

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Meeting Minutes, June 2, 2022

Area Council members:

Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Robert Fizek, Jeremy Freudberg, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdjan Nedeljkovic; Larry Rosenberg not present

Ex Officio:

City Councilors Brenda Noel, Bill Humphrey, and Holly Ryan were not present

Guests:

Mark Friedman, Kathy Pillsbury, John Rice, Rena Getz, Amy Wayne

Meeting called to order at 7:08 pm. Srdjan Nedeljkovic taking minutes. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell presiding. The meeting was held in person at the Brigham House as well as via Zoom videoconferencing technology.

Substantive Topics:

Bob Burke: An Appreciation

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin thanked Area Councilor Bob Burke for his many years of service on the Area Council. Nathaniel noted that Bob was the Area Council Secretary when Nathaniel joined the Area Council. Today, Bob is participating in person with the Area Council for his final meeting as an Area Councilor before he moves away from Newton Highlands. Area Council Vice President Barbara Darnell thanked Bob for all of his efforts, especially leading the effort to rally support for a Local Historic District in Newton Highlands, and for stepping up to participate in all of the tasks of the Area Council.

Bob thanked everyone for the various gatherings that took place in his honor around the community during the past few weeks. Nathaniel reminded Bob that he will need to notify the City Clerk's office of his intent to resign. The Area Council welcomed Bob to join future meetings virtually or in person. Bob said that he will miss Newton Highlands and all of us, but that he is ready to move on to his next life journey. Bob remarked that he enjoyed leading the effort to conduct the study for a Local Historic District in Newton Highlands, even though the effort did not result in the establishment of a district, at least for now! There remains a budget allocation of \$1500 in the Area Council's account related to the historic district effort.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the recent Zoning and Planning Committee meeting that took place to discuss a draft zoning ordinance for village centers. Additional information can be found here: <https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/85435/637892559787436400>

Public meetings to discuss the draft ordinance have not yet been scheduled. Waban Area Councilor Rena Getz mentioned that this item will be discussed at the Waban Area Council's next meeting. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin stated that there are two zoning initiatives taking place concurrently: a local city effort and the state's MBTA communities' legislation.

Northland Update

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin reported that the Conservation Commission is meeting a week from today to discuss the daylighting of the South Meadow Brook at the Northland site along Needham Street. It was noted that the developer is not proposing to do anything with most of the existing underground culverts. There is concern that flooding along the South Meadow Brook may occur, and that this may affect the Northland site. Area Councilor Groot Gregory noted that there have been proposals to clean the area around the brook.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic noted that there is a portion of the waterway that is planned to be daylighted on the Northland site near the mill building. Nathaniel Lichtin shared a map showing the site indicating the culvert and the open parts of the South Meadow Brook. A map of the South Meadow Brook watershed was displayed, extending into Newton Highlands and Crystal Lake. Another map was shown of areas that could be subject to flooding, extending from the area of Oak Hill Middle School towards Needham Street, and then to the Charles River.

Lincoln Street Redesign

Area Council Vice President Barbara Darnell noted that there will be an in-person meeting on June 7th at the Newton Highlands Woman's Club from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm to kick-off the Newton Highlands Village Enhancement project. The meeting will be both indoors and outdoors. There will also be a table about this at Village Day. Area Councilor Jeremy Freudberg noted that there is an on-line comment tool available where people can provide feedback to the city.

<https://envpartners.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f5c8ffbe0c1d41e79c7ee65e31650aff>

The meeting to discuss the Newton Highlands Village Enhancement Program is being organized by the Newton Department of Public Works.

Traffic Council Agenda Items regarding Lincoln Street

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic provided a summary of the Traffic Council meeting that took place in May where it was decided to remove two on-street parking spaces on Lincoln Street in the village center. Traffic Council has authorized removing a parking spot in front of the Bank of America ATM. The other parking space to be removed is on the eastbound side of Lincoln Street adjacent to Davis Hairdressing salon. The Department of Public Works has the administrative authority to remove parking spaces that are within 25 feet of a crosswalk, so a vote was not needed on this matter. The parking space removal will occur within one month.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic expressed concern that removal of the parking buffer will reduce pedestrian safety by increasing the unprotected crossing distance in this part of Lincoln Street for pedestrians from about 30 feet to 45 feet. The lack of visual barriers at these locations may encourage drivers to speed faster through the village center, once again reducing safety for pedestrians. Area Councilor Jeremy Freudberg noted there was also a discussion about putting planters and bicycle racks in the village center.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic noted how other recent street redesigns in West Newton, Waban, and Newtonville have been criticized for making these streets more difficult to navigate. Nathaniel Lichtin commented that as a pedestrian, he was pleased with the outcome at Newtonville, but that he has heard complaints about Beacon Street in Waban near the Angier School. A discussion ensued about traffic safety in Waban village and the recent placement of flex posts to improve safety and reduce excessive crossing distances near the intersection of Woodward and Beacon Streets.

It was noted that the Newton Highlands Village Enhancement Project will provide an opportunity to address issues of parking, safety, and traffic flow in the Highlands. Area Councilors Srdjan Nedeljkovic and Robert Fizek expressed a desire to have utilities and wires undergrounded or placed behind buildings in Newton Highlands as part of the Village Enhancement Project.

New Members

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin and Vice President Barbara Darnell reported that there will be an open seat on the Area Council for next month's meeting due to Bob Burke's resignation. Mark Friedman expressed an interest in joining the Area Council. Robert Fizek reported that he has been sworn in for the Area Council. Amy Wayne stated that she will be sworn in within a couple of weeks, upon her return from California. With these changes, there will be one open position on the Area Council.

