



LOWDOWN FALL 2020

LETTER FROM THE LFIA PRESIDENT

By Erin Kandamar

Greetings Lower Falls and happy fall!

I hope everyone is finding some time to get outdoors and enjoy the great fall weather. For those of you with kids, I hope your back to school transition has been working out as we continue to manage through these unprecedented times. It's so great to see so many families and kids in the neighborhood riding bikes or taking advantage of the walking trails we have right in our own backyard.

Speaking of trails, I do have some updates to share. The Riverside Greenway Working Group, spearheaded by Ted Chapman and working in conjunction with other trail advocacy groups, recently completed the renovations of the Pony Truss Trail along the Charles River near the Riverside MBTA station. Thank you for your efforts to rehabilitate the trail and make it more enjoyable and accessible. As you may have heard, the DCR is also conducting a feasibility study to review trail extensions, connections and improvements through Lower Falls to Quinobequin Road (near the edge of Walnut Street and the I-95 on ramp). The DCR held a public meeting at the end of September and provided a public comment period that closed

on October 6th. I will continue to share more details about what's to come.

With Halloween only a few weeks away, our neighborhood decided to provide some spooky fun for everyone to enjoy safely and responsibly. You can learn more about the inaugural Lower Falls "Spooky Tour" scavenger hunt by visiting our website at <https://newtonlowerfalls.org/event-4016683>.

Special thanks for Michael Lorant, Kathleen Snyder and Matt Almeida for organizing this event (and remember to sign up by Oct 24th).

Please consider joining the LFIA (it's \$30 a year for a family membership, \$20 a year for an individual and \$15 a year for seniors). Membership funds help support our community in so many ways from Progressive Dinners, Halloween/Diwali festivals, beautification, the skating rinks, and much more. Please learn more about how your membership can help to give back to our neighborhood at <https://newtonlowerfalls.org/Join-the-LFIA>.

Last but by no means least, I wanted to recognize the LFIA Riverside Committee for their tireless work on the new Riverside mixed use development project. As you may have heard, the special permit was unanimously approved by the City Council on October 19th (24-0). Before the vote, the special permit was amended to **increase the neighborhood mitigation fund from \$1.3M to \$1.5M**. These funds can be used for improvements to the neighborhood like improving the Hamilton field, putting in a raised crosswalk, etc. On behalf of the LFIA and our neighbors, we salute you Riverside Committee! (For more details, see below.)

As always, feel free to reach out at erin@kandamar.com or 617-864-9950.

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**LFIA COMMUNITY MEETING
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH AT 4PM
ZOOM (INVITE TO BE DISTRIBUTED)**

Agenda

- Welcome
- Approval of Minutes (Spring 2020)
- Treasurer's Report
- Communication Updates
- Beautification Committee Update
- Membership Report
- Lower Falls Trails Feasibility Study
- Riverside Update

NEW NEIGHBORS

By Cate Stabile and Cyrisse Jaffe

Chris and Michelle Ahern moved to 46 Moulton Street in late July. They have two daughters, Sloane (22 months) and Logan (2 months). Chris is the director of risk management at a waste water and environmental company and Michelle works in business development at a law firm downtown. Chris grew up in Lower Falls and is happy to be back.

Jennifer and Seán McTernan moved in at 31 Asheville Road in October. Jennifer, originally from North Carolina, works in compliance for an asset management firm in Boston. Seán, from Ireland, is Head Teaching Professional at Brae Burn Golf/Country Club. They have a

cavapoo named Oscar. The McTernans previously lived in West Newton and are excited to join the neighborhood!

Please welcome all of our incoming neighbors.

New to the neighborhood? Want to be included in the next Lowdown? Please contact me at stabilec@gmail.com.

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A RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT RECAP

By the LFIA Riverside Committee

After 2 ½ years of countless meetings, emails, conversations, and hours spent reviewing and drafting documents, here is an overview of the mixed-use project planned for the Riverside Station site. (For an even more detailed summary, please see our website at <https://newtonlowerfalls.wildapricot.org/page-18156>.)

As you probably know, the development will bring apartments, offices, hotel, stores, green space, bike lanes, a large garage, and a revamped entrance to the MBTA station. It will also include a new traffic “roundabout” at Asheville and Grove Streets and a highway ramp to 128 North. Construction is slated to begin in spring 2022 and may take up to 10 years to complete.

Thanks to our Ward 4 councilors (Lenny Gentile, Josh Krintzman, Chris Markiewicz) for working so hard on important changes to the proposed special permit, which was approved unanimously, first in the Land Use Committee and then by the full City Council.

