



Newtonville Area Council - Meeting Minutes
Thursday, __June__29__, 2023 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: Online via Zoom

Attendees:

NAC: Jennifer Bentley (President), Carolyn Gabbay (Vice President), Dana D’Agostino (Treasurer), Nancy Greenberg (Secretary), Timothy LeBlanc, Laura De Veau, Ralph Abele, Harvey Young, Aline Sammut

City Government: Tarik Lucas, Judith Malakie, Emily Norton

Public: Approximately __12__ members of the public

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

1. Newtonville Village Center Zoning Survey Results

a. Survey results distribution

Laura notes Carolyn Gabbay, Ralph Abele, Peter Harrington

Laura shared her presentation ([doc here](#))

62% completion rate

534 submitted

277 from Newtonville catchment

Average Information (1-5): generally a 3

Highlights

Participation – 79% ward 1, 2,3; 72% in Newton for at least 15 years, 76% subscribe to Mayor’s newsletter

Engagement Gap: 28% in Newton 0 – 15 years

Height matters to people more than type of resident

3 stories generally OK – most popular (up to 4 stories on Washington st)

Austin St – 3 stories

Deal with heavy traffic

Housing supply shortage

Parking and Use

84% visit small business

67% drive

60% use retail lots (? Use of star market lot)

Common ground

70% oppose “by right” of 30,000 sq ft

Review of feedback

Further considerations

Broaden engagement across communities

Act with lens of trust building

Parking and transit – need to ask more questions in a future survey. The mbta came up several times with lack of reliability, not ADA compliance, lack of bus stops

26% gap in sentiment that there is not enough market rate housing for purchase

Feedback: Affordable housing, keep character, lack of affordable housing, Environment of Trust

Continue to do surveys

Newsletters (only 1241 reader subscription across newsletters)

Parking and transit

Concern about density

Concern about traffic, parking

Get rid of parking all together

Threat – reduction in service, does not meet ADA compliance

Questions

Harvey – on building height.

(Carolyn) Overall 70% against, 30% love it. Confusion of the MBTA rules/impact. One response said that the survey was bias, others said that it was objective. Concern of affordable housing for working class. A lot of skepticism that developers will address affordable housing. Ability to downsize in town – doesn't seem like there are opportunities to do this. Seniors have no place to go.

Norton – thanked the folks who worked on the survey. In the survey, this was about the Newtonville Center rezoning and deferred the public transit.

MaryLee (from Newton Center) – took the survey and appreciates that there is a Newtonville council. Questions: 1. 0-15 year vs 15 or more – seems broad categorization. Can this be made narrower? Survey had broken it out more.

May be interesting to look closer at the demographics. Laura to analyze more, but people who were here 20+ years were more engaged. 2. If additional surveys are planned, would be interesting to see difs between children in school vs no kids in school; how do people use mbta?

Naomi (Newton Center, on the Newtonville side) – wonderful group, inspiring. Very troubled that zoning is reduced to building height and price of the apartment. We need to look at more, such as quality of life. No equity built into any of the buildings. Renters are being taken advantage of. Need to look at what seniors need, such as supermarket distance. Buildings need certain amenities. Has not heard what businesses will be on ground floors. Business people have not been consulted. Green and open space not discussed. Parks are trampled. Erosion, degradation of woods. Laura noted

that open comment period is open and Naomi, all can still enter their comments.

Aline – Understands the tight timeframe, wish we had more responses. Per Carolyn – over 500 unique respondents compare favorably to the planning departments survey of 1000, with many duplicates. They did not filter for duplicates, whereas we did.

MaryLee commented that zap committed to keep the public hearing open into September. Laura suggests that this be informed at the newsletter.

Lucas – will this info be on the NAC website page? Laura – it is up for debate. The last question asks if the survey respondents wants to be included. These folks will be added to the Newsletter. Tarik recommends giving a 1 page summary.

Jennifer: We should give more than an executive summary to the councilors.

b. Future survey ideas

More detail on

Quality of life questions (which businesses?)

Transit

Carolyn notes that there is some interest in other councils using Survey Monkey and our questions, but modified.

MBTA survey – commuter use, upgrade of services may improve usage.

Timing of Survey – use Village Day to launch it and involve everyone.

Jennifer received some comments back that asked for paper surveys (we don't have the money to do postage)

Maybe set up a booth at high traffic locations.

Carolyn notes that on a busy day in the Newtonville, she watched traffic, people coming and going from various businesses, kids after school – she did not see that the village centers are withering. Storefronts seems fairly busy. Developers are waiting this out. We should follow up on inventory of storefronts and underpin the message that the villages need to be revitalized, as they already are. Newtonville does not need to be “up-zoned”. MaryLee reports that the Charles River Chamber of Commerce (tends to look out for the businesses).

Naomi notes that the large senior center is going up soon. A huge building on a small lot.

2. Newtonville Beautification Initiative

(Aline had to leave, but she was helping distribute signs to beautify Newtonville). Some signs have become run down. She wants a campaign to get new signs for 50.00. Jennifer thinks this is fine. Carolyn seconds, all in favor.

3. Discussion of other issues/projects in Newtonville

Councilor Norton – there is a kiosk in Bram Way with a pad lock. It was installed by Scott and it is supposed to be electricity or solar, but it is not working. Emily asked that it be removed. Scott not agreeing. Brought in the city, and Scott will move it to his side of the property.

Jennifer asked about trash receptacles. We were supposed to get more, but the city reversed itself on the new system. “The Big Belly machines are much improved, and we are going with new units as opposed to extending the existing ones that the company was looking to “upgrade in place”. When

we went through another summer with the piloted open style receptacles our team saw the capacity difference as a significant shortcoming, particularly when compared to the compactors when they can be fully utilized (hold 3x capacity as a non-compactor). As you may recall, we were not able to utilize the full compactor capability because the waste was too heavy for our staff. This is one area where a significant design change in their new model will enable us to handle fully compacted waste. There are other examples of improvements such as the foot pedals that will enable hands-free use and a handle design change to keep rodents from getting in-out.

Here is a memo I sent recently the city council explaining the changes and how they have overcome the concerns previously raised: NEWTON PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING (newtonma.gov)”

Piano – need volunteers/caretakers to unwrap in the morning and wrap in the evening and when it rains. Link - <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c084cacac2eabfcc25-piano#/>

4. Administrative Issues

a. Village Day planning update

Dana: going well, on schedule. Picked up more local sponsors, have about 22 and waiting to hear back from a few more. Vendor booths are almost sold out again. Likely to be sold out by next week. Will need to find more space. Tell people to go to Eventbrite, newtonville village day 2023 (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/newtonville-village-day-2023-vendor-booth-registration-tickets-489209086547>). Working on marketing materials (tee-shirts, posters, fliers, lawn sides). If any councilors want to sit in on the meetings, send Dana an email.

b. Approval of April meeting minutes

Approval of ___ May 2023_ meeting minutes

The draft minutes of the ___ May 2023 meeting having been circulated for review prior to the meeting, ___Jennifer_____ moved, ___Tim_____ seconded, and it was unanimous:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the ___May_____ 2023 NAC meeting.

Adjournment

At approximately __8:44___ PM, _____Jennifer_____ moved, __Carolyn___ seconded, and it was unanimously:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Greenberg

Secretary