

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2005

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

Absent: Ald. Gerst, Lappin

Also present: Ald. Lennon and Fischman

City personnel present: Lou Taverna (City Engineer), Nicholas Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings), Mayor Cohen, Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Michael Kruse (Director of Planning), David Turocy (Deputy Commissioner of Public Works), Anne Larner (School Committee) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#480-04 GEORGE PALLI, 61-59 Cornell Street, Newton Lower Falls, petitioning for Construction of a Common Sewer in ATKINSON STREET, from the existing manhole in Cornell Street 150' southerly to a manhole in Atkinson Street.

PETITIONER TO PAY ENTIRE COST

ACTION: APPROVED SUBJECT TO SECOND CALL 5-0-1 (Mansfield abstaining)

NOTE: George Palli, the petitioner, presented the petition to the Committee. The Planning Board Acting as Board of Survey has approved the subdivision of a lot, which will activate a paper street. It is a condition of the Planning Board that Mr. Palli petition the Board of Aldermen for a sewer for the new home in the subdivision.

Lou Taverna stated that the design of the sewer meets the City's standards. Atkinson Street is a private way and there were some questions regarding whether the Board of Aldermen requires an easement. Ald. Salvucci suggested getting an opinion from the Law Department before approving the petition (attached). Ald. Stewart moved approval of the petition subject to second call, which carried by a vote of five in favor and one abstention.

#481-04 ALD. SCHNIPPER requesting an update on the HVAC and plans to commission Newton South High School.

ACTION: HELD 6-0

NOTE: Commissioner Parnell, Anne Larner and Mayor Cohen were present for discussion of this item. Commissioner Parnell is meeting with the architect and project

manager to scope out how to address the problems with the HVAC system. There have been several complaints regarding the climate in different areas of the school.

The Chairman asked if the City planned to commission all of the systems in the building or just the HVAC system. Commissioner Parnell explained that all of the other systems seem to be working well. The focus of the commissioning will be on the HVAC system and the acid neutralization tank system in the science labs. However, it is important to make sure that all systems work.

Ald. Salvucci asked how the commissioning would be funded. The Mayor responded that he is working on an appropriation for the commissioning. He views commissioning as an insurance policy for a tremendous investment. The Chairman asked whether the commissioning would go out to bid. Commissioner Parnell stated that fortunately one of the City's on-call architects does commissioning.

Ald. Stewart asked for an explanation of commissioning. Commissioner Parnell explained that it is a walkthrough of the entire system to make sure that it is installed correctly and working properly. Ald. Mansfield asked what recourse the City had if there is a design flaw in the system. The Commissioner responded that the City would go back to the design engineer, who will fix or replace the system. Anne Lerner stated that the School Committee strongly supports commissioning and feel that it is a good use of money.

The Committee opted to hold the item for future updates on the commissioning of the high school. The Committee also voiced their strong support of commissioning buildings.

#432-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the 25% design plans for the reconstruction of Needham Street for review. The design plans provide a detailed depiction of the roadway layout for the "Three Lane Alternative," which provides the most substantial improvements for motorists, pedestrians and business in terms of safety, capacity and aesthetics as compared to the other alternatives.

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0-1 (Salvucci abstaining)**

NOTE: The Committee was joined by the Mayor, Michael Kruse and Bill Steffens of McMahan Associates. The Mayor explained that the last time the Needham Street reconstruction was discussed in March of 2001 there were many individual, specific questions about intersections, driveways, etc...The Mayor stated that the presentation by the consultant should address each of those questions. The Mayor feels that the plan improves traffic flow and safety on the street without creating a detriment to the businesses on the street. The consultant has worked closely with the businesses to make sure that concerns are addressed.

The State will fund 100% of the reconstruction but before entering into the project, the Mayor wants to make sure that the City has operational control over the project. The Mayor will insist that on control of the project to make sure the project is done correctly. The Mayor would like to see the work done at night to minimize the impact on the businesses.

The consultant, Mr. Bill Steffens, reviewed the 25% plans with the Committee. The Town of Needham is working on improving Highland Avenue in conjunction with Newton. The Town of Needham has submitted their 25% plans to the State and the State is awaiting Newton's 25% plans. The State must repair and upgrade the bridge on Needham Street to three lanes for the plans to work. The Highway Department seems to want to do the bridge internally and the work should move forward as soon as the plans are submitted.

Mr. Steffens explained that the worst time in terms of traffic is the afternoon. The most traffic comes from Route 128 into Newton. However, back-ups occur in the other direction because there is a high demand for a left hand turn at the first intersection in Needham. There is no dedicated left hand turn lane at the intersection creating a back up all the way back down Needham Street. The consultant has coordinated with Needham and there will be an exclusive left turn lane with two through lanes at that intersection.

The plan calls for the alignment of the mouths of Oak Street and Christina Street. The City will need to take land in order to align the streets. The Chairman asked if there was available land at Oak Street as the building is very close to the sidewalk. Mr. Steffens responded that there is a 3' to 4' culvert that runs beside the building the City would use. Ms. Judy Mannix, 430 Winchester Street, asked how much land would be taken at the Bull Finch site at the corner of Christina Street. Mr. Steffens responded that the City would only require a minimal amount land from the parking lot. The alignment of the mouths will allow the City to keep a simple two-phase light intersection.

There is a conflict at Marshall Plaza with people turning into the parking lot. Mr. Steffens believes that the conflict can be resolved with an exclusive right turn in and out of the entrance closest to Charlemont Street. In addition, there is will be a physical barrier at the Blockbuster Video, so cars cannot take a quick left creating a safety issue. There will also be a new two-phase traffic light at Industrial Place and Tower Road. The mouths of both streets will be better aligned and the owners of the property in that area have agreed to the intersection configuration. Ald. Stewart asked what strategy was used when discussing the reconstruction with property owners. Mr. Steffens stated that each owner was shown the plans for the portion of the project in front of their property. If the owners were pleased with the configuration it was kept, if they were not pleased worked towards a resolution.

There will be concrete sidewalks with granite curbing on both sides of Needham Street the entire length. The overall plan closes thirteen curb cuts with the agreement of all property owners. The driveway aprons will now slope down onto the street instead of being level with the street. The consultant has worked to standardize driveway opening, however, it was not possible for all driveways to be standardized.

Bill McLaughlin of Avalon Bay addressed the Committee and explained that the State has approved the 75% plans for a traffic light in front of the Avalon Bay apartments. The new traffic signal is consistent with the City's overall plan for Needham Street. There will also be pedestrian crossings located at that site. Avalon Bay will fund this portion of the project. Ald. Salvucci asked why it was not shown on the consultant's plan. Mr. Steffen explained that, as it is not part of the consultant's work it is not shown but it will be displayed if the State requests it. Ald. Mansfield asked if this traffic light would be synchronized with the rest even though it is not part of the City's plan. Mr. Steffens responded that he has collaborated with Avalon Bay and it will be synchronized.

Ald. Salvucci asked if the City has to accept Needham Street once it is reconstructed. The Mayor responded that the City would own Needham Street once the project is completed. He stated that the State has not put any money into maintaining the street and it is critical that the City take over the maintenance of the street. Ald. Salvucci stated that it only adds to the burden of Newton taxpayers. The Mayor does not wish to go to the State every time Needham Street needs work. Ald. Mansfield stated he would like an opinion from the Law Department regarding whether the Board of Aldermen would need to accept Needham Street from the State. He would also like to know what changes if Newton accepts ownership of Needham Street and an estimate of the annual maintenance for the street.

Mr. Steffens continued his review of the 25% plans. There will be an exclusive left turn at Columbia Avenue. There will be two left turn lanes at the intersection of Dedham and Winchester Streets. There will be crosswalks and sidewalks at the intersection.

The sidewalks and crosswalks will be continued along Winchester Street. Winchester Street will also be a four-lane roadway. The Curtis Street mouth will be narrowed and crosswalks will be added to make the crossing easier to navigate. The parking on Winchester Street will be moved behind the businesses. The street will be signalized at the Route 9 ramps and will operate in tandem. There will also be a traffic island at the westbound ramp to separate traffic.

Ald. Fischman has noticed many cars parked along Winchester Street and would like to make sure that parking is prohibited all together. The Mayor explained that enforcement of parking restrictions would be strictly enforced when the project is completed. Ald. Fischman would encourage working with business owners to reduce curb cuts on Winchester Street.

George Hinchey, 275 Winchester Street, stated that he has looked at all the alternatives for Needham Street and feels this is the best and safest plan. It is very important to have the left turning lane, which cannot be done with a 4-lane roadway. Judy Mannix, 430 Winchester Street and Brian Ferry, Needham Street business owner also voiced their support of the project.

Ald. Mansfield asked if it is the proposal that four lanes continue to Centre Street and Walnut Street. Mr. Steffens responded that it would not continue and Ald. Mansfield asked how a bottleneck would be avoided. Mr. Steffens responded that most of the traffic goes eastbound on Route 9. Ald. Mansfield pointed out that there should be a right turn lane and a through lane instead of a left turn lane and through lane if this is the case. Mr. Steffens agreed to investigate that further.

Ald. Mansfield suggested exploring ways to bury the utility wires along Needham Street. The Mayor explained that Mass Highway has always denied requests for burying wires but the Mayor will push strongly to have the wires buried. Mr. McLaughlin of Avalon Bay stated that he has asked for the wires to be buried and is willing to grant easements for the wires. Mr. Steffens stated that there would be conduit placed during the reconstruction for future use if the State denies the City. Ald. Stewart asked when the taskforce on undergrounding would be established. The Mayor responded that he is working on finding people to serve on the task force. Ald. Stewart asked if it is possible to explore another funding method for undergrounding, such as a joint venture between business owners and the City. The Mayor stated that none of the businesses have expressed an interest in undergrounding the wires. Ald. Yates suggested a business improvement district and Ald. Mansfield suggested that the Mayor and Mr. Kruse investigate.

Ald. Albright asked if there would be landscape improvements to the street. There will be improvements but the project is in early stages and the improvements will be addressed later.

Ald. Yates moved approval of the item. Ald. Schnipper asked if the plans would be back at the 75% stage. Mr. Steffens responded that the next opportunity for input would be at the hearing held by the State. Ald. Mansfield asked that the Committee be kept in the loop during each stage of the project. The Mayor agreed to keep the Board updated and the Committee voted unanimously to approve the item.

#339-03 ALD. SALVUCCI, on behalf of Anthony R. Cucchi, requesting that the square at Watertown and Adams Streets be named San Donato Square.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-1 (Salvucci opposed)**

NOTE: This item was previously discussed by the Committee and held, as there was no unanimity in the neighborhood in regards to naming the square. Ald. Schnipper suggested investigating another mechanism to recognize San Donato. Ald. Lennon joined the Committee and stated that there may be a better way to recognize San Donato as a sister city. He is willing to work with the petitioner and neighborhood to get recognition of San Donato that is agreeable to the majority.

Ald. Yates stated that he proposed joining the Sister City Organization a few years ago and it has never been done. He asked that the Mayor pursue joining the program, as they may have ideas on how to recognize the sister city relationship.

Ald. Stewart moved the item no action necessary, which carried by a vote of five in favor and one opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman