

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
SPECIAL MEETING

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2001

Present: Ald. Parker, (Chair) Ald. Merrill, Coletti, Baker, Tattenbaum

Absent: Ald. Johnson, Gentile, Sangiolo,

Also: Ald. Salvucci, Nick Parnell (Buildings Commissioner) Michael Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer) Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Director) Michael Kaufman, Jim Marini, (Assistant Superintendent), various architects and design people.

REFERRED TO PROG&SERV; PUB FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE

#268-00(3) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$175,000 to lease four modular classrooms for Newton South High School.

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0

NOTE: Commissioner Parnell distributed some information in response to written questions that the Chair had sent him regarding environmental issues at the project. Ald. Coletti asked for a comparison as now drawn to the original design specifications that were in the Strekalovsky & Hoit study of the needs assessment of the schools. The architect responded that the main difference is that they did not increase the size of the auditorium instead planned a larger gymnasium to accommodate schoolwide functions.

The Building Commissioner added that an 1,850 student school would need adequate assembly space and that instead of doing that in a 375 seat auditorium, they would do that in the gymnasium – they could hold up to 700 chairs in the gymnasium.

Ald. Salvucci said that he was concerned that the cafeteria was next to the library and that noise from the cafeteria would disturb studying in the library. He was told that they will have a sound-insulating corridor in between and they will design it so the sound will not penetrate from the cafeteria to the library.

Ald. Coletti asked whether the numbers in the latest document were just being moved over from the earlier document or whether they have been analyzed and whether they have some greater reality to them. He was told that yes there has been further analysis and they are, in fact, real costs although they continue the process of refining the data.

The Committee members asked about the timeline for the projects and also the effect of phasing on the students while the project is in progress. The Committee was shown a phasing plan, which has three phases. Phase 1, Phase 2A, and Phase 2B and the plan is designed so that the students would be accommodated during each of the phases. The first phase would begin this summer, Phase 2A would begin next summer and they will begin handing out documents that are labeled with when these phases take place. Ald. Parker asked a few questions about the memo Mr. Parnell distributed, in particular, with respect to alternative energy sources and there is a reference to photovoltaic cells.

Commissioner Parnell clarified that there was definitely a commitment to use photovoltaic cells in the project. The question was how many and where they would be located. Ted Callahan said that they have two potential locations where they are looking at photovoltaic cells, one is the roof of the gym, which seems to be the preferred location, although they may use them in both.

Ald. Baker and Tattenbaum both commented that they need time to absorb materials before meetings and prefer to get them in advance. Ald. Parker asked about the grey water system, whether that was just being discussed or whether that was definite. The answer provided was that it was definitely going to be included, that the toilets would be flushed with grey water, thereby saving on MWRA water costs. The next question Ald. Barker asked about was what was happening with the pool and whether that would be included in the design specifications and would be drawn as a bid alternate.

Commissioner Parnell said it was unclear at this point on whether this would happen but for the time being he has asked the project manager for costs for design and construction of the pool and that data would be available on Friday. Ald. Merrill said he doesn't want any effect of having a pool or not having a pool decision at Newton South High School to have any effect on that decision on Newton North. He doesn't want something to be eliminated from Newton North project in order to fund the installation of a pool at Newton South. It was made clear by the administration and Mr. Parnell and everybody else that there was no fungibility between the two schools and what was designated for one school and what was designated for the other would be used for the other and that they are two distinct projects.

Ald. Parker also asked about staff and meeting rooms being available in the school in the evenings and what the level of community access would be. There is on the drawing a community education staff room and the project has a flexible design which will allow community spaces although, of course, the primary use is education. It is unclear at this point what areas of the building would be open in the evening for community use. There was also some discussion of having computerized systems of lighting, cooling, and heating for maximum efficiency. Ald. Parker also asked about the effect of the library size on the reclaiming of space, as certain functions were shifted out of the library area. The reading room will change from being 5,780 sq. ft. to 9,700 sq. ft. which the

Committee was informed should be adequate to accommodate the increase in number of students.

