

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Meeting Minutes, December 3, 2020

Area Council members:

Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdjan Nedeljkovic, Larry Rosenberg, Amanda Theunissen (not present), Amy Wayne

Ex Officio:

Bill Humphrey

Guests:

Sonya McNight, Carol Carroll, Alicia Bowman (City Councilor), Kathy Pillsbury, Mark Shooman, Lisa Gordon, Dennis Rieske, John Rice, Rebecca Camargo (Newton Housing), Christine Long (Newton Housing), Alan Schlesinger, Julia Malakie (City Councilor), Robert Fizek, Ned Crecelius, Hal Lichtin, Kathleen Kouril Grieser

Meeting called to order at 7:35 pm. Srdjan Nedeljkovic taking minutes. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin presiding. It was noted that former Area Councilor Bruce Blakely has resigned from the Area Council due to moving away from Newton. The meeting was held using Zoom videoconferencing technology due to the Covid-19 health crisis.

1149-1151 Walnut Street Proposal

Talanian Realty is proposing to construct a 4-story, 48 feet high, 26-unit apartment building with first floor retail at 1149-1151 Walnut Street, replacing a single story building at that site. Area Council President Lichtin noted that there is now a new proposal for the design of the building. A 5-foot setback is being proposed between the church property and the new building, which was previously a zero foot setback. The building is now proposed to have a flat roof instead of a pitched roof. The building height is being reduced from 48 feet to 44 feet. Balconies and windows are being placed on the north side. In earlier plans, this façade on the north side had had been a blank wall, and then a patterned wall. Internal changes have been made to increase the size of some of the studios from 480 square feet to 540 square feet on the 3rd and 4th floor. The small studio apartments on the second floor have not been changed. Area Council President Lichtin stated that he had received a call from Ned Crecelius from the Christian Science Church that the Church has developed additional alternative plans that they will be sharing with the developer and the community at a later time.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic discussed his concerns with the new design compared to the prior version. He noted that the scale and massing of the building seems to be off in the new design. The earlier design had a variety of shapes that softened the appearance of the building and helped integrate the building into the Highlands streetscape. This has been replaced by a monotonous uniformity. There is no longer a "base, middle, and top" to the building. All the windows are the

same size. The lintels have disappeared. The top floor looks larger. The proportions are off. The variation between the elements has been reduced, making it appear as a single structure.

Also, the flat roof is inconsistent with the surrounding properties. Why not respect the continuity of the gabled and sloping roofs that characterize the village? It now looks like a "Big Box" version of the prior design.

Dennis Rieske, an architect who has participated as a member of historical commissions in the past, stated that he has reviewed these plans and he agrees that this new plan is not consistent with the nearby Newton streetscape. The design violates many rules that are typically followed by historical commissions in evaluating design. Mr. Rieske feels that the new design is totally unacceptable. Mr. Rieske noted that he had previously sent a few suggestions to the developer and but that his input has not been taken into consideration. In general, Mr. Rieske supports the prior version of the design more than the current version.

Area Councilor Bob Burke added to those comments in favor of the prior, more traditional design. Mr. Burke mentioned that he had supported this project despite some of the problems with zoning, parking and other issues. He also felt that with the prior design, the project would serve as a good example of how historic concepts could be integrated into new projects. He had hoped that this project would set a precedent for appropriate new development in village centers, and thus it is vitally important to maintain the prior design. Bob mentioned that he feels that 9 out of 10 people in the neighborhood would agree with him and support the prior design. Area Councilor Burke concluded by stating that the new design dehumanizes the project and the village. He expressed hope we can make our way back to the first design.

Kathy Pillsbury agreed that she much preferred the more traditional design. She wondered if making new units on the top floors larger may have led to there being a flat roof in the new design. Ms. Pillsbury noted that although some of the proposed apartments are indeed small, there are other "microunit" developments elsewhere with even smaller housing units. She stated that otherwise, this location is a great place for a building of this size.

