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Barney S. Heath
Director

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 30, 2024

TO: City of Newton City Council

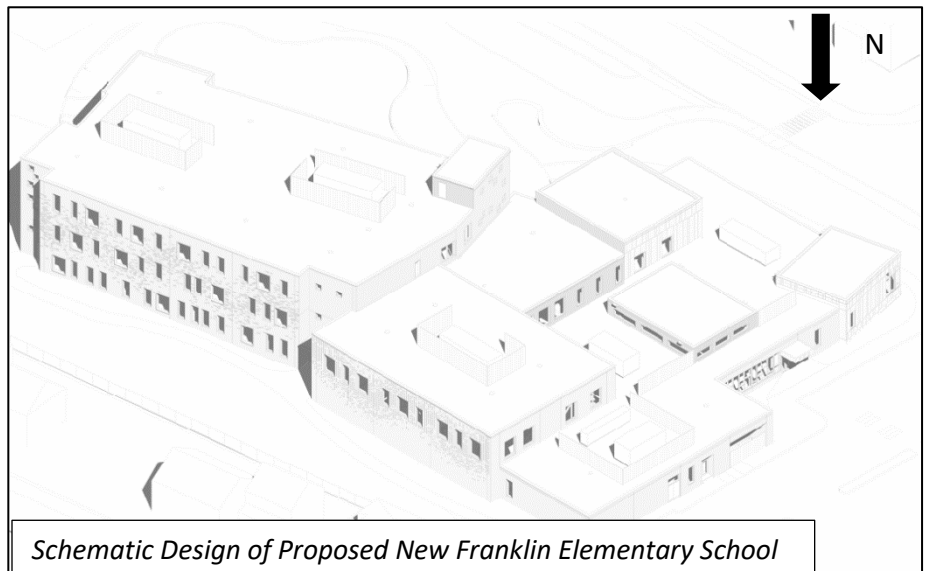
FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director Department of Planning and Development
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Joe Iadonisi, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Chapter 5 §5-58 of the City of Newton Ordinances, request for review for site and building construction at 125 Derby Street for the Franklin Elementary School

CC: Alejandro Valcarce, Public Buildings Department
Design Review Committee
Public Buildings Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Department conducted a Section 5-58 review of the proposed new construction of the Franklin Elementary School at 125 Derby Street. The proposed project consists of a new three-story building with approximately 70,898 square feet. The plans show an increase of dedicated space for programs such as special education, fully electric utilities, and improvements to traffic, parking, and circulation. There is no anticipated increase in enrollment, but the proposed new school will support additional students than the current enrollment if needed.



Schematic Design of Proposed New Franklin Elementary School

Section 1. History and Existing Conditions

History and Past Renovations

Franklin Elementary School was constructed in 1938. Initial additions to the school included four classrooms in 1950 and in 1954, four more classrooms and a gymnasium were introduced to the site. In 1998 an elevator was added to improve accessibility. For the most part, since 1953 renovations on the site have been internal or limited to the maintenance of existing structures.



Currently, the Franklin Elementary School is a two and a half story building totaling approximately 50,245 square feet. The school largely incorporates traditional design elements for an elementary school, such as a steeple, red brick façade, and large windows throughout the original u-shaped building. To the east/right of the front façade is the 1950 addition which incorporates a unique design with four attached pentagonal classrooms whereas the 1953 addition to the rear/north continues the design and scale of the original school.

