

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2009

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

Absent: Ald. Lappin

Also present: Ciccone, Freedman, and Linsky

City staff present: Maurya Sullivan (Telecommunications Planner), Frank Nichols (CPA and Special Projects Engineer), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer), and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

Chairman's Note: Frank Nichols, Special Projects Engineer, provided the Committee with an informational update on the Commonwealth Avenue Project. The project is a continuation of the reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue. This portion of the project spans Commonwealth Avenue from Grant Avenue to the Boston line. The contractor for the project is Newport Construction and it should take approximately two years to complete. The estimated cost of the project is \$4.87 million, and it is federally and state funded. However, if the project exceeds the \$4.87 million and the 10% contingency, the city will be responsible for the additional costs.

The project includes a full reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue, improvements to the drainage structures, catch basin replacements, crosswalks, and intersections on both Commonwealth Avenue and the carriage lane. There are ten new historic lights being installed. The contractor is currently working on drainage in the carriage lane. Traffic will continue to flow with police details. The Parks and Recreation has been involved in the landscaping plan for the project and would be responsible for maintenance once the project is completed.

There is discussion regarding bike paths on Commonwealth Avenue. The Bicycle Pedestrian Task Force has called for some minor re-stripping of the main thoroughfare to include a bike path both eastbound and westbound. The city has agreed to the bike paths but it will need to be coordinated with Mass Highway. There would be no additional cost to the project for the re-stripping.

Jonathan Kantar, 672 Chestnut Street, asked how the city planned to control the costs of the project to ensure that there are no overruns and the project stays within budget. Mr. Schuckel stated that Mr. Nichols was on site every day. The City will stay actively involved in the project and avoid any major design changes. John Allen, 7 University Park, Waltham, spoke on the item as a representative of the MassBike Technical Advisory Committee. He urged the city to pay careful attention to the bicycle lanes at intersections on Commonwealth Avenue. There was a fatal bicycle accident at an intersection on Commonwealth Avenue. In addition, the City should look at educating bicyclist regarding how to operate safely to avoid conflict with vehicles. Lois Levin of Bike Newton provided the Committee with a letter supporting a bicycle promenade along the carriage lane, which is attached to the report.

Mr. Nichols invited the Committee and members of the public to view the plans at the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department. The Committee felt that it would be appropriate to receive monthly updates on the project in order to be aware of any cost overruns

or design changes; therefore, the Committee will docket an item. The Committee also requested a one-page schematic of the project, which Mr. Nichols will provide.

#83-09 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to lease space on and around Fire Station #10 and/or lease space on and around the water tank off Ober Road for wireless communication equipment.

ACTION: **WITHDRAWN WITHOUT PREJUDICE 4-0 (Gentile, Mansfield, and Yates not voting)**

NOTE: Maurya Sullivan, Telecommunications Planner, requested to withdraw the petition without prejudice. The Planning Department received an opinion from the Law Department that the private drive (Ober Road) that is used for access to the water tank is limited to vehicles used to service the water tank. All of the designs that have been looked at for maintenance of the wireless equipment include Ober Road as the access point for the wireless communication companies. The Planning Department is going to study whether it is possible to access the water tank site from Country Club Road, which is a public way. The department plans to re-docket an item after a determination is reached. Ald. Albright suggested that if it is determined that the water tank is accessible, a landscape plan should be included with the item.

There were a number of residents present at the meeting and the Chairman explained that as the item was being withdrawn, there would be no further discussion on the item, but if there were any communications that the abutters would like the Aldermen to read to submit them to the Clerk's Office for distribution. The Chairman also explained that if the item is re-filed, a public hearing would be held and the abutters notified of the hearing. The motion for approval of the withdrawal without prejudice carried unanimously.

#341-08 NATIONAL GRID petitioning for a grant of location to install and maintain 80 ± of 6, 12" gas main from the existing 12" gas main in Lowell Avenue at Hull Street easterly to the existing 8" gas main across from Newton North High School and to install a new regulator station in HULL STREET (Ward 2). [09-26-08 @11:10 AM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Mansfield not voting)**

NOTE: This item was held in Committee on October 15, 2008, as the project is located in close proximity to Newton North High School and the Committee felt that it would be more appropriate for the work to be done when school is not in session. At that time, the Committee also requested a more detailed plan before the item was discussed again. The original Committee report and recommendation for approval from the Public Works Department were attached to the agenda. Dennis Regan, National Grid Permit Representative, and Michael O'Brien, National Grid Project Engineer, were present for the discussion of the item. The request for the regulator and new gas mains is for an upgrade to the gas service for the residents of the neighborhood and has nothing to do with the new Newton North High School.

