



Programs & Services Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

Present: Councilors Krintzman (Chair), Oliver, Malakie, Humphrey, Baker, and Farrell

Absent: Councilor Micley and Lobovits

Also Present: Councilors Leary and Greenberg

City Staff: Linda Walsh, Commissioner of Health and Human Services; Shin Yi Lao, Director of Public Health Services; Jennifer Wilson, Assistant City Solicitor; Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer; Anthony Ciccariello, Commissioner of Inspectional Services; John Doyle, Election Supervisor; Liam Hurley, Assistant Superintendent; Perry Rosenfield; Manager of Financial Planning and Analysis; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer; and Jaclyn Norton, Committee Clerk

All agendas and reports, both past and present can be found at the following link: [Programs & Services Committee | City of Newton, MA \(newtonma.gov\)](https://www.newtonma.gov/Programs-Services-Committee)

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: [Programs and Services Committee - June 5, 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

#252-24 Appointment of Shin-Yi Lao as Commissioner of Health and Human Services
HER HONOR THE MAYOR appointing SHIN-YI LAO as COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES pursuant to Sec 3-3 of the City Charter. (30 Days: 07/03/24)

Action: Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting)

Note: Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer, provided an overview of Shin-Yi Lao's experience and stated that Linda Walsh, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, has been aiding in the transition. Shin-Yi Lao, Director of Public Health Services, has been with the City for 8 years and hopes to continue to do good work in the department along with continuing to serve the community. A Councilor asked what she is most excited about along with what she sees as the biggest challenge facing the Department. Ms. Lao stated that she is excited to explore how the city can utilize money received from the recent opioid settlement to strengthen drug treatment programs within the City. Regarding the biggest challenge, she stated that these include being able to meet people where they are to connect them with resources along with preparing for the next pandemic. Councilors voted 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting) on a motion to approve from Councilor Humphrey.

#237-24 Requesting to set Early Voting Hours and location for the September 3rd State Primary Election

THE CITY CLERK requesting to set early voting hours for the September 3rd State Primary Election on the following dates, location, and times recommended by the Election Commission: A total of seven days; Saturday August 24th: 11am-5pm, Sunday August 25th: 11am-5pm, Monday August 26th: 8:30am-5pm, Tuesday August 27th: 8:30am-5pm, Wednesday August 28th: 8:30am-8pm, Thursday August 29th: 8:30am-5pm, Friday August 30th: 8:30am-5pm at Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459.

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting)**

Note: John Doyle, Elections Supervisor, described that the state provides tight parameters for the scheduling of Early Voting. The City does have the discretion to have additional hours along with additional locations. The attached presentation outlines the proposed dates, times, and locations for early voting in the State Primary Election and State and Federal Election. Mr. Doyle did note that during early voting for the November State and Federal Election, there will be early voting the first weekend at Newton North High School and the second weekend at Newton South High School in addition to City Hall. Councilors supported this expansion in early voting locations and one Councilor asked why they didn't do one day each weekend at each high school Mr. Doyle responded that this was for logistical reasons and that signs would be posted throughout the City and at each high school with these early voting hours. A Councilor also asked about the percentage of voters that participate in Vote by Mail. Mr. Doyle noted that currently about 50% of voters in an election elect to Vote by Mail and the attached presentation shows the percentage of voters in an election that utilized in-person early voting. Committee members voted 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting) on a motion to approve items #237-24 and #238-24 from Councilor Farrell.

#238-24 Request to set Early Voting Hours and location for the November 5th State and Federal Election

THE CITY CLERK requesting to set early voting hours for the November 5th State and Federal Election on the following dates, locations, and times recommended by the Election Commission: A total of fourteen days; Saturday October 19th: 11am-5pm, Sunday October 20th: 11am-5pm, Monday October 21st: 8:30am-5pm, Tuesday October 22nd: 8:30am-5pm, Wednesday October 23rd: 8:30am-5pm, Thursday October 24th: 8:30am-5pm, Friday October 25th: 8:30am-5pm, Saturday October 26th: 11am-5pm, Sunday October 27th: 11am-5pm, Monday October 28th: 8:30am-5pm, Tuesday October 29th: 8:30am-5pm, Wednesday October 30th: 8:30am-8pm, Thursday October 31st: 8:30am-5pm, Friday November 1st: 8:30am-5pm at Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459; Saturday October 19th: 11am-5pm, and Sunday October 20th: 11am-5pm at Newton North High School, 457 Walnut Street, Newton, MA 02460; and Saturday October 26th: 11am-5pm, Sunday October 27th: 11am-5pm at Newton South High School 140 Brandeis Street, Newton, MA 02459.

