

Waban Area Council

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2017, 7:30pm

Members in Attendance: Joe Corkery, Sallee Lipshutz, Maureen Reilly Meagher, Andreae Downs, Rena Getz, Kathy Winters

City Officials: Chief of Police David MacDonald, Officer Paul Boyle, Office Lauren Dragoni (sp?), John Rice

Other attendees:

- 1) **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:31 pm**
- 2) **APPROVAL OF MARCH 9 MEETING MINUTES** - AD moves. CP seconds. Unanimously approved.
- 3) **WAC 2016 ANNUAL REPORT BY SECRETARY TO CITY** - RG moves to accept as amended. AD seconds. Unanimously approved.
- 4) **APPROVAL OF APRIL 13, 2017 TREASURER'S REPORT** - RG reports no changes. Balance is \$1747.53. AD moves to accept. JC seconds. Unanimously approved.
- 5) **BURNING ISSUES** - Barbara Kopans (?) of Manitoba Rd reports that she is concerned about the traffic light on Manitoba. Would like to see if could be blinkered or turned off after school hours or during the summer. It can take up to 2 full minutes to change even when there is no traffic on Beacon St. AD will ask at city hall.
- 6) **CONVERSATION WITH NEWTON'S CHIEF OF POLICE, DAVID MACDONALD** - Newton has the full complement (149) of police officers for the first time in a long time. Significant decline in police force over time from 180 in 1993 to 133 in 2013. Community businesses were surveyed that they were concerned because they didn't see police enough. Had only minimal staffing in the evenings. Need to establish a common rapport with the people that you serve. Public safety commission revisited staffing and agree that it needs to be revisited occasionally. Good thing is that with crime rate, don't need as many police officers. Every year since 2010, property crime rate has been going down.

No trends that are moving upwards in any of our neighborhoods. Want residents to develop a rapport with area officers. Not going to dictate how things are done geographically. Hope that there will be more ownership in the smaller areas. Want to develop the old-timey feeling that you used to see police on foot. First big analysis in 1980s of policing noted that police had lost touch with the people (in particular as a result of being in motor vehicles). Probably won't ever see somebody walking a beat in Waban Sq though. Have close affinity to Waban, lots of friends from here when growing up. Want to hear the concerns of Waban residents.

- a) **SL** - Are any police on bicycles. Paul Boyle states that he rides the bike for Newton all the time. Ride all over the city. Gives you the ability to remind residents of important issues in certain areas. Can get out from behind the windshield. Helps break the ice with community members. Bike gets him into a lot of places that he wouldn't normally be able to go. Have 17 or 18 officers that are certified on the bike. Don't normally send people out on the night shift unless there is a spree of break-ins.
- b) **SL** - do you think drop in crime is related to cameras? **DM** does think that drop in crime is related to technology. Usually most car breaks are attributable to a single individual or certain groups of individuals. But also worried that drugs are ridiculous cheap. Heroin is cheaper today than it was back in the 1990s.
- c) **CP** - does technology allow you to be more effective or accomplish more as a single officer or as team? **PB** states that laptop in cruiser does save a lot of time. Can do a lot of research right in the car without having to go back to the station. Technology isn't a replacement for manpower. It's more of a marriage. Supply of manpower is what keeps crime down. **CP** - is technology up to date? **DM** - Yes. Life cycle is around 3 years. Expect to turnover most computers in the fall. New security cameras in City Hall?
- d) **CM(?)** - There is a drive in the city to make the community more urbanized. Wondering if police are looking into that. **DM** - keeping attention on the conversations. When you have more people in a smaller area that don't know each other, you do tend to have more crime. Used to be a big problem when Avalon Apartments first opened. **NL** - why less crime now? **DM** - it's often quite cyclical. A

while back there was a problem with prostitution on Needham St and that attracted additional crime around it.