Area Councilor Amy Wayne agreed that she preferred the previous design and hopes that the developer will consider going back to a more traditional design. She expressed hope that the adjacent church and the developer can come up with a design that moves back to the traditional design from an aesthetic standpoint. Dennis Rieske pointed out that based on his work in the past, the city of Newton needs to do more robust design review, which is a process that he is used to seeing and participating in as an architect.

Councilor Alicia Bowman commented that she likes both the previous design and that she understands the genesis of creating the new design for the proposed building. She noted that there are nearby flat roof buildings on Lincoln Street that are lovely. A flat roof with a cornice at this site could look historic and fit in nicely. She noted that although she also likes pitched roofs, a flat roof may not conflict with other rooflines at this location. Councilor Bowman believes that it is important for this project to get built, and that the 26 units that are part of the proposed development will be an affordable alternative and nice boost to Newton Highlands, while being located next to the MBTA transit station.

Mr. Hal Lichtin stated that he is going to be contrarian on the issue of design. Hal stated that the traditional design looked “fake” and more “massive” to him, and that the white paneled separation between the two main building blocks looked like an unattractive fill in. Although the newer plans for the building may appear more bland, the building does not look more massive. Mr. Lichtin noted that it would be nice to see more detailing of the building facade, and that the newer plans need more interest and variety. Overall, Mr. Hal Lichtin feels that a Victorian design doesn’t always work.

Local architect Robert Fizek made additional comments on the building design. He feels that he is becoming more friendly with the earlier design. One of the reasons that it is harder to compare the two designs is that the views of the facades that have been provided are not the same scale. The position from where the view was taken has an effect on how the massing of the building is perceived. Mr. Fizek inquired if there will be a restriction on short-term rental use? It was noted that the City of Newton has a short-term rental ordinance. City Councilor Alicia Bowman noted that the short-term ordinance will apply to this property, and that a renter cannot rent and then re-rent a unit as a rental property. The proposed project will have only rental properties. Based on the square footage of the apartments, these will likely be a more naturally affordable housing option. City Councilor Bowman again expressed her opinion that a development like this should be supported as it will enhance the Newton Highlands village and will provide more housing near the village center.

Area Council President Lichtin stated that he is glad to see that the new design has now been modified to include a side setback, which had been a concern. We should recognize that the developer has made this change that had been requested. Nathaniel stated that he has no opinion if the building has a flat or pitched roof, and stated that either version is fine. He did acknowledge that more could be done to improve the architectural design on the new plans.

Carol Carroll asked about the interior arrangements for the subsidized units that may be required to get a building permit waiver due to size issues. A brief review of the plans ensued. Some of the studio apartments on the third and fourth floor have been increased in size. City Councilor Alicia Bowman noted that the Fair Housing Committee will be evaluating the plans for the proposed subsidized units, and they will be meeting next month.

Robert Fizek noted his support on the accommodation by the developer of the additional side setback. He wondered if the former design could conform with the new setback. It would be an ideal compromise if the former design could be accommodated with the 5-foot side setback from the Church property. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell also expressed support for having the 5-foot side setback and the addition of windows and balconies on the north side facade. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic supported Robert Fizek’s compromise proposal to maintain the prior historical design while including the side setback.

City Councilor Bill Humphrey stated that some of the elements from the new plans may reflect tradeoffs between one priority and another. It may not be possible to have a traditional design with a pitched roof and also maintain a side setback for example. Area Councilor Bob Burke expressed hope that we could move to a plan that is a reasonable compromise between the traditional building design and the new plans with the setback. He hopes that the opinions expressed tonight could move the developer and the Church towards a better agreement.

