**Waban Area Council**

**Meeting Minutes Dec 17 2020 7pm**

**Held via Zoom**

**Waban Area Council** Chris Pitts, Dinah Bodkin, Sallee Lipshutz, Isabelle Albeck, Ronald Marcus, Rena Getz, Thomas Elkind

**Community** Kathy Pillsbury, Judy Burten

**Invited Speakers** Ken Lyons, Peter Sachs

City Councilor Ward 5 Bill Humphrey (arr after UF Area Council)

**November Minutes Accepted. Treasurer’s Report no change.**

**Issues from the Community:** Judy Burten commented on how construction in Wellesley Office Park (WOP) is affecting Waban, particularly noise levels and traffic levels have increased. Several WAC members answered by stating that we were not “part of the conversation” when the construction in WOP was planned. SL proposed some kind of regional mechanism whereby neighboring communities are informed when significant changes in one locale are proposed.

**Conversations on Zoning** Ken Lyons, President of Chestnut Hill Association, also an attorney who specializes in zoning laws, spoke about proposed new zoning ordinance. He expressed serious reservations to the changes proposed by the Planning Department and stated that in general there is fierce opposition throughout Newton. He and others have at this point declined to contribute to Mayor Fuller’s reelection campaign, mostly because of the proposed changes. Leadership of the ZAP Committee proposed to table the discussion of two family allowed “by right” in all residential districts until 2022, implicitly recognizing widespread opposition to Planning Dept’s proposals. Conversions of up to six units in proposed residential districts have also been shelved. These two proposals will still be allowed in residential districts proximal to transit (R4 and N). Kathy Pillsbury disagreed with Ken Lyons, saying only a very small number of homes are big enough to allow conversion to six units.

Peter Sachs, Architect, 2007 Newton Zoning Reform Task Force, 2012 FAR Zoning Task Force City of Newton, also spoke against proposed ordinance changes. The main objection in Lyons and Sachs discussions was changing from a FAR based zoning system to a Form Based Zoning system. Sachs stated that form based zoning would allow much bigger houses to be built and described how easily house type B and C can be built which will be oversized for the lots they will occupy. Thomas Elkind objected to detailed discussion of building metrics, asking instead what we wish to achieve and how do we get there? Discussants in general agreed that Newton should be more economically and ethnically diverse. But also discussants generally agreed that “you cannot build your way to affordability.” The question then becomes which private or government mechanisms are available to accomplish stated goals. Kathy Pillsbury stated that form based zoning will control house size.

All viewpoints can be expressed by emailing the Zoning and Planning Committee ([dolson@newtonma.gov](mailto:dolson@newtonma.gov)). Participants stated that they intended to do so. Discussions of that committee and input to that committee is available on the Newton City website.

**Respectfully submitted by**

**Dinah Bodkin**

**December 28 2020**