Mark Friedman thanked the Area Council for inviting him to participate in this evening's meeting. He stated that he is impressed with the knowledge and expertise of the group, and that he is eager to learn and contribute to the Area Council. Dr. Friedman lives in Newton Highlands near the Highlands MBTA station. He has worked as a physician at Mount Auburn Hospital and is now mostly retired. He is currently also involved in working for a data science firm.

Village Day

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin provided an update about Village Day planning from Steven Feinstein. As of the present time, there are two volunteers to help manage the Road Race. Sponsors include Anna's Taqueria and others for a total contribution of \$5000. There is an expectation of revenue of \$3000 from the road race and \$5000 from booth fees. We expect to have 50 booths and 78 runners have registered thus far. There is an expectation that there may be 50% more runners joining as same-day registrants.

Projected expenses include \$2800 for music and \$5700 that includes about \$3400 for tents and \$2200 for rides. A few other entertainment activities are being added. There is an audio engineer fee of \$800. Expenses also include \$740 for posters and yard signs. The expense for the caricature and

face paint artists is \$900. The projected net revenues are estimated to be \$13,000 and projected expenses are \$12,140. With regards to local food establishments, Lincoln Kitchen, Dining Cart and Grape Leaf will be serving food outside. Several stores will be using the space outside their stores to display their projects. The event is being publicized on Facebook, Instagram, and the Newton Highlands google group, among other places. We are expecting an expense of \$600 to place cones along the race course. These will be placed by DPW.

Area Councilor Groot Gregory noted that volunteers will be needed to help organize booth placement. The street will be marked for booth space the day prior to Village Day. John Rice stated he will be hiring several high school kids to help move tables from the Hyde Center. There will be two tents available, one around the main stage and one for people to sit under. The cost for the tents and chairs is about \$2000. A discussion ensued about who will be helping out for various tasks related to Village Day. It was mentioned that no community award will be presented by the Area Council this year.

New Business

John Rice announced the Hyde Concert schedule, and that there will be events starting June 10 and extending to September. The Hyde bandstand will be in use for various activities, including movies on Friday evenings and several Wednesday concerts over the summer. The Hyde Community Center has pulled the permit from the City for use of the Hyde Playground for these events. The Area Council will continue to be a co-sponsor with the Hyde Community Center for all of these events. The Festival of the Arts will have a number of programs happening in Newton Highlands in mid-July.

Area Council Vice President Barbara Darnell commented that parking spaces have been removed to accommodate street-space for certain village businesses. She asked about parking meter revenues that have lost and how loss of these parking spaces may have an impact on other businesses which depend on parking availability. There are 2 parking spaces that are being used by both Buttonwood and Grape Leaf for restaurant outdoor seating that were removed from public use. John Rice stated that the use of these parking spaces by restaurants is being allowed as an ongoing Covid-related measure and that the use of these spaces for outdoor seating is not likely to be permanent.

Area Councilor Jeremy Freudberg noted that a 20-mph reduced speed zone was approved by Traffic Council on Lincoln Street between Walnut Street and Bowdoin Street.

A discussion ensued regarding the Officer English Garden, removal of plants in the garden, and future plans for the Officer English Garden. John Rice pointed out that originally, there was a small sign at this location indicating the Officer English Garden. A new sign is being planned to explain the history of the garden. Officer English was a police officer who had been assigned to Newton Highlands at some point during the past century. Area Councilor Bob Burke noted some historical facts regarding precincts, elections, and village history.

Area Councilor Robert Fizek brought up discussion regarding the case of Mike Colon, and the circumstances that led to his death in Newton Highlands in January 2021. Robert expressed his dissatisfaction and concern in how the situation was handled, and the delay and limited scope of the

investigation. Mr. Fizek then introduced a letter to mayor than was submitted by 4 city councilors, which was dated May 18, 2022, expressing their opinions on the matter, and read the letter for consideration by the Area Council. The full text of the letter can be found here:

<https://village14.com/2022/05/18/four-councilors-take-issue-with-mayors-statement-on-colin-shooting/>

Bob Burke expressed his thoughts on the letter and the way it was received by members of the public. John Rice noted that the investigation pertaining to this case was conducted by the District Attorney.

A question came up regarding the orange ribbons placed on trees along Lake Avenue near Crystal Lake. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic stated that he had heard that these trees are to be protected while the gas company is working to address the multiple natural gas leaks along Lake Avenue.

Administrative Items:

Approval of May Minutes: The draft minutes were submitted for review from the May 5th Area Council meeting. Area Council Secretary Srdjan Nedeljkovic reported on several amendments to the minutes made on pages 2 and 3 related to the Traffic Council meeting about Lincoln Street. A motion was made to approve the amended minutes. The minutes were approved 7:0.

Treasurer's Report: Area Council Treasurer Groot Gregory reported that the Area Council has spent \$2000 for Village Day thus far, with more spending to come. Hopefully income will be coming in as well!

Upcoming Meetings: The Area Council is intending to meet in July and August. Area Council Vice President Barbara Darnell is planning to invite Isaac Prizant, the City Traffic Engineer, for a discussion about a traffic study that was done in Newton Highlands. Area Councilor Jeremy Freudberg mentioned that he will contact the city's GIS person to update maps of the Area Council service area. John Rice made a few reflections on the history of the Hyde School, and some other historical tidbits.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.