

Newtonville Area Council Meeting Minutes June 17, 2020

Members Present: Peter Bruce, Dana D'Agostino, Jessica Aker Archer, Martina Jackson, Susan Reisler, Carolyn Gabbay, Pamela Shufro, Kartikey Trivedi

Invited Guests: Marc Kaufman

Members of the Public in Attendance: Tarik Lucas, Peter Harrington, Kate May, Linda Wolk, Christine Jacobs, Ted Vahey, Maryanne Rogers, Eileen Budri, Carmela DeCandia, Helen and John, Gail Gordon, Vera Schultz, Marc Kaufman, Debbie Sussman, Meg Ward

President, Peter Bruce called the meeting to order after confirming quorum.

Burning Issues in the Community

1) A minute of silence to contemplate the meaning of George Floyd's death

2) Discussion of its relevance to Newton:

- Two incidents of Newton Police confronting BIPOC populations (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) that escalated and could have resulted in violence and death- Tim Duncan and suspected robbery right on Lowell Ave- is happening in our community.
- Human Rights Commission reports on hate crimes and incidents in Newton
- Young people are leading protests to defund the police
- In Newton: no new police cruisers will be purchased, 5 replacement police officers will not be hired
- Community policing efforts- there needs to be more outreach and awareness.
- Need to diversify the community more.
- Policing has changed since the 1950's and 1960's- militarization has increased. Is this necessary and what are alternatives?
- Good direction for Newton to conduct outreach outside its political system to review/restructure police budget and replacing with other services such as social work etc.
- Would body cams help to observe continued bad patterns and events?
- Look at efforts by NAACP, ACLU
- Individuals can support BIPOC businesses, support local podcast Black Wall Street 1921. Should NAC also support as an elected body?

3) Sewer tax increase

- Did City Council decided to raise because of maximum utilization to-cover up rising costs by increasing tax?
- In Newton city budget and from the Mayor, there was no mention of the increase. Expenses should have accounted for- why did it not come up?
- City has tried to maintain/replace old pipes. Has been replacing over the past 20-30 years.
- Considering current economic issues, raising taxes would be an increased burden on taxpayers.

- Even though increase has already been approved, would a sunset clause be appropriate?
- Water Department usually has a surplus budget.
- NAC should invite someone from city gov or head of Water Department to come speak about this issue at a future meeting.
- If cannot get someone to speak, get a written explanation from Emily Norton or another City Counselor.

4) Dunstan East

- Short update.
- Seven stories for some buildings due to 40b construction.
- Rear parts of buildings would not look tall because they are below grade level on Washington Street.
- Would be able to see the 7 stories from direction of Watertown Street.

Newtonville Center Update

1) Updates from the Public Works Department – from liaison Marc Kaufman

- Construction began in March on Walnut Street which includes widened sidewalks, more benches, better lighting, landscaping- trees that retain water with special soil and flowers, curb cuts.
- The hope is that with 8 ft sidewalks, restaurants will take for outdoor dining- can set up more tables and still have room for people, strollers, etc. to pass by comfortably.
- Other money available to add alternative seating in addition to permitted benches.
- Gravel is being used, but eventually paving stones will be used.
- Curb cutouts added.
- Obtaining permits for restaurants to open- permits are relatively inexpensive and the process is easy.
- Other possible ideas include kiosks, LED lighting.
- People in the restaurant industry are scared to go back to work and might want to continue take-out/curbside pickup or find other jobs.
- How will Newton support small businesses if a landlord will not budge on stopping rent collection. Use Boston as an example. Small business association could be a solution.

Infection and death in Newton's long-term care facilities

- Status of Newton compared to 15 other cities in eastern MA: Newton has highest death rate per case.
- 42% percent of cases are people living in a Newton long-term care or assisted living facilities.
- State is responsible for making general testing more readily available.
- Workers in these facilities tend to live in other areas that are often socio-economic disadvantaged and have lack of access to health care, so could be bringing COVID into high risk communities. Hope testing is done more frequently for these workers.
- Testing is more readily available.
- Fifty pop up COVID testing sites around the state for 2 days due to protests.
- More walk-in testing is available- MA Department of Public Health has these locations.

Administrative Issues

1) Review and approval of May minutes

- May minutes still need editing and should be submitted for approval by July meeting.

2) Protocols for communications and dissents

- Proposed process: Draft is made. Draft is disseminated to 2 NAC officers for editing. Then draft is distributed to all NAC members.
- A 2-day comments period will ensue.
- Comments/changes will be integrated into the draft.
- Allow for individuals to write additional comments/dissent within 2 additional days. These will be included with final product.
- NAC reviews all materials. Everything is placed into the same document.
- Carolyn Gabbay made a motion to adopt this protocol. Kartikey Trivedi seconded. Motion was passed unanimously. Carolyn to work on language of protocol for NAC to review.
- Minutes to be turned in 1 week from meeting unless there are extraneous circumstances. Secretary to communicate these issues should they arise.

3) NewCal and Newtonville businesses: How adequate has outreach been?

- Susan Reisler asked a few Newtonville businesses if they received mail about the Newtonville Business Meeting in relation to NewCal. Many long-time businesses did not seem to receive or know about the meeting.
- Susan will reach out to Josh Morse to get clarification about the communication. She will ask for a copy of the communication and see why it was not effective.

4) Newtonville Plaza mural competition

- \$5000 is allotted for the mural.
- Mural should be done by October 2020.
- Only experienced muralists are wanted.
- Pam Shufro is on committee but does not know more details at this time
- Other \$5000 is allotted for music, entertainment, etc.

Submitted by Jessica Aker Archer, Secretary