

Alicia Bowman, Candidate for Ward 6 At-Large City Councilor
Vicki Danberg, Candidate for Ward 6 At-Large City Councilor
Deb Crossley, Candidate for Ward 5 At-Large City Councilor
Andreae Downs, Candidate for Ward 5 At-Large City Councilor
Dan Gaynor, Candidate for Ward 2 Ward City Councilor
Doris Ann Sweet, Candidate for Ward 4 Ward City Councilor
Martha Bixby, Candidate for Ward 6 Ward City Councilor
Holly Ryan, Candidate for Ward 8 Ward City Councilor

October 10th, 2023

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council
Newtonville Neighborhood Area Council
Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council
Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Dear Neighborhood Area Council Members,

We are writing to express our serious concerns related to the upcoming debates being sponsored by the four neighborhood area councils. As one of the missions of the neighborhood area councils is to improve communications and foster community spirit, it should be the goal for all involved to ensure debates for elected office are fair and follow debate standards⁽¹⁾.

After reviewing the Neighborhood Area Council debates held for the preliminary elections and donations to candidates, we have some serious concerns we would like addressed before the upcoming City Council Debates.

We feel that to ensure a fair debate, it is imperative that :

1. Area Councilors who have donated to candidates should recuse themselves from the debates both in the creation and selection of questions and overseeing the debate process. Donations are listed below.
2. Ideally seat selection and order of who gets first question would be done by flipping a coin or other random selection process.
3. Introductory statements provided by candidates must be read as provided and not be altered in any way, assuming they meet the criteria of 45 word limit.
4. Questions should be asked in a neutral tone, not taking a side of an issue, and all candidates should receive equal opportunity to answer the same question.
5. The role of the moderator is to explain the ground rules and to ask the questions. It is important not to editorialize or offer hers/his own views on a topic.
6. The moderator, or another designated person, should announce verbally when a candidate's time is up. If a candidate cannot comply with time limits, extra time should be granted to other candidates.
7. We would like assurance that what happened in the Ward 6 Ward preliminary race will not happen again. In that case, Ms. Bixby's closing statement was not recorded in full. In fairness to all candidates, the video should have been edited to remove all Ward 6 Candidates' closing statements.

Lastly, a review of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance data shows that **eight Neighborhood Area Council members have made a total of twenty-one financial donations in both the preliminary election and the upcoming general election. In total \$4,350 in donations were made to 7 candidates.**

Adding to that, **Ms. Getz, is both the President of the Waban Area Council and is running for City Council.**

We are concerned that the donations and Ms. Getz' continued affiliation with the WAC, affects the ability of the Area Councils to hold fair and unbiased debates. At the very minimum, this should be publicly disclosed as part of the debates. Refer to detail below.

Newtonville Neighborhood Area Council

D'Agostino, Dana (Treasurer)

\$200 to Peter Bruce

Young, Harvey (Secretary)

\$100 to David Micley

Gabbay, Carolyn

\$250 to Randy Block, \$250 to Rena Getz, \$250 to Stephen Farrell, \$250 to Lisa Gordon, \$250 to Peter Bruce, \$100 to David Micley

Waban Neighborhood Area Council

Getz, Rena (President)

running for City Council

Pitts, Chris

\$200 to Peter Bruce

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Gregory, Groot (Treasurer)

\$500 to Lisa Gordon, \$500 to Alan Lobovitz

Darnell, Barbara

\$500 to Lisa Gordon, \$100 to Randy Block, \$100 to Peter Bruce

Fizek, Robert

\$200 to Lisa Gordon, \$100 to Stephen Farrell, \$50 to Rena Getz, \$150 to Peter Bruce

Newton Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council

Irish, Julie

\$100 to Randy Block, \$100 to Lisa Gordon, \$100 to Rena Getz

We ask that each of the recommendations be agreed to and implemented at the next round of debates. Only then, will the process be fair.

Respectfully,

Alicia Bowman, Vicki Danberg, Deb Crossley, Andreae Downs, Dan Gaynor, Martha Bixby, Doris Ann Sweet, and Holly Ryan

⁽¹⁾ Debate standards from respected non-partisan organizations

<https://lwvnewton.org/about/non-partisan-policy/>

<https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/making-disbursements-ssf-or-connected-organization/public-debates/>

<https://www.fredlaw.com/alert-can-a-501c3-host-a-political-candidates-debate>

<https://www.debatesinternational.org/sites/default/files/CPD-Debate-Manual.pdf>