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting)**

Note: This item was jointly discussed with item #237-24. A written report can be found with item #237-24.

#206-24 Requesting complete review and appropriate changes to the Rules of the City Council

COUNCILORS KRINTZMAN AND LAREDO requesting the review of the Rules of the City Council, traditionally done through a Subcommittee of the Programs & Services Committee. The Committee should review the rules and make recommendations to the full Committee in time for the recommendations to be reviewed and adopted by the full Council prior to the Inauguration of the next term's City Council, when the Rules for that Council are formally adopted at Inauguration.

Action: **Programs & Services Held 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting)**

Note: The Chair stated that a memo was attached to the agenda regarding the creation of the Rules Subcommittee and that it will be Chaired by Councilor Oliver with Councilors Baker, Krintzman, and Micley serving on the Subcommittee. All Councilors are encouraged to participate, and the Subcommittee will meet publicly to develop recommendations that will be presented to the Committee. Councilors voted 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting) on a motion to hold from Councilor Farrell.

Referred to Programs & Services and Finance Committees

#221-24 Appropriation of \$296,312 for student transportation

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of two hundred ninety-six thousand three hundred and twelve dollars (\$296,312.00) June 30, 2023 Certified Free Cash (0001-3240), to Newton Public Schools for student transportation for children who are homeless or in foster care.

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting)**

Note: Liam Hurley, Deputy Superintendent for Newton Public Schools, stated that this is an annual request to appropriate state funding to reimburse the City for costs incurred in securing school transportation for youth who are homeless or in foster care. He also noted that this program serves between 50 – 70 students per year. A Councilor asked why this funding from the state goes into the general fund and not a revolving fund along with any trends in the number of youth serviced by this program. Mr. Hurley stated that he would look into why this money is not deposited into a revolving account and that the number of students being serviced by this program has increased in recent years. Committee members voted 5-0 (Councilor Baker Not Voting) on a motion to approve from Councilor Humphrey.

#165-24 Discussion regarding hoarding and refuse on private property
COUNCILORS GREENBERG, LAREDO, LEARY, OLIVER, HUMPHREY, LUCAS, LIPOF, BIXBY, WRIGHT, MALAKIE, DOWNS, FARRELL, AND MICLEY requesting a discussion with the Inspectional Services, Health, and Law Departments to review how the city responds to issues of hoarding and other behaviors on private property that lead to pest infestation or potential injury to the occupants of the property and their nearby neighbors.

Action: **Programs & Services Held 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting)**

Note: The docketing Councilor described that there have been increases in rodents within Newton and that hoarding and other behaviors have been known to lead to pest infestation. This discussion is to see how the City approaches rodent infestation, how hoarding can exacerbate rodent infestation, what the City can/can not do, and what new things the City could try to address this issue while respecting private property rights.

The Public Comment period was opened.

Terry Sauro, 44 Cook St, noted how people who hoard need help in dealing with this issue and acknowledged the work that the City has done so far to address this issue. Ms. Sauro also spoke later in the public comment period and thanked the City for taking up this issue.

Susan Donnellan, 397 Linwood Ave, described that hoarding contributes to the severity of rodent infestations and that she hopes the City can find a way to solve this problem.

Kathy (address unknown) stated how bait boxes are not sufficient in dealing with the rodent problem and that people have incurred damages due to these rodents.

Marie Stefanik, 90 Boyd St, thanked the City for the ongoing efforts to address this issue but noted that rodent infestations are still a significant problem.

The Public Comment period was closed.

Commissioner Walsh stated that she would not be speaking on one particular property this evening but rather on hoarding in general. She noted that the City needs to be invited onto the property to conduct a complete inspection but if they are not invited on, they can conduct a plain view inspection. The plain view inspection consists of what can be seen from the street along with from neighboring properties if invited on by the neighbors. If the City finds a property in violation they can begin issuing citations, letters of abatement, issuing fines, final notice letters, and taking the person to court if needed. A Councilor asked if the City uses the public nuisance statute and if any ordinance changes would be necessary to aid the City in dealing with these matters. Jennifer Wilson, Assistant City Solicitor, stated that the City utilizes this statute when dealing with rodents and issuing letters of abatement. Attorney Wilson stated that she would need to take a look at the ordinances to see what changes if any could be recommended. In issuing a letter of abatement it states that the individual must complete the abatement by a

certain date, that the City will institute a \$ 1,000-a-day fine if not completed by that date and the City is also able to do the abatement themselves. If the abatement is completed by the City, then the cost of the abatement can be levied as a lien against the property, but not for the \$1,000 a day fines.

