

Waban Area Council
Meeting Minutes January 14 7:30pm
Held via Zoom

WAC Members Present: Rena Getz, Chris Pitts, Megan Meirav, Ronald Marcus, Bob Jampol, Isabelle Albeck, Dinah Bodkin, Tom Elkind

Community: Nathaniel Lichtin, Maureen Reilly Meagher, John Mordes, Amanda Theunissen, Phyllis Scher

City Councillor: Bill Humphrey

Issues from the Community: *Union Twist* will be presenting an updated proposal for a potential marijuana dispensary at 1158 Beacon St at the February 4th meeting of the Newton Highlands Area Council. All agreed that that information will be included in WAC blast email.

Repairs on Chestnut St: BJ: street constantly under repair. BH: Despite appearances, repairs are not always in the same place. The water main under Chestnut St. is being repaired and that is a prerequisite for street level repairs and improvements. What actually gets done will be a function of city finances. Andrea Downs had held a forum for residents on desired changes. BH: City Council is pushing for measures that will improve safety for all modes of transportation.

WAC Executive Council Slate of current WAC executive councilors all voted in for the year 2021.

Zoom Meetings: General agreement that they have worked well. Not clear that meetings by Zoom can continue after the Covid emergency ends. Subject to open meeting law. BH requests that community members and WAC members send him feedback on how experience with Zoom meeting can be used to improve and adapt open meeting laws.

Debates for March 16 Special Elections: Open city council seats are councilor at large ward 1, councilor at large ward 2. Any person who has met the January 26 deadline for passing papers will be invited to participate in the debates. Debates will be Hosted by the four area councils and moderated by Marjorie Aarons Browne. Debates will be held via Zoom Feb 21 2-4pm. SL: Questions that moderator can present to debaters should be emailed to areacouncildebates@newtonma.gov.

WAC 2021 Goals. Outreach: Amanda Theunissen explained NHAC outreach wherein appropriately themed postcards were mailed to everyone in NHAC catchment area. The total cost of postcards and mailing was approximately \$750. Nathaniel Lichtin believes NHAC listserv now more active. Tom Elkind: can our meetings be posted in the Tab under community announcements. Was generally felt (CP and TE) that WAC recruitment was good if an issue of public importance was on the agenda. CP talked of "WOW" moments. RG suggested postcards describing WAC be left at events sponsored by WAC. TE tasked with asking Tab to include WAC meetings under community announcements. Distributing flyers or postcards to mailboxes also discussed. TE noted that such was done for Waban Common and did not yield one single contribution. CP hoped for outdoors outreach event in summer when Covid will presumably be on the decline.

Help to Waban Center businesses. NL: NHAC sponsoring artists putting their work in windows of Highlands businesses. The idea is to coax people into the village center(s). Once there, they presumably will patronize local businesses. Effort has been publicized by the Mayor's Office, the Tab and on Instagram. Barry's Deli of Waban had notified Chris that they are struggling financially under the strain of Covid restrictions. Isabelle suggested blogging on Village 14 about various foods (ie crab sandwich) available at Barry's. May stimulate some readers to buy Barry's foods.

Ronald Marcus questioned whether community members know that WAC is more than a "debating society." SL stressed information role of WAC, ie Charles River Special Project Coordinator will be addressing the issue of flooding on Quinobequin Rd. This information has been transmitted to the catchment area. WAC is probably the only way such esoteric information is transmitted to interested parties. CP reiterated important tasks carried out by

WAC: Political debates in spring and fall, conduit whereby Friends of Quinobequin and Hemlock Gorge transmit their message(s), meetings where transportation and street and road issues are discussed, well attended meetings on Zoning Reform, general outreach.

Friends of Hemlock Gorge: John Mordes hoping to obtain grant in order to purchase supplies for box steps for Quinobequin Trail. Would be approximately \$200 to buy supplies, then give supplies to Erica at DCR in the hope the box steps will be constructed. Discussion with Maureen O'Reilly Meagher of larger trail grants (see below).

Banner for racial justice: IA and MM suggest either a virtual banner across WAC website or actual banner on bridge across the T tracks. IA inquired of MBTA whether such a banner is allowed and got no response. NL: generally such banners in Newton Highlands have not been prohibited. Discussion ensued as to whether a banner, a lawn sign or some equivalent is what WAC (according to bylaws) is allowed to do and what WAC wants to do. CP suggested a discussion forum. Issue of racial justice dovetails with WAC logo picturing Chief Waban. MM: Agreed that issue will be on the February agenda.

NL: Four area councils will created an award for **David Olsen**, who is retiring from his position as City Clerk.

Meeting adjourned 9:05.

**Respectfully submitted by
Dinah Bodkin Jan 27 2021**

Addendum added by Maureen O'Reilly Meagher (02/25/21) re granting for box steps:

The Mass grant program requires a much higher minimum bar or price tag for a project to be considered, as well as being a program overseen by the Federal govt. with participation by DCR.

The matching partnership program is exclusive to DCR and one which The Friends group applied to and was approved for several years ago. It has a much lower scope and financial commitment for a project. I would encourage those who have an interest in initiating a project to look at the matching partnership program.

I was made aware of an interest in building box steps in the park and going through the Mass grant program. I shared my thoughts to those interested parties ahead of and during the meeting, why that particular grant program might not be the appropriate vehicle for this. Building the box steps will require approval by the Conservation Commission. There are many other ideas which have been forwarded to Erica Auboin such as rebuilding the bird boxes and mounting in the trees. We await a response from her.