Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS)
Roundtable

September 25, 2025, **Discussion Highlights** Newtown Senior Center

The Newtown Bee

Guests: Jim Taylor, Editor and Shannon Hicks Managing Editor of The Newtown Bee

Pre Meeting Survey

2. Do you subscribe to The Newtown Bee? 27% No 73% Yes

3. If No, why not? Information Overload Budget

4. How much of The Bee do you read each week?
   45% Everything 27% Most 27% A Few 0% Not at all

5. Do you access The Newtown Bee website?
   8% Regularly 69% Occasionally 23% Not at alll

6. Do you subscribe to any other print newspaper(s)? 18% No 82% Yes
   Which? NY Times (50%), News Times (50%)

7. How active are you on social media?
   36% Hardly ever 21% Occasionally 21% Regularly 21% Daily

8. If you are a social media user, what platforms do you use?
   91% Facebook 9% X (Twitter) 0% Instagram 0% Tic Tok 0% Other

9. Do you access The Newtown Bee Calendar?
   36% Regularly 57% Occasionally 7% Not at all

Discussion Summary

The Bee Publishing Company, Inc. dates back to 1881. Office, the red building at 5 Church Hill Rd opened in 1904. Started the website www.newtownbee.com in 1995, a first in Connecticut.

Bee Publishing Company has been in the Smith family. Helen Smith and Sherri Smith Baggett are the current co-publishers, a role they took on after the passing of R. Scudder Smith in August 2022.

The Bee Publishing Co also publishes “Antiques and the Arts Weekly” a magazine with extensive readership in New England and across the country. It started as an insert to The Bee which became so popular it was spun-out as a separate publication.

About 2,300 subscribers. About 150 of these subscribers are out-of-town. Weekly there a typically 600 newsstand sales. There are about 9,600 households in Newtown. Top readers are 1) Parents of school children and 2) Older long-term residents

The Bee Extra has copies of all the advertisements in The Bee mailed to Newtown residents who do not subscribe to The Bee

Friendly Neighborhood Journalism with strong ethics. Does not do Investigative Reporting. Does not and has no plans to use AI. Written by writers!

The Bee is funded by advertisement and subscription. No grant funding

The origin of its name, The Bee, comes from the concept of bees gathering pollen in the community, bring it back to the hive producing honey. In the late 1800s to early 1900 many local newspapers were called The Bee.

A lot of time and effort goes into public service information. The school supplement which has all the bus routes takes a lot of time to compile. Letters to the Editor (LTE), need substantial manual effort to take from email to print and online. Especially leading up to a municipal election LTE and candidate profiles are a lot of work.

While an early innovator, The Bee website could be improved. Funding is a limitation. The most read pages are Letters to The Editor, Obituaries and By-line articles. Soon PDFs of the entire paper will be available. An updated version, e-Edition, of the website is in the works. Current subscribers will have full access to the e-Edition. There will also be a e-Edition only subscription option.

Discussion on the calendar. Another time-consuming activity. Additional functionality of the calendar platform is desired. The Bee staff does not look for calendar items. They must be submitted. Readers can email links to Facebook or other web event postings, and The Bee staff will pick it up and add it to The Bee calendar.

How to help The Bee? Subscribe. Get your neighbors to subscribe.

For those who would like to introduce a new neighbor to The Newtown Bee, or a real estate agent who would like to do the same, we will start a complimentary three-week subscription for them. People should contact our Circulation department at 203-426-3141 or subscriptions@thebee.com and provide their name, and the name and address of the person they would like to have the complimentary subscription mailed to.