

Newton Upper Falls Area Council 2018 Annual Report



NEWTON UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL



January 29, 2019

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 2018.

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 Deb Crossley and Andreae Downs provided 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 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.



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 2018, the work of the Area Council could be broadly defined as falling within four main categories: Development, Public Safety, Community Building, Communication, and Street Management. Work in future years might involve new categories.

DEVELOPMENT

Northland Project



In 2016, a proposal to redevelop the Marshall's shopping center was announced by Northland Properties, the owner of the parcel. In 2018, members of the Area Council met with Northland and city officials to learn more about the proposal during the year. The Area Council also hosted meetings where residents could learn more about the proposal and could ask questions of Northland representatives. The proposal is now before the City Council for review. The Area Council provided comments to the City Council in August about its thoughts on the project. The Area Council will continue to keep residents updated on developments and to work with all interested parties in 2019 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. Councilor Jo-Louise Allen was named to the Group as the Area Council's representative. She attended the meetings and participated in crafting the final recommendations, which addresses environmental health, transportation, land use, design, and implementation. The final Vision Plan was accepted by the City Council by a 20-1 vote.

Green Tea Site



The Green Tea restaurant, which was a valued contributor to our Upper Falls Soup Social, sadly closed in the summer of 2017. Following the closure, a company called Cypress Tree Management, Inc., proposed opening a medical marijuana dispensary at the site. Although the Green Tea site is located outside our coverage area, the siting of a cannabis-related facility next to the Upper Falls was obviously of great interest to the Upper Falls community. We hosted Cypress Tree at multiple meetings, where they provided details about their plans and answered questions from the Area Council and the community about topics such as traffic and security. In advance of the city's vote on two cannabis-related ballot questions, we hosted groups supporting and opposing the questions at another meeting. Because Cypress Tree is looking to now sell recreational marijuana at their facility, we will be hosting them at more meetings in 2019.

Oak Street and Christina Street Intersection Improvement



The Area Council has been monitoring the planned reconstruction of the intersection at Oak and Christina Streets. Because delay in the removal of utilities, the project is postponed until early spring 2019 and is scheduled for completion by the end of summer 2019.

Renovation of the Oak/Chestnut/Ossipee Property

The Area Council has been monitoring the ongoing renovation of the building that borders Oak, Chestnut, and Ossipee Streets. The Area Council will be hosting the property owners at an Area Council meeting in 2019.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Coyotes



At some point over the past couple of years, a pack of coyotes made its home in Upper Falls. Unfortunately, these animals have not been able to peacefully coexist with their human and canine neighbors. Two dogs have been killed by coyotes and two more have been injured. It is unclear whether some of the village's missing dogs and cats have also fallen victim to a coyote attack. To address resident concerns, we hosted Animal Control Officer Ralph Torres, who provided advice to attendees on how to protect their pets and families from a coyote attack. We have also worked to disseminate similar messages through our usual communication channels. We are currently working with the city to provide even more comprehensive communications about coyote safety.

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 2018:

Newton Upper Falls Village Day



This year marked the biggest change in the history of Newton Upper Falls Village Day, as the event was moved to the Upper Falls Greenway for the first time and held along Chestnut Street. The new location gave the event more of a “street festival” feel. Vice President Jeff Riklin and Councilor Marie Jackson co-chaired the Village Day Committee. As in past years, we relied on the leadership and organizational experience of Councilor Rice, the financial support of the Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation, donations from area businesses, and the assistance of many volunteers. Northland Investment Corporation was also a major sponsor. We look forward to holding the event on the Upper Falls Greenway again in 2019 and look forward to growing the event in this new location.

Upper Falls Soup Social



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 Mayor Ruthanne Fuller in attendance.

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, 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.

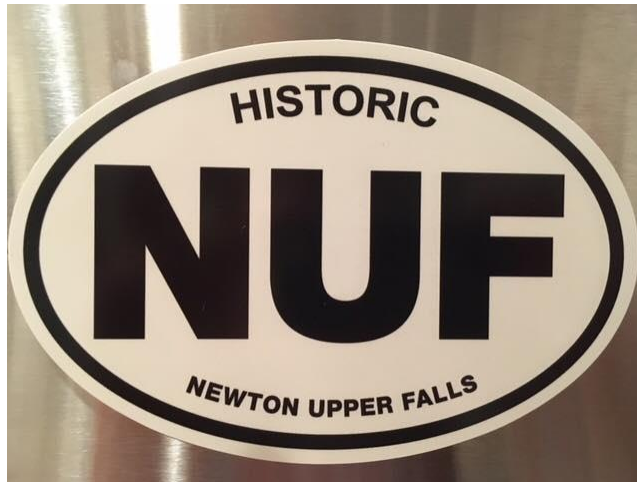
Historic Upper Falls T-Shirts



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. In addition to shirts bearing the iconic Echo Bridge logo, we are exploring the creation of a second design with a local artist.

Newton Upper Falls Car Magnet

Thanks to the leadership of Councilor Julie Irish, the Area Council released Upper Falls' own car magnet. The magnets were popular and providing residents with a way to show their Upper Falls pride whenever they drive.

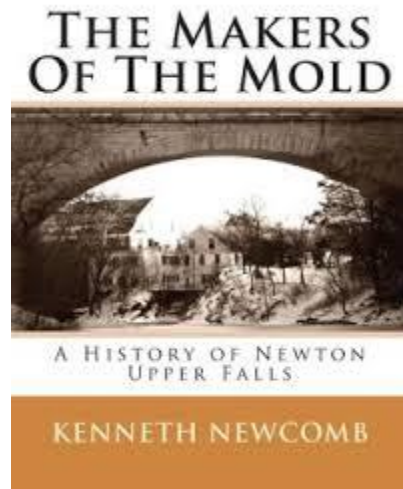


Food Drive



We were pleased yet again to participate in the Mayor's 13 Villages One Community program by working with the Newton Food Pantry to collect food donations during Village Day. We also collected donations during the Upper Falls Soup Social in March and promoted the Newton Food Pantry's December food drive.

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 juniors Allie Riklin and Jennifer Lee were the 2018 winners of the award.





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 established a third Little Free Library next to the Upper Falls Depot. The Area Council unanimously supported the proposal.

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 increased from approximately 367 to 488 by the end of 2018 or approximately 22% of the households.

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. This year he ceded the reins to Margaret Alexander, who is the new 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 2018 were:

- Cypress Tree Management
- Northland Investment Corporation
- Officer Ralph Torres, Animal Control Officer, Newton Police
- Wendy Wolf from Studios Without Walls
- Conni Melia, Newton Environmental Affairs Division

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 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. Mr. Fisher is pursuing federal funding and the Area Council will continue to monitor his efforts and provide support where we can to this important project.

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 2019 traffic calming list as well.

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 \$3,763.30 in its bank account at Village Bank.

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