

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

JOINT PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS & SERVICES
COMMITTEES REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2008

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chairman), Lennon, Albright, Salvucci, Gentile, Yates and Lappin

Absent: Ald. Mansfield

Also present: Ald. Baker, Brandel, Coletti, Freedman, Hess-Mahan, Merrill, Parker and Sangiolo

City officials present: John Daghlian (Assistant City Engineer), Mayor Cohen, Dori Zaleznik (School Committee), Scott Perrin (Newton South High School Athletic Director), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

REFERRED TO PROG& SERV, PUB.FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#192-08 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$5,069,783 from the following sources for the purpose of installing new fields and track at Newton South High School:
(A) Capital Stabilization Fund.....\$1,851,783
(B) Bonded Indebtedness.....\$3,218,000
(C) and to establish an appropriate vehicle into which \$500,000 may be transferred from the Capital Stabilization Fund to support the annual maintenance of these fields.

[05-13-08 @ 5:02 PM]

ACTION: **PUBLIC FACILITIES APPROVED 5-0-1 (Albright abstaining)**
PROGRAMS & SERVICES APPROVED 5-0-2 (Merrill, Sangiolo abstaining)

NOTE: The committee met jointly with the Programs and Services Committee on this item. Please note that both committees approved two items requesting funds for new fields at Newton South High School at the last meeting on May 7, 2008. However, the items were voted no action necessary on the floor of the Board in November and were therefore no longer valid items. The Mayor docketed the above item for funding of the new fields at Newton South High School. Nathan Collins and Paul Tyrell of Gale Associates were present for the discussion. Gale Associates previously provided the Board with a supplement to the drainage report and master plan for the fields (attached). The supplement also addresses questions raised at the Finance Committee on May 13, 2008. The Executive Office also provided a handout addressing questions raised regarding health risks associated with synthetic turf, which is attached.

Ald. Albright stated that she spoke with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and they are investigating the lead found in all types of artificial turf. They do not expect to have any results until late June or early July. Ald. Albright pointed out

that the results will be available before any type turf is installed at Newton South High School. Ald. Hess-Mahan is also concerned with the health risks being associated with synthetic turf. He also was not comfortable with the long lists of don'ts he has seen regarding artificial turf, such as no soda or sports drinks on fields. It is not reasonable to expect children not to bring drinks onto the field.

Ald. Baker moved approval of the previously approved plan of two synthetic multi-purpose fields, a natural turf baseball field and a natural turf softball field. Ald. Parker suggested that the committees consider a synthetic turf baseball field and one multi-purpose synthetic turf competition field due to maintenance costs. It is his belief that the maintenance costs related to a natural turf baseball field are higher than any other field. Ald. Parker also suggested that the city investigate naming rights for the fields to help with the funding. Ald. Schnipper explained that she could not support a synthetic turf baseball field as she does not believe it offers the school enough use of a field. The two multi-purpose fields provide the most uses for the school. Ald. Gentile feels that the two and two option is the best plan for the school due to the flexibility. The overwhelming majority of baseball fields are grass at the college and professional level.

The Mayor explained that there is a request for an additional \$500,000 to establish a fund for the annual maintenance of the fields at Newton South High School included in the docket item. There is still some question on the mechanism that will be used to establish the fund. The mechanism needs to allow the city to collect interest on the money, which will be used for part of the maintenance. The mechanism is expected to be determined by the time the Finance Committee discusses the item. Ald. Lappin asked that the Executive Office update the financing plan to include the \$500,000. Ald. Albright asked if there was a way to establish this type of fund for all city fields, particularly the new fields at Newton North High School. The Mayor explained that unfortunately the City finances do not allow funds to be dedicated to each field at this time. Ald. Brandel felt that the city should be treating all of the fields like this, as they are all city assets. It is important to know how much it costs to maintain the city fields. Ald. Gentile pointed out that the fields at Newton North will be fine, as they have to be available for students and community to use.

The committees then reviewed the drainage at the fields. There are schematic drawings for the drainage included in the master plan. Ald. Gentile asked how the water is getting down to the main drain during storms. Paul Tyrell of Gale Associates explained that there will be connections to the culvert in both the artificial and natural turf. The heavily compacted soil will be removed; a series of under drains will be laid under the fields and covered with free-draining soils. The under drains will be connected to a series of collector pipes, which will be connected to the existing culvert under the field. Ald. Gentile is concerned that if there are no lateral pipes in the outfield of the baseball field, water will pool. Mr. Tyrell explained that if it is properly graded the water will run off to the catch basins located at the perimeter. Ald. Lappin asked what type of warranty there is on the drainage system and turf. There is no drainage system warranty but if the system were to fail due to the plan, the city would sue the engineers and if failure was due to the installation, the city would sue the contractor. The engineer is

required to show that there is no increase to the storm water run-off from the site. The artificial turf has a year warranty. The success of the fields also depends on the city's commitment to maintenance of the fields.

Ald. Lappin stated that she researched artificial turf in surrounding communities and she is much more comfortable with supporting the item. She asked when the fields would be available for use. If everything goes according to schedule, the synthetic fields will be available for use in September of 2009. The natural turf fields will depend on whether they are seeded or sod is used. The sod will make the fields available sooner. Ald. Parker asked how long it takes for the artificial and natural turf fields to be playable after a rainfall. The synthetic turf fields are playable during rain events but the natural fields need six to 24 hours to dry before they can be used without damaging the field. Ald. Parker then inquired how long it would take to repair a natural turf field once it is damaged. Mr. Collins of Gale Associates stated that it takes approximately two growing seasons to repair a natural turf field if it is badly damaged. Ald. Albright was concerned that fields all over the city were being damaged, as she sees children playing pick-up games on fields all the time in the rain. Mr. Collins explained that it is unlikely that the fields are being damaged, as the children are probably not wearing cleats during pick-up games.

Ald. Yates moved approval of the previously approved plan of two synthetic multi-purpose fields, a natural turf baseball field and a natural turf softball field in Public Facilities. Ald. Baker's motion to approve the item in Programs and Services carried by a vote of five in favor with two abstentions. The motion for approval in Public Facilities carried by a vote of five in favor with one abstention.