. Village day expenses came to $6513. Expenses associated with our January public meeting, School Committee and City Council debates sponsored by the Area Councils, and planters for Newton Serves were $1410. Fees for Constant Contact and USPS P.O. Box totaled $726. The Newtonville Area Council ended the year with $16,708 for a net gain of $1426.

**2019 NAC Members**

Peter Bruce (President), Dana D’Agostino (Treasurer), Tarik Lucas (Vice-President), Maura Harrington (Secretary), Marc Kaufman, Tom Kraus (resigned in early 2019), Martina Jackson (elected in May 2019), Colleen Minaker, Susan Reisler, Helene Sroat.