

## Newton Upper Falls Area Council – Minutes

**DATE:** April 16, 2020

**Time:** 7:00 pm

**LOCATION:** Zoom meeting

**Meeting called to order:** 7:00 pm

**Members in Attendance:**

Anil Adyanthaya (President)

Kathaleen Brearley

Jeff Riklin (Vice President)

Patty Connolly (Secretary)

Susan Huffman (Treasurer)

Marie Jackson

Jack Neville

Jay Werb

Bill Humphrey (Ex Officio)

Carol Stapleton (Newton Parks and Recreation)

**Public attendees:**

Jerry Reilly

Emily Kaye Gelbert

Jen Kohl

**City Hall Attendees**

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

Dana Hanson - Director of Community Engagement & Inclusion

**Mayor spoke upon the status of the city regarding the COVID-19.**

**Summary:**

Acknowledged the impact on all in terms of uncertainty and anxiety

First Mayors referenced January 29<sup>th</sup> was first mention of COVID-19 in Mayors update

- 360 Positive cases in Newton as of 4/15
- 15 Case overnight
- 25 Casualties in Newton as of 4/16
- Hospitals including Newton Wellesley Hospital is seeing an uptick of positive cases
- ICU beds, general beds, positive
- Have not leveled off
- Hardest hit areas are among people living in close quarters and physical distancing is not possible
- Vulnerable people with risk factors

- Increase of testing has shown that there are positive tests in people with no symptoms
- Positive cases are reported to the City of Newton Health and Human Services department
- Contact tracing is in touch with person and asks for account of past activities in order to
- People in health profession and using PPE are at higher cases.
- Seeing family house hold units in which individual bring it back to the family
- Community transmission in Newton in low with aid of community distancing
- Decrease in complaints of residents not practicing physical distancing, which concludes residents are abiding to recommendations

**Mayor Ruth Fullers Question and Answer session:**

**Question: What are the economic effects on the city?**

**Answer:**

- Pain is deep and widespread, in particular mostly hotels and restaurants
- Some restaurants used takeout and delivery, some restaurants had to shut down as the volume was not enough.
- Small businesses in general
- Retail and service type business and are shut and in a lot of pain.
- Rare sector is okay, Grocery stores.
- Grocery store is a tough environment, difficult for employees
- Many calls for help health, financial, psychological.
- City of Newton Social workers are hearing tremendous amount of distress.

**Question: Newton COVID-19 Care Fund**

**Answer:**

- Mayor asked to spread the word
- Anyone in pain should raise their hand, fill out the application send it in.
- Generosity 600,000 of people has been fabulous. Expect every 135 applications in about a week.
- Seeing grab and go meals, Food pantry demand way up. Tough time.
- Anil suggested the Area Council should get the word out.
- The Mayor responded to please get the word out to those who are in need
- Finding that there is a whole new set of people. Not used to needing a boost and not used to
- Dana Hanson – impress upon folks that 4 category eligible for the funds.
  - Newton Residents
  - Family with children in Newton schools.
  - Works in Newton (Example of Newton restaurant employees)
  - Any city of Newton First responders. Including child care of associated costs
- Initial spike in application and expectation that impact is going to be deep and sustained.
- Expecting the fund to be needed for quite some time.
- Not a City of Newton fund, it is run by the United Way and administered by Family Access.
- When the United Way set up the portal, it was intentional to both get help/ give help.
- Community based for in need and for those in a position to give.

(Dana will provide information to Anil to post on the NUF web site)

**Question:** Information regarding the **Newton Neighbor to Neighbor program on Facebook**

**Answer:** Mayor said it has been fabulous, nibble and creative and making a difference.

Dana Hanson stated it is going to take all hands, city business, and philanthropy networks. Need to weave a rich net of support.

They have over 3000 folks, city in contact with founders.

Marie Jackson updated the initiative started by Julie Irish (former NUF Area Councilor) was one an analog, specific outreach with Telephone number and run errands, do grocery shopping, CVS medication pickup for them.

Will post on Neighbor to Neighbor for them and plan to specifically target elderly homebound.

Mayor emphasize – picking up phone and reaching out to vulnerable in need.

Marie Jackson & Dana Hanson will follow-up by phone. Dana's City of Newton Cell phone 781-605-4093

**Question:** Construction and what is considered not essential

Opportunity to stimulate economy and if emphasis on being smart of scheduling of sub-contractors and very limited interaction. Anyway to get around this with smart planning can start doing what is considered non-essential?

**Answer:** This is a tricky and important question

Governor initially said all construction was considered essential and was left wide open.

Mayor thought this would be a problem in Newton with the limited number of city inspectors to be sure this was being done in a physical distance and proper hygiene kind of way.

Governor then pivoted and narrowed by saying, we are in a public health crisis. Another crisis is a shortage of housing. Construction deemed as providing new housing or directly related to COVID hospital construction was considered essential.

In Newton, if you are adding housing unit can move forward as long as have really stringent health practices.

This is difficult for residents doing a remodel, addition, and or finishing kitchen or doing a bathroom.

Public health ramifications of having people out in about is not the way to go. Collapse the economy even if Even if it could be done safely.

Need to reduce community transmission. Only allowing essential construction and this is painful.

Have made medical or health examples. Person with Parkinson's in wheelchair was in need of 6 days to complete. This was verified and approved.

Inspectors are finding safe practices are being made and have found bad actors and have resorted to fining.

**Question:** Is Northland going to go ahead with demolition?

**Answer:**

Barney Health reached out to Northland, as of April 16<sup>th</sup> is lots of will not get more aggressive.

As of today is spending time on planning and design work.

Think within the next couple month's geotechnical soil boring being done at the site.

Northland thinking that some demolition might be able to occur this calendar year. Then 2021 will be about prepping the site and some sort of construction.

**Follow-Up:**

Jay Werb said there will be some concern. Jay will organize and put in writing for an appropriate time to respond.

Mayor: Decisions will go straight to the medical and health experts to help understand specifics and make right decisions. Look forward to what to do is safe and healthy.

**Question:** Recreation aspect of closing tennis and golf courses.

Summary: Feels likely hood of spreading through tennis ball very low. Newton Commonwealth Golf Course had a plan in place prior to closure. Likely hood of spreading low. Great place to get out and get exercise. Some towns have loosen up and opened despite of the Governor's restriction.

**Answer:**

Mayor said understand what is being said. Goal is during difficult period is to keep people home and within a household unit.

Have found that it was not family units going out playing tennis together but mixed households and that is the exactly behavior trying to prevent.

Mayor is trying to enforce keeping people at home and lowering the exposure.

Shelter in place.

**Question:** Mandating wearing of face masks had been

**Answer:** Mayor paying attention. Maura Healy 3-5 communities have ordered face masks to be worn.

It is illegal, but strongly advised. Please put on a face covering on when going into store.

Mayor is advising strongly.

**Question:** Big gardening crews doing lawn clean-up.

**Answer:**

Governor included landscaping as essential business. Are supposed to do social distancing and not have 3 persons sitting

Are allowed to work and use leaf blowers. Mayor agrees there are violations.

**A. Approval of Minutes from March Meeting (5 minutes)**

1. Update made to local Newton Upper Falls outreach initiative started by Julie Irish. Removing the previous description as the outreach description, it is not digital. Focusing on Upper Falls.

2. Update to description of parking restriction discussion. There is a 3<sup>rd</sup> option. Updated the minutes.

Marie motioned to approve the minutes, Anil 2nd the motion.

Approved unanimously

**B. Treasurer's Report**

No activity still \$3759 in the bank. Emailed copy of report was forward to Area Council by Anil.

**C. Public Comment**

**City Councilor Bill Humphrey – If there are ideas that city council can do for upper falls**

City council have introduced rental assistance program. This would be available through community preservation funds. Idea is to prevent impact on residents as well as decrease vacancies which would impact income for others.

Hoping to get in place by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Currently half the City Councilors in support of initiative.

**D. COVID-19 Issues for Upper Falls (10 minutes)**

**1. Outreach**

Marie Jackson and Julie Irish's outreach by phone & flyer initiative in addition to the United Way fund and the Neighbors helping Neighbors Facebook.

**2. Business Support**

Remind people that businesses are still open and trying to serve the community.

Newton / Needham Chamber of commerce provided a list of business that were not previous doing a takeout business.

Village 14 Post – March 17, 2020

<https://www.nnchamber.com/dine-local>

Chris Osborne of Better Life Foods – provided over 200 meals to Tufts medical center. They are also offering takeout meals. Chris has always been a friend of Newton Upper Falls and supported various activities.

Jeff Riklin volunteered to be available to assist with delivery of needs.

Suggestion for additional meeting to see if there is something that the Newton Upper Falls Area council can do.

Anil in support of additional meeting.

First Thursday of the month was a suggested. May 7<sup>th</sup> would be the next meeting.

Summer Camps and Summer Jobs are potentially impacted. Newton Parks and Recreation have seen withdrawal due to not wanting to be in a camp situation. Lifeguard, Camp Counselor jobs are hanging not sure what to do.

**E. Update on Northland Construction Liaison Committee (5 minutes)**

Was discussed earlier with conversation with the Mayor. Other than demolition will not be happening in the immediate future.

No community engagement until construction starts.

Jeff Riklin has received 2 calls regarding contamination of the grounds where they are doing demolition. Want to make sure testing is being done if the ground is being disturbed. May need to escalate.

Jay will have letter on subject by May 21<sup>st</sup> on the subject.

Will postpone discussing participating in the liaison committee.

**F. General Upper Falls News**

**Stairway Project on the Greenway:**

Carol Stapleton said there is movement on the stair project on the Greenway.

Will be put out to bid and Jennifer Steele said that it could happen

**G. Public Comment/Questions**

**Close Quinobequin Road**

Andrea Downs asked to share a proposal to close Quinobequin.

Petition DCR to close during to allow social distancing along with Hammond Pond Parkway.

Carol Stapleton said possible proposal of closing the Highlands for pedestrians. Going to be on City council meeting on Monday.

Jeff Riklin motion to not support closure of Hammond Pond Parkway

2<sup>nd</sup> by Marie

Motion passed to not support closure of Hammond Pond Parkway

Jeff Riklin motion to not support closure of Quinobequin Rd

2<sup>nd</sup> by Patty

Motion passed to not support closure of Hammond Pond Parkway.

### **Newton Nomadic Theater on line event.**

The Lunatic Talent Jamboree

Zany Variety Show on Saturday, April 18th on NEWTON NOMADIC THEATER Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/NewtonNomadicTheater>

### **Graffiti**

Emily Gilbert, Jerry Reilly and Andraea Downs facilitated getting the graffiti on Echo Bridge cleaned up. Looks fantastic

MWRA power washed the bridge. Andraea Downs called MWRA on Thursday, Friday and Monday.

Carol Stapleton requested if any graffiti is spotted The Greenway to make sure Newton Parks and Recreation is contacted.

Emily Gelbert is taking initiative to clean up area by route 9. Welcomed any volunteers

The land is under DCR and Erica is a DCR rep?

### **H. Adjourn 8 :27 pm**

Motion to adjourn made by Jeff Riklin

2<sup>nd</sup> by Marie Jackson

All in favor

### **Next Meeting (s)**

May 7, 2020 at 7:00 pm

This will be an off Schedule meeting to communicate updates related to COVID-19 Pandemic.

May 21, 2020 at 7:00 pm