

Waban Area Council
Meeting Minutes October 13 2002 7:30pm
Held via Zoom

WAC: Chris Pitts, Sallee Lipshutz, Isabelle Albeck, Drake McCabe, Dinah Bodkin, Rena Getz.

City Council: Bill Humphrey, Julia Malakie

Community: Lisa Monahan, MaryLee Belleville

Community Issues: IA states that Braeburn will be surrounding the golf course with fences. Braeburn gets a 75% on their property taxes because they are classified as “open space.” Tax break obligates them to allow the community to benefit from their presence in some way. Fencing off the property appears to violate that obligation. RG agreed that we would speak to all ward councillors and write a letter to Mayor Fuller expressing concern about this apparent violation. Those present unsure as to Braeburn’s actual legal obligation. Councillor Andrea Downs looking into whether there is an actual legal conflict. General agreement that we do not wish to take Braeburn into court over this matter. Motion passed that Rena and Isabelle would continue investigating legality of Braeburn’s situation and if necessary bring WAC’s objection to Mayor Fuller.

Village Center Zoning: Next ZAP meeting will be October 24 and there will be a presentation and discussion on preliminary mapping of the proposed new districts within village centers. Economic Development Commission sent a letter to City Council supporting districts as they are currently proposed. Waban Village Center has lowest village classification in the Pattern Book. Designation covers approximately 14 lots. Map showing fairly large number of historic properties in village center. Staples Craft is the only landmarked building. Library and Strong Block are individually listed on the National Register. RG gave examples of how, under current proposal, the “village center” buildings would change. Presentation based on exhibit at Newton Public Library and online, but RG gave concrete examples of how tall and much larger allowed structures would be. CP stated people in the community are getting concerned about new buildings and possible change to village center. Bill Humphrey has filed landmark nominations for Strong Building and Waban Hall.

Apartment buildings near post office were built by special permit but can be rezoned for a larger by right build. That would allow them to possibly be in partial fulfillment of obligations created under Governor Baker’s Community Economic Development Plan, the MBTA Communities Act.

“Planning for our Future” Presented by Liora Silkes, Newton’s Energy Coach. Addressed Newton’s climate goals and how individual citizens can help achieve those goals. The four main areas are weatherizing, transitioning to carbon free heating and cooling, electric vehicles and installing solar panels on one’s roof. For those not able to make significant physical changes to their homes, one can participate in the renewable energy economy by using Newton Power Choice. One can sign up to have various percentages of renewable energy in one’s electric mix. All Newton Power Choice’s options were cheaper than Eversource Basic Service throughout 2022. Another is renewable energy through community solar. SL raised the question of incentives for people to not demolish their homes, but to reuse and readjust existing material. LS stated that current programs are focussed on existing structures. She is not in the planning department but spoke of various sustainability requirements that ZAP has incorporated. Much of the building code is regulated at the state level and therefore not subject to local ordinances. Her presentation, and more, can be seen at newtonma.gov/4ourfuture.

“Updating Newton’s Tree Preservation Ordinance.” Presented by Julia Malakie, Ward 3 Councillor. With some modification, this is the presentation Julia gave to the Programs and Services Committee of the Newton City Council in September of 2022. The benefits of tree canopy were discussed, as was the advantages conferred by older trees, advantages that can not be replaced by new plantings. Examples of recent tree removals were shown, including one property in Waban in which over 900 years of tree age was removed in one day. Comparisons were shown between Julia’s and Emily Norton’s proposal (“City Council Proposal”) and Mayor Fuller’s proposal (Administration proposal). Although there are many areas of agreement, City Council proposal generally goes much further to protect existing tree canopy. Malakie and Norton proposed a tree removal moratorium until the new ordinance is in place. City Council will vote on proposed moratorium on Oct 17. CP showed photographs from Linda Plaut Festival of the Arts which was held on a very hot day in summer 2022. Trees gave musicians needed cool, shade and fresh air. Julia expects there will be a public hearing on both set of updates after the Programs and Services Committee reviews changes to the Tree Ordinance on Oct 19. Julia’s presentation can be seen at https://www.juliamalakie.org/uploads/5/6/7/3/56735139/tree_presentation_for_wac_101322.pdf

Administrative Matters: September Minutes Approved. Treasurer’s Report: unchanged.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

**Respectfully submitted by Dinah Bodkin
Nov 2 2022**