

Ken Parker

for Mayor of Newton

Almost exactly one year ago today, we came together to announce the formation of the Ken Parker for Newton Mayor 2009 Exploratory Committee. Our goal was simple: in the face of declining service quality, financial crisis, and poor management, we sought to develop a plan to bring Newton back, a plan that would serve as a roadmap for restoring excellence to Newton services.

One year ago today, we talked about the need to do better: the need to fix our aging infrastructure, to clean up our parks, to make our schools once again among the best in the nation. We talked about the need for innovative, transparent government that sets high standards and holds itself accountable for getting results.

We discussed the need for bold and decisive action to get our City government back on the right track, for new leadership that will engage in an open and honest discussion with Newton residents about the challenges facing our community, so that we can move forward together—new leadership that will respond to challenges with cooperation and innovation.

I am pleased to report today that our Exploratory Committee has accomplished the goals we set for it. We brought together more than one hundred Newton residents to craft a plan to bring Newton back. Our *Blueprint for Newton's Future* is more than just a policy statement or campaign platform. It is a practical plan to reinvent government in Newton.

And make no mistake: Newton's government is in need of re-invention. Solving Newton's financial crisis and restoring excellence to all our services will require not just policy initiatives, but a whole new way of thinking.

Our *Blueprint* is founded in the values of our community. Values like protecting the environment, strengthening public education, and enhancing the quality of life in our villages. For each of these values, we

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recommend specific goals— like increasing Newton’s recycling rate from 38 percent to 75 percent. And for each of these goals, we recommend practical steps to achieve them, like providing recycling containers in our parks and village centers.

Our plan introduces sound management practices into every aspect of City government. The people of Newton expect and demand that we spend every tax dollar wisely and effectively. Responsive customer service is at the heart of this management philosophy, as is setting specific goals and measuring performance.

Only by making the most of our available resources will we be able to improve services while solving Newton’s structural deficit.

Implementing these plans will require leadership. Newton needs a leader with a full understanding of the workings of our City government, the ability to bring diverse interests together to build consensus for change, the flexibility to embrace new ideas and initiatives, and the management skill and persistence to follow-through on those ideas and to make them reality.

How do I know that we will succeed in implementing the plans laid out in our Blueprint for Newton’s Future? I know that we can do it, because we have done it before. During the past seventeen years, it has been my honor and privilege as your Alderman to work with Newton residents from all parts of our great city on solving the challenges facing our community.

Working together we have accomplished a great deal, bringing innovative proposals to fruition. From the Smoke-Free Newton Ordinance to expanding the public beach at Crystal Lake. From the local adoption of the Community Preservation Act to improving investment return on our pension fund. From developing a Canadian Drug Re-Importation program that has saved the City and our employees more than half a million dollars to the local adoption of the Hopkinton Bill, which has generated over a million dollars in new revenue for the City.

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I know that working together we can accomplish great things, because we already have.

But much more work remains to be done. We need long-term financial planning, improved maintenance of our buildings, streets and parks, open and transparent government, and sound management practices.

Bringing customer-focused, results-driven government to Newton will require not just a plan, but a leader committed to implementing that vision for Newton's future. A year ago, we asked whether we could develop a plan to Bring Newton Back. Today, we pose a new question, can we implement this vision for better government? Do Newton residents want to see these plans come to fruition? Based on the support and encouragement of friends from around our City, I believe the answer to these questions is a resounding yes! Newton residents do want to join our effort to bring Newton Back. Therefore, I am pleased to announce my candidacy for Mayor of Newton.

Together, we can and will restore excellence to all aspects of Newton government. Five years from now, we will all be able to say with pride once again that we live in the best run City in America. We will have clean parks, smooth streets, well-maintained buildings, and the best schools in the nation.

In a moment, I'll take questions, but first I'd like to say a few things about our campaign.

First, while our Blueprint for Newton's Future is based on the input of hundreds of Newton residents, it is a living breathing document, subject to continual improvement. The version that is on our web site today will be updated with the latest round of public comments soon, and will be updated again as we continue our conversations with Newton residents about their values and priorities.

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Second, we will be having a campaign kick-off party on Sunday, November 23 at the Women's Club in Newton Highlands to which you are all invited. Details will be posted on our web site, www.Parker2009.org.

Third, I want to point out that my management style as mayor will be the same as it has been when I organized the Finance & Management Working Group nearly four years ago, the same as it has been for our Exploratory Committee, and the same as it will be for our campaign. I surround myself with smart, talented, hardworking people. I'd like to introduce a few of them that have played and will continue to play a central role in our effort. Please allow me to introduce our campaign co-chairs Todd Krasnow, Lucia Dolan, George Mansfield, Geoff Epstein, and Leslie Schneider. You already know Shawn Fitzgibbons, but he will no longer be the Field Director for the Exploratory Committee. As of today, he is our Campaign Director. And Nathaniel Lichtin will serve as the campaign's Research and Outreach Director.

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