Dennis Rieske noted that he had previously proposed a revision of the original design and shown how the developer could consolidate the building features, move away from the abutter, and still retain all the architectural features of the prior design. Mr. Rieske believes that these kinds of ideas could be incorporated into a new design going forward. He noted that the concern about the new building casting shadows to the abutting property will not differ based on either version of the plans, or whether the building setback is zero feet or 5 feet. Lighting on the church property will be virtually the same either way. The flat roof of the new design may make lighting worse. As an architect, Mr. Rieske pointed out that in looking at the Stevens building, carrying the line of the cornice to the new development was architecturally consistent, but that this feature is now completely gone. The current plans are totally unacceptable from a historical perspective. Mr. Rieske noted that to the rear of the building, there could be a rearrangement of components. He expressed a desire that there should be a more cooperative process between developers and the city to come up with a better design. So far that level of cooperation has not been shown.

City Councilor Bowman responded that the builder has already received input from multiple sources, including the Urban Design Commission. Eventually, the Land Use Committee at City Council will provide additional feedback. Overall, Councilor Bowman believes that the project will be an improvement on the site, and that the project will bring value to the city. In contrast, many other proposals that come before City Council are to build a 5000 – 6000 square foot home with a three-car garage.

Attorney for the developer, Alan Schlesinger, spoke and expressed appreciation to the Area Council for considering this project. The plan before us is a direct response to requests to address the side yard issue. Mr. Schlesinger noted that changes in design to the north face of the project are in direct response to what was requested. The pitched roof was a casualty of the building setback being expanded by 5 feet. The developer has also tried to address concerns of the Urban Design Commission. Ultimately, the final decision about the proposed development will be in the hands of the City Council.

Hyde School Oak Tree

Christine Long and Rebecca Carmago from the Newton Housing Authority joined the meeting. The old Oak Tree at the Hyde School on Lincoln Street was removed after a large branch from the tree fell during a recent storm. The storm split a branch of the oak tree, damaging the canopy of one of the buildings. Afterwards, it was decided that the oak tree was rotting. The tree warden determined that the tree should be removed as a safety measure and to protect property. Ms. Long noted that all such site work is the responsibility of Newton Housing, so they made the determination to remove the entire tree. Some other trees were also removed. Currently, the Housing Authority is considering reconstructing the parking lot. There are plans to redo the landscaping and replace some of the shrubs. There is also a proposal to increase on-site parking. The additional parking is primarily needed for staff, who have grown in numbers. Staff otherwise have limited options for parking, as the local street parking is restricted to only 2 hours, and many staff drive to the site and cannot use public transit.

Area Council President Lichtin requested that the landscape design plan is presented for review at a subsequent Area Council meeting. Ms. Long replied that she would be glad to have community input. As the construction manager for the project, and the person who is responsible for capital improvements for Newton Housing, Ms. Long noted that neighborhood input can be helpful in making a project better, and stated that she appreciates the input.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic stated that he appreciated Ms. Long's concern about parking issues. However, city policies have been orienting towards addressing climate change, providing alternatives to auto use, reducing parking requirements, increasing green space, and reducing impervious surfaces that lead to runoff and flooding. Newton is engaging in a strong effort to do our part to combat climate change and increase equity in our city. Therefore, we need to reorient our priorities to these new realities Plans for adding additional parking should be aborted.

Area Councilor Nedeljkovic feels that there are great opportunities to increase green space at the Hyde complex, remove unnecessary asphalt, and that alternatives should be considered so that additional on site parking is not needed at this site.

Rebecca Camargo from Newton Housing Authority stated that the housing program at the Hyde is a unique program. The Hyde building requires that each person in the building is in an accessible unit. Many residents require patient care assistant (PCA) services, and there is occasionally a need for ambulance services. Parking needs are now higher than in the past because there is additional staff and many of them are not residents of Newton.

Robert Fizek stated that in the creation of the parking circle in the past, questions were raised about what was necessary to protect the old oak tree. Paving all around the tree's root structure may have hastened the tree's demise. There is a great sensitivity to what happened to the tree. There is a feeling that community concerns should be taken into account as mitigation for losing the tree. Robert suggested that other methods should be considered to allocate parking for staff, such as developing a parking sticker program, allowing some staff parking in the municipal lot, and allowing extended parking on certain local streets.

Ms. Carmago pointed out that that the Newton Housing Authority has access to only 2 parking spaces, and that PCAs would not be able to obtain parking passes under the current system. When Newton Housing Authority had a conversation with the city's traffic commission, there was a recommendation that more employees should use public transportation. But many of the PCAs come from out of town. To park on nearby public streets which have 2-hour parking limits, staff have to move their cars every two hours. Tenant parking has to be allocated on-site at the parking lot, and some tenants are utilizing more than one spot. Currently, there are 14 people living at the Hyde with families, and there are 23 employees who work for Newton housing.

It was also pointed out that Newton Housing Authority's main administrative offices are located at the Hyde complex. Some apartments have been converted for office space and into Executive Offices. Conducting administrative work and office function at this site adds a level of additional employees who need parking access.

Carol Carroll suggested that some parking spaces for employees could be added to local streets. Councilor Bowman will follow up to see what the city can do to create more on street parking spaces for housing employees as part of the Newton Highlands parking plan. There may currently be parking passes available to be purchased. A process similar to what was done for schools to create on street parking spaces could be implemented in the Highlands for employees of Newton Housing. Currently, there are just 14 residents and families at the Hyde, of whom 5 residents have cars. One of the vehicles is a van that takes up more than one parking space. Because the Newton Housing Authority's main office is located at this site, residents come to conduct business here from all over the city.

City Councilor Julia Malakie found out from Ms. Long that if the tree had not come down, the plan for increasing on site parking would not have been put forward. However, Ms. Camargo and Ms. Long both expressed concern about the current parking situation on site. There are sometimes many cars and buses at this location, and there are now several new employees. When parking capacity on site is reached, parking accommodation for PCA's is limited and there is no non-time limited parking within walking distance.

City Councilor Malakie noted that concerning the loss of the old tree, she would like to see a new tree canopy at this site. She hopes that the tree will be replaced with another tree that can provide a large canopy, like a tulip tree. Councilor Malakie is concerned that trees are considered to be "in the way" for adding more parking to sites. Robert Fizek mentioned that he supports Councilor Malakie's suggestion that we need to add to the tree canopy at this site. Even if the small circle where the old oak tree is paved over for more parking, losing this small site will not provide much benefit for parking or for transportation access to the site. Mr. Fizek wondered if some of the Housing Authority's administrative work could be done virtually, such that clientele would not burden the area with parking issues.

Area Councilor Nedeljkovic confirmed with John Rice that sections of Lincoln Street between Woodward Street and Bowdoin Street currently allow on-street parking on one side from 9 am to 11 am, and then parking is allowed on the opposite side of the street from 11 am onwards until 7 am the next day. Therefore, there is 20 hour unlimited parking on one side of Lincoln Street each day that is within easy walking distance to the Hyde, and perhaps some of these spaces could be allocated to employees who work at the Hyde housing complex.

MBTA Schedule Changes

With lower ridership due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and loss of revenue, the MBTA is proposing to eliminate the Route 52 bus from Watertown to Dedham, and to cut service on the Route 59 bus about 20%-30%. For the Green line, there is a proposal to increase headways by 2 minutes at peak times and 3 minutes off peak. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin expressed concerns especially about the changes in bus service. Once it is gone, we may never get the Route 52 bus back. For the Route 59 bus, it already runs on a limited service, and if it is cut back further, it will be harder to use and ridership will continue to fall. There is a concern for eventual elimination.

