

# Newton Upper Falls Area Council 2017 Annual Report



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

# NEWTON UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL



January 26, 2018

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 2017.

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. Since then, Area Councils have been established in Waban and Newtonville.

The nine members of the Area Council were elected during the city elections in November 2017 and were sworn in in January 2018. The nine members of the Area Council are in alphabetical order:

Anil Adyanthaya (Tamarac Road)  
Jo-Louise Allen (Indiana Terrace)  
Maxine Bridger (Champa Street)  
Susan Huffman (Indiana Terrace)  
Julie Irish (Columbia Avenue)  
Nina Kochs (Cottage 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 attended our meetings and provided much appreciated support for our work. We look forward to working with new Ward Five At-Large City Councilor Andreae Downs, who replaces Mr. Yates.

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 2018, 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.

**Councilor Brian Yates**



In January of 2018, Councilor Brian Yates ended his term on the Newton City Council. The Newton Upper Falls Area Council is enormously appreciative of the assistance Councilor Brian Yates has provided throughout the Area Council's existence. His great knowledge about Newton city government and the history of Newton Upper Falls has been invaluable. We look forward to his future contributions to the community.

## **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 2017, the work of the Area Council could be broadly defined as falling within four main categories: Development, Community Building, Communication, and Street Management. Work in future years might involve new categories.

### **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. In 2017, members of the Area Council met with Northland and city officials to learn more about the proposal during the year. The Area Council will continue to keep residents updated on developments and to work with all interested parties in 2018 and beyond to ensure that the project is a successful one for the village.

#### **Needham Street**

The Planning and Development Department established a Needham Street Area Engagement Group to engage the broader community in informing the development of a vision plan for the Needham Street Area to be adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan. Jo-Louise Allen was named to the Group as the Area Council's representative.

#### **Oak Street and Christina Street Intersection Improvement**



The Area Council has been monitoring the planned reconstruction of the intersection at Oak and Christina Streets. This project has been delayed until the summer of 2018.

### **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

One of the main goals of the Area Council has always 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 2017:

#### **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. This year's event was the biggest in our history. We are currently evaluating whether to hold the event on the Upper Falls Greenway in 2018.

### **Upper Falls Soup Social**



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

We held a soup social in March that featured delicious soups and bread from several Newton restaurants and catering companies. We were honored to have mayoral candidates Ruthanne Fuller and Scott Lennon attend and serve guests. It was a wonderful event that we plan to repeat in 2018.

### **Feast of the Falls**



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

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, Evan Westrate, and 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**

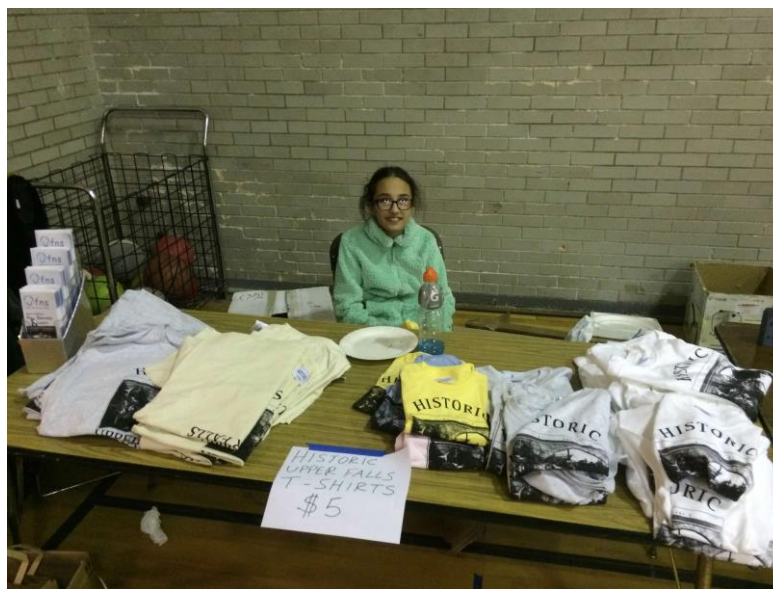


Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

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.



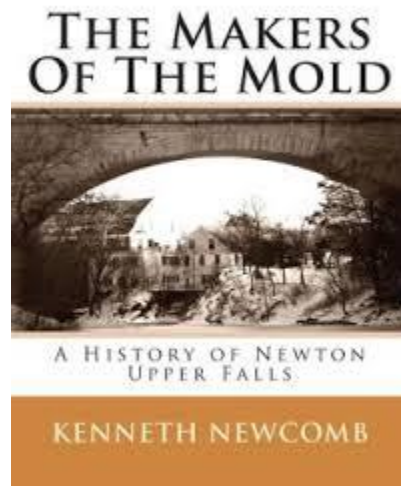
## Food Drive



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

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, Whole Foods also gave a generous donation of food. We also collected donations during the Upper Falls Soup Social in March.

## Ken Newcomb Upper Falls Book Award



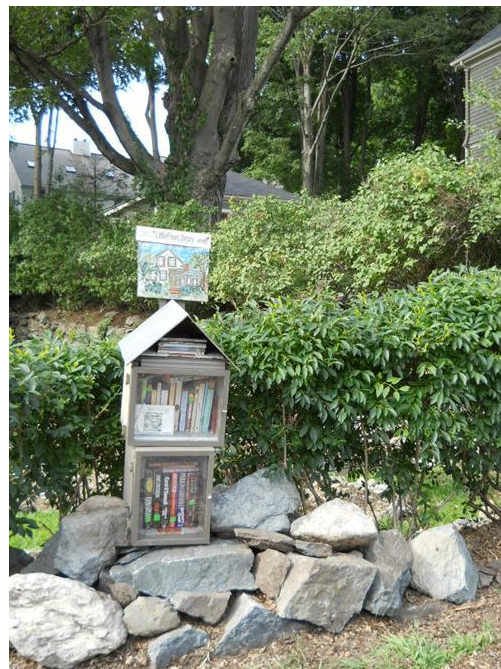
The Area Council has established an award to be given annually to a Newton Upper Falls high school junior. The winner was chosen by the Area Council and criteria include grades, character and contributions to the school and community. The award is named after longtime Newton

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 Talia Tartaro was the 2017 winner of the award.



Photo Credit: Anil Adyanthaya

### **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.

### **Bocce Court**



A proposal has been presented to the Area Council for the creation of a bocce court next to the Upper Falls Greenway. Bocce is a fun sport that is popular with people of all ages, including seniors. Newton Parks & Recreation sponsors a bocce league as part of its Over 55 Recreation programming and offers free lessons as well. The Area Council supports the establishment of a bocce court in Upper Falls and is monitoring the progress of the proposal.

### **Time Capsule**



The Area Council contributed some items to a time capsule that was inserted in the Elliot Street Bridge. We contributed a miniturized version of our original bylaws and also collected items from residents for inclusion in the time capsule. The project was organized by the Planning Department. The time capsule will be opened in 2187.

### **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/](https://newtonupperfalls.nextdoor.com/news_feed/)) that is specific to Upper Falls residents. Membership has increased from approximately 218 to 367 by the end of 2017.

Other methods of communication the Area Council has utilized include:

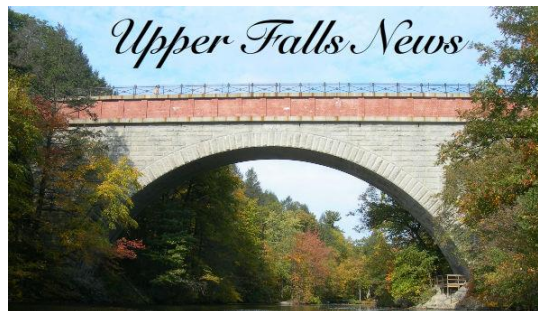
- Web page on the city website - [http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper\\_falls/default.asp](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper_falls/default.asp)

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>

In 2018, we will be looking to increase community participation in the Upper Falls News with the addition of more volunteer editors and writers.

- 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 2017 were:

- Barney Heath, Director of Planning & Development
- Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager
- Brett Houston, Candidate for City Council
- Ann Berwick, Director of Sustainability, to discuss Newton Power Choice
- Brett Ferolitto, Newton Police Community Officer

## Area Council Candidate Showcase



Photo credit: Anil Adyanthaya

The Area Council worked with the area councils from Waban, Newton Highlands, and Newtonville to promote and hold two forums for the candidates for mayor, city council, and school committee, as well for the groups supporting and opposing a new city charter. The events were well attended and helped educate voters about the important choices before them.

## BEAUTIFICATION

The Area Council has been involved in various efforts to beautify Newton Upper Falls:

### 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 Project



Upper Falls resident Lee Fisher has organized an effort to restore the railings on the historic Echo Bridge, which have fallen into disrepair. The effort to date has attracted over 85 donation pledges from the Newton and Needham communities. The Area Council reviewed the project with Mr. Fisher at one of our public meetings and voted unanimously to support the project however we can. While approximately \$250,000 in state funding can be secured for the project, the full cost of the effort is estimated to be \$1.44 million. A public/private partnership may be needed to complete the restoration.

## 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:

### **Ellis Street**

Residents on Ellis Street are investigating ways to improve safety for pedestrians who need to walk along this street, which lacks sidewalks in some places.

### **Traffic Calming**

The Area Council helped to identify Elliot Street as a priority for traffic calming efforts to be performed by the Transportation Department. The Area Council will be looking to contribute to the Transportation Department's 2018 traffic calming list as well.

## **Braceland Parking Lot Restrictions and Regulations Proposal**



The Area Council is reviewing complaints about commercial vehicles parking in the Braceland Park parking lot for extended periods and will consider recommendations on addressing those complaints.

### **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 \$2,742.21 in its bank account at Village Bank.



[http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper\\_falls/default.asp](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/neighborhood/upper_falls/default.asp)