



## LOWDOWN SPRING 2020

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Erin Kandamar

Dear Neighbors:

Happy Spring! As we are all adjusting to our new normal, I hope this edition of the Lowdown reinforces what an amazing, connected and caring community we belong to in Lower Falls.

About two weeks ago, our very own Lowdown editor, Summer Zeh, launched a neighborhood socially distant scavenger hunt. What an incredible and thoughtful way to create safe community activities as we are all dealing with cabin fever. If you are not familiar with the hunt, you can check out some of the items on [google docs](#) or [read the article](#) posted in the March 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Newton Tab by our very own neighbor Debra Ruder.

If you are receiving this newsletter, but are not on our listserv, please send an email via our [website online form](#), or email me directly at [erin@kandamar.com](mailto:erin@kandamar.com) and I can help you. Our listserv provides a wealth of information and idea sharing, which is extremely helpful during this challenging time.

Social distancing has not impeded us from staying connected and making progress on work that's important for Newton and our neighborhood. The Riverside Committee

remains very active in participating in virtual meetings during the Land Use Committee reviews. The most recent meeting was held on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> to review design guidelines, architecture and signage. More information about Riverside is included in this edition of the Lowdown. On Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup> a virtual meeting was held by Lower Falls residents to provide information and updates on recreational trails. As a reminder, the LFIA will continue to play a neutral part in the trails developments and serve as a conduit to share and communication information. On Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> the LFIA will hold its annual Spring Community Meeting at 3pm via Zoom. We'll send out reminders as the date nears, but we're looking forward to seeing you all.

And lastly, I'm writing to inform you that Kathleen Snyder has resigned as Co-President of the LFIA. I've had the pleasure to be a board member with Kathleen over the last three years. Kathleen truly embraces the spirit of community by championing myriad social events including our ice rinks, movie nights, Falls Ball, Treasure Hunts and more. As a mom of two elementary school aged boys, wife and attorney, Kathleen has always found the time to remain poised, focused and energized to lead our board. We'll miss you, but glad to have you remain on the board as "Past President."

As always, feel free to reach out at [erin@kandamar.com](mailto:erin@kandamar.com) or 617-864-9950.

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**LFIA COMMUNITY MEETING  
SUNDAY, APRIL 19<sup>TH</sup> AT 3PM  
ZOOM (INVITE TO BE DISTRIBUTED)**

**Agenda**

- Welcome
- Approval of Minutes (Fall 2019)
- Kathleen Snyder Resignation
- Treasurer's Report
- Fundraising Updates
- Communication Updates
- Beautification Committee Update
- Membership Report
- Riverside Update

**NEW NEIGHBORS**

By Cate Stabile

Ally Zhu and Charles, Jennifer (a senior at Newton North), and Jeremy Wang (in kindergarten at Williams) happily joined our wonderful NLF community. They are at 36 Crehore Drive. Ally previously worked at various law firms and now spends her leisure time reading, cooking, writing, gardening and practicing ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging. Charles is a software engineer and works in NYC.

Ann and Jeff Bonner-Stewart moved to 260 Concord Street in late November from Raleigh, North Carolina. They have two daughters who attend Angier, Claire (11) and Celeste (6), and a cat named Speckles. Ann is the rector (pastor) of Saint Mary's Episcopal Church right here in Newton Lower Falls. Jeff is finishing his PhD in electrical engineering from NC State University.

Ann enjoys reading and barre classes; Jeff likes hiking and woodworking.

New to the neighborhood? Want to be included in the next Lowdown? Please contact me at [stabilec@gmail.com](mailto:stabilec@gmail.com).

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**RIVERSIDE DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE!**

By the LFIA Riverside Committee

As many of you know, although zoning for the Riverside project was approved in November 2019, important details continue to be shaped in the Land Use Committee hearings of the Newton City Council, which began in January 2020.