The existing school has 22 classrooms, an auditorium/cafeteria, a gymnasium, and other administrative rooms and facilities. Current enrollment is approximately 349 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. While the number of classrooms is likely sufficient, there is a lack of specialized classrooms and spaces for group work, special education,

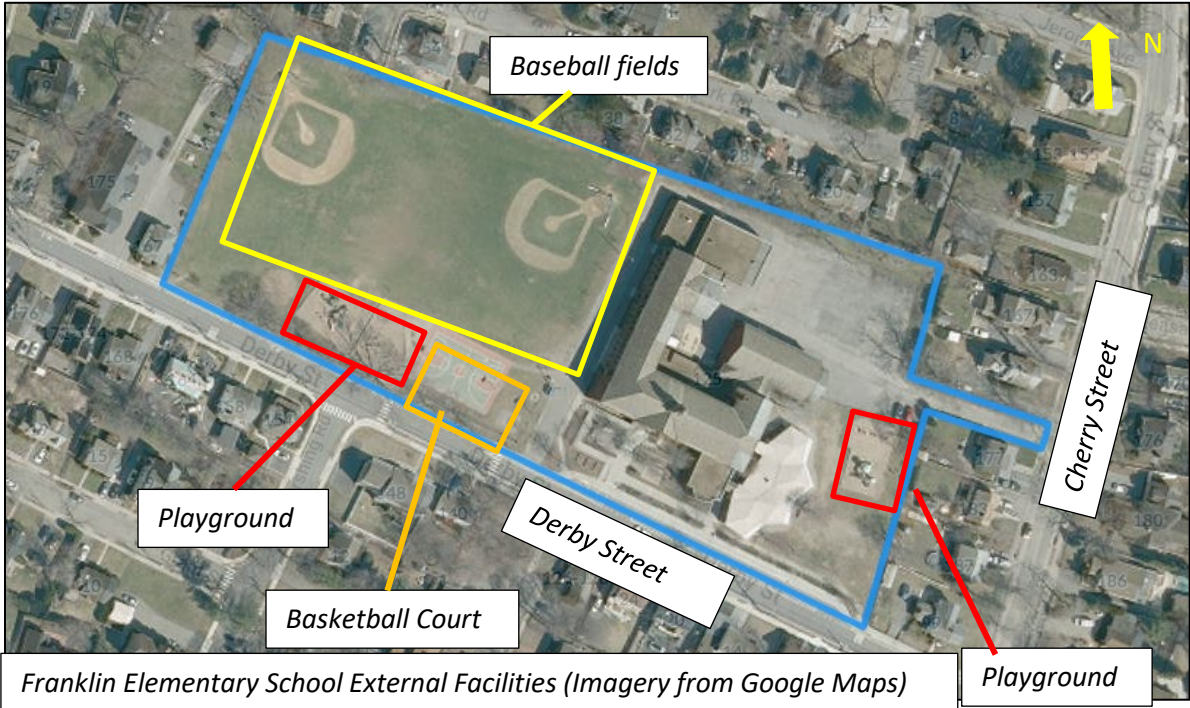
and other programs and administrative offices as the school has largely maintained its layout since the 1953 addition.



Site and External Facilities

The Franklin School is located on an approximately 237,611 square foot site bounded by Derby Street to the south, Cherry Street to the east, residential dwellings along Clark Street to the north, and a two-family dwelling at 167 Derby Street to the west.

Given the large size of the lot, Franklin Elementary School has ample room for recreation and recess space. The external facilities at 125 Derby Street feature two playgrounds, a basketball court, and two baseball fields. The area in between the baseball fields also serves as a multi-sport field for soccer and other activities.



Section 2. Project Details

I. Site Plan Approval Process

Prior to construction at any municipal building, Section 5-58 of the Newton City Ordinance requires reviews of associated plans by the following:

- The Director of Planning and Development for consistency and compatibility with the Newton Comprehensive Plan and other applicable planning and analytical studies;
- The Design Review Committee for layout, construction, and relationship to surroundings;
- The Public Facilities Committee to provide a forum for public comments and discussion about proposed buildings and their locations, followed by City Council action.

Once the site plans are formally approved by these bodies, they become part of the final set of project plans and construction drawings and cannot be substantially altered without being resubmitted to the Design Review Committee and to the City Council. After the requirements of §5-58(a)(1) through (a)(6) have been satisfied, the City Council can appropriate funds for preparation of detailed construction drawings.