Regarding behaviors that can attract rodents, a Councilor asked if open dumpsters and feeding birds can contribute to this. Commissioner Walsh stated that the City educates restaurants on how to prevent rodents during inspections and will make sure that new staff know to look for secure dumpsters. A Councilor also asked if rodent fertility control is effective. Commissioner Walsh stated that it is only used on public property by the Public Buildings Department. The City is also working with other communities to develop best practices which so far have included training for restaurants and a comprehensive review of each communities' materials to be more effective.

Committee members voted 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting) on a motion to hold from Councilor Oliver.

#186-24 Reappointment of Marcela Merino to Community Education Commission
HER HONOR THE MAYOR reappointing Marcela Merino, 66 Cloverdale Road, Newton as a member of the Community Education Commission for a term of office set to expire on May 31, 2026. (60 Days: 06/15/2024)

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting)**

Note: The Chair read the item into the record and Councilors citing no objection voted 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting) on a motion to approve from Councilor Farrell.

#228-24 Reappointment of Karl Munger to the Biosafety Committee
HER HONOR THE MAYOR reappointing Karl Munger, 5 Nightingale Path, Newton as a member of the Biosafety Committee for a term of office set to expire on December 30, 2026. (60 Days: 07/19/2024)

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting)**

Note: The Chair read the item into the record and Councilors citing no objection voted 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting) on a motion to approve from Councilor Oliver.

#229-24 Reappointment of Howard Birnbaum to the Urban Tree Commission
HER HONOR THE MAYOR reappointing Howard Birnbaum, 36 Central Street, Auburndale as a member of the Urban Tree Commission for a term of office set to expire on April 30, 2027. (60 Days: 07/19/2024)

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting)**

Note: The Chair read the item into the record and Councilors citing no objection voted 5-0 (Councilor Humphrey Not Voting) on a motion to approve from Councilor Krintzman.

Referred to Programs & Services and Finance Committees

#245-24 Appropriate \$500,000 for IT infrastructure improvements

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) from PEG Access and Cable Related Fund (the "Fund") to Micro/Network Services - PC Hardware (0111154-585111), to make improvements to the City's IT infrastructure.

Action: Programs & Services Approved 6-0

Note: Mareen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer, noted that from 2010 to 2013 the City installed fiber cables between city buildings and in 2014 added redundancy to the system. In recent years the City has increased its need for technology along with interdependencies with NewTV. These PEG funds are being used for this project due to this being the funding source for the original installation of the fiber cables and the limited ways in which these funds can be used. Gregory Ansaldi, Deputy Director of Information Technology, described that this is the foundation of the City's core network and that these switches have been end of life since 2018. This new equipment will also prepare the City for the expansion of this network. A Councilor asked why these switches were not replaced in 2018. Mr. Ansaldi and Ms. Lemieux noted how support for the switches is becoming difficult and that this upgrade is purely preventative as the current switches have not failed yet. A Councilor also asked if the fiber cables would need to be replaced. Mr. Ansaldi noted that they were installed by a certified installer, have a 20-25-year warranty, and do not currently need to be replaced. Committee members voted 6-0 on a motion to approve from Councilor Humphrey.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Josh Krintzman, Chair

Early Voting Hours Recommendation

September 3rd, 2024 State Primary
November 5th, 2024 State Election

September 3th, 2024 Early Voting Hours

| Date | Times |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Saturday August 24 th | 11a-5p |
| Sunday August 25 th | 11a-5p |
| Monday August 26 th | 8:30a-5p |
| Tuesday August 27 th | 8:30a-5p |
| Wednesday August 28 th | 8:30a-8p |
| Thursday August 29 th | 8:30a-5p |
| Friday August 30 th | 8:30a-5p |

November 5th, 2024 Early Voting Hours

| Date | Times | Location(s) |
|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| Saturday October 19 th | 11a-5p | City Hall and NNHS Gymnasium |
| Sunday October 20 th | 11a-5p | City Hall and NNHS Gymnasium |
| Monday October 21 st | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Tuesday October 22 nd | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Wednesday October 23 rd | 8:30a-8p | City Hall |
| Thursday October 24 th | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Friday October 25 th | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Saturday October 26 th | 11a-5p | City Hall and NSHS B Gym |
| Sunday October 27 th | 11a-5p | City Hall and NSHS B Gym |
| Monday October 28 th | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Tuesday October 29 th | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Wednesday October 30 th | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Thursday October 31 st | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |
| Friday November 1 st | 8:30a-5p | City Hall |

Early In-Person Voting Data

- September 2022: 5.1%
- November 2022: 7.6%
 - March 2023: 5.5%
- September 2023: 6.9%
- November 2023: 6%
 - March 2024: 5%