



Special Meeting: NAC Vacancies – Candidate Interviews
Date & Time: February 23, 2022 at 7:00 PM
Location: Via Zoom

Attendees:

NAC: Jennifer Bentley (President), Martina Jackson (Vice President), Nancy Greenberg (Treasurer) Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay (Secretary), Timothy LeBlanc, Aline Sammut
City Government: Councilor Lucas.
Public: Approximately 5 members of the public

Jennifer called the meeting to order and confirmed the presence of a quorum. Carolyn reviewed the process, namely that the NAC Bylaws provide that

- the 3 vacancies on the NAC be filled by soliciting applicants via public notice, which has been done,
- 4 NAC catchment area residents applied, and
- voting will take place at the 2nd regularly scheduled NAC after the public notice, which will be on March 10, 2022.

She added that tonight’s meeting is a special meeting and, therefore, the only topic that can be addressed is interviewing the vacancy candidates as per the notice of special meeting.

The 4 candidates were interviewed in the order their applications were received. Each were given 15 minutes, with a 5-minute runover allowance.

First candidate: Linda Swain

Linda served as President of the Cabot After School Program and as a frequent volunteer with Newton Community Serves and at Newton North PTO events, including as co-organizer of Newton North Porch Party. She wants to serve on the NAC as a way to “give back” to Newton. She noted the NAC’s leadership in building a sense of community with its Village Day event, in which her daughter has participated. She added that the NAC often deals with topics related to development and felt that her 25 years of experience in as a marketing and communication professional in the commercial real estate industry, including community engagement proactively focusing on diversity

and inclusion, would be beneficial to the NAC both in listening to the community and in being good conduit to the City Council. She stated that if there was a conflict because of her employer's activities, she would recuse herself as applicable. Her suggestions for possible NAC outreach activities included an on-line forum, being visible at key places in the community in nice weather with outside table outside, activities to help foster local businesses, outdoor music events at NNHS and a book swap and events like the Halloween painting day and working with a preservation architect to strike a balance between development and historic infrastructure preservation.

Second candidate: Dana D'Agostino

Dana served on the NAC previously and has been the lead organizer of Village Day for a number of years. She wants to continue to help organizing Village Day and has built a network of volunteers to support the event. She felt it important for organizers to be on the NAC. Dana discussed possible added improvements to the Village Day process such as earlier assignment of booth slots. She also discussed ways to try to help address the increasing number of empty storefronts (such as "exit interviews" with owners of closed businesses and landlords) using the array of contacts she has built from her work on Village Day events. "Shop Local" ideas were also discussed.

Third candidate: Miranda Barrows

Miranda grew up in Newtonville, went to Newton public schools and now lives in the same house which she grew up in. Her mother, a retired Newton math teacher, still lives in Newton. She learned of the vacancies through Facebook and had become interested in NAC service in a discussion at the Planning Department Village Day booth. She described herself as involved with neighbors, including the parents of her children's peers and those who are moving into Newton with younger children. Concerning development's impact on naturally affordable housing, especially on the neighborhood to the north of the Pike, she said it was unfortunate that Newton has become unaffordable to many, that a thoughtful approach to adding affordable housing is needed to strike a balance. She added that the new state law on encouraging more housing in MTBA communities is interesting and that Newton and other communities need to do their part to help address the climate crisis and housing crisis in greater Boston with some added densification which may be uncomfortable to some. She suggested that, in addition to Village Day, the NAC might be able to encourage and attend block parties. She also suggested that it would be good to try to make Bram Way a teen-friendly gathering area at certain hours of the day, with the area being a welcoming one for families and other age groups as well.

Fourth candidate: Jessica Acker

Jessica served on the NAC previously and noted that she had been Secretary of the NAC for a time before taking a step back due to work and personal considerations, but had a good record of meeting attendance and had spoken out against the opening of the proposed gun shop and is a voice an underrepresented younger demographic with a different point of view than others on the NAC. She is active in a number of community groups, is Ward for the Newton Democrats, and attends meetings of the Human Rights Commission. She also has experience running Zoom

meetings and with social media and information hubs for people interested in addressing issues such as food insecurity. She suggested a renewed NAC survey of community view in light of changing local demographics. She expressed concern with the loss of businesses in Newtonville and encouraged supporting local business, such as with monthly themes.

The NAC discussed the candidate's comments and the Bylaws' provisions. Jennifer will ask the Law Department for clarification of the appropriate voting process under the Bylaws.

Adjournment

At approximately 9:35 PM, Carolyn moved, Tim seconded, and it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Jacoby Gabbay

Secretary