

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2006

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chair), Weisbuch, Albright, Salvucci, Gentile and Mansfield

Absent: Ald. Yates and Lappin

Also present: Ald. Harney and Sangiolo

City staff present: David Turocy (Deputy Commissioner of Public Works), Lou Taverna (City Engineer), Nicholas Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

Public Hearing

#93-99 RUTH M. THOMPSON 5 Belmore Park, Petition for Laying Out, Grading and Acceptance of BELMORE PARK from Washington Street to end 505' to be the width of 45 feet.

ACTION: **APPROVED SUBJECT TO SECOND CALL 6-0**

NOTE: Lou Taverna and David Turocy joined the Committee for discussion of this item. Belmore Park is located in the Lower Falls area of Newton and is a dead end street. The residents of the street opted to petition for street acceptance, which will include full depth reconstruction and drainage improvements. There are several trees on Belmore Park some of which are pine trees that are not normally accepted as City shade trees. The petitioners would like to retain the trees and are requesting a waiver of the roadway curbing. The Commissioner of Public Works strongly recommends curbing due to the grade of the street to prevent erosion of the berm and roadway. However, it is possible to stop the curbing at the trees leaving gaps where the trees are located. The property owners have only received the assessment of betterment estimates without the curbing. The City Engineer provided estimates with curbing to all of the property owners at the meeting. The Public Works Department is proposing to construct a bullet nose shape to the end of the road at the dead end instead of constructing the triangle shape shown on the original site plans. There is a fence and carport located at 45 Belmore Park, which encroaches on the triangular portion of the roadway. However, the Law Department recommends taking the entire lay out and allowing the encroachment.

Ald. Mansfield questioned whether there would be a problem with erosion at the gaps for the trees. Mr. Turocy responded that there should not be any problems, as the tree roots will hold the soil in place. Ald. Salvucci pointed out that the City will need to maintain the road once it is accepted and curbing saves the road.

The public hearing was opened and Reza Sadr-Lahijany, 15 Belmore Park, spoke in favor of the petition but questioned where the handicap ramps will be located. The two ramps will be about halfway down the street at the bend. Paul Bradbury, 14 Belmore Park, stated that he is very upset about the curbing being added to the project. Ald. Salvucci explained that the curbing is important to street maintenance and will improve the quality of the road in years to come. Ellen Geary, 39 Belmore Park, asked why the homeowners were given the option of no curbing. Mr. Taverna thought that he had made it clear that it is not his decision to waive the curbing but the Board of Aldermen's decision. Gertrude Kneeland, 40 Belmore Park, asked to see the lay out of the street. Mr. Taverna provided the lay out to the residents. Dennis Geary, 39 Belmore Park, explained that the property owners have reached a consensus on the dead end portion of the street. Also, the City will need to move a hydrant and telephone pole in order to reconstruct the street. Mr. Taverna responded that the hydrant will be moved at the expense of the City and he does not believe that the pole will need to be moved. Mr. Geary went on to say that he would prefer that the City construct the road to the original lay out. Deborah Frascatore, 45 Belmore Park, stated that they have already endured two takings on their property for the Route 128 Ramps. Mr. and Mrs. Frascatore do not want to remove their fence, flagstones and carport. Ms. Geary felt that if the street were constructed with the bullet nose ending the snow would create a problem because it will all be pushed to the end of the street. Mr. Turocy does not see the snow as an insurmountable problem as the Public Works Department can back blade and push the snow out. Mary Sherman, 21 Belmore Park, stated that she is having a hard time visualizing the plan and is concerned that if there are sidewalks there will be nowhere for the snow to be piled. Last year a plow dug up part of her front lawn and she would not want that to reoccur. Mr. Turocy responded that there are many dead ends within the City that are back plowed and with the addition of curbing her lawn would be protected from plow damage.