Ald. Baker asked whether the new classroom space is being designed with optimum location of desks and windows creating the best possible teaching environment.

The Committee was informed that when teachers at the high schools were asked about the designs of the educational space, they said they wanted to be able to reconfigure furniture, so they could recreate different types of use of desk configurations for different classes. That request was being addressed and also overhead projection systems will be designed to work in conjunction with the natural lighting from the windows.

Ald. Coletti asked about what type of security and observation systems would be in place. He was told that was not yet decided. Ald. Parker asked about science storage space and was informed that they would be adding prep spaces. Right now the preferred ratio was one prep space for each two classrooms and currently there aren't that many, but enough will be added to reach that ratio and that there would be refrigerated storage areas within those prep spaces. Ald. Coletti also asked about basement usage and whether there would be kids learning in the basement, which would be inappropriate, he thought.

It was clarified that the work in the basement was only in conjunction with a dressing room for theatre productions and would also include renovation of some of the boilers and pipes but there would not be classroom instruction going on in the basement.

Ald. Tattenbaum asked about the safety of the children during asbestos removal and Commissioner Parnell said that the asbestos removal would be taking place far away from where the students were. In fact, they would be doing as much as they could during the summer and what was being done at other times would be done in totally isolated sections of the school far away from where students and faculty were.

Ald. Parker also asked about drainage of the fields and stands and lighting. Commissioner Parnell said they would resolve the standing water problems on the field by adding more drains so that there would not be a standing water problem and that they would be putting new stands in the football field, but they are continuing to discuss other landscaping related issues and there is currently no money in this project budget for any lighting in any of the fields.

The Committee then discussed the following item:

REFERRED TO PUBFACIL. PROG&SERV, AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#268-00(B) **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$89,220,407 for the purpose of funding the construction and renovation of Newton North and South High Schools, which source of funding will be the issuance of long-term debt.
(Public Hearing Held 1-10-01)

ACTION: **HELD**

NOTE: Ald. Tattenbaum asked where the money from the modulars was coming from and Chief Budget Pooler explained that that \$175,000 was coming from the so-called kitty that had been set aside from previous reimbursements the City had received from the Middle School project and that money would now be made available for modulars at Newton South.

There was some discussion of whether these modulars could be included in the project so that they would be subject to reimbursement from the state. The Committee was informed that, given modulars that are necessitated by construction are not reimbursable and we further learned that, in fact, these modulars would be needed even if we weren't expanding Newton South, they would still be necessary because the school population in the near term before any of the additional space will be available and that the four modulars will be able to accommodate about 100 additional students which should be adequate to deal with the anticipated population increase next fall so these modulars would be put into place for the fall semester.

Ald. Merrill moved approval of this item, which passed unanimously 5 in favor, 0 opposed.

The Committee then had some discussion of Newton North High School. A lot of the work being done at Newton North is within the existing footprint and is a reconfiguration and improvement of existing spaces. Ald. Baker asked about the differences in function between windowed and non-windowed spaces, and also whether the parking lot entry and exit could be redesigned.

Assistant Superintendent Marini said that he didn't know if there was currently money in the budget for the project to redesign the entry and exit to the parking lot but he thought it would be a great idea since there is currently gridlock there as the cars enter and exit through the same spot. Therefore, there is a significant problem that needs to be addressed and that he would look into it.

Ald. Parker expressed concern that one of the major problems of Newton North is the oppressive, claustrophobic feel of the building and wanted to know whether design elements could be added that would improve the feeling of openness in the building and whether those types of elements have been included. The architects said they hadn't

gotten to that level yet, but that that was one of their major objectives and they couldn't make it any worse than it was now.

Ald. Merrill said he wanted attention to be given to improving the look and feel of Newton North High School so it is less oppressive and the committee decided that further questions and further discussion would take place at the next meeting.

The Chair offered the members of the public the opportunity to comment, but all chose to defer their comments until next week's public hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Parker, Chair