- e) **SL** - recently when to traffic and safety commission where BY asked the city to ask DCR to reduce the speed limit on Quinobequin Rd. So likely we will have 25 mph speed limit on that road. But if there is no enforcement, the speed limit doesn't matter. **DM** - Speed limit on that road there is 30 MPH, DCR didn't put those 25 MPH signs there, but commissioner is planning to adopt that. Very aware that it is a cut through. As a general rule of thumb, don't spend a lot of time enforcing on state roads (in part because it is not their jurisdiction). Will sometimes patrol side streets to be visible. Can write citations on Quinobequin Rd. If you don't see cruiser there for some time, call the traffic office and Capt Anastasia will put it on directed patrol. Have never seen a state police car there. Can also call state police in Framingham to have them patrol too. Will pay more attention to Quinobequin.
- f) **SL** - people have asked why don't we have police patrolling at schools during drop-off. Have been told that was because that was due to shift change. **DM** - as an example at Bowen School. There is a new principal there this year. Previous principal made sure that the blue zones were enforced and that parents were aware of them. Crossing guards available and if not available there will be a police officer. Never had a problem last year. This year people have gotten more comfortable with violating the blue zones. Have gotten more involved as a result. This summer going to need to be more involved with schools and school department. Have heard that new school likely won't have adequate parking. Going to have to worry about traffic issues there. It's hard to hire part-time crossing guards. Have to backfill with traffic officers when not available. When Zervas opens they will be monitoring the situation actively. Hopefully, they will be like chicken little and nothing will be wrong.
- g) **MRM** - can you give overview of engagement with police and other social services? **DM** - Have a great rapport with senior center, have full-time elder affairs officer. Works closely with HHS in City Hall. Full-time domestic violence officer. Have jail diversion clinician on staff (via state grant but will become permanent position when grant runs out). Very useful in helping police understand mental health

issues. **PB** - have evolved from “cops & robbers” to a more social role when people don’t know who to call. Clinician gives the police more referral options. Very aware of bullying as a problem and can make those referrals. Don’t have a lot of homelessness in the city, but many children in need. **DM** - Mayor setup a multidisciplinary group to discuss the opiate issue. Has been beneficial in opening the eyes of the police. Have a drug court that takes non-violent offenders that monitors people closely. It’s another tool that they have access to. Although, sometimes getting into the system is the best way to deal with a situation. It’s not the only way to help get people clean, but it is an option. Many options available. Really good to see so many disciplines and people looking at this problem to find new ways to deal with the problem.

- h) **MRM** - Boston Globe has covered the suicide rate being higher in middle-aged men. We don’t hear a lot about that in Newton. Is it true that the highest rate of suicide in that category. **DM** - anecdotally that is likely the highest demographic. **MRM** - is there a way to raise awareness? **DM** - We’re lucky that overall our numbers are lower than in other communities, but people often don’t see the signals.
- i) **SL** - do you have any connection to the postal service to report things? **DM** - nothing formal, but people do report things when they see concerning things.
- j) **SL** - do you shoot coyotes? **DM** - no. sometimes we have to put sick animals down, but generally no.
- k) **CP** - what is the most common crime? **DM** - car breaks used to be one of the biggest problems, but that notably has fallen substantially. Numbers are 71% lower than in 2010. Potential reasons are cheap drugs, motion lights, electronics are cheaper, and it’s a serious crime now.
- l) **SL** - how many of our residents have gun permits? **DM** - don’t have the number off hand. Probably do 1 or 2 licensing interviews every day of the year. Probably turn down 1 or 2 a year. Licenses are usually issued for a year for target and hunting purposes. With that, likely will become a member of a club and get some training. If all looks good after a year, then will grant a full license.
- m) **AD** - can you comment on your approach to traffic enforcement? **DM** - two of the biggest concerns of residents are parking and traffic

enforcement. Only 5 full-time officers working out of traffic. More on patrol though. Philosophy is to give officers a lot of discretion. Do directed patrols when there are complaints. Encourage officers to be proactive. Traffic enforcement has a positive impact for a short period of time in specific locales. People do return to normal habits. **PB** notes that chief has just added two unmarked cars on the first shift.

