

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

SPECIAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2008

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

Absent: Ald. Gentile

Also present: Ald. Baker, Coletti, Danberg, Freedman, Hess-Mahan, Johnson, Sangiolo and Vance

City staff present: Mayor Cohen, Lou Taverna (City Engineer), Dori Zaleznik (Chair of the School Committee and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

REFERRED TO PROG&SERV, PUB FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#86-07 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$2,300,000 from bonded indebtedness for the purpose of funding the construction of a new synthetic turf recreation complex at Newton South High School. [03-13-07 @ 7:04 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV., PUB.FAC. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#276-06(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$1,800,000 from bonded indebtedness for the purpose of funding the construction of a new synthetic turf recreation complex at Newton South High School (these funds will supplement the requested CPA funds for this project under item #276-06).

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

NOTE: As the items above are related, they were discussed concurrently. This item was previously held and that report is attached. The discussion began with questions regarding the drainage study of the Newton South playing fields. The Chair asked for clarification on whether or not the drainage would improve if natural turf were chosen for the fields. Mr. Tyrell, Civil Engineer from Gale Associates, explained that the recommendation to use the synthetic turf was based on the usage of the fields and not because the drainage could be further improved by synthetic turf. There will be a significant improvement to drainage if the current fields are replaced with either natural or synthetic turf. A properly designed athletic field has virtually no sheet run-off regardless of whether it is synthetic or natural. However, there is a much higher level of maintenance if the city chooses natural turf. Currently, the topsoil on the fields is impermeable and in order for the fields to drain correctly, it will need to be replaced with a mixture that is 80% sand. The new natural fields would require regular maintenance to preserve an 80% sand level. Mr. Tyrell stated that some of the deterioration of the current fields is due to lack of maintenance. There was some question regarding why the fields sink in areas. The sinking is possibly due to compaction of the top layer creating low spots. If the city does not maintain any new natural turf fields, the same problem will occur.

Ald. Coletti stated that some of the items in the RFP's scope of services pertaining to drainage in the neighborhood of the Newton South fields do not appear to have been addressed. He would like a sign off from Gale Associates that they looked at items A through M and the replacement of the fields does not create any new drainage problems for the neighborhood. It is important that these improvements do not exacerbate the problem but alleviate it to some extent. The city should take care of the neighbors during this project. Ald. Coletti pointed out that if he were to vote for the funding of the turf it would be because it was good for the neighborhood as well as the school. Mr. Tyrell responded that Gale Associates was charged with what is happening with the fields and how to mitigate those problems. Ald. Coletti stated that during the review of the RFP for the drainage study, the Aldermen included items to study the drainage in the neighborhood, and he hopes that the RFP was not changed. Mr. Tyrell would like an opportunity to review the RFP before he comments any further. Ald. Lappin would also like to see the neighborhood issues addressed. She asked if there is any potential of storm water reuse. The reuse is addressed in the report and, unfortunately, the cost of an underground storage tank is prohibitive.

There were no further questions on the drainage study, therefore, the committee took public comment on the items.

Guive Mirfendereski, 24 Carleton Street, provided the committee with the attached handouts on the possible health effects of artificial turf. He asked if the dips observed on the fields could have been due to the differential settling of that area that was addressed in the 1977 engineering report. Mr. Tyrell stated that it could be part of the issue, but the depressions do not seem to be as significant as he would have expected differential settlement resulting from sub-base failure. Mr. Mirfendereski then asked if the engineer was familiar with the drainage system put in place when the original fields were constructed. Mr. Tyrell responded that he is not familiar with that system. Susan Allen, 100 Littlefield Road, is very concerned about the possible health risks associated with artificial turf. She provided the committee with a handout, which is attached. She stated that there is the possibility of artificial turf containing high levels of lead. There has not been enough research on the effects of artificial turf. Her granddaughter has played on artificial turf and has been injured. Lyutina Glik, 44 Sharpe Road, stated that her daughter had a very negative experience playing on synthetic turf recently in Lexington. The scraping and burning she received from just playing on the field once was quite awful. She asked if anyone had addressed the impact on the children and the environmental concerns. John Bamel, 28 Winston Road, spoke in favor of the field restoration. He believes there should be a compromise of two synthetic fields. He proposed that there be a synthetic football field and that the field closest to Brandeis Road be artificial turf. The students deserve better than what they have now. His son has played soccer on both natural and artificial turf and he prefers the artificial turf. Steve Farrell, 30 Winston Road, spoke on the items. He has met with the Mayor, the Newton South Athletic Director and Gale representatives regarding the fields. He had a wonderful conversation and, as a result, there was an alternative plan designed. The proposed new plan creates two artificial multi-purpose fields. One field would be located at the site of the current football field, however this would require the current field be moved over slightly and the track widened to accommodate the increase in size. The other synthetic field would be located beside Brandeis Road. The baseball field, softball field and practice field would be located at the center of the site and be natural turf. Mr. Bamel added that he was supportive of this plan but would propose one permanent bleacher system at the football field and two team rooms at the

other synthetic field. Scott Perrin, Athletic Director at Newton South, felt that the proposal gives the school two competition size fields that can be used at all times. He is willing to compromise and it would be great to hold competitions but his main goal is to make the fields useable. Ald. Albright requested the required number of spectator seats for MIAA level competitions.

Mayor Cohen stated that Gale Associates has the new plan to present. Mr. Collins from Gale Associates reviewed the new plan. The new plan would cost approximately \$4.7 million dollars but Gale will get a better estimate. The proposed plan does not quite address the school's need in terms of usage but the Athletic Director feels that it is possible to work around that issue. In addition, the new plan makes the drainage issue more difficult to resolve; however, it can be resolved with this plan. Mr. Tyrell is positive that he can do a successful drainage system. The Mayor asked if the drainage plan depended on the city's ability to maintain the fields. The response was that in order to ensure proper drainage, maintenance is a requirement. There would also be a loss of a proposed parking lot by Brandeis Road as the space would be needed for the fields. Ald. Coletti felt strongly that there needed to be bleachers at both synthetic fields. Nathan Collins responded that there are pads for portable bleachers at the field closest to Brandeis Road. He also reiterated the need to maintain the natural turf fields. He asked what the cost for both natural turf field maintenance and artificial turf maintenance would be per year. Mr. Collins responded that the cost for the natural field maintenance would be approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year per field. The cost of maintenance of the artificial turf field would be between \$2,500 and \$5,000, depending on the amount of grooming. Ald. Coletti is concerned that the city cannot dedicate that type of money to field maintenance at one school.

Ald. Danberg asked if the engineers had thought about an ambulance or other emergency equipment going across the fields and what type of damage that might do to the fields. Mr. Collins explained that there would not be damage to the synthetic turf. However, there would be rutting on the natural turf and possible damage to the irrigation system. Ald. Coletti asked if there was emergency access planned for the field. Mr. Collins stated that there is emergency access through a gate but not anything more than the gate.

Ald. Lappin asked about the recently publicized possible health related issues with the artificial turf, in particular the lead content. Mr. Collins explained that it is the older turf fields made of nylon that contain high lead levels. The proposed fields would not be this type of turf. Ald. Albright would like further information on the Environmental Protection Agency's involvement in artificial turf. Ald. Lappin asked why the pellets used in the artificial turf migrate from the field. Mr. Collins stated that this occurs mostly in the first year of use especially on wet days. When Gale Associates installs an artificial turf field, it creates a lower strip at the edge of the field to catch the pellets. Grooming the field once a month also cuts down on the migration of the pellets. Ald. Mansfield asked how artificial turf is disposed of when it is replaced. Mr. Collins believes it is a standard landfill operation but would need to check. Ald. Lappin pointed out that the committee did not receive the corrected numbers on the costs of the different alternatives. Mr. Collins stated that he would provide those corrections.

Ald. Coletti urged the committee to rank the three alternatives that have been proposed regarding the artificial turf in order to move the project forward. Ald. Lappin stated that the drainage problem and the usage problem have existed for a very long time and needed to be addressed. However, she would like it to be addressed correctly and does not feel that the committee has all of the information required to rank the alternatives appropriately. She

requested that Gale Associates provide the corrected figures with the cost estimates on the new proposal. Ald. Albright requested further information on what the Environmental Protection Agency is testing. In addition, the committee would like copies of the new alternative plan. The committee held the item until their next meeting on May 7, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman