

NEWTONVILLE AREA COUNCIL MINUTES
JUNE 13, 2019

The **meeting minutes** from May were approved with one additional edit from Marc.

Burning Issues in the Community:

- Rats & Redevelopment- We had a short discussion about the increase in rat sightings in neighborhoods where development is occurring. Carolyn Gabbay was going to discuss her concerns but did not show up to the meeting. Some discussion followed. Some people noticed an increase in rats and some thought this has been a problem before.
- Closing Bram Way- Marc provided an overview of the progress he has made in presenting the argument to the City Council to close Bram Way, when needed, to cars, so the city will have a larger community plaza. The idea is to have the main entry point to Bram Way at Highland Ave, and close it from Starbuck's to Austin Street, when needed, using a moveable planter to block off the road at Austin Street. He presented this at the last liaison meeting at the Planning Dept. and the Planning Dept. said they are speaking with building owners. Marc said Jake Ochinclauss is in favor and someone suggested there should be a study done to monitor traffic when it is closed off, to see the impact. Marc said the parks and rec. dept. is in charge of maintaining the public plaza but does not know who would be in charge of opening and closing off the area where the planter would go.
- Other information about the Public Plaza- an electrical outlet has been added but the fountain idea has been rejected. Hopefully there will be a sculpture, but that is still not settled.
- Clarissa and Norm, owners of the building that houses the Rox Diner spoke at the meeting and they expressed their concern for closing Bram Way. They felt it would prevent parking for customers because they might think they can't access the parking lot that is behind the building. Norm talked about the fact that parking is life-saving for small businesses and he expressed concern over the lack of parking in the village. He asked a few questions:
 - What times will the Way be closed off to the public?
 - Who opens and closes the way?
 - When the Way is open, how and who controls the crowd in the way?Norm expressed concern about the logistics of closing the way. He didn't think it is a good idea. Helene said the proposal to close part of Bram Way included keeping the parking lot and access areas to businesses open. One guest, Rick Frank, said that he is cynical but thinks that the reduction in parking is driving out small businesses so owners like Norm and Clarissa will sell their buildings so developers can move in and rebuild larger buildings.
- Peter announced that the Charter is not going to change and another guest, Randy said one provision is that Article 10, which allows citizens to put a

referendum on the ballot. He announced that Citizens Unite is holding a training on how to organize and get a petition on the ballot this fall. The facilitator will be Jordan Berg Powers, Executive Director of Mass Alliance and it will be held at the Auburndale Library from 7-8:30 pm on June 27th. He asked if the Newtonville Area Council can be a co-sponsor. We all agreed by vote that it can be. Randy said he will send a poster for us to post on our website.

Village Day Update: Maura and Dana reported that they have been meeting and are making progress on Village Day. Marc completed the Save The Date signs that we will send out electronically. The new date for Village Day is September 22, 2019- rain or shine.

City Election Candidate Debate: Peter Bruce led a discussion about the candidate debates that we will host. We will try for October 19-20 or Oct 26-27th and we will look for a venue because Cabot School is not a possibility. We had a long discussion about who to include in the debate and it was not finalized whether we will host a school committee debate or not, but it was generally agreed we would host all city council debates where there is a contest. A sub-committee was formed to organize this and bring it back to the group at the next meeting. Marc, Dana, Peter and Martina all joined the sub-committee.

3rd Draft of the Vision Plan: Peter led a discussion about what's going on with the zoning Vision Plan draft, which is in its third version. The question arose if we should push the city to charge developers impact fees. Maura felt strongly that we should. Others agreed. Martina said that we should address Kay Kahn and Cindy Creem about our concern about development in the area. There was a long discussion about the rezoning laws, their purpose, officials' seeming agendas and what we should do about it as an area council. We all agreed our role is to educate and disseminate information but we did not agree on how. Ideas included:

- Hire a PR Firm to help us
- Start a Yard Sign campaign to raise awareness about what is going on
- Picket along Walnut and Washington Streets so people know real people are concerned
- Start door-to-door campaigning to inform people about the rezoning and development issues in their neighborhoods
- Create and disseminate a newsletter
- Make noise about the fact that our survey is being ignored
- Write to the Globe to present on-going problems in Newton
- Call Kirill for help with multimedia efforts
- Develop position papers and send them to our constant contact list and post on our website
- Use information from the survey and push out findings to our constituents

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Maura Harrington, NAC Secretary