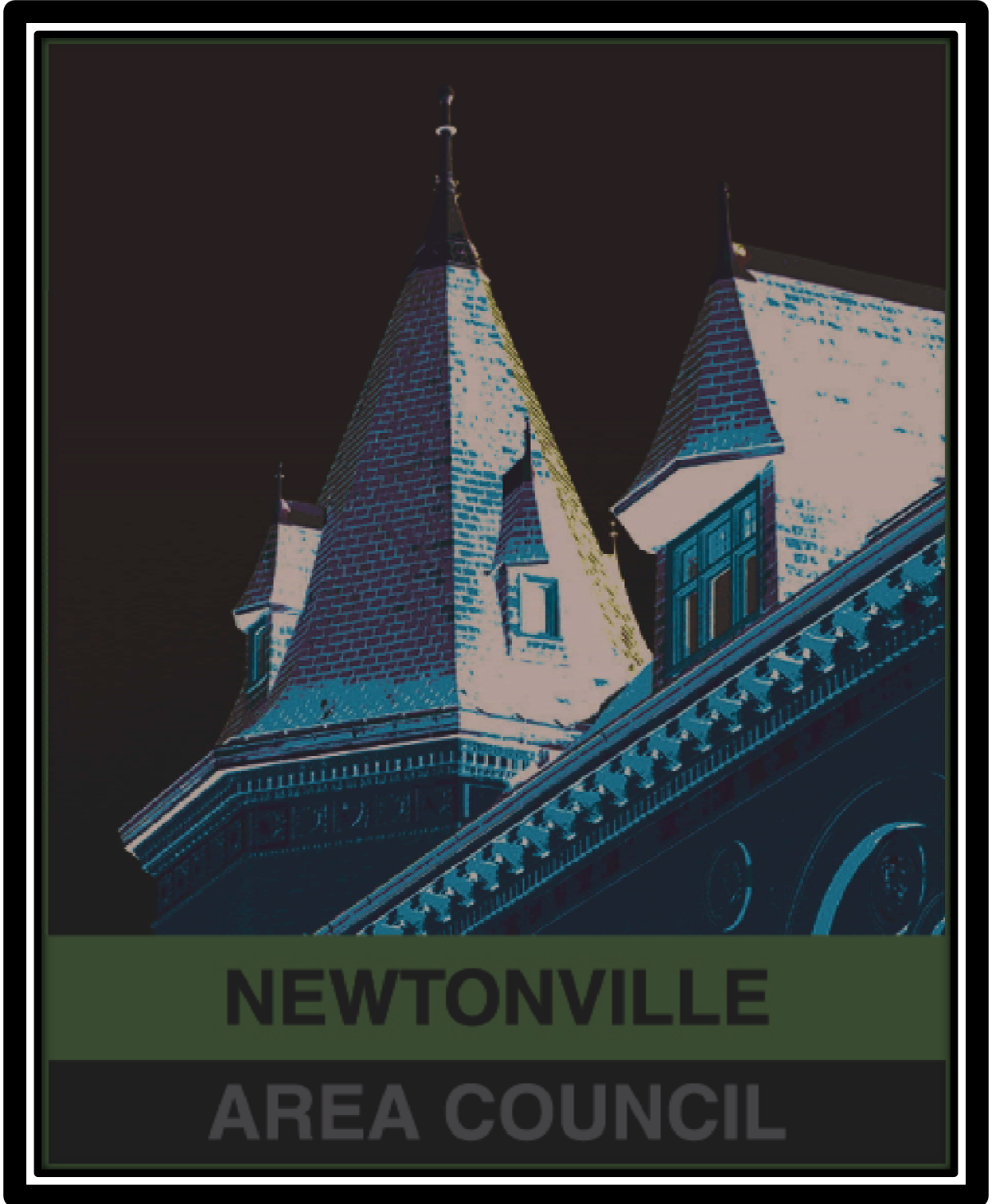


**Newtonville  
Area Council  
2016 Annual Report**



December 31, 2016

Newton City Council  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton MA 02459

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council,

Pursuant to Section 9-10 of the City Charter, the Newtonville Area Council is pleased to provide you with this Annual Report of its activities for the calendar year 2016.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kraus  
President

# About the Newtonville Area Council

The Board of Alderman approved the creation of the Newtonville Area Council (NAC) on March 18, 2013, as an auxiliary means of communications between the city and residents. The NAC has just completed its third year.

Nine members were elected during the second bi-annual in September of 2015 and were sworn in January 2016. Our members are Peter Bruce, Clafin Place, Joy Huber, Whitney Road, Marc Kaufman, Walnut Street, Wayne Koch, Greylock Road, Thomas Kraus, Walnut Street, Colleen Minaker, Bemis Street, Susan Reisler, Clafin Place, Helene Sroat, Wildwood Avenue, and Tim Stone, Briar Lane. Ward 2 Councilor Emily Norton is a member, ex-officio.

In January of 2016 the following officers were elected by a vote of the Newtonville Area Council:

President — Thomas Kraus  
Vice-President — Marc Kaufman  
Secretary — Colleen Minaker  
Treasurer — Helene Sroat

Currently, the Area Council has no Subcommittees.

The Area Council generally meets on the second Thursday of each month at City Hall, at 7 p.m. All of the Area Council meetings are open to the public. The council uses the Beautiful Newtonville email distribution list to let residents know about important events and meetings.

The Area Council regularly updates the council's webpage on the city's website. (<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/newtonville/default.asp>.)

Upcoming meeting times, agendas, minutes, bylaws and other materials are uploaded to the city filebank, and are available through the council's webpage. Contact information for all members is also posted on the page.

During 2016, the NAC held 16 public meetings. These included the regular monthly meetings, and also special meetings for developing presentations for critiquing projects, and public meetings facilitating developers to communicate with residents.

# Work Of The Newtonville Area Council for 2016

## Washington Place

A primary focus of the NAC in 2016 has been the Washington Place Development Project, otherwise known as the Orr Block project. The Council organized two public presentations in February and March in order to facilitate the developer's attempt to introduce the project to Newtonville Residents, and to receive feedback. The developer, Mark Newtonville, LLC, with their architects and engineers presented their preliminary plans to the public and answered questions of attendees. Over 100 people attended each of the gatherings. Mark Newtonville subsequently filed a zoning change to MU4 for the parcel, and filed a special permit application to build a mixed use complex of (originally) 171 residential units and ground floor retail space. The NAC has worked closely with the city planning department and the petitioner to outline the issues important to the village as this project evolved. These issues include the mass and size of the structures, architecture, building materials, public space, traffic flow, parking and intersection improvements at Washington/Walnut Streets.

The NAC also focused on potential public benefits of the project, especially considering the offer by the petitioner of up to \$1,000,000 in off-site public benefit spending. We focused on how to formulate a public benefit package for the community. Ideas included:

- A unified streetscape design for the village, including both sides of the Pike.
- How to reconnect both sides of the village with changes to the bridge over the Pike.
- Improvements to the MBTA station

Similar to the NAC's approach to the Austin Street Partners' special permit process, the NAC chose to critique the project, rather than taking a position advocating or opposing the project. In October, the NAC created a presentation summarizing our critique, and presented it to the Land Use Committee in early November. Members of the NAC subsequently met with the petitioner to further explain our preferences and ideas.

## Austin Street Project

The City Council set up a 9 person advisory committee, known as the Liaison Committee, as part of the Special Permit for the Austin Street Partners' project at the Austin Street lot. NAC member Helene Sroat was selected to be the NAC's representative on this advisory body. The committee has met once, but project construction has not started. The city has completed water / sewer improvements on Austin Street in preparation for the project.

## Walnut Street Hardscape Project

The Walnut Street Hardscape project has been one of the top priorities of the Newtonville Area Council since our inception. This project comprises roadway and sidewalk reconfiguration between the south end of the Walnut Street bridge over the pike, south through the village center to Cabot Street. The NAC requested meeting with Mayor Warren to advocate for the project. Members met with City Planning and Public Works staff several times during the year.

The NAC recommends that the sidewalks be widened to improve the pedestrian experience in the village. Additionally, the NAC would like the aesthetic character of the village to be improved by adding benches, attractive street lamps and greenery. The NAC believes that, while this project should be implemented independent of the status of the Austin Street or Washington Place projects, it is critical to coordinate the design elements of the three projects to provide a unified village look. The NAC advocated with the Planning Department for the creation of a Newtonville Design Guide, which would specify design criteria for these three projects, as well as any subsequent projects. The City Council is currently adopting this recommendation in the draft board order for Washington Place.

NAC members met in December with members of Planning, Traffic and Public Works to help plan for a public event in early 2017 to reintroduce the project to residents and businesses, and to gather public ideas and feedback.

## Cabot School Renovation and Expansion

Several NAC members attended the meetings and made suggestions about the design of the new Cabot School project. After a homeowner agreed to sell their property to the City, the site access was substantially changed and improved. The NAC formally advocated that the City delay the design approval to re-evaluate the design after this change. The City approved a design in June. The final budget is \$42 million.

## Newtonville Ave. Storage Facility

The NAC organized a public presentation between the developer and neighbors of this project. The proposal was for a 1100 unit storage facility and required a special permit. Neighbors raised concerns over the size of the building, the hours of operation, traffic concerns and tree removal. The developer worked closely with the abutters to modify the site plan. The NAC presented recommendations to the Land Use committee during the Public Hearing process. The recommendations included evaluation of removal of the traffic island at the intersection of East Side Parkway and Newtonville Avenue in order to improve traffic safety and expand greenspace. Also recommended was stipulations in

the Council Order that the monies paid by the petitioner relative to tree replacement should be spent on street trees centered in the abutting areas of the City. In June the City Council approved the petition to build the facility, and included the NAC's recommendations in the Council Order.

## Charter Commission

The NAC members attended many of the hearings of the Charter commission and reported back to the full Council. An issue of concern was the possible elimination or change of the area councils in the new draft City Charter . NAC members testified at the hearings in support of retaining the area councils. They outlined the scope of the work of our council and its relevance to the community over the past 3 years. All four councils wrote letters to the Commission in support of retaining the area councils. The NAC signed a joint letter to the Commission from the four area councils

## Village Day

The NAC, led by Joy Huber, had a very successful Village Day in September. Participants included local businesses, non-profits, performance groups, outside vendors, and civic organizations. This year, we added a food truck, which was well received.

Village Day is the main fundraiser with 2016 revenues of \$11,150.00.

The NAC is soliciting volunteers from Newtonville to create an ongoing Village Day organizing team in order to help sustain the efforts in upcoming years.

## Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Helene Sroat reported that the NAC received revenue of \$11,150. from the Newtonville Village Day event, which consisted of donations and booth rentals. During 2016 the NAC expenses totalled \$5555.66. Most of the expenses were associated with Village Day. Monies spent on NAC elections totalled \$47.22 for printing. The NAC petty cash account at Village Bank has a year-end balance of \$14,683.72 and the Newtonville Area Council account with the City of Newton has a balance of \$13,243.88.