Representatives of National Grid spoke with Mike Burton of Turner Construction, regarding whether the proposed project would create any conflict with the construction of the new school. Mr. Burton saw no conflict but asked that the National Grid project not start until July 15, 2009 to avoid any conflict with the construction of a temporary fire lane for the new high school. The National Grid project should take approximately four weeks to complete and be completed well before school begins in September. National Grid has also put together a

traffic plan and will have two police details to ensure continual traffic flow. Ald. Gentile hoped that National Grid would begin work no later than July 15, 2009 to avoid any issues or conflicts with students returning to school. Mr. O'Brien stated that if there is a delay with the project the new regulator and mains could be installed and National Grid could hold off on the removal of the old regulator. Ald. Gentile suggested that National Grid keep in touch with Mr. Burton of Turner Construction throughout the project. With that, Ald. Yates moved approval of the item, which carried unanimously

#96-09 ALD. LENNON, CICCONE AND MERRILL requesting approval of the conceptual plan approved by the Traffic Council for the traffic improvements of PARK and VERNON STREETS and to send a resolution to the Mayor to fund the design and improvements. [03/31/09 @8:08 AM]

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 6-0 (Mansfield not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Lennon and Ciccone joined the Committee for discussion of the conceptual plans for curb extensions at Vernon and Park Streets. The intersection is located near the Underwood Elementary School and the Bigelow Middle School. The Traffic Council has reviewed the plans, approved traffic calming, and other safety measures to help reduce speeding in the area. The proposed curb extensions would create a shorter distance for pedestrians to cross and force drivers to slow down when turning. The neighborhood is very much in favor of the improvements.

Ald. Lennon explained that the Newton Corner Advisory Committee has earmarked approximately \$10,000 of CDBG funds to help with the expense of the improvements. The advisory committee is willing to provide further funds next year; however, there is no engineered design at this time. Ald. Lennon has spoken with Commissioner Daley, who suggested that the Public Facilities Committee review the concept plan and approve it, before the Engineering Department produces an engineered design. Richard Belkin of the Newton Corner Advisory Committee spoke in favor of the project. The intersection is very dangerous and Mr. Belkin is concerned that there will be an accident with a pedestrian involved. Sean Roche, 42 Daniel Street, felt that it would be a good idea for the city to put in temporary curb extensions while the project is being designed. It would create a safer intersection at a small expense to the city.

The Committee discussed the wording of the docket item and determined that it was more appropriate to request the design and wait until the curb extensions were designed in order to get an estimate for the project before requesting funding. Ald. Yates moved approval of a resolution with the following amended language: Resolution to the Commissioner of Public Works to bring the conceptual designs for the traffic improvements at Park and Vernon Street intersection to engineered plans. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion by Ald. Yates.

#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 6-0 (Mansfield not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Schnipper and Gentile updated the Committee on the Newton North High School Project. The Public Facilities Committee will continue discussion of the traffic improvements on Walnut Street between Cabot Street and Mill Street on June 17, 2009. Ald. Albright inquired if the Traffic Engineer, Clint Schuckel, would be presenting additional information. Ald. Schnipper stated that Mr. Schuckel would attend the meeting. There will be a

tour of the new school on June 24, 2009. Ald. Gentile addressed the need for a temporary road, which will provide Fire Department access to the site. He wanted to make it clear that the road will cost the City money. The funds for the road will come from the contingency money but it is a necessary cost.

Ald. Gentile suggested looking at the possibility of creating a separate building for bathrooms to service the athletic fields. It may be a less expensive option than the proposed bathrooms within the school. He was concerned that if the school is not open, the bathrooms will be unavailable to people using the athletic fields. Ald. Gentile is also aware that the architect has significantly lowered the cost for the bathrooms within the school and the Plumbing Board has accepted that option instead of fifty bathrooms within the stadium. The Committee will continue the discussion regarding the bathrooms when the plans are presented to the Committee. Ald. Yates moved hold on the item, which carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman