

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF FINANCE, PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND  
PUBLIC FACILITIES

COMMITTEES REPORT

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2006

Finance Present: Ald. Coletti (Chairman), Lennon, Linsky, Salvucci, Gentile, Parker, Schnipper and Lipof

Programs & Services Present: Ald. Johnson (Chair), Coletti, Merrill, Hess-Mahan, Sangiolo, Parker, Lipof and Baker

Public Facilities Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chair), Weisbuch, Salvucci, Gentile, Albright, Yates and Lappin  
Absent: Ald. Mansfield

Also Present: Ald. Burg and Vance; School Committee members, Zaleznik (chair), Larner, Glick, Murphy, Sokoloff, Laredo, and Yeo; Hon. David B. Cohen (Mayor), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Nick Parnell (Commissioner, Public Buildings), Rob Juusola (Turner Construction), Heidi Black (School Dept.), Jeff Young (Superintendent of Schools), David Olson (City Clerk/Clerk of the Board)

**REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV., PUB. FAC. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#230-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization for the issuance of long-term debt in the amount of \$3,648,750 for the purpose of completing the design phase of the Newton North High School Project.

**ACTION:**

**PROG. & SERVICES APPROVED 5-1-2 (Ald. Sangiolo Opposed) (Ald. Parker, Johnson abstaining)**

**PUBLIC FAC. APPROVED 4-0-3 (Ald. Weisbuch, Yates, Albright abstaining)**

**FINANCE APPROVED 6-0-2 (Ald. Parker, Linsky abstaining)**

**NOTE:** Ald Johnson, Coletti, and Schnipper led the meeting and Ald. Johnson called the meeting to order at 8:50 pm. Ald. Coletti pointed out that Nick Parnell had provided information on budget and the contract that was in the Friday packet that went to all the Aldermen.

Mayor Cohen presented his request for \$3.6 million in long-term debt to complete the architectural drawings for the new Newton North High School. Mayor Cohen explained that the previous appropriation request for \$10.25 million in 2004 was divided into three phases at the request of the Board so that the Board could have input at each phase. The first phase appropriation, which the Board approved last year, got the city to the schematic designs. Now he is asking for the next phase which includes the design drawings and the construction documents. These will be completed in approximately one year and he will be back to the Board several times during the design drawings phase. When the construction documents are ready, he will come back with an appropriation request to construct a new building.

The Mayor reiterated that he recommends building a new Newton North High School. The alternatives all have major problems, a new building is the only acceptable alternative. The renovation option is a nonstarter because it can't work. A hybrid is the worst of both worlds, it has the same expense as a new building and the same problems as a renovation. A new building will be of lasting value to the students of the city and will have up to date facilities including HVAC, ADA compliance, sprinklers, natural light, windows that operate properly, up-to-date classrooms, etc.

Mayor Cohen explained that he has a plan that works for the City's capital needs as a whole. The plan to add an additional \$250,000 per year from new growth into capital will raise what the City has to spend on capital needs from just over 3% now, to just under 5% over twenty years. This will not only serve to cover the cost of construction for the new high school, but provide about \$3.5 million per year for other capital projects as well. In other words, 60% of this capital money will be for Newton North and 40% will be for other projects. Mayor Cohen stated that this is both gradual and sustainable, and a reasonable allocation of the City's resources.

Ald. Coletti explained that there is in motion already the original \$39.9 million renovation project, which we are not going to do because it is no longer a viable project. He asked if the Mayor will rescind the original bond authorization before the end of this fiscal year, so that the City can get the debt off the books. The Mayor stated that it was entirely reasonable, and that he did not intend to spend that money on the new project.

Ald. Coletti reminded Aldermen that voting for the design money tonight did not commit anyone to the construction portion of the project. He also wants to make sure that the Mayor's Office will continue to work with the Aldermen as the project evolves.

Ald. Parker stated that he was under the impression that the \$3.8 million authorized for Phase 1 had not all been spent yet and asked why the Mayor was coming to the Board now if he still had money left. Ald. Yates also asked when the money would be needed to pay the architects. The Mayor responded that the current funds will be spent by the summer and the request before the Board tonight will be needed this summer. Sandy Pooler responded that once we have an appropriation from the Board, the Comptroller's Office will allow us to pay on the contract. We will get the cash in when we sell bonds in February.

Nick Parnell presented a new Budget and Category of Expenses spreadsheet for the New North High School Project to replace the spreadsheet provided in the Friday packet, a copy of which is attached to this report.

Ald Baker asked if the funds that are being asked for included the hiring of a Construction Manager at Risk. Nick Parnell responded that there is \$570,000 included in this request for the CM at Risk.

Ald Gentile asked if we are within budget to this point of the project. Sandy Pooler responded that the project is on budget.

The Aldermen took the opportunity to speak with the Mayor and asked additional questions including debt exclusion and operating overrides, funding mechanisms for the construction, operating impacts of the construction, the site plan of the building, neighbors concerns, and current and future operating budget cuts.

There were concerns by several Aldermen that the cart was being put before the horse since several issues with the site had not been finalized and were not ready to approve the design funds.

Alderman Schnipper reminded those present that the concerns that were in the community were about access to the site which could be worked on in the design process. She could not see any alternative but to move forward with this portion of the funding.

Alderman Baker made a motion to approve the funds in Programs & Services, and Ald. Gentile made a motion to approve the funds in Public Facilities and Finance.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 pm.