- n) **Don (CM)** - what is current policy on marijuana? **DM** - a few years ago could cite people for just smelling of marijuana. New law in place has made previous policies moot. Not everybody who smoked marijuana does hard drugs, but everybody who did hard drugs, they all smoked marijuana. Always found marijuana in context of other drugs. Often very useful as a mechanism to enable investigations. Also, no long term studies on the super-high-test marijuana available since 2000. Policies are that it's no longer against the law as long you abide by the ordinances. Making a lot of things in society an uphill climb. **PB** often the only probable cause they had in some investigations was presence of marijuana. **DM** - big chasm between public perception of what happens with drugs and what happens in court. Police department worked very hard to find a way for people to get treatment instead of in jail. Overdoses have tripled since 2014. Increase in fatal overdoses. These numbers are likely lower than actual because many in the community are able to get people into treatment centers in other areas.
- o) **CM** - wondering about school resource officers? **DM** - school resource officers sometimes do games as part of their responsibilities. But if there are large games schools often getting police details. Have one full-time at Newton North, one full-time at Newton South, and one for all the middle schools. Act as a liaison to the staff. Try to have the resource officer on duty at events. Try not to make arrests in school. Make arrangements to do things away from campus to minimize impact on others.
- p) **CM** - do we have Fentanyl problem in town? Is it a problem that state law is different from federal? Is there an online police log? **DM** - logs are available by request. Fentanyl - overdoses have plateaued but think that is due to people getting used to Fentanyl. So much cheaper and can be cut many more times. It's firmly ensconced in the area. Fortunately, don't have street level drug problems, but would be

misleading you to say people aren't buying Fentanyl. Thankfully, haven't seen any in the schools.

7) UPDATES:

- a) **St. Philip Neri / Staples-Craft** - Alexandra Ananth reports that with regard to 1615 Beacon the Suzuki School of Newton is looking to acquire the property from the developer. Have met with city to understand what would be required. Development would likely proceed under Dover amendment. No word from the developer on the project. Guess is that they aren't working with historic commission. No activity and no permits issued with regard to 1521 Beacon St. **RG** there are fences up and active digging on the site. **KW** mailed Steve Buchbinder to get more information.
- b) **WAC Visioning Community Survey** - Have completed surveys after 2-3 years of work. Preparing a test trial with 50 some people. **AD** was under the impression that we would discuss these first. **SL** we need to discuss as a committee. **CP** this has been a long time coming, and have sent lots of examples. I just want to send it to a test group. **AD** I think even before 50 it should be vetted. **CP** thought people had opportunity for feedback as drafts were first to all Board Members weeks on 3/8/17. **AD** thought the comments should be in open meeting. I think we need to debate the larger concepts. I think we need to ask about what we're asking and what the goals for this are. **CP** totally disagree. **AD** officially lodge a protest that we need to review it. **SL** you agreed that you would submit to everybody and then we would deliberate it. **AD** can't send it out until we deliberate it. **SL** deliberation is that we discuss this at the table. **CP** it would have been useful if people had provided feedback on things that might be contentious. Content of this has been around for a while. Think it is unfair that we say we can't send it around because we haven't deliberated. **KW** understand the frustration, sounds like there has been a miscommunication. Agree that it needs to be on the agenda for discussion. **SL** this should be the topic of our May meeting. **MRM** this is illustrative of the challenges we have to deal with under open meeting law. It would be useful to identify a means for discussion in advance of the next meeting. **AD** some of the concepts are worthy of discussion instead of individual feedback such as whether it is useful to discuss a particular

development concept when we know there is another one potentially coming. Perhaps more useful to talk more generally, such as historic context of house. **CP** think this is the perfect example to focus conversation as it is in the center of Waban. **AD** think that with this you end up on a referendum on specific projects. **SL** can you generalize the questions and we can discuss them next time? **RG** think there is also a larger question that relates to zoning reform and land use, especially around village centers. **CP** I would ask that you all look over the surveys. **RG** I care a lot about historic preservation, but think that this specific example is capturing multiple issues in one place. **CP** one of the challenges is keeping the survey short. I will resend to everybody. Please review it, provide feedback, and be prepared to discuss it. **RG** would you like to have a special meeting before next meeting **CP** I'd be all for it. This is the reason why I joined WAC. **MRM** we discussed in several meetings about the process and that we would discuss it. **RG** let's have a special meeting. We can do Brigham House on April 25 at 7 pm. **SL** Chris - please send to PleasePost next week.

- c) **Waban Historic District** - **RG** says that they are targeting an event in about a month. Doing lots of research. Think it will be very informative. Need to figure out the specific date/time. **SL** how about on Village Day? Could you have something for people to fill out? **RG** that's also the Historic Newton House Tour day. Think there is too much going on that day.
- d) **Waban Common** - **SL** reports that it is coming to life again. Had second community meeting. People talked about traffic problems. Traffic engineer, Newton Police, and Parks & Rec came out. Decision was that nothing would be done. There is no funding to do anything. Designer is making changes to the plan based on meetings with DPW. Determined plant types and costs. Going to meet with committee when he gets back in the week of April 24th. May see something happen there this spring. **CM** who is paying for this? **SL** fundraising broadly and some amount from Parks & Rec for specific things. **CM** do you expect to see people using it. **SL** yes. We have an island which is a resource. It's not coming from tax money, except for what Parks & Rec would have done anyway (seeding, pruning).

- e) **Business Center Needs** - SL reports that spoke with some of the business people. Talked about putting mural up on the parking lot side of Waban Market. SL talked with Jan (Waban Market) who is in favor of it. Would need to get permits. There is a feeling that the business center doesn't look nice, would like to beautify it. Situation complicated by absentee landlord.
 - f) **Accessory Apartments** - SL reports that full council passed an ordinance that allows for accessory apartments in your house without a special permit. If you want to put an accessory apartment in a separate building on your lot, you can do that with a special permit.
 - g) **Charter Review** - SL reports that charter coming up for vote in November. On May 4th proposal has to be sent into the state regarding council members, can't say if in favor of proposal until it is submitted because it keeps changing.
- 8) **UPDATES** - Safe Routes to School: Want to put notice out to residents what is going on in Cold Spring Park. There will be an extension to the path as a result of relocating the path around the Wetland. Will connect to Beacon St. Enable kids to walk from Winslow Rd to School without crossing traffic. John Rice at traffic council discussing parking issues around Zervas including removing parking on one side of Evelyn Rd. Has done walk of Allen Ave. Traffic engineer Steve S has agreed to remove two spaces of parking on Allen Ave. AD encouraged him to look at adding crosswalks. Will need to get traffic speed counts before curb extensions, so will need to wait until school is open. 25 mph speed limit update: Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) can set their own speed limit. Brian Yates docket item can proceed.
- 9) **WAC PARTICIPATION IN WABAN VILLAGE DAY** - SL will send a spreadsheet around and would like people to fill in when they could be there and figure out what people would like to have there.
- 10) **NEWTON SERVES** - MRM - Encourage people to participate. It's on Sunday April 30, 2017. Three sites within Waban. We've had people turn out on Quinobequin to help with cleanup. Going to meet at corner of Radcliffe and Quinobequin. First session is 9:30-12:30. Second session is

12:30-3:30. Can go to City Hall before or after. Details at
<http://www.newtoncommunitypride.org/NewtonSERVES.html>

- 11) **ANNOUNCEMENTS** - WAC July meeting date changed to Thursday July 27.

- 12) **DISCUSSION OF FORMALITY/INFORMALITY OF WAC MEETINGS** -
SL says that someone raised the question as to whether or not people were being allowed to speak and be heard. CP does like the informality and doesn't think that it gets in the way of getting things done. RG interesting in other councils that they don't allow community to speak. MRM feels like there needs to be some kind of protocol around specific agenda items, especially around WAC deliberations on proposed actions. Have been uncomfortable at times because there is disruption of deliberation. We need to have the opportunity to deliberate and focus and then open to comment. AD when we have general hearings or informational sessions it is nice to have open comment. SL yes, only time have had to close comments down was when trying to deliberate.

- 13) **NEW BUSINESS** - SL reports that there was an issue with an approved message to be forwarded and it didn't happen. AD would like to have a procedure documents. SL would like to see when something is approved, we need to send it out. JC everybody should have the ability to set this up because I don't have the bandwidth to format and send every message. RG agree that everybody should have the ability to setup and push send when approved. CP we also see patterns of people unsubscribing and decreased engagement especially when information isn't positioned as relevant. We need to think about this in the context of what else we're going to send. SL this was not duplicative, it was for a budget item that requires people to get comment in by today. RG agree that the onus should be on the person who wants to send the message to format it.

14) ADJOURN:

Next meeting will take place on May 11, 2017 at 7:30 PM.

Adjourn. 10:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Joe Corkery