

Newton Upper Falls Area Council 2016 Annual Report



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

NEWTON UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL



January 28, 2017

City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Ave
Newton MA 02459

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council:

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

Sincerely,



Anil Adyanthaya
President

About the Newton Upper Falls Area Council

2012 was the inaugural year of the Newton Upper Falls Area Council. Newton Upper Falls was the second of Newton's villages, following Newton Highlands, to take advantage of the Newton city charter's provision allowing for the creation of an area council "to encourage citizen involvement in government at the neighborhood level by permitting limited self-government." Following a petition drive and a public hearing before the Programs and Services Committee, the Board of Aldermen approved the creation of the Newton Upper Falls Area Council on March 21, 2011.

The nine members of the Area Council were elected during the city elections in November 2015 and were sworn in in January 2016. The nine members of the Area Council are in alphabetical order:

Anil Adyanthaya (Tamarac Road)
Maxine Bridger (Champa Street)
Susan Huffman (Indiana Terrace)
Julie Irish (Columbia Avenue)
Nina Kochs (Cottage Street)
Jen Kohl (Elliot Street)
Marie Jackson (Spring Street)
Jack Neville (High Street)
Jeff Riklin (High Street)

Ward Five City Councilor John Rice is an ex officio member of the Area Council. Ward Five At-Large City Councilors Brian Yates and Deb Crossley frequently attend our meetings and provide much appreciated support for our work.

Carol Stapleton, Manager with the Parks & Recreation Department, while not an official member of the Area Council, attends every meeting and has provided invaluable organizational guidance and other assistance to the Area Council.

At a subsequent Area Council meeting in 2016, the following officers were elected by a vote of the Area Council:

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| President | Anil Adyanthaya |
| Vice President | Jeff Riklin |
| Secretary | Maxine Bridger |
| Treasurer | Susan Huffman |

The Area Council addresses all issues in full session and currently has no subcommittees.

Work of the Area Council

The work of the Area Council is varied and addresses numerous aspects of life in Newton Upper Falls, both as it relates to life within the village and within the city. For 2016, the work of the Area Council can be broadly defined as falling within five main categories: Purpose and Role, Development, Community Building, Communication, and Street Management. Work in future years might involve new categories.

PURPOSE AND ROLE

In 2015, Newton voters approved the creation of a commission to review the city's charter. Because area councils are a creation of the city charter, the Charter Commission included area councils in their review. Members of the Area Council attended Charter Commission meetings and offered testimony concerning the importance and role of area councils and urged that area councils be retained as part of any revised city charter. The Area Council also submitted written proposals to improve the institution of area councils.

DEVELOPMENT

Northland Project



Photo credit: Ellen Katz

In 2016, a proposal to redevelop the Marshall's shopping center was announced by Northland Properties, the owner of the parcel. The initial proposal included approximately 950 rental units, shops, and public areas. Members of the Area Council met with Northland and city officials to learn about the proposal and in November, the Area Council convened a public meeting where approximately 100 residents and other interested observers heard a presentation from Northland and asked questions. The Area Council will continue to work with all interested parties in 2017 and beyond to ensure that the project is a successful one for the village.

Needham Street

The Area Council reviewed and co-signed a letter to state officials concerning the need to consider pedestrian and bicycle uses during the planned redesign and reconstruction of Needham Street.

Undergrounding of Overhead Wires along Needham Street

The Area Council reviewed and co-signed a letter to the Mayor urging the development of a plan to underground the overhead wires that run along Needham Street. The Area Council believes undergrounding will improve walkability and pedestrian safety along Needham Street and will enhance beautification efforts for this important corridor.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

One of the main goals of the Area Council has been to restore and improve upon the great pride and affection residents feel for Newton Upper Falls. Accordingly, the Area Council undertook the following community building efforts in 2016:

Newton Upper Falls Village Day



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

With the leadership and organizational experience of Councilor Rice, who led the Newton Highlands Village Day for more than a decade, the financial support of the Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation, donations from area businesses, and the assistance of many volunteers, the Area Council held Newton Upper Falls' own village festival in September. The event included numerous vendors and community groups and entertained a few hundred residents throughout the day.

Upper Falls Soup Social



After a weather postponement in January, we held a soup social in March that featured delicious soups and bread from several Newton restaurants and catering companies. It was a wonderful event that we plan to repeat in 2017.