Reza Sadr-Lahijany questioned whether the requested lack of curbing would have an impact on the Board or Committee's vote on the petition. Ald. Salvucci responded that it would be irresponsible not to put curbing in, as the City will need to maintain the street and the cost of maintenance would rise drastically at the expense of taxpayers if there were no curbing. Ald. Gentile explained to the residents that they are not bound to the street acceptance and can withdraw the petition. However, the curbing makes sense and there should be a compelling reason to waive the curbing. Ald. Harney related his experience with street reconstruction and curbing. His street was redone approximately 18 years ago, the City installed curbing, and it is still in great shape to this day. He also receives multiple calls regarding torn up asphalt where curbing is not installed. Ald. Harney feels that granite curbing is worth installing when a street is reconstructed.

Ald. Schnipper pointed out that the last completed street acceptance projects costs were 20% lower than estimated. This does not necessarily mean that this project will come in under the estimates but would hope that it would. She also clarified that the property owners are only assessed the actual cost of the project and cannot be assessed more than the estimated betterments.

The Committee asked for a poll from the property owners on who is in favor of the petition and who is against the petition. Five of the neighbors were in favor of pursuing street acceptance and two of the neighbors were against the petition.

Ald. Gentile stated that if any of the missing homeowners wanted to be heard they could call the Aldermen or the Clerk's Office. It is important for the petition to move forward if it is going to be done this construction season. Ald. Salvucci suggested that a motion to approve the item subject to second call be made in order to have input from the other homeowners. Ald. Schnipper moved approval of the item subject to second call. Ald. Mansfield asked why the City would be taking land that it would not use. Mr. Taverna explained that it is the recommendation of the Law Department to take the whole street lay out. Ald. Mansfield asked if the road is designed to allow cars to turn around. Mr. Taverna stated that any passenger car could make a three point turn and it would be likely that large trucks would need to backup. The Committee voted to approve the item subject to second call unanimously.

NOTE: Paul Bradbury, 14 Belmore Park, is no longer in favor of the petition.

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

#453-05 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$150,000 be appropriated from bonded indebtedness for the purpose of funding a space needs study for the elementary schools throughout the City.

**PROG&SERV APPROVED 4-0-1 (Sangiolo abstaining; Baker not voting)
on 3/22/06**

ACTION: HELD 6-0

NOTE: School Committee members Dori Zaleznik and Susie Heyman, as well as Public Buildings Commissioner Nick Parnell joined the Committee for discussion of this item. Commissioner Parnell stated that the Request for Proposal (RFP) is one of the better RFPs he has seen for a study. A lot of thought has gone into the RFP, the needs are made evident and the technical documents are good. The City has not done any type of study on elementary schools since 1994. The original study done in 1994 needs updates, such as ADA compliance, sustainability and life cycle costs. Ms. Zaleznik stated that the study would provide a database with current inventory of all facilities, a list of short-term projects that could be undertaken and a sense of what the long-term needs are for the elementary schools. The study would provide a mechanism for the City to determine what needs to be done, when the State gets back to funding these types of projects. Long range facility planning is becoming necessary and it is recommended that an updated study be performed every five years. The hope is to get the communities surrounding the different elementary schools on board by allowing everyone to see what the conditions are like in other schools.

Ms. Heyman knows it is a little unnerving to be looking at future school projects with the Newton North High School project on the horizon. She believes that it is necessary to start the process now, as everything has changed since the last study. It will be very helpful in planning the short-term energy related issues like boilers and windows. It would allow the School Department

to prioritize and determine what will give the biggest return on investments. Twelve of the City's elementary schools have not been touched in many years and they are some of the oldest buildings in use.

Ms. Heyman also pointed out that the funding source is no longer bonding, as stated in the docket item but an unidentified source. The Mayor has promised to identify another source of funding before it reaches the Finance Committee. Ald. Schnipper explained that the understanding of bonding something is that the life of the item should be longer than the cost of paying it off and a study does not have that kind of life. Ms. Zaleznik explained that it is not the intent to put school buildings ahead of any other City buildings by proposing this study. The School Department would just like to be prepared to initiate a project when the State reopens the School Building Assistance Program.

Ald. Salvucci felt that it is a good idea but feels studies end up on a shelf. Schools are not the only buildings that need to be repaired. The fire stations are in terrible condition and it would be hard to explain why money is going to a study instead of repair of the stations. Ald. Albright has taken a tour of the fire stations and she is concerned about what type of message the Board is sending if we spend millions of dollars on the schools and let the rest of the City buildings deteriorate. Commissioner Parnell responded that it is important to know what is going on with the buildings. The City needs documentation. Ald. Albright is troubled that there is no study on the City side. The Commissioner stated that he would like the City to do a comprehensive study of all City buildings. Ald. Schnipper asked the Committee to give the Commissioner a clear sense of the Committee's support of a citywide study of all public buildings. The Committee was supportive of this type of study.

Ald. Gentile does not have a general negative feeling towards studies but the Board needs to look at spending and equality. He is frustrated that the School Department is looking for funding for this study. He would like a memo from the School Department and Administration that states when they anticipate funding to implement recommendations of the study. Ald. Gentile also pointed out that this study will raise the expectations of the community that schools will be repaired when the City cannot afford to repair them. Ms. Zaleznik responded that it will but it has been made clear to the community that the study in no way means that the projects will be done immediately.

Ald. Schnipper felt that the wording of the docket item is misleading as it includes a wide range of services not just space needs. Ms. Heyman stated that the study includes education and program aspects, as well. Ald. Albright asked if it is possible to separate the energy piece from the study, as it seems to create an overlap. Ms. Zaleznik would not expect to repeat energy portions but build on the energy data provided by the energy performance contractor. Ald. Weisbuch questioned how the \$150,000 for the study was determined. The Commissioner stated that the figure is based on the cost of similar studies.

Sandy Pooler joined the discussion and explained that the first problems that will be addressed will be any safety issues. Ald. Albright asked if he was aware of the overlap in the

energy portion of the study. Mr. Pooler had not really thought of that but the study looks at a much broader spectrum than an energy performance study. He would go forward with the study and meld the data down the road.

Ald. Mansfield stated that he would like more time to consider the questions raised at the meeting. Ald. Albright moved hold in order for Mr. Pooler to respond to the questions. The Committee voted unanimously to hold the item.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES, PS&T AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#163-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$40,000 from the Parking Meter Receipts Fund for the purpose of installing a new pay station at the Cypress Street municipal lot and for the purchase and installation of 100 replacements for obsolete parking meter heads throughout the City.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Sandy Pooler, David Turocy and Clint Schuckel were present for discussion of this item. The Traffic Engineer would like to implement a pay station program at the Cypress Street lot in Newton Centre. The lot was chosen, as it generates the highest revenue per space. The lot also has a majority of long-term spaces. There are two systems, which could be installed: a ticket dispenser system or an electronic system that registers time. Both options would allow paper money, payment through debit cards and possible charge card payment. The City would most likely use the electronic system, as it allows people to pay and leave instead of returning to their car to place the ticket on the car.

Mr. Schuckel explained that this is a pilot project to see how a pay station works in City parking lots. There are many advantages, such as it is easier for tickets to be issued, people have the option of cash or debit, the City forces do not have to empty 57 meters just one pay station and it will free up 57 parking meter heads to be used elsewhere in the City. Several other cities and towns have switched to this type of system and have used it for years.

Ald. Salvucci asked if bad weather would affect the machine or if it could be easily vandalized. Mr. Schuckel replied that the machine could be set-up to call or page someone if there is any type of problem and are built to withstand the weather. The City will work to put out a very comprehensive RFP.

Ald. Weisbuch asked how much time could be purchased. It was explained that the machine would only allow for the purchase of the time allotted to the parking space. Ald. Weisbuch questioned whether the shops had been notified to this change in the parking lot. Mr. Schuckel responded that he could notify the shops before it takes effect.

Ald. Mansfield made requests that all the businesses be notified and that the pay station be located conveniently. Mr. Schuckel stated that the proposed location of the pay station is in the center of the lot. Ald. Gentile moved approval, which carried unanimously.

Re-appointment by Board President

#158-06 PRESIDENT BAKER recommending William Chaisson, 31 Evergreen Ave. Auburndale be re-appointed as an Aldermanic appointee to the DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE, term of office to expire 12/31/07.

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee would like to invite Mr. Chaisson in to discuss his reappointed, therefore, the item was held.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman