

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2011

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

Also present: Ald. Baker, Ciccone, Fuller, Harney, Johnson, Shapiro, Swiston, and Yates

City staff present: Lou Taverna (City Engineer), Marc Welch (Director of Urban Forestry; Parks and Recreation Department), Dave Turocy (Commissioner of Public Works), Robert DeRubeis (Commissioner of Parks and Recreation), Joe Mulvey (Acting Director of Information Technology), Hugh Downing (Police Department), Howard Mintz (Police Department), Robert Rooney (Chief Operating Officer), and Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer)

#266-11 NATIONAL GRID petitioning for a grant of location to install and maintain 80' ± of 4" gas main in RUANE ROAD from the existing 4" gas main at #74 Ruane Road in an easterly direction to #69 Ruane Road. (Ward 3) [09/12/11 @ 11:59 AM]

ACTION: **HELD 8-0**

NOTE: The Permit Representative from National Grid was not present at the meeting; therefore, the Committee held the item for discussion on October 19, 2011.

REFERRED TO PUB. SAF. & TRANS. AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEES

#255-11 ALD. BAKER, GENTILE, SCHNIPPER, CICCONE, FULLER, SHAPIRO requesting discussion of preparation for, response during, and follow up after, Tropical Storm Irene by the City of Newton, including co-ordination by the Mayor's office and the various City Departments involved. [08/29/11 @ 2:09 PM]

PUBLIC SAFETY VOTED NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 on 10/5/11

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0 (Lennon and Lappin not voting)**

NOTE: Docket Items #255-11 and #256-11 were discussed together, as they are both related to the coordination of emergency management between City departments. Ald. Schnipper explained that the items were not docketed as a criticism of how the City responded to Tropical Storm Irene but as a way to review any issues that may have arisen. She felt that the City's response to the storm was an extraordinary effort. Ald. Baker pointed out that a great many things went well in terms of emergency management during the storm. He clarified that Docket Item #255-11 was filed in order to review coordination between departments and look at how to enhance an already good response by the City. Ald. Baker is aware of one incident during the storm that could have been handled better with improved coordination between City departments.

Chief Operating Officer Rooney began the discussion by acknowledging the efforts of Police Lieutenant Downing, Commissioner of Public Works David Turocy, Acting Information Technology Director Joe Mulvey, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation Bob DeRubeis, and Director of Urban Forestry Marc Welch during Tropical Storm Irene. Mr. Rooney is also proud of how the City's workforce prepared and handled any issues that arose during the storm.

The storm caused close to \$3/4 of a million in damages to public property. The City began preparations for the storm, as soon as the forecasts predicted that the storm would hit Massachusetts. The appropriate City departments began coordinating the response for different storm scenarios on the Tuesday before the storm. The City also interfaced with the State and used some of their resources related to dealing with downed trees during the storm.

Police Lieutenant Hugh Downing relayed the Police Department's efforts in dealing with the storm to the Committees. The department began interaction with Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) regarding the storm. MEMA provided Newton with alerts and information regarding the storm. The Police Department began early preparation with other departments and increased its staffing levels for the time of the storm. The police planned for the worst-case scenario and were happy that the storm was downgraded before it hit Newton. Although, there were still a number of trees down that closed streets and caused loss of power, which generated a significant amount of phone calls to the Police.

Director of Urban Forestry Marc Welch reviewed the Parks and Recreation Department's response to the storm and plan for overall emergency tree management. When Mr. Welch joined the City nine years ago, there was not an emergency tree management plan. Mr. Welch formulated a general plan to address tree emergencies.

For Tropical Storm Irene, Mr. Welch began planning approximately nine days before the storm hit. Mr. Welch spoke with the City's tree service contractor in advance of the storm to reserve whatever vehicles that were available to deal with downed trees and limbs. When Mr. Welch learned of the magnitude of the storm, he spoke with the State's tree contractors to reserve more trucks. By the Friday before the storm, Mr. Welch knew that the City should have 19 vehicles manned with two people each available to address tree related storm issues. Eighteen of the nineteen trucks were in the City by the time of storm and were assigned specific routes throughout the City. A Parks and Recreation employee was assigned to each truck and was responsible for addressing all problems on their assigned route. The trucks and chasers responded to close to 200 downed tree or tree limb reports. Some of the trees brought down wires and could not be dealt with until NStar shut the power off. The full complement of trucks worked in the City to deal with the debris, removal of trees, and removal of tree limbs until the Thursday after the storm.

Commissioner of Public Works Turocy explained that the Department of Public Works looked at dealing with the storm as a two-pronged effort between utilities and roads. Before the storm, the Utilities Division surveyed low-lying areas, creeks, and catch basins and addressed any problems. Pre-staged pumps were placed where there have been problems with sewer overflow, such as Lyons Field, Old Farm Road, and Quinobequin Road. The department also

lowered Bullough's Pond to mitigate the chances of flooding because of overflow. The Highway Division checked and made any necessary repairs on highway equipment.

Additional staff were called in on the day of and night of the storm in the Utilities Division, Customer Service Division, and Highway Division of Public Works. Eight crews went through the streets to clear and clean-up debris. Chasers were used to identify problem areas. Crews responded to calls received by the customer service center, if possible. The crews could not address calls where there were downed wires until the power was shut down. Roads were closed because of downed live wires or downed trees.

It took most of the Highway Division's work force to pick up brush and debris. The Public Works Department did not differentiate between public and private debris collection and extended the debris pickup for private residences for an additional week. The Public Works Department is still addressing removal of tree stumps and working on repairing sidewalks damaged as a result of uprooted trees.

Chief Operating Officer Robert Rooney stated that the Mayor called all key staff members and met with them to ensure that there were no major safety issues or need for shelter because of the storm. There was an after action meeting to review the City's response to the storm. The administration is working to process a tremendous amount of information. The administration is reviewing how to improve the handling of data. There were some technical issues, as police dispatch and customer service use different software. The calls came in rapidly to customer service and there was no time to enter the information in the computer. Not all of the information was accurately transcribed resulting in responses to the wrong address or the wrong equipment was brought to respond to the issue. There was also some difficulty in getting clean accurate information, triaging and responding appropriately as the locations of customer service, police dispatch, the highway division and utility division are spread out throughout the City. The administration is looking at the possibility of having the customer service division located at the Police Department during the next storm, as it is close to dispatch and it will be easier to disburse information. They are also investigating increasing the customer service center staff in order to make sure all data is inputted, which will allow for more effective triage. Acting Information Technology Director is researching the best technology for storm management.

One of the biggest issues in dealing with the storm was the difficulty in coordinating with NStar Electric and Verizon regarding downed wires. There was a considerable loss of time and labor when City crews responded and could not do anything because of live downed electric wires. NStar prioritizes its response using criteria related to the number of people or business without power. It would be helpful if there were better communication between the utility companies and the City regarding whether downed wires are live.

Committee members suggested that the administration ask MEMA to look at the utility companies' response to the storm. Mr. Rooney agreed to relay the request to MEMA. Lieutenant Downing added that NStar and National Grid representatives were meeting with MEMA throughout the storm. NStar coordinated with the City and other municipalities on what critical infrastructure needed to be powered during the storm.

Paul Stein of 8 Olde Field Road, Newton Centre stated that he appreciated the communication between departments during the storm and the response to emergencies. However, a tree fell on a home on Olde Field Road at 10:30 a.m. and the neighbors removed the tree from the house but it blocked the street. The residents of the street called the City repeatedly from 10:30 a.m. on but got no response until 6 p.m. The police responded at 6 p.m. and informed the Parks and Recreation Department that a tree was blocking the street. The Parks and Recreation Department responded at 10:30 p.m. and removed the tree. Mr. Stein believes that the City needs to improve communication to ensure a better response from the City.

Ald. Shapiro added that he volunteered at the Customer Service Center for an hour and a half and was surprised at the antiquated reporting system. There was some ambiguity in prioritizing calls. Ald. Shapiro suggested looking at standardizing the prioritization of phone calls.

With that, the Committees requested that the Administration provide a report on how the technology and coordination between City departments and the utility companies is being enhanced to provide better emergency response. Mr. Rooney agreed to provide the report when it was available. Ald. Crossley moved no action necessary in the Public Facilities Committee, which carried unanimously. Ald. Shapiro moved no action necessary in Public Safety and Transportation, which carried by a vote of four in favor and none opposed.

REFERRED TO PUB. SAF. & TRANS. AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEES

#256-11 ALD. SHAPIRO, CICCONE, BAKER requesting a discussion how the City uses information systems as well as people to collect and process information from residents impacted by a storm or other emergency event, and ways to establish or improve the manner in which triage is performed and prioritized to increase public safety with the appropriate response. [08/29/11 @ 9:25 PM]

PUBLIC SAFETY VOTED NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 on 10/5/11

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0 (Lennon and Lappin not voting)

NOTE: See above note for discussion of this item.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#89-11 FINANCE COMMITTEE recommending that **Sec. 29-72(b) Same— Assessments upon owners of estates passed by new sewers.** of the City of Newton Rev Ordinances, 2007, be amended to increase the fixed uniform rates assessed upon owners of all estates passed by new sewers to rates that more accurately represent the estimated average cost of installing such sewers. [03-07-11 @9:30 AM]

ACTION: HELD 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)

NOTE: Ald. Fuller explained that the Finance Committee docketed this to review the betterment assessment ordinance to determine whether the assessment amounts should be increased. Commissioner of Public Works Dave Turocy stated that he does not have a recommendation on whether to raise the assessment to property owners that are passed by new sewer mains. However, Commissioner Turocy wanted a sense of how the Committee members feel about raising the assessment.

The Commissioner explained that the current ordinance provides a convoluted formula to determine the homeowners' assessment. The Commissioner provided the attached chart, which provides examples of the sewer betterment assessment for two sewer projects: one small project and one large project. The chart provides the assessment percentage information for the current ordinance, a 50/50% split, and a 33/67% split. The 50% and 33% split are based on a linear footage formula. The chart highlights that the City is currently paying a substantial percentage of the cost of sewer installations.

The Commissioner checked with surrounding communities to determine how they handle their sewer assessment. The Town of Needham has a similar ordinance and the Town of Wellesley's ordinance requires a 50/50 split with a \$9,000 cap on the individual assessment.

The feeling of the Committee was to look at increasing the sewer betterment assessment with a reasonable cap. The Committee asked that the Commissioner report to the Committee with detailed options and a proposed cap amount. Ald. Crossley moved hold, which carried unanimously.

#385-07 ALD. SCHNIPPER AND GENTILE updating the Public Facilities Committee on the progress of the Newton North High School Project. [11/21/07 @ 10:23 AM]

ACTION: **HELD 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Newton North High School Project is expected to be completed around Thanksgiving and is still expected to come in under budget. The baseball and softball fields located on the Lowell Avenue side of the project are being seeded in stages. It will take approximately 1 ½ years before the fields can be used for practice and games. There was no further information to provide at this point in the project and the item was held for the next update.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE

#99-11 ALD. ALBRIGHT, JOHNSON, and DANBERG requesting that the Department of Public Works coordinate data on the impact of the snow removal ordinance from the Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department, Executive Office, and Senior Services into a monthly report for the winters 2012 and 2013, which will be sent to the Public Facilities Committee of the Board of Aldermen that includes the following data: (1) the number of people requesting exemptions; (2) the number of exemptions awarded; (3) the number of warning letters sent; (4) the ability of the City to maintain the same standard regarding treating the surface to preserve safe passage; and (5) cost of the implementation of the program. 03/29/11 @ 11:43 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Commissioner of Public Works agreed to provide the requested monthly report at the Committee meeting of September 9, 2011; therefore, Ald. Gentile moved approval, which carried.

#22-10 ALD. YATES & DANBERG requesting a report from current and former members of the Design Review Committee on the treatment of the members of

the committee relevant to the Newton North High School Project. [01/04/10 @8:16 PM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Committee voted this item no action necessary, as the item is out dated and the Design Review Committee membership has turned over since the item was docketed.

#397-09 NSTAR ELECTRIC petitioning for a grant of location to install a new pole (233/4-1X on the northeasterly side of HOMER STREET opposite Grafton Street. (Ward 6) [11-10-09 @ 12:24 PM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Committee voted this item no action necessary, as the NStar customer that requested the pole relocation has not contacted NStar or the Board of Aldermen since December 2009.

#224-06(2) ALD. LINSKY, ALBRIGHT & JOHNSON, BAKER & SCHNIPPER requesting further deliberation on the conditions set forth in the Site Plan Approval Board Order relating to the Newton North High School project, considering possible expansion and modification of the conditions.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Committee voted this item no action necessary, as the project is almost complete and there is no need to modify the Site Plan Approval Board Order.

#386-04 ALD. SANGIOLO, HESS-MAHAN, JOHNSON, AND DANBERG proposing an ordinance to require that designers selected have LEED certification and include high performance/life cycle analysis for all municipal construction projects in the City of Newton.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0 (Albright, Danberg, Lappin, Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: The Committee voted this item no action necessary, as the State and City are already requiring that City projects meet “green” criteria related to energy efficient, high performance, and life-cycle analysis.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman

Sewer Betterment Assessment

| | | Current Ordinance | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| California Street (214 feet) (4 residences) | Assessment % | 5/95% | 50/50 % | 33/67% |
| | Project Cost (Actual) | \$144,100 | \$144,100 | \$144,100 |
| | City Cost | \$137,471 | \$72,050 | \$96,547 |
| | Total Resident Cost | \$6,629 | \$72,050 | \$47,553 |
| | Average Residential Assessment | \$1,657 | \$18,012 | \$11,888 |
| | Assessment Range | \$1,169 - \$2,748 | \$10,100 - \$20,874 | \$6,666 - \$13,777 |
| | | | | |
| Aspen Ave Hawthorne Ave Studio Rd (3,997 feet) (34 residences) | Assessment % | 15/85% | 50/50 % | 33/67% |
| | Project Cost (Estimated) | \$800,000 | \$800,000 | \$800,000 |
| | City Cost | \$684,358 | \$400,000 | \$536,000 |
| | Resident Cost | \$115,642 | \$400,000 | \$264,000 |
| | Average Residential Assessment | \$3,401 | \$11,765 | \$7,765 |
| | Assessment Range | \$1,379 - \$6,494 | \$5,304 - \$24,018 | \$3,501 - \$15,852 |
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