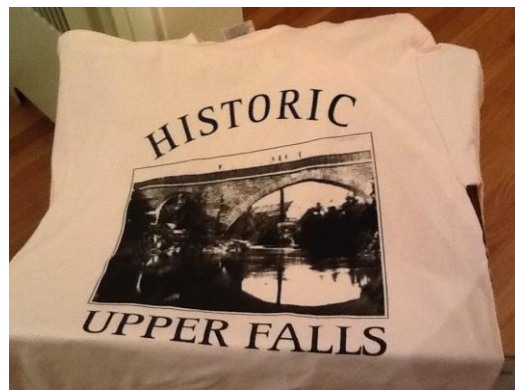
Feast of the Falls



The Feast of the Falls was a privately organized and funded event that involved a dinner for over 250 Newton Upper Falls residents. It was sponsored by Dunn-Gaherin's, Better Life Food, Tzu

Chi Foundation, Sysco, Carriage House Violins, Johnson String Instruments, Re-Stream, Peterson Party Center, Whole Foods, the Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation, Newton Electrical Supply, Echo Bridge Mobil, Elaine Construction and was the brainchild of Newton Upper Falls business owners Seana Gaherin (Dunn-Gaherin's) and Christopher Osborn (Better Life Food) and Jerry Reilly. The Area Council assisted in promoting the event and Council members served as waitstaff.

Historic Upper Falls T-Shirts



Thanks to the generous support of the Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation, the Area Council was able to print another batch of Historic Upper Falls t-shirts. The shirts have been good advertisements for our village and we believe they inspire a sense of community. The Area Council is very appreciative of the support of Bob's Sub Stop on Elliot Street, which has taken a lead role in advertising and selling the shirts.

Food Drive



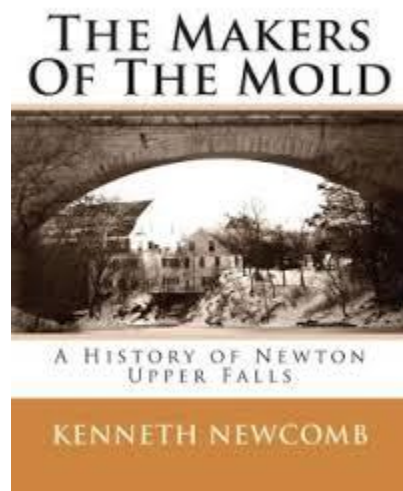
We were pleased yet again to participate in the Mayor's 13 Villages One Community program by working with the Newton Food Pantry collecting food donations during Village Day. In addition to the contributions from the Newton Upper Falls community, Wegman's in Chestnut Hill also

gave a generous donation of food for a third consecutive year. We also collected donations during the Upper Falls Soup Social in March.

Newton Upper Falls Good Neighbor Award

This year, in recognition of his retirement, the Area Council awarded a Good Neighbor Award to John Areano, who ran the 3 in 1 Superette on Elliot Street for over forty years.

Ken Newcomb Upper Falls Book Award

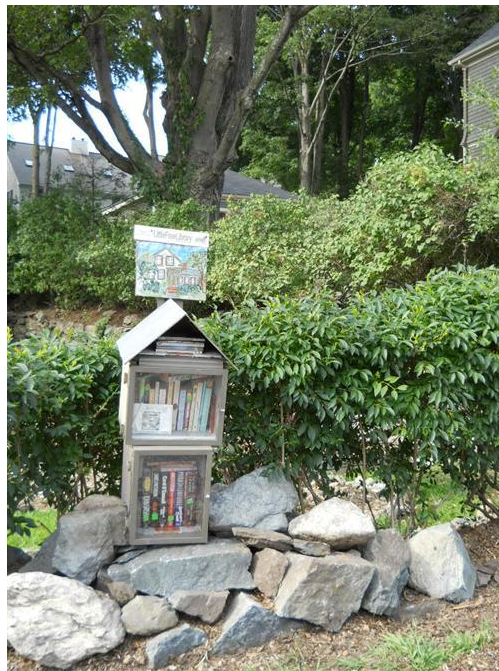


The Area Council has established an award to be given annually to a Newton Upper Falls high school junior. The winner was chosen by the Area Council and criteria include grades, character and contributions to the school and community. The award is named after longtime Newton Upper Falls resident and historian Ken Newcomb. Mr. Newcomb's book about Newton Upper Falls, *The Makers of the Mold*, will constitute part of the award along with a gift certificate to New England Mobile Book Fair. Newton South junior Rebecca Yakubovich was the 2016 winner of the award.



Photo Credit: Ellen Katz

Little Free Library



Little Free Libraries are a wonderful concept that has been adopted around the world. They are small kiosks where people can leave and take books for free. Newton Upper Falls currently has a Little Free Library on Rockland Place and on Cottage Street. Upper Falls resident Jack Fidler proposed the establishment of a third Little Free Library on the Upper Falls Greenway. The Area Council unanimously supported the proposal and will be supporting the project.

COMMUNICATION

Another priority for the Area Council was to improve the lines of communication between Newton Upper Falls residents and the city. It is important that residents have accessible means to communicate with the city and for the city to be able to communicate with residents. Effective communication is also important to community building efforts.

The Area Council uses an online community messaging platform called Next Door (https://newtonupperfalls.nextdoor.com/news_feed/) that is specific to Upper Falls residents. Membership has increase from approximately 150 to 218 by the end of 2016.

Other methods of communication the Area Council has utilized include:

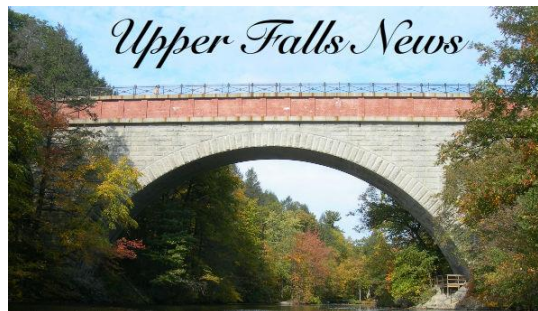
- Web page on the city website - http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper_falls/default.asp

This page provides visitors with all information about the Area Council, including upcoming agenda items and contact information for Area Council members. Former Council member Mark Bridger manages the Area Council web page.

- Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Newton-Upper-Falls-Area-Council/113969745300108>

The Area Council maintains an active Facebook page that keeps subscribers up to date on various news and events within or relevant to Newton Upper Falls.

- Upper Falls News



Upper Falls News is the brainchild of Jerry Reilly. Mr. Reilly is also the Editor in Chief. The Upper Falls News has readership of a few hundred and is also available via our Facebook page. The Upper Falls News provides news, anecdotes, history and updates about Newton Upper Falls. Past issues are archived at the following site:

<https://sites.google.com/site/upperfallsnews/11-09-12-news>

- Newton TAB

The Area Council places notices of its meetings and other hosted events in the Newton TAB.

- Monthly Meetings



The Area Council meets on the third Thursday of at least ten months during the calendar year. These meetings take place at Emerson Community Center and are open to the public. In addition to conducting Area Council business, these meetings provide an opportunity for interested residents to hear presentations on various matters. Some of the speakers who have appeared at Area Council meetings in 2016 were:

- Newton Police Chief David MacDonald
- Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager
- Christopher Steele and Jane Frantz, Charter Commission Members
- Christopher Osborne and Karen Osborne, to discuss their plans to purchase the St. Elizabeth Center, renovate it, and offer it as a community resource in addition to other private uses.

We realize that not all Upper Falls residents have online access. This year, we experimented with having printed copies of the Upper Falls News available at the Depot Café and at Bob's Sub Stop.

BEAUTIFICATION

The Area Council has been involved in a number of efforts to beautify Newton Upper Falls:

Newton Upper Falls Greenway



Photo credit: Ellen Katz

We are proud to say that thanks to the efforts of Mayor Warren, Parks and Recreation and Public Works, the Upper Falls Greenway was completed.

Newton SERVES Greenway Cleanup



Thanks to leadership of Area Councilor Julie Irish and former Upper Falls resident Jim Lerner, the Area Council helped promote and members assisted in the NewtonSERVES project in April to clean up trash along the proposed Upper Falls Greenway.

Echo Bridge Railing Restoration



Upper Falls resident Lee Fisher is leading an effort to restore the historic railings on Echo Bridge. The project is expected to cost \$1.4 million. Echo Bridge is an iconic landmark in Newton and its proper restoration will be a priority for the Area Council in 2017. We expect to provide communications and other support for this privately led effort.

TRANSPORTATION

During the past year, the Area Council has received many inquiries about issues related to the streets in Newton Upper Falls. Included among these are the following:

Elliot Street Bridge Repairs



The Elliot Street connection between Newton and Needham was closed from July to December for the repair of the Elliot Street Bridge (also known as Cook's Bridge). The Area Council convened a meeting for residents to hear about the project from city planners and provided updates during the construction process.

High Street

The Area Council, led by Vice President Riklin, monitored the restoration of High Street following the various construction projects done on the street in 2015.

Parking

Parking continues to be an issue, particularly for residents in the business district near the Greenway. Indiana, Pennsylvania and Ossippee Streets are among those affected by weekday parking.

Private Roads

Upper Falls contains several private roads and the maintenance of these roads continues to be a challenge for residents, particularly when the roads are frequently used by non-residents. Tamarac Road and Rockland Place are two roads where this issue is most pronounced. The Area Council has investigated options, such as converting the roads to public status.

Area Council Finances

The Area Council does not receive any direct funding from the city and has to rely on donations and its own fundraising efforts. The Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation has been a significant benefactor, underwriting many of the projects described above. At year end, the Area Council had a gross amount of \$2742.21 in its bank account at Village Bank.

http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper_falls/default.asp