II. Site Design and Building Design

The proposed new school building will consist of approximately 70,898 square feet with 47,265 square feet dedicated to classes and programming with the remainder of the area including the gymnasium, cafeteria, offices, and other accessory spaces. This will support an enrollment of up to 396 students and staffing of 57 full-time and 13 part-time employees, which is more than sufficient for the current enrollment of 349 students. The L shaped building will have two wings; one wing will be oriented on a north-south axis and include the administrative and shared spaces. The other wing will be oriented on an east-west axis and contain classrooms. There are 18 classrooms proposed which will support kindergarten through fifth grade, as well as a gymnasium, cafeteria, and kitchen with a platform to serve as an auditorium, a music room, library, art room, and program/administrative offices. There will be dedicated rooms for English language learning, special education, speech therapy, occupational/physical therapy, groupwork spaces, a nurse's room, and dedicated rooms for staff. One major improvement is that the proposed building will be accessible with an elevator and entrances at ground level.

The overall site will be reconfigured with the surface parking relocated to the western portion of the lot into a more clearly marked and designed lot with handicapped stalls and screening. There will also be a dedicated bus lane and walking paths from the pedestrian access to the lot, play areas, and pick-up/drop-off areas. The outdoor recreational area as proposed consists of one baseball field, a multi-use field, a basketball court, and one larger

playground.



The new school will feature a modern design incorporating the traditional elements of large windows and red brick facades. The overall building height increases to three stories and 43 feet at the east wing from the existing building due to the need for additional classroom, administrative, and programmatic space. The north-south oriented wing maintains a height of two stories and 30 feet. Although there is an increase in the overall height, the building will be adequately set back and screened from the residential properties to the rear/north and significantly set back on all other sides by the parking, recreational areas, and street in between the adjacent properties and the school building. Additional height is contemplated by both stair access and rooftop mechanicals and screening, however, the area is

limited and mitigated by its location in the center of the building and site.