Our Goals, Achievements, Concerns

As you may know, the LFIA Riverside Committee (also known as RightSize Riverside) is a committee of the Lower Falls Improvement Association (LFIA) that has been actively engaged with our Ward 4 councilors, the Newton City Council, the Planning and Development Department, and the developer to represent the interests of Lower Falls and Auburndale.

We have had three consistent goals:

1. Achieve the best development—in terms of size, design, traffic, the environment, and so on—for the surrounding neighborhoods, future residents of the development, visitors, commuters, the City, and the region.
2. Ensure that planned trails are built, as promised, to connect citizens to the Charles River and surrounding nature that abuts the development.
3. Provide flexibility for future transit development at the Riverside site.

To achieve our goals, we have:

1. *Requested* the City undertake a visioning process for Riverside (completed April 2019).
2. *Drafted and submitted* to the City Council our own proposed zoning amendment that incorporated our vision of what was appropriate for the site.
3. *Advocated* during the Zoning and Planning Committee process to promote the neighborhood's needs and come to a

consensus on the zoning amendment. (The zoning, which set critical parameters such as overall project size and building heights, was approved in November 2019.)

4. *Attended and spoke up* during the Land Use Committee hearings (January 2020 to October 2020) to ensure that the special permit reflected the neighborhoods' concerns.
5. *Communicated* regularly with the community to inform, solicit feedback, and encourage participation in the process.

Beneficial Changes

Along with our Ward 4 councilors, we have successfully advocated for many beneficial changes. The following agreements have been reached:

- *Reduce* overall project size from 1.5M square feet (SF) to 1.025M SF.
- *Decrease* hotel height from 18 stories to 6 stories (including eliminating condos on top of hotel); *decrease* office building height from 14 stories to 11 stories; *reduce* building heights on Grove Street.
- *Increase* percentage of housing to 60% (including 103 affordable housing units), providing additional housing while effectively reducing traffic.
- *Provide* neighborhood mitigation funds of \$1.5M for future improvements to reduce the impact of the development.
- *Provide* \$1.5M for improvements to the Williams School.
- *Provide* \$3M to design and build six components of a trail network along the Charles River connecting Auburndale to Lower Falls, and complete the design of the Two Bridges Trail, directly linking Lower Falls and Riverside.
- *Provide* a pilot shuttle between Riverside and the Auburndale commuter rail station.
- *Create* a Riverside Liaison Committee composed of two Ward 4 Councilors,

representatives from Lower Falls and Auburndale, and Mark Development to review ongoing issues connected to the development, as well as report back to the community.

- *Begin* traffic monitoring earlier than had been originally proposed and continue after the project is complete.
- *Create* a two-way separated bike path on the development side; *increase* overall safety of bike and car traffic by removal of a third bike lane opposite the development.
- *Reduce* the impact of office and hotel signage, including lighted signs facing Lower Falls.
- *Establish* a more robust review of final building designs by the City than originally proposed, with an opportunity for public comment.
- *Increase* safety and accessibility of the development's "transit square" by the T station.
- *Expand* green space next to the hotel by reducing on-street parking.
- *Revise* the Construction Management Plan to lessen truck traffic on Grove Street.
- *Limit* construction hours to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (weekdays), 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (weekends).
- *Provide* additional monitoring and reporting related to noise, dust, water, and wastewater; *include* additional groundwater/stormwater infiltration-related work in the design work plan.

Lower Falls Parking Plan

With our Ward 4 City Councilors, who are working with the City's Traffic Council, we have begun developing a parking plan—to be put in place before construction begins—to prevent commuters from parking in Lower Falls and/or Auburndale.

Remaining Issues and Concerns

Some issues were not resolved in our favor during the Land Use Committee process. We hope that the full City Council will include these provisions in the special permit:

- *Require* Mass DOT approval of the 128 North ramp before construction begins on any building (other than the garage).
- *Monitor and mitigate* excess traffic for longer than 2 years after the project reaches 85% occupancy.
- *Allow developer* 6 years (instead of 8) after the special permit is approved to pull the last building permit.

We also will continue to advocate for a neighborhood parking plan and a comprehensive commuter parking plan during construction of the new garage.

Want to know more?

View our presentations to the City Council on our website's "News Updates" page at <https://newtonlowerfalls.wildapricot.org/page-18156>.

Thank you for your continued interest and support!



STRETCH WITH A NEIGHBOR

By Jess Faith Guyer

Join neighbor and fitness instructor Jess Faith Guyer for some at home stretches on YouTube. She has created a video of 5 mid-day stretches to break up your work day here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dtu0KSK5NUM&t=74s>

Enjoy!



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

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