Srdjan Nedeljkovic commented that the problem is a broader issue of tying MBTA revenue to ridership, which chronically leads to financial shortfalls for the MBTA since fare collection can

never meet expenses. A system of local assessments could correct these structural deficits. The current proposals to reduce service are not unexpected because ridership has been very low. Carol Carroll asked if our transportation planner has been engaged with the MBTA, especially since the City is talking about transit-oriented development, and loss of MBTA service will threaten this entire concept of promoting growth near transit. City Councilor Bowman noted that city staff have been involved in requesting no loss of service, and the mayor spoke at the public hearing on this issue that was conducted by the MBTA. The mayor has come out to say that this loss of transit service will be very difficult for Newton. Councilor Bowman pointed out that the MBTA evaluated changes in service based on the ability of a community's population to drive and on the usage of the T. For the bus and the commuter rail, we are in the lower usage category, and people who use these lines have the ability to drive. For the Green line, due to higher ridership, the service will be maintained somewhat more. The City of Newton has made a point that people who work in Newton but don't live in Newton will have difficulty getting to work. We are building or have built 2000 units that are or will be dependent on regular access to transit. Councilor Bowman stated that if we are going to address the housing crisis, we need a dependable transit system.

Area Councilor Nedeljkovic again mentioned that if we want a robust transit system in Newton, somebody will need to pay for it. If Newton provided the funding to maintain transit service, then we could have much better access to transit. If everyone in Newton paid the equivalent of an annual transit pass, then there would be funding to improve the system and everyone could have access to an improved system. Councilor Bowman noted that changes would be required in state laws to enable that kind of funding mechanism. Area Councilor Bob Burke noted that the proposed cuts in service will happen at the same time that people may be ready to get back to on site work. Bob suggested that the MBTA should keep the service going the rest of the upcoming year. Once a vaccine for the Covid-19 virus is available, people will feel safe about riding the transit. Bob believes that the MBTA should hold off another year before they make any cuts. People will come back to riding the T once the virus is under control.

Winter Holiday Contest

Area Councilor Amy Wayne proposed having a Newton photo contest with a theme of "Winter Wonderland" for January, February and March. She is thinking of having 3 photos selected in the contest per week, and giving winners a \$5 gift card to businesses in Newton Highlands. The photos will be posted on the Area Council website, and winners will be given recognition. There would be a \$15 expense per week to support this project for January, February, and March, so the total cost would be about \$200. Photo winners and participating businesses could be posted on Instagram for additional publicity. Carol Carroll expressed support for this idea, as did Srdjan Nedeljkovic. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell gave a lot of credit to Area Councilors Amy Wayne and Amanda Theunissen for doing all of the work to organize the contest. A discussion ensued about whether to conduct the contest every week or every two weeks and increase the amount of the prizes. Srdjan Nedeljkovic made a motion to allocate the requested funding of \$201. Barbara Darnell seconded it. All in favor: 7 yes, 0 no.

Area Council banner

Area Councilor Wayne noted that Area Councilor Theunissen had talked with Ingrid who designed the recently mailed Newton Highlands Area Council postcards to develop a design for a banner. The designer said that she will work with the Area Council to provide a favorable price. Area Council Treasurer Groot Gregory asked what is the total expenditure for the banner, including design and printing. Amy mentioned that the printing shop at the high school may be a good resource for printing. The banner proposal will be discussed again next month at our Area Council meeting once we have an update about price.

Local and City Updates:

Zoning Redesign

Nathaniel Lichtin reported that there were 275 members attending the Planning Department's Zoning Redesign virtual meeting last evening, including about 250 members of the public. There were 170 people registered for today's meeting. At the meeting last night, city staff had an introductory talk about the history of zoning, and the goals that the Planning Department and City Council had developed and approved for the zoning redesign community engagement process. Participants then went to breakout rooms of about 27 people. Staff asked participants about their concerns related to zoning. The meeting presentation will be on the city's website tomorrow. Comments made by participants will also be posted. There is a survey on the zoning redesign page available for people who want to provide their opinion about the process. The next steps for city staff are to collect all the feedback and to continue to refine the community engagement process. Area Council President Lichtin noted that there were many city staff and city councilors participating in last night's session.