Proposed Front/South Perspective Rendering



Proposed Right/East Perspective Rendering



Proposed Rear/North Perspective Rendering

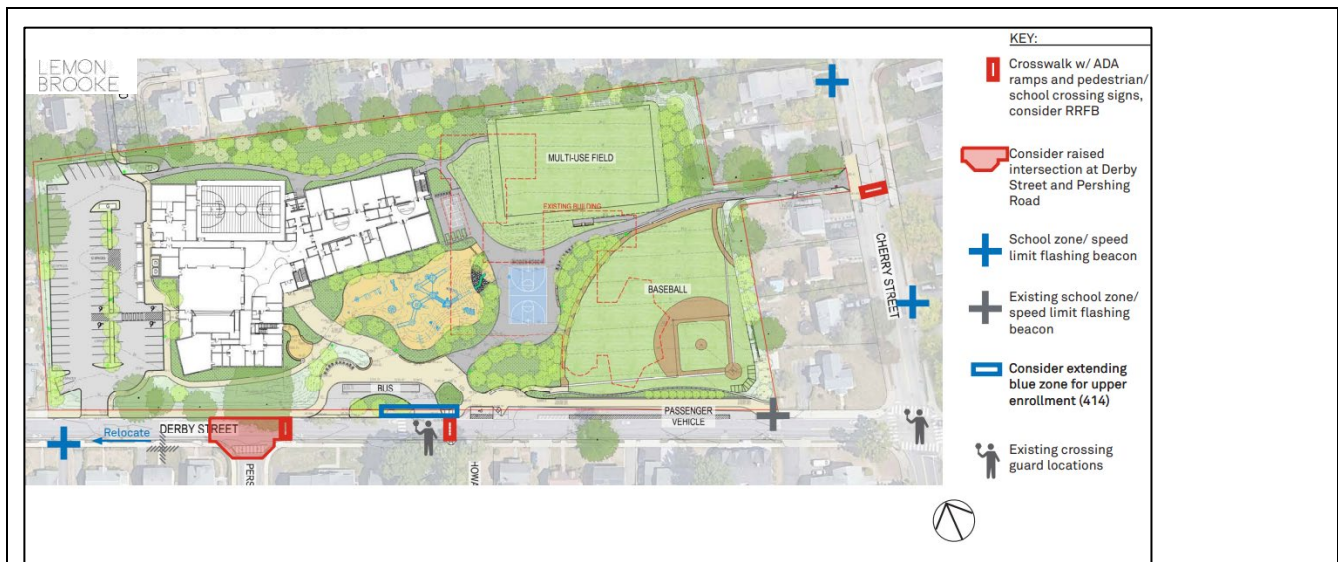


Proposed Left/West Perspective Rendering

Parking, Traffic, and Circulation

With the relocation of the school to the western portion of the lot, the parking, traffic, and circulation components of the site will change. Some elements of traffic design remain the same, such as the current protected “blue zone” for student pick-up/drop-off along Derby Street and pedestrian access along Derby Street, between 171 and 177 Cherry Street, and from the intersection of Russell Road and Clark Road. The plan adds a designated bus lane, removed from Derby Street and the pick-up/drop-off area. Additionally, the proposal recommends adding two flashing school zone beacons to Cherry Street, removing the existing beacon that is to the west of the Cherry Street and Derby Street intersection, and shifting the existing beacon near Pershing Road further to the west. The plan also proposes adding a crosswalk in between the proposed bus lane and pick-up/drop-off zone. With a staff of approximately 65 full-time and 25 part-time employees, there are only 16 marked parking stalls in the existing area with additional spots being unmarked. The proposal has 60 parking stalls, including two handicap-accessible stalls, ensuring better safety and convenience for staff and less need for staff to utilize street parking. Bike racks are currently available only in one location and will be available in three locations with the proposed plan. The proposed plans also state that they are considering raising the intersection at Derby Street and Pershing Road and extending the blue zone for pick-up/drop-off.

<p><i>Existing Conditions</i></p>	<p>Existing Conditions Key</p>
	<p>Pedestrian Access: </p> <p>Parking: </p> <p>Pick-up/Drop-off Zone: </p> <p>School Zone Beacon: </p> <p>Cross-Walk: </p> <p>Bike Racks: </p> <p><i>Imagery from Google Maps</i></p>
<p><i>Proposed Conditions</i></p>	



III. Technical Review of Site Plans Under Section 5-58

1. Location and Existing Site Conditions

The school is in the Public Use zone while the surrounding neighborhood is within the Single Residence 3 district and largely consists of single- and two-family dwellings. The school is located just over a half a mile to the north of the West Newton Village Center, but otherwise remains in a residential area.

The 237,611 square foot lot is largely level and has adequate area to accommodate full construction of the new school while the current school building is in use. The site is not located in any wetlands, floodplains, or other restricted that would inhibit development or the continued use of the lot.

2. Proposed Improvements

The proposed new school will increase the quality and total area of dedicated spaces for administrative offices and dedicated program space. Features such as groupwork space, English language learning and special education classrooms, and other programmatic space should help to ensure that all students have the resources that meet their particular needs. Additionally, the proposed bus loop, relocation of parking, and proposed traffic control improvements should serve for safer access to and from the school by all modes of transportation. The change of the school to full electric energy will improve indoor air quality, energy efficiency, and help reduce the City's climate impacts.

IV. Other Reviews

- **Newton Historical Commission.** On January 30, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission voted to find the Franklin Elementary School historically significant and imposed demolition delay until January 29, 2025. The report is available as Attachment A.
- **Associate City Engineer.** The Department of Public Works Engineering completed review of the Schematic Design prepared by Samiotes dated April 17, 2024. The review noted some items for consideration prior to the construction of the new school. Firstly, the proposed location of the transformer and generator should not be located over the existing City drain main as proposed. Next, a larger water main should be considered to accommodate for both fire suppression and water consumption. Lastly, prior to the completion of the project, an Operations and Maintenance plan and a Construction Management Plan

must be completed and the Final Plans must be stamped by a Professional Engineer.

- **City Transportation Engineer.** The City Transportation Engineer met with the design team during the Development Review Team meeting on March 20, 2024 and provided further analysis and input to the design team. The design team states that they plan to incorporate the City's and the Newton School Transportation Steering Group's feedback into the final plans.
- **Fire Department.** Newton Fire Prevention met with the design team on January 3, 2024 to review the plans. The plans will allow for emergency vehicles to access the south, east, and west sides of the building. The building will also be fully sprinklered.

V. Consistency with Newton Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans/Studies

While most of the Comprehensive Plan deals with non-public land and buildings, the Comprehensive Plan specifically addresses schools and municipal buildings in general with regards to environmental protection, energy conservation, and transportation. There are no significant concerns regarding environmental protection as the proposed school will remain on the same site and is currently fully improved. The site is not located in any protected areas such as wetlands, flood plains, or any other areas of environmental concern. Further, the proposed landscape plan has a greater number of trees, heavily features native species, and has a pollinator area. The school will be fully electric, which will improve indoor air quality and ensure energy conservation. The school will be LEED Gold certifiable, ensuring an improved level of energy conservation. Transportation, greater explained below, is improved per the proposal with additional traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures, a dedicated bus loop, and additional parking. These measures should improve safety and convenience for students, staff, guardians, and neighbors accessing the site by all means of transportation.

VI. Site Plan Review Criteria

In accordance with Section 5-58, the City has filed plans for Site Plan Approval. These are to be reviewed in accordance with the procedure outlined in Chapter 30: Article 6, Chapter 5, Section 5-58 of the Revised Ordinances. The following is a review of the submitted plans against the relevant criteria established in this section.

A. Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and in relation to the adjacent streets, properties or improvements

The plan overall improves the convenience and safety of pedestrian and vehicular movement within and surrounding the site. The addition of a bus loop and more parking stalls should help to improve the convenience and safety of vehicular movement in and around the site by ensuring that buses and staff vehicles are not blocking the flow of traffic on Derby Street or Cherry Street. Pedestrian movement remains similar with access along Derby Street, Cherry Street, and Russell Road. Additional crosswalks, school zone beacons, and potential raised intersections will significantly improve the overall safety and convenience for pedestrians.

B. Adequacy of the methods for regulating surface water drainage

The proposal represents an improvement compared to the current very limited site stormwater drainage. However, the City Engineer memorandum, found in Attachment B, notes some areas for improvement to the site stormwater drainage prior to the completion of the project. The final plans should ensure that the proposed transformer and generator location is changed to avoid the transformer and generator. Additionally, a Construction Management Plan and Operations and Maintenance Plan should be provided to ensure proper site drainage during construction and during the long-term operation of the building.

- C. Screening of parking areas and structures from adjoining premises. Location of parking between the street and existing or proposed structures shall be discouraged.

The proposed plan provides adequate screening of the parking area as a six-foot privacy fence screens the parking area to the west and north and the school screens the parking area to the east. To the south, where the entrance to the parking area from Derby Street is, there is some vegetation screening, but screening is appropriately limited to ensure adequate lines of sight from vehicles entering, exiting, and passing the parking area. The parking area is not located between the street and existing or proposed structures and is additionally appropriate as it is removed from the pedestrian paths and bus lane, minimizing the chance of students walking through the parking area.

- D. Avoidance of topographic changes; tree and soil removal shall be minimized.

Given the site is relatively level, no major regrading will occur. Some soil and trees will be removed to accommodate the footprint of the new school building, utilities, and newly paved areas, however, these will be over the existing baseball fields which are level. The landscaping plan shows the removal of approximately 33 trees with 130 proposed to be planted. Caliper inches were not provided for the existing or proposed trees and because the land is owned by the City of Newton, the City Tree Ordinance is not applicable per Newton City Ordinance Chapter 21 Section 21-82.a.

- E. Consideration of site design including relationship to nearby structures.

The proposed design proposes a similar size and scale to the existing school and while modern in appearance, much of the site design demonstrates thought to nearby structures. In keeping with the design of a neighborhood school, red brick is featured heavily in the design. There is significant screening and landscaping to ensure privacy for the abutting properties and for the school. Additionally, the site design improves traffic flow for the neighborhood by adding a dedicated bus pick-up/drop-off area that will improve student safety and improve area traffic flow.

VII. Construction Management

The project team anticipates site clearing and construction to last 20-22 months. Following demolition delay, which expires on January 29, 2025, and the bidding process, the construction will occur in two phases. The first phase will include the construction of the new school, parking lot, and other site improvements while the old school remains in use. The second phase will begin once the new school is constructed and will consist of the demolition of the old school and external work on the recreational and play areas.

Given the three-month bid contract has yet to occur, there is not yet sufficient information on construction management for this project. The contractor for the winning bid should submit a Construction Management Plan ("CMP") to the Director of Planning and Development, the City Engineer, the City Traffic Engineer, and the Commissioner of Inspectional Services for review and approval before any construction activities related to this project are commenced on the site.

This plan should identify hours of construction, further details on the expected phasing and length of construction, location of proposed on-site contractor parking, and material storage and staging areas. This plan should also incorporate preferences and input from neighbors, and the telephone number for the contractor's primary contact person. Copies of the final approved CMP should be submitted to the Executive Office and each of the Ward Councilors who represent the areas the school serves. Ultimately, the CMP should serve to demonstrate the project's plans to minimize any potential disruption to education.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Director of Planning and Development has determined that the preliminary site and architectural plans for the proposed Franklin Elementary School are consistent with the *Newton Comprehensive Plan* and any other relevant plans and studies, including the site plan review criteria listed in Section 30-23. The proposed additions offer remedies or improvements to the issues with the current building that could not otherwise be offered through renovation. The new school should greatly benefit the surrounding neighborhood far beyond the impact of construction or any other potential inconveniences of the new building.

With that in mind, the Planning Department suggests the following items for consideration:

- Where raised intersections were proposed on Derby and Cherry Streets, consider speed bumps or other traffic calming measures if raised intersections are not feasible because of the cost or inhibition of emergency vehicles.
- Consider the installation of solar panels where feasible at construction to obtain a return on investment for fully electric utilities sooner. While this will increase the initial capital expense, it will pay off in a number of years and may cause disruptions to learning to add the panels later during the school year.
- Consider widening the path and changing landscaping to the north of the building to ensure emergency access.
- The baseball field appears to have dugouts on the same side. If the field is slightly shortened or rotated slightly clockwise and moved slightly northward, this may not be necessary.
- Construction management should strongly consider any impacts to learning and recreation as preparation of the site may be noisy and otherwise disruptive if conducted during the school year, especially during phase 1 of construction.

If the Council, Executive Office and School Committee choose to approve these plans, prior to applying for Building Permits the Public Buildings Department should submit:

- Attachment A: NHC Letter, January 30, 2024
- Attachment B: Engineering Review Memorandum, May 15, 2024

CITY OF NEWTON
Department of Public Works
ENGINEERING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

To: Barney Heath, Director of Planning

From: John Daghlian, Associate City Engineer

Re: Administrative Site Plan Review – Franklin Elementary School

Date: May 15, 2024

CC: Lou Taverna, P.E., City Engineer
Carol Moore, City Clerk
Jennifer Ciara, Deputy Director of Planner
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner
Alyssa Sandoval, Deputy Chief Planner
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