At each hearing, the LFIA Riverside Committee has advocated for the community by presenting concerns, questions, and suggestions (even when hearings recently moved to a virtual platform). For example, we have pressed for:

- a mitigation plan to address traffic congestion on Grove Street;
- more involvement of the MBTA in the planning process;
- a Community Liaison Committee to provide feedback as the project moves forward;
- a nighttime “curfew” on lit signage on the office tower;

- the need for additional affordable housing units;
- more trees/plantings along Grove Street;
- photorealistic renderings of buildings;
- details about construction hours and noise levels;
- careful management of storm water; . . .and much more.

We continue to carefully analyze the plans by Mark Development and comments by the city's Planning Committee and peer reviewers and have had ongoing conversations with the developer and our City Councilors. We appreciate Mark Development's collaborative approach to addressing our questions and concerns. (Project details, as well as the presentations, can be found on the RightSize Riverside website at:

<https://newtonlowerfalls.org/Riverside>; see "News Updates". Also Figure 1 on page 5 for a rendering of the current plan.)

Public comments are allowed at these hearings, so we urge you to stay informed and engaged. Watch for announcements via the Lower Falls listserv for upcoming hearings and news.

Here is what has been covered so far:

- **Site Design/Urban Design/Open Space;**
- **Housing and Fiscal Impact;**
- **Transportation;**
- **Sustainability; and**
- **Design Guidelines, Architecture, and Signage.**

Follow-up hearings are scheduled for:

**Tuesday, April 7** – Topics will include traffic impacts, shared parking, and the transportation demand management plan.

**Tuesday, April 28** –Topics will include construction and its related impacts and a review of the project to date.

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## **MARCH 2020 TRAILS UPDATE**

By Ted Chapman

The trails work reported in the Fall 2019 Lowdown has continued full speed. Among the major developments is a \$2.65 M commitment by Mark Development, which will be a condition of the Riverside Development Special Permit to include funding for:

- 100% design of the Two Bridges Trail with connections to Riverside and Lower Falls.
- Design and construction of a new trail from Grove St. to Riverside Park on the C-D Road and to the MWRA site and the Lasell Boathouse Bridge.
- Design and construction for restoration of the Riverside Depot Tunnel.

In February 2020, the DCR requested design firms to submit proposals for

1. 100% design of a shared use trail along Quinobequin Rd. between the I-95 overpass to Ellis St. in Newton Upper Falls.
2. Conceptual Design for a shared use trail connecting the end of the Two Bridges Trail in Lower Falls and new Quinobequin Road Trail, using existing public streets or new trails thru the Leo J. Martin Golf Course, not to include the 'rail trail.'

*See Figure 2 on the last page.*

The LFIA held a virtual informational meeting about these projects on March 19th, 2020. The LFIA will play a neutral role in the trails

discussion and will be provide more information on our website.

The Riverside Greenway Working Group has hired Conservation Works, with a grant from the DCR Recreational Trails Program, to restore the historic Pony Truss Trail, a footrail which runs along the Newton bank of the Charles River between the CD Road at Riverside to the Pony Truss Bridge, Riverside Park and the Riverside Depot Tunnel. The restoration will include new stepped granite stairs, bank restoration and an 85-foot-long boardwalk in a severely eroded section upstream from the bridge. If you are interested in volunteering and learning trail restoration skills contact Ted Chapman (ehchapman@verizon.net).

You can learn more about all of these projects on the Riverside Greenway Working Group website:

<https://riversidegreenwayma.org>.

#### **A note on the role of the LFIA:**

Since the neighborhood is divided on the proposed recreational trail through Lower Falls, the LFIA has chosen to remain neutral on this issue. It is the role of the LFIA to gather information and make it available to the entire neighborhood. We will hold informational meetings and communicate opportunities for meetings for neighbors to express their positions to the decision makers at the DCR or City Council.



*The Lowdown is the newsletter of the Lower Falls Improvement Association, Newton Lower Falls, MA 02462 • LFIA website: <https://newtonlowerfalls.org>*

*Editor: Summer Zeh • Email comments to [summerzeh@gmail.com](mailto:summerzeh@gmail.com)*

*Figure 1. Image of Riverside Development*



**Figure 2. Concept of trails connecting thru Lower Falls to Quinobequin Rd.**

