

MINUTES OF THE NEWTON UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: April 15, 2021

Time: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Zoom meeting

+16468769923,,714158912# US (New York)

Meeting called to order: 7:06 pm

Members in Attendance:

Anil Adyanthaya (President)

Jeff Riklin (Vice President)

Susan Huffman (Treasurer)

Patty Connolly (Secretary)

Kathaleen Brearley

Marie Jackson

Jack Neville

Jay Werb

Deborah Crossley, Newton City Council

Public attendees:

Rena Getz

Peter Harrington

Garry Miller

Mike

A. Approval of Minutes from March Meeting

Jeff Riklin motioned to accept the meeting minutes, motion 2nd by Susan Huffman. Approved unanimously.

B. Treasurer's Report

1 outstanding check to Waban Area Council for contribution to plaque

\$3607.99

C. Public Comment (5 minutes)

D. Village Center Zoning Amendment Proposal by Peter Harrington

Peter Harrington shared his draft of the Village Center Zoning.

Attached is my updated draft of a Village Center Zoning District. My principle purposes are to initiate discussion and protect our villages from "urbanization".

In a nutshell, the proposal would:

1. Limit the basic building to two stories, residential above the first floor (as in present zone).
2. Allow another story, as of right, if low income housing is included (new).
3. Allow additional floor area, as of right, if a pitched roof is included (new).

No special permit approval.

Jay Werb, Upper Falls Area Councilor made a statement to be put into record:

The Village Center District Amendment appears designed to deal with a long-term approach for villages in general. In Upper Falls, our Village Center situation is completely different. Regarding urbanization in Upper Falls, that train left the station last year when the Northland referendum failed. Our village center is now urban whether we like it or not.

We've been talking about Pettee Square a lot in our last few meetings. It started when this group was reviewing the Pettee Square design work that is being done by the city under a grant from the state. It is good work as far as it goes. But half the time when I asked a question about something I care about, I was told it was out of scope.

For me, the penny dropped in February when we learned that Nuestra selected Pettee Square as a perfect location for marijuana dispensary. I asked myself how is that even possible? Isn't that site too valuable for that purpose? Something did not make sense.

Eventually I connected the dots. I realized there are actually two Pettee Squares.

There is the Pettee Square that is on the other side of the tracks. This Pettee Square is surrounded by radio towers. This Pettee Square sold its neighborhood school for 30 pieces of silver. This Pettee Square is home to the dumpiest liquor store in the city. This Pettee Square is where trucks park on the sidewalk while they buy lottery tickets. This Pettee Square is where we thank our lucky stars every year the post office isn't shut down. This Pettee Square has for rent signs in the windows. This Pettee Square is an ideal location for a regional pot shop.

Then there is the Pettee Square in 2025. That Pettee Square has Northland across the street. That Pettee Square is soon to become some of the most valuable real estate per square foot in New England. That Pettee Square is going to change, and it's going to change fast.

How is it going to change? I have no idea. But I'm pretty sure that if the Upper Falls Village Council does nothing, Pettee Square will end up a mish-mosh of whatever a random series of meatball developers decide to build under the current zoning code.

We have to get in front of this.

I have two specific suggestions.

First, if possible, let's see if we can get two buildings added to the Upper Falls Historic District: the post office and, the Biltmore building.

Second, let's ask that the city to launch an urgent process to rezone Pettee Square in close collaboration with the Upper Falls Area Council. I hope we can convince the city to give this priority, for a few reasons.

- It is extremely urgent.
- The scope is limited, and it's an easy "win" for the city.
- There is already a fully funded planning process underway to design the traffic aspects.
- Upper Falls has Anil, who has a great track record managing controversy without making it worse.

In summary, I don't think the Upper Falls Village Council should support the general idea of a one-size-fits-all approach to village centers. We need an individualized approach to Pettee Square, and we need it yesterday.

City Councilor Crossley spoke to the process and that one size does not fit all when comes to village centers. Community Engagement will begin to discuss the village centers on May 20th 6:00 pm
[Zoning Redesign - Community Engagement](#)

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/zoning-redesign/community-engagement-2>

Registration required: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YwIETHS4TyqGaNJcwu16YQ

E. Planning Dedication for Brian Yates Memorial Plaque

Discussion for putting plaque on a stone. Jeff Lubin said he would investigate the options and get back to Jack Neville.

F. Discussion of proposed pocket park next to Upper Falls Greenway

G. Discussion of proposed marijuana dispensary at 1185 Chestnut Street

Anil Adyanthaya inquired that status of the permit.

Jack Neville and Judy Malone Neville had a meeting with the Mayor. Verbalized that the dispensary does not belong in the village center. Close to a park (400 feet), next to Preschool, lack of parking and proximity to the Greenway and soon to be splash park. Needham Street would be a more appropriate location for a future dispensary. Mayor said to contact City Councilors. Jack Neville requested that this item remain on future NUF Area Council Meeting agenda.

H. Village Day 2021 Planning - Sunday, October 3, 2021

Charge businesses \$25 / no cost for Non-profits. If it rained out, it would be refunded.

Anil Adyanthaya will reach out to Julie Irish for process for sign-ups for businesses.

Jeff Riklin suggested to reach out to vendors early. Use next meeting to review likes / dislikes for planning purposes.

Marie Jackson suggested that the AI Fresco remain as it is a nice addition.

1. Costs
2. Recruiting Vendors/Participants
3. Contingency Arrangements

I. Newton Serves Upper Falls Greenway Cleanup

- The Greenway
- Pocket Park across from fire station

J. General Upper Falls News (5 minutes)

Steps approved at the end of The Greenway have been delayed due a no show contractor. Funds are available. Suggestion to write a letter to emphasize the benefit with NUF Area Council Support.

Follow-up to village zoning discussion. Jay Werb suggested pursue adding 2 buildings to the Historic district.

- Building currently occupied by Biltmore and other shops located at Chestnut Street.
- Post Office located at Oak Street.

Marie Jackson asked for the timeline for the Pettee Square improvements. Witness a gentleman in a wheelchair having to maneuver to cross the street. It is an immediate handicap access problem. Jay Werb will connect Marie with Ellen Katz who has escalated this issue previously.

K. Public Comment/Questions

959 Chestnut – Owner asked NUF Historic for resolution to 5 to 6 items. NUF Historic declined to address the items until the height of the building has been resolved. Owner has appealed to the mass state commission. There is a delay up to 90 days prior to a hearing. If no resolution then he will bring to the SJC. Stop work order remains in place

13-19 Winter street – Getting close to developer submitting real plans. Issue is moving building forward on the site as well as the garage placement would need to be located in the back

300 Eliot Street – a different developer has purchased from the bank. The new owner is a member of the Auburndale Historic Commission. The plan is to maintain the façade and recreate.

Add 2 story addition in the back. The main house will have 2 units. Renovate the Carrage house to hold 2 units

L. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm

Jeff Riklin motioned to adjourn meeting, Kathaleen Brearley 2nd motioned.

Approved unanimously