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Election results & more: Horace Mann, traffic calming, curbside organics

1 message

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Thankful to be elected this time!



It took three tries, which I'm told is not unusual, but according to unofficial results, I've won the Ward 3 Councilor race, 1119-898. I'm very happy not to have disappointed my supporters, and to know that it's still possible to win a seat by walking the ward, without a campaign manager, a huge budget (like Ward 2!), or political party backing. Mostly I'm very, very grateful to all the people who helped: hosting signs and meet & greets, distributing signs and postcards, contributing financially to cover my postcards and a mailing, and convincing their friends, neighbors, family members, and sometimes strangers to vote for me. And to my fellow challenger candidates, Pam Wright, Tarik Lucas, Jennifer Bentley, Rena Getz and Lisa Gordon, for their inspiration and mutual moral support. And to the current city councilors who endorsed me:

Barbara Brousal-Glaser, Lenny Gentile, Chris Markiewicz and Emily Norton.

Congratulations especially are due to Pam on her spectacular win in the Ward 3 at Large race. I first met Pam last winter at the Ward 3 'zoning roadshow' community meeting, and I've been telling people ever since that she's the quickest study I've ever met. She got into the race a week before signatures were due, to give voters a choice, and had four family summer trips to go on before she could really start campaigning. But even from places like Latvia she was reading and commenting on Washington Street vision plans and zoning on her cell phone, and her organization and commitment and common sense won over people all over the city in the limited time she had to campaign. She will be a great colleague to have on the City Council.

I'm still catching up on sleep, behind on leaf-raking, and getting ready for fall Newton Tree Conservancy plantings, but will be spending a lot of time between now and January preparing to represent Ward 3 residents. I will schedule at least one 'out-of-office' hours at a West Newton venue in early December, for anyone who would like to stop by and talk. I knocked on thousands of doors during the campaign, but many people were not home or too busy to talk.

A note on turnout

Complete unofficial results are [here](#) on the city website. Turnout citywide was 25%, which I believe is better than average for a non-mayoral year. Turnout was higher in wards with contested races for both ward and at large seats. I calculated turnout by ward (listed from highest to lowest):

Ward 2 - 37.1%

Ward 5 - 30.7%

Ward 6 - 29.8%

Ward 3 - 27.6%

Ward 4 - 22.5%

Ward 8 - 18.2%

Ward 1 - 17.8%

Ward 7 - 17.7%

I wish we could have contested races and 37% turnout, or more, in every ward!

Horace Mann parents have focused attention on shortcomings of former Carr School



As I campaigned during early fall I heard from many Horace Mann parents about the educational shortcomings of the former Carr School as a permanent home for Horace Mann Elementary School, and the fact that no independent assessment of the building as an educational facility (as opposed to building structure) had ever been done, as had been done for all other schools. Specific issues include: too-small classrooms for class sizes, lack of breakout space, absence of sinks in some classrooms, bad acoustics in classrooms, and insufficient number of toilets.

Thanks to parents' activism and advocacy, the administration's attention is now focused on how to address these problems, and an independent assessment has been promised.

I attended the October 28 meeting for the community that was organized at the request of Ward 2 councilor Emily Norton. If you're a parent who missed the meeting, or if you'd just like to learn more about parents' concerns, you can listen to audio of the over three hour meeting [here](#). (For now, it's on my Google Drive; getting audio onto YouTube is always an adventure. The Globe reporter present also recorded audio, as well as shooting some video, but I believe it was just for her own reference for writing the story.)

Speeding & traffic calming



A top concern for many people I've met is speeding on the streets where they live, or that their kids use to walk to school or wait for the bus. In 2017, the city began a traffic calming initiative, with an annual budget for improvements of \$150,000, that seems very inadequate for the goal. (Some improvements are also being funded as part of 'complete streets' projects.) More stretches of road were evaluated in 2018 than in 2017, and the 2017 results were updated to reflect a new weighting formula that considers vehicle volume, crash rate, MPH over speed limit, and proximity to generators of pedestrian traffic (schools, village centers, parks, and transit stops).

You can see links to the results on [this page](#) on the city website. Notably, seven of the top 25 priority locations are in Ward 3:

Rank	Score	Study Location	Study Area Limits	School	Village	Park	Transit	Vehicle Volume	Num. of Crashes	Crash Rate	Speed Limit	MPH Over
1	87	Pearl St	Watertown St/Centre St	PS	VC	MP	x	5001-7500	20	9.16	25	7
2	79	Webster St	Cherry St/Rowe St	x	VC	MP	x	5001-7500	18	7.83	25	6
3	74	Lexington St	River St/Auburndale Ave	PS	VC	x	x	12501-15000	16	2.24	30	5
4	72	Adams St	Lincoln Rd/Quirk Ct	PS	x	MP	x	5001-7500	7	11.53	25	5
5	71	Walnut St	Beacon St/Lincoln St	x	VC	MP	TS	10001-12500	16	3.04	30	4
6	70	Grant Ave	Comm Ave/Beacon St	x	x	MP	x	7501-10000	6	2.31	25	10
7	67	Langley Rd	Beacon St/Glen Ave	x	VC	x	TS	5001-7500	9	8.03	25	2
8	66	Walnut St	Boylston St/Dedham St	PS	x	x	x	3001-4000	3	3.90	25	11
9	65	Dedham St	Winchester St/Walnut St	PS	x	MP	x	4001-5000	3	2.65	25	12
10	64	Florence St	Boylston St / Louise Rd	x	VC	x	x	5001-7500	7	4.04	30	4
11	61	Highland St	Washington St / Chestnut St	x	VC	MP	x	5001-7500	4	1.91	25	9
12	61	Otis St	Lowell Ave/Chestnut St	PS	VC	x	x	1001-2000	4	4.03	25	8
13	59	Auburn St	Washington St / Greenough St	PS	x	MP	x	5001-7500	1	0.88	25	12
14	57	Hartman Rd	Greenwood St / Brookline St	x	x	x	x	1001-2000	3	4.42	25	8
15	56	Dudley Rd	Entire Road	PS	x	MP	x	2001-3000	4	1.63	25	9
16	56	Cherry St	Derby St/River St	PS	x	MP	x	5001-7500	4	2.70	25	7
17	53	Hobart Rd	Commonwealth Ave/Beacon St	PS	x	MP	x	4001-5000	2	2.28	25	6
18	52	Mill St	Berkshire Rd / Clinton Pl	PS	VC	x	TS	1001-2000	3	7.13	25	5
19	52	Tremont St	Park St/Town Line	PS	VC	MP	x	10001-12500	9	4.52	35	-6
20	51	Eddy St	Entire Road	PS	VC	MP	TS	1001-2000	1	4.28	25	6
21	50	Pleasant St	Centre St/Lake Ave	PS	VC	MP	x	1001-2000	4	20.60	25	3
22	50	Central Ave	Entire Road	x	x	MP	TS	0-1000	2	9.13	25	5
23	47	Waverly Ave	Tremont St/Kenrick St	PS	x	MP	x	4001-5000	3	1.71	30	6
24	46	Ward St	Waverly Ave / Manet Rd	PS	x	x	x	5001-7500	1	0.63	25	9
25	46	Parmenter Rd	Entire Road	PS	x	MP	x	1001-2000	4	7.44	25	3

More areas have been, and are still being evaluated in 2019 calendar year, and those results will be published early in 2020. Anyone can request that a stretch of road or intersection be evaluated (e.g. through [311 on the city website](#) -- there's no precise category in Streets but there's always Miscellaneous). I spoke to the city's traffic engineer, Isaac Prizant, who is very helpful, to learn more about the status of improvements. Funding is a constraint as they work through 2017 priority locations, and begin to plan for 2018 priorities. Eliot Ave was already on the list for 2019 evaluation. Derby Street near Franklin School was not, but now is, after I requested that Derby west of Cherry be included, and Isaac hopes to do it in 2019.

Organics collection available for a fee, but free dropoff is coming

As I was knocking on doors this summer and fall, I was pleasantly surprised when I got unprompted questions from people wishing we had curbside organics collection (like Cambridge already has), because I would like to see this as part of our recycling program. Food waste reportedly makes up 26% of trash by weight in Massachusetts. And I'm old enough to remember in the 1960s, having a garbage can receptacle sunk into the ground, with a cast iron lid, in the back yard of my parents' first house on Elsworth Road. (Though I don't remember ever seeing the garbagemen who apparently hopscotched through people's backyards emptying the bins.)

So I was very happy to see [Mayor Fuller's announcement](#) about the preferred

vendor agreement with Black Earth Compost to offer weekly organics pickup, at an initial rate of \$59.99 for six months, and a one-time fee of \$34 for a lockable 13-gallon bucket with wheels. The six-month rate will go down as more households sign up, reflecting greater efficiency of scale for Black Earth, to as low as \$39.99 per six months when 7,500 households are participating.

As a single person, I don't generate enough food waste to even wheel out my trash bin most weeks, so even \$39.99 seems high. **But there is good news for people like me, for whom paying for weekly pickup seems not worth the price.** I asked Waneta Trabert, director of Sustainable Materials Management in DPW, about a dropoff option, which was discussed in the report on last year's curbside pilot program (in which I participated). She tells me "We are working on resolving some logistical challenges to provide drop-off options for residents. I anticipate that drop-off options, which will have no cost, will begin in early spring (hopefully sometime in March)."



These bins are pretty nice, and the wheels will help, since this bin full of food waste would be heavy! But at a unit price of \$34/bin, the startup cost for bins to do citywide organics collection, as I hope we will ultimately do, would be about \$1 million. I think this would be a much better use of \$1 million, than what I predict will be a \$1 million rebuild of the Newton Free Library parking lot that's being used to sell the idea of eliminating the berms and cutting down the Library parking lot trees! Let's wait and do more solar on city roofs as they are re-done, and pass a solar roof ordinance like Watertown, instead of cutting down trees -- which more and more people are citing as important for climate change mitigation.

As always, please pass this one and encourage your friends and neighbors to sign up if they would like to receive these updates.
Thank you!

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