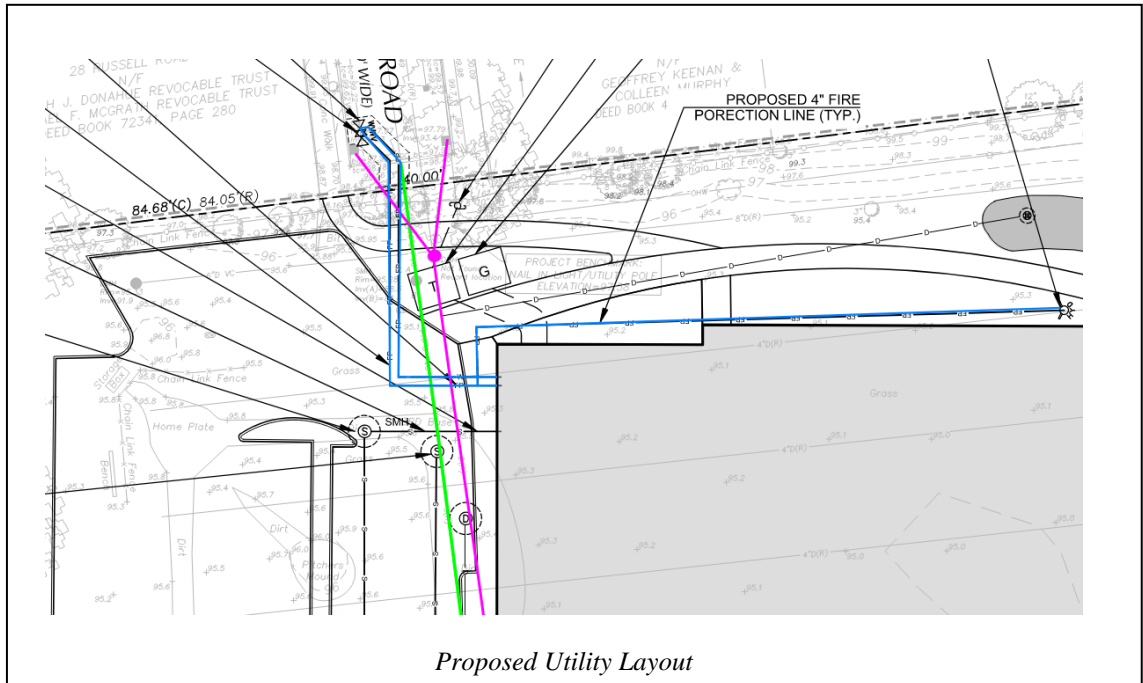
In reference to the above site, I have the following comments for a plan entitled:

*Franklin Elementary School
90% Schematic Design
Prepared by: Samiotes
Dated: 4/17/2024*

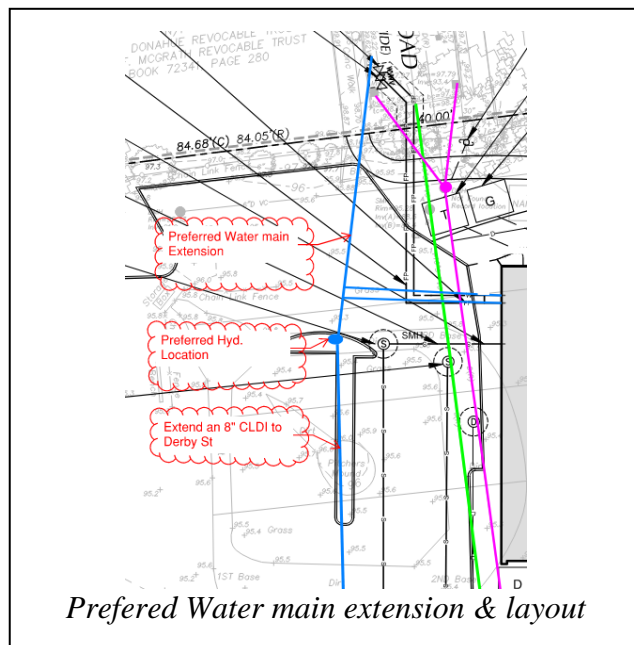
Executive Summary:

This application entails the construction of a new elementary school to the west of the existing school's footprint and new athletic fields in the location of the old school's footprint. The site currently has limited stormwater collection and little to no stormwater treatment. The engineer of record has designed a collection system to receive runoff from the school road, athletic fields and the bus drop off driveway that will vastly improve stormwater quality and decrease runoff from the site. The system will infiltrate and treat the collected water on site as required by the DEP and City Ordinances. As a housekeeping item the water quality volume for the City is based on 2-inches of rain not 1-inch as calculated.

The proposed location of the transformer & generator is directly over the existing City drain main, either the main should be relocated or the proposed transformer & generator.



The existing 6-inch water main may not be sufficient for both fire suppression and domestic use, an 8-inch CLDI should be extended from Russell Road to Derby Street to provide a looped system. The fire & domestic service should be tapped off the newly extended 8" main rather than how it is configured on sheet C-5.0 see preferred water main extension and fire/domestic service layout. The engineer of record should submit these plans to the Utilities Division for review and comment.

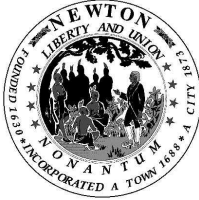


An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan will be needed to ensure that the long-term performance of the drainage system meets the City's MS4 permit and the design intent.

A construction management plan is needed for this project. At a minimum, it must address the following: staging site for construction materials and equipment, parking for construction workers vehicles, phasing of the project with anticipated completion dates and milestones, safety precautions, emergency contact personnel of the general contractor. It shall also address anticipated dewatering during construction, site safety & stability, siltation & dust control, and noise impact to abutters. The CMP must also address surface runoff during construction so that it does not impact abutters nor City streets & the stormwater system. Temporary detention basins, check dams or diversion swales should be considered.

Final Plans shall be stamped by a Professional Engineer.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me @ 617-796-1023



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts

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Barney S. Heath
Director

Newton Historical Commission Demolition Review Decision

Date: January 30, 2024 **Application #** HRA-24-5

Address of structure: 125 DERBY ST

Type of building: Non-residential building
If partial demolition, feature to be demolished is

The building or structure is:

- in a National Register historic district or in a historic district eligible for listing
- individually listed on the National Register or individually eligible for listing.
- importantly associated with historic person(s), events, or architectural or social history
- historically or architecturally important for period, style, architect, builder, or context.
- in a local historic district not visible from a public way

is **NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT** as defined by the Newton Demolition Delay Ordinance.

Demolition is not delayed and no further review is required.

is **HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT** as defined by the Newton Demolition Delay Ordinance (See below).

The Newton Historical Commission staff:

APPROVES the proposed project based upon materials submitted see below for conditions (if any).

Demolition is not delayed, further staff review may be required.

DOES NOT APPROVE and the project requires Newton Historical Commission review on this date January 29, 2024 (See below).

Conditions:

The Newton Historical Commission finds the building or structure:

is **NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED**
Demolition is not delayed and no further review is required.

is X **PREFERABLY PRESERVED – (SEE BELOW).**

Delay of Demolition:

 X is in effect until January 29, 2025

 has been waived - see conditions

Owner of Record:

City of Newton

Please Note: if demolition does not occur within two years of the date of expiration of the demolition delay, the demolition will require a resubmittal to the Historical Commission for review and may result in another demolition delay.

Determination made by:



David Lewis, Chief Preservation Planner



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts

Department of Planning and Development
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Barney S. Heath
Director

RECORD OF ACTION

DATE: January 30, 2024

SUBJECT: 125 DERBY ST

At a scheduled meeting and public hearing on January 29, 2024, the Newton Historical Commission, by vote of 5-0:

RESOLVED to: Find the property preferably preserved.

Voting in the Affirmative:

Doug Cornelius, Chair
John Rice
Harvey Schorr
Anne Marie Stein
Scott Friedman, Alternate

Voting in the Negative:

Abstained:

Recused:

Title Reference:

Owner of Property: City of Newton
Deed recorded at: Middlesex County Registry of Deeds
Book/Page
Date



David Lewis, Chief Preservation Planner

Newton Historical Commission
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459
Email: dlewis@newtonma.gov
www.newtonma.gov