

Waban Area Council Meeting
02/18/2021 7:30pm
Held via Zoom

WAC members: Chris Pitts, Rena Getz, Bob Jampol, Ronald Marcus, Sallee Lipshutz, Tom Elkind, Isabelle Albeck, Dinah Bodkin

Community Maureen O'Reilly Meagher, Alice Ingerson, Peter Bruce, Carol Todreas, Debra Waller, Loumona Petroff

City Councillors Andrea Downs, Susan Albright, Bill Humphrey

Burning Issues from the Community

Tim deChant: Nothing new from NWH.

Tom Elkind: 13 years ago a bike plan was presented to the city and nothing has come of it. Does City Council pay attention to bike issues when roads are being repaired? AD: yes. TE: bike accessibility was ignored when Angier was rebuilt. AD: Angier was rebuilt as bike plan was being developed so timing did not allow for recommendations of bike plan to be incorporated. AD is asking City Council for better sidewalk network and improved bike plan. TE: Beacon St bike lane is still not striped. TE: Is the process for input from cyclists adequate? AD: We should not take up more meeting time with this, let's discuss offline. RM asked if cyclists take responsibility for their own actions. Some discussion re helmet laws ensued. Newton has green bikes which are a mix of pedaling and electric power. Federal Climate Action Plan discussed at 02/17/20 meeting would inform discussions at the local level, specifically as they pertain to parity of all users on the city's streets.

Newtonville Area Council letter. CP read the letter out loud (http://www.wabanareacouncil.com/sites/default/files/A_NewVision_Letter.pdf). Mayor Fuller responded by email (<http://wabanareacouncil.com/sites/default/files/RAF%20response%20to%20NNAC%20letter%20on%20ZR%20process%20021121.pdf>). Newtonville Area Council will have a meeting with Mayor Fuller on April 15th to discuss the contents of the letter. Some discussion of the adopted Washington Street Visioning ensued and how that and similar processes could be incorporated into Comprehensive City Plan. AD: Outreach has been ongoing. Planning Department lost the staff that did specific neighborhood outreach but public information campaign has still been robust. General agreement that the processes did not result in a strong public understanding of the need for Comprehensive Zoning Reform.

CP read Mayor Fuller's email response which emphasizes community engagement and proposes meeting with NAC in person.

More discussion about the need for reform because neighborhoods are changing quickly, and in a way that most residents do not like. Some discussion of tweaking the Zoning Code rather than major reform. General agreement that community engagement has been lacking. Discussions of housing initiatives under Setti Warren, "listening sessions" held by Planning Department around town from 2016 forward. Many of those discussions became quite heated. Alice Ingerson recounted her experience serving on historic chapter of Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee. She stated that the many meetings held by the Planning Department between 2016 and 2018 on Zoning Redesign (plus a year long pause) created the impression to her that the public was ready for the actual technical aspects of Zoning Redesign.

Kathleen Hobson speaks of well attended meetings Dec 2 and 3 2020 Planning Department Community Engagement Events (via Zoom). Transcripts and videos of those events available

on Zoning Redesign website. Kathleen Hobson states that process as it currently exists should be allowed to move forward. Councillor Albright recaps the community engagement events that have occurred to this point. Discussion continues re staff turnover in the Planning Department, and various other missteps that have slowed the process or led to disengagement on the part of the public.

Motion to invite Mayor Fuller to next WAC meeting passed unanimously.

CP: Possibly create a working group within WAC to look at Zoning Redesign. SL: we must agree on what goals of zoning are.

WAC 2021 Goals and Endeavors. Debates this Sunday are at 300 attendees already. Let's plan on similar debates in November. That and Zoning may be enough for us to chew on. BJ: we should have a discussion on reopening the schools. SL: vaccinating teachers should be a priority; City Council should write a letter to the governor. Councillor Albright agreed to docket a Resolution for that item. All WAC members present voted in favor.

Racial Justice: IA: Based on her queries with the City's Law Department, banners or other forms of support can not be placed on city property.

WAC Support of Waban Businesses: Lisa Rodman (Barry's Deli) says they are facing very hard times. CP- uses newsletter to encourage residents to patronize local stores. SL: let's eat sandwiches from Barry's during our meetings.

December and January Minutes approved. January Minutes will include Maureen's email describing funding mechanisms for box steps.

Treasurer's Report Accepted.

Respectfully submitted by Dinah Bodkin

Feb 27 2021