

## CLARIFICATION: THE NEWTONVILLE AREA COUNCIL'S MARCH 9 RESOLUTION

The Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which led to the expansion of the Vietnam conflict into a full-scale war, was voted on almost unanimously, even though the last of two incidents on which it was based never occurred. A similarly deceptive, near-unanimous motion occurred at the last meeting of the NAC. You received this motion from David Olson.

In addition to earlier items, our agenda only indicated an "update" on Washington Place. No votes seemed in order. It looked like we might have a quick, friendly meeting. The only non-council members there were Kenneth Roberts and Susan Albright. As the discussion started, Mr. Roberts, co-owner of Newtonville Camera, interjected adamantly that he had new information from recent conversations with Mr. Korff, who, he said had already filed for a 40B project with seven stories and 245 units. I suggested that he was just bluffing. He and Albright insisted vociferously that it was not a bluff, and Roberts told me "ask Robert Korff."

Reacting to this "revelation," several members of the Area Council said that a 40B would be unfortunate, and that it would be better if the process were kept in the city's hands. Some pushed for a vote. We argued it was premature to have a vote, since it was not on the agenda, and we had not checked the facts. And Colleen and Susan complained that the NAC needed public input before such a vote.

Council President Wayne Koch said that there was no way we could have anticipated a vote while preparing the agenda, and that the "new facts" presented by Mr. Roberts made quick action imperative so as to avoid a 40B. When those of us who thought that the ZBA and Land Court would bog a 40B project down for a very long time and create costs Mr. Korff might not want to face, and possibly lead to a better result, Albright and others insisted that the process would move very quickly, and in all probability, lead to a victory for Mr. Korff. Three of us expressed our objections to that opinion, but the point was moot.

Joy Huber suggested that we all support an MU4 as a way of fostering compromise. But seeing intense opposition from three of us, Wayne offered an alternative formulation, basically asking that all parties bargain in good faith. Joy proposed a new motion, building on Wayne's, saying that an MU4 was desirable in general as a model for other developments and appropriate to this site. My fellow Area Councilors Susan Reisler and Colleen Minaker and I all objected to that, and it was removed. Vice-President Tom Kraus rewrote the motion with the current phrasing, emphasizing that the City Council had approved MU4s in the past, and that that guidance deserved to be noted, if not agreed with. This seemed innocuous to Susan and me initially, since it did not express support for an MU4 at this project, or as a model for others.

I felt it would be highly desirable if the process were kept within the City's jurisdiction. And since the motion did not explicitly endorse an MU4 for Washington Place, I decided to go along with it. On the other hand, I did have reservations that the first sentence could be a "poison pill" that could make it look like we all had endorsed MU4s, even though we had not. The first

sentence was simply background, as I saw it. But the responses of some councilors indicates that some took this as an endorsement by the whole Area Council of the MU4 idea and the current proposal.

***Susan Reisler, Colleen Minaker, and I all oppose that.*** We believe that a solution should be found through our current zoning in combination with Special Permitting. Also, though we were hoping for a negotiated solution, it now seems that there will be no formal negotiations, in the open meeting on March 20.

In sum, our March 9 vote was taken in error. The “emergency facts,” purveyed by Mr. Roberts were false. According to Area Councilor Marc Kaufman, Tom Kraus spoke to Mr. Korff after Thursday’s meeting, and Korff told him that the seven stories, with 245 units, was “possible,” but that nothing had been finalized. In short, the “fact” that triggered this precipitous vote, and the rush to judgment behind it -- just like the “facts” behind the Gulf of Tonkin resolution -- was a **fabrication**. And Colleen, Susan, and I oppose an MU4 here.

Due to these grievances, we have requested an emergency meeting of the Newtonville Area Council. (See attached or accompanying document.)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Bruce  
Colleen Minaker  
Susan Reisler