Area Councilor Amy Wayne noted that she attended last night's meeting. Other than the general information provided, Ms. Wayne stated that the only concrete information given was that up to 6 units could be developed on certain residential properties, and each unit had to have at least 1200 SF of area. Nathaniel Lichtin stated that the 6 unit developments would be for a multifamily conversion of a very large house. City Councilor Bill Humphrey mentioned that city council has not yet voted on any aspect of new zoning. Bill noted that only a small number of properties would be eligible for 6-unit conversions. Even conversions from single family home to duplex would affect a small percentage of houses. A property owner will not be able to convert any property in the city to 6 units.

City Councilor Alicia Bowman mentioned another item of discussion is the proposal to be able to create 2 family houses throughout the city, not just in multifamily zones. An economic analysis for this proposal has not yet been done. Conversion from a one to a two-family home is not something that can happen everywhere in Newton and will be based on factors such as lot and unit size, and it is not likely to happen quickly. Both proposals for 2 family conversions and 6-unit conversions are meant to provide flexibility for residents to move into Newton and for people to be able to stay in their homes as their age. Amy Wayne stated that if a homeowner already cannot afford to live in their own single family home, the homeowner won't likely have the funds to convert to a 2 family. Developers will step in and purchase these kinds of properties.

Kathleen Kouril Greiser shared some thoughts regarding the zoning redesign process. She had attended the recent zoning redesign meeting and after the meeting attended another meeting with people who had been in breakout rooms, and compared notes. She also spoke with people who were in different breakout rooms during the zoning meeting today. In most of the breakout rooms, Kathleen stated that there was opposition to aspects of zoning reform. Some people questioned when did the City Council ever vote to affirm the need to change policies related to zoning, and questioned the legitimacy of the process. It was noted that initial efforts to revise the zoning code started with proposals by architects and builders, rather than a poll of residents. Kathleen noted that the goals for zoning reform were not clearly identified, and the decision to go forward with whole-scale zoning reform was only voted by the ZAP committee. Kathleen expressed concern that vision plans for certain parts of the city that have been adopted have been retrofitted as justification to support the new zoning proposal. Some finance minded people have asked for the data that supports why we need to overhaul our zoning. Kathleen noted that many questions remain unanswered: What is the data about the number of units that have expanded throughout the city in the last decade, and has that improved housing affordability? What has been the effect of recent growth on Newton's carbon footprint? Do we have data to show if new growth has increased socioeconomic or ethnic diversity in the city? We need to conduct a fiscal impact study about how new growth and development will affect Newton fiscally. Some have expressed concerns that new growth leading to higher density is raising housing prices and displacing lower income people. Why is it necessary to replace zoning with form-based codes, when there are specific problems to address like front facing garages? Ms. Greiser stated that there seems to be little concern in the zoning redesign process about how zoning changes may affect Newton's current residents who may be displaced by this process, and whose homes may be displaced by luxury developments. Kathleen concluded by saying that zoning redesign creates lots of concerns, including potential impact on schools, the city's fiscal debt, and city services.

Srdjan Nedeljkovic asked if there have been any single-family homes that have been replaced recently by two-family attached houses where the two family homes were more affordable than the house they replaced. Also, Area Councilor Nedeljkovic remarked that the city previously seemed to focus on revisions in the zoning code in commercial and mixed use centers, rather than focusing on increasing densification in residential neighborhoods. Perhaps the city should consider refocusing first on zoning overlay districts in our village centers and commercial areas, where new mixed use development may be more acceptable, rather than an overhaul of residential zoning.

Kathy Pillsbury noted that there was a difference of opinion about the direction that zoning reform might take, but that change will occur invariably in our communities whether or not the zoning code is changed. Ms. Pillsbury expressed support for more naturally affordable housing like mixed-use housing in village centers.

City Councilor Alicia Bowman noted that the City Council had previously reviewed zoning goals and voted to create a task force to look at zoning reform, and then voted to support the process of zoning reform moving forward. As far as the question of whether the public should vote on a zoning proposal when it is created, the City Council cannot conduct such a vote based on rules of City Charter, but a vote can be called by citizen referendum. Councilor Bowman believes that people really need to be having conversations about the goals for zoning reform, and to align goals with housing and transportation plans. There is a diversity of concerns. Some people are worried about

whether a two-family house will be built next to them, whereas other people are more concerned about issues such as climate change. Councilor Bowman noted that there are many conflicting goals and there will be a series of discussions within the community regarding any recommendations and changes to zoning. Councilor Bowman feels very strongly that sitting still is not a good option, as not changing the zoning code will not resolve issue of housing faced by seniors and young people, and not address climate change or socioeconomic diversity. Zoning reform gives us the opportunity to work on all of these goals.

Special Election:

Newton will have two special elections to fill two city council vacancies. The Newton Highlands Area Council will participate in organizing debates for candidates with Peter Bruce from the Newtonville Area Council. A date for the special election has not yet been set. City Councilor Humphrey stated that the city is waiting for the state to give Newton permission to conduct voting by mail. The current authorization to vote by mail expires on December 31. The election date for the Special Election may be some time before March 31. In the past election this year, 2/3 of the ballots cast were by mail. Bob, Barbara, and Amy will help coordinate the debates with Peter Bruce.

Fire Pits:

Concerns have been expressed about people burning wood in fire pits. Newton does not allow the burning of any solid fuel in an outdoor fire pit. An outdoor fireplace is permitted, but a permit is needed from the fire department. Use of a fire pit with burning logs is not allowed in Newton. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic asked if there is a difference between using a fireplace and a fire pit. Nathaniel Lichtin mentioned that he believes that in a fire pit, there is not good combustion and that particulates are larger.

Northland on Needham Street:

The urban design commission is reviewing the plans for buildings at this site for consistency with the approved special permit. The city agendas for their meetings and others are on the City Council webpage.

Land Use item: 66 Winchester Street

There will be an upcoming Land Use Committee hearing regarding 66 Winchester Street, which is the Boston Showcase building. The owners are proposing a parking lot redesign, and the matter will be going before Land Use on Tuesday, December 8. The proposal calls for a redesign of parking spaces in the front of the building. The parking spaces are proposed to remain in the front setback. This will affect how people access the site from Winchester Street. There is a proposed secondary use at this property for a fencing studio on the second floor. Some have expressed concern on whether parking in front of the building is appropriate given changes that are planned to Winchester Street to encourage pedestrian access. It is not clear if it will be safe to park in front of the building in the future. There is parking currently available in the rear of the building. In that same part of Winchester Street, Area Councilor Barbara Darnell noted that there is a lack of adequate sidewalk next to the cemetery, and that this area sometimes remains unplowed in the winter. City Councilor

Alicia Bowman noted that this section of roadway will be reconstructed as part of the Needham Street project and there will be a multi-use path for walking and biking on the cemetery side of the street.

Lighting in Newton Highlands Village Center:

John Rice spoke with Mayor Fuller regarding economic development and how the Highlands village center would be more welcoming if there was better lighting. John discussed the possibility of putting lights on the trees in the winter. He met with Josh Morse and Carol Stapleton, and they concluded that there was not enough external electrical power to light the trees. However, there is an electrical outlet that has enabled lights at the Officer English garden. John is planning to get solar lights that project snowflakes on buildings. This will brighten buildings in the Highlands to the Hyde Center. Barbara Darnell mentioned that any lights that are on trees need to come off each year. John is planning to talk with building owners about the possibility of additional lighting fixtures that could be in the village center.

Administrative Items:

Approval of November Minutes: The draft minutes were submitted for review from the November 5th Area Council meeting. No changes or revisions were recommended. The minutes were approved 7:0.

Treasurer's Report: Area Council Treasurer Groot Gregory had submitted a monthly update. Nathaniel Lichtin asked if there were any questions. There were none.

New Business:

There was no additional new business to discuss.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 P.M.