



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Boston College Neighborhood Council

Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, September 21, 2020

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Zoom conference

Present: Councilor Lisle Baker, Councilor Emily Norton, Karine Alexander, Thomas Keady, and Barney Heath

Also Present: Councilor Laredo, Kevin Callarus, Devra Bailin, Heather Zaring, Neil Cronin, Linda Walsh, "AJD", Dr. Douglas Comeau, George Arey, Rick Westman, Jeanne Levesque, Laura Krantz, and Jack Collins (The meeting was disrupted by "Nick Gerr", "Jon" and "Ken" who were removed at around 6:30 p.m.)

Members

Councilor Lisle Baker
Councilor Emily Norton
Lynn Yetra
Karine Alexander
Ken Lyons
Thomas Keady
Barney Heath

1. Update on COVID-19 Measures/Protocols

Mr. Health noted that the City is always in close communications with Boston College regarding COVID-19. The Boston College Team was introduced: Jeanne Levesque (Director of Government Relations), Tom Keady (VP, Director of Community Affairs), George Arey (Assoc. VP Director of Residential Life and Special Projects), Dr. Douglas Comeau (Director of Health Services).

Dr. Comeau explained that they tested everyone coming onto the campus (over 18,000 tests). They continue to do a mix of targeted testing and surveillance testing per contact tracing. He pointed out that the increased cases were due to contact tracing from a couple of incidents; as a result of that contact tracing, they have lowered the curve with positivity rates below those in Boston and Massachusetts. They ran 4639 tests last week with a resultant 0.37% overall and 0.52% undergraduates tested.

The College is in constant contact with the health departments of Newton, Boston and Brookline. No Newton students found positive are isolating in Newton—they are all in their Boston facility.

Mr. Arey noted that they have additional student housing at Hotel Boston, Pine Manor College, Four Points in Newton and 100 beds in Dover.

Councilor Baker asked why BC was not routinely testing their entire population, as other colleges are doing. Dr. Comeau explained that BC has increased testing every week and believe that the testing they are doing is the correct approach. Councilor Baker asked when BC will deem it insufficient and go to a more aggressive model. Dr. Comeau said BC will be guided by the positivity rate and noted differences in the housing of BC student versus other colleges like Suffolk. He added that anyone with symptoms gets tested and, if positive, they contact trace.

Ms. Alexander asked about the protocols for athletes. Dr. Comeau explained they are following the guidance for each sport and have increased testing for those individuals at high risk, including athletes, campus police, nurses, etc.

Councilor Norton asked about off campus parties and what is being done to minimize them. Mr. Keady explained that they monitor the campus and neighborhoods from Thursday evening through Sunday in Newton with a Newton police officer and a representative from Student Life. Students are required to sign contracts and enforcement is swift. Students who don't comply can be suspended and hosts lose the privilege of taking classes and the ability to live on campus senior year. Mr. Arey noted that BC is providing many student activities, including clubs, virtually and BC has increased outdoor furniture to promote utilization of outdoor spaces.

Mr. Wetmore, a neighbor to BC in Chestnut Hill, questioned who will make the decision when to test all students and staff weekly and noted many colleges are testing twice a week. Dr. Comeau explained that senior administration would make the decision to go to a more aggressive testing model, based on the recommendations of experts and in consultation with health departments in Boston, Newton and Brookline.

Linda Walsh spoke to say that Newton's Health and Human Services Department works closely with BC and the City is satisfied with the testing procedures adopted. The handling of the positive student cases which BC had was appropriate. The use of contact tracing app is particularly useful. Dr. Comeau noted that BC also uses a Data Dashboard to monitor the situation.

1. Facilities Update

Ms. Levesque explained that the Integrated Science and Society Building, which was started in 2019 in the middle campus, will be completed in December 2021. The external renovation of the library will be completed within two weeks. The Pete Frates Center for basketball and indoor baseball is expected to be completed in late December in Boston.

2. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

3. Next Meeting—December 2020

It was announced that the next meeting will be held in December. The meeting ended at 6:50 p.m.