



Newtonville Area Council - Meeting Agenda
Thursday, February 10, 2022 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: Online via Zoom

Attendees:

- NAC Members: Jennifer Bentley (President), Martina Jackson (Vice President, Nancy Greenberg (Treasurer), Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay (Secretary), Timothy LeBlanc
- City Government: Councilors Albright, Lukas, Malakie, Norton and Oliver and Wright; School Committee member Chris Brezski; Council on Aging member Joan Belle Isle
- Approximately 20 members of the public

Jennifer Bentley called the meeting to order and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

1. Update on solicitation of applicants to fill Council vacancies

Martina reported that public notice soliciting applicants to fill the 3 vacancies on the NAC had been published and there have been two applicants to date, namely: Linda Swain and Dana D'Agostino. Jennifer noted that a special meeting will be held on February 23rd to interview applicants and a vote will be on the agenda of the March meeting, all as per the NAC bylaws.

2. Update and Discussion on Horace Mann Building Renovation Project": Presentation and Q&A with Members of the Building Committee

Jennifer reported that on January 27th Josh Morse (Commissioner of Public Buildings) moderated a public meeting on the Horace Mann building renovation project. City Councilor John Oliver and School Committee member Chris Brezski provided an update, including displaying the slide deck used at that meeting and fielding questions. Among other thing, key points included:

- Two groups have been working on the project: an informal steering committee (consisting of staff and elected officials) and voting members for the School Building Committee (consisting of appointed staff, elected officials and residents).
- Currently the process is in an early phase of the timeline (i.e., the feasibility study).
- Some smaller projects have been conducted in the building already (i.e., acoustics, moving some walls to improve access/classroom sizes, and installation of sinks).
- Two temporary modular classrooms have been in place since summer 2019
- Floor plan are being designed for 396-414 students and 18 classrooms (i.e., one per grade) and an added special education classroom.
- Some, but not all, classrooms, are within acceptable guidelines currently, but a building addition and some wall moves are needed to meet MSBA guidelines on classrooms, the library and media center.
- Site review and opportunities identification are ongoing, with three options presently in rough form. Options are focused on additions envisioned for the Lower Site Plateau (called the "bowl").
- Sign up for updates at: HoraceMann@newton.ma.gov

- Staff may relate to the work to revise the playground and the baseball diamond. Staff parking by permit will also be available on Nevada Street along California and Linwood Streets.
- The build is being based on the maximum number of children expected, with built-in flexibility. Current enrollment is 369 students and enrollment is expected to decline over the next decade. There is still room for discussion about the Newton Public Schools' approach with existing and new buildings to accommodate enrollment swings over time.
- Work on Horace Mann was previously deferred, with "band aids" applied (largely in response to parental demands about overdue improvements).
- Due to the building being occupied during construction, certain work will be conducted during the summer and school breaks.
- Parents think more community input in the process is needed.

Link to recording of the January 27th meeting is available in NAC newsletter and the NAC Facebook page

3. Introduction to the new SRG Senior Living/Mark Development proposed Independent Living/ Assisted Living/Memory care development planned for Crafts Street behind Whole Foods.

Jennifer displayed the slide deck from the Mark Development website used at a recent community. She summarized the planned project: 129 independent, 52 assisted living and 28 memory care units, with 13 affordable units, 137 below level parking and 10 ground level short-term parking spaces, and building heights of 5 stories behind Marty's and up to 7 stories for the independent living building on Crafts Street. See: www.craftsproposal.com, and link is to be added to the NAC website and Facebook page.

Discussion included:

- Mark Development has assured Court Street residents that the roadway at the rear of the property is required by and to be used only by the Fire Department in the event of emergency.
- The proposed 7 story building height may set the tone for other Washington Street projects and exceeds the property's current zoning. President Albright said that the developer is requesting rezoning to Business 4 to be allowed to build to that height.
- The project is to be a rental model project, but Mark Development and SRG has declined to provide any pricing estimates.
- The number of units proposed and associated staff would increase traffic.
- The developer will need to address HazMat considerations from prior uses of the property.
- A neighbor (Francine – no last name given) expressed concerns about limited publicity about the proposed project and the further development burdens on already disproportionately burdened, traditionally the lower income neighborhoods on the Newton north side, including impacts on infrastructure (fire, police, water) and tall building height in a residential neighborhood and that insufficient attention is paid to indigenous tax-paying residents when allowing developers to rezone properties for increased profitability, rather than abide by the zoning under which they purchased a property.
 - City Council President Albright noted that the City review process will include notification to direct abutters and a public hearing.
 - Councilor Norton said that the introductory community meeting was held at her urging.

4. Other Matters of Community Interest

Jennifer absented herself on recusal and Martina took over chairing the meeting. She introduced Councilor Lucas to provide an update on NewCAL/Senior Center. He reported that in Fall 2020 the Newton Historic Commission recommended an 18-month demolition delay for the building, which expires in March 2022 and recently he and 4 others have nominated the current Senior Center for landmarking. The Newton Historic Commission will take a vote on March 24th on whether to accept the nomination. If accepted, the NHC will begin the process of researching and will and vote at a future meeting, probably in April or May at which time there will be a public hearing. Emails to the NHC can be directed to ybermingham@newtonma.gov.

Councilor Lucas said the nomination was prompted by a petition drive by Neighbors for a Better Newtonville which now has <500 signatures from Newton residents. David Bronstein noted that there is an alternative position petition with 749 signatures, although not necessarily all Newton residents. Councilor Lucas commended the level of engagement of by Newton residents and noted that City Councilors are receiving many emails on both sides of the question.

- President Albright noted that there will be a community meeting on February 17th at which the latest designs will be shown. She also noted concerns with the existing building and access for people with disabilities.
- Councilor Malakie noted that many people become aware of developments late in the process and that site selected for NewCAL at Walnut Street occurred by default because no other location could be found. She added that both the reno/add and new build approached would be feasible and accommodate the program.

Martina urged attendance at the Feb 17th meeting and said this issue is slated to be discussed at the NAC's March meeting.

5. Preliminary Discussion of how the NAC can advocate for ARPA Funds to be used for Newtonville

- **a. From Mayor's February 2, 2022 newsletter: *[ARPA investments include]***
"...Assisting the recovery and rebuilding of village centers and commercial corridors and our small businesses and non-profits (e.g., linking employers to employees with NewtonHires, improving our streets, sidewalks and village centers, supporting arts, culture and community groups, helping restaurants)"

Jennifer returned to the meeting. She solicited ideas about ARPA funds uses that could be send to the Mayor. In response to Tim's question about a public posting, she noted the Mayor's newsletter addressed this issue and said that some suggestions have already been sent to the NAC with requests for NAC support.

Peter Bruce suggested preservation of the Senior Center and its open space, which he said would be consistent with polls on public desires for open spaces and the Comprehensive Plan.

Carolyn suggested Jennifer assign a working group to think about this matter and report at the next meeting. Jennifer asked that, in addition, ideas be sent by email to the NAC and she volunteered to talk with other Area Councils about their ideas.

6. Administrative Issues

- **Refining the language of a vote taking on protocol for promoting events or activities**

This matter was deferred to the March meeting.

- **Submission and Approval of the 2021 Annual and Financial Reports**

This matter was deferred to the March meeting.

- **Approval of January meeting minutes**

The draft minutes of the January 2022 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, Jennifer moved, Martina seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the January 2022 NAC meeting.

7. Adjournment

At approximately 8:47 PM, Martina moved, Carolyn seconded and it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay

Secretary