

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2005

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

Also present: Ald. Linsky, Samuelson and Danberg

City personnel: Mayor Cohen, Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Lou Taverna (City Engineer), John Daghlian (Associate City Engineer), Ted Jerdee (Superintendent of Utilities), David Naparstek (Commissioner of Health), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Candace Havens (Chair, Traffic Council), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#467-04      ALD. YATES AND SCHNIPPER requesting a response from the Commissioner of Public Works to the findings of the Environmental Protection Agency that pollution enters the Charles River from Newton.

**ACTION:**      **HELD 8-0**

**NOTE:**      This item was held on December 8, 2004 for a plan to deal with flooding in the backyards along Quinobequin Road and Devonshire Road (Report Attached). Commissioner Rooney reviewed and updated the Committee on the situation. He has met with the neighbors and the engineer hired by the neighbors to discuss the various options to resolve the problem. He would recommend diverting the flow from the backyards by extending the drain line along Larkspur Road. The Commissioner has investigated the various permits that will be required to create a new outfall in the Charles River.

Lou Taverna presented the Committee with a topographical representation of the area. He has researched the history of the drainage system in the area. There was a brook that ran through the backyards on Quinobequin Road and Devonshire Road. In 1937, a drainpipe was installed to contain the brook as part of a condition of a sales agreement between the City and developer and the City also agreed to maintain the pipe.

It is Mr. Taverna's opinion that the flooding is due to leakage, surface and ground water. The main cause of the flooding is the broken drainpipe, which has recently been repaired. The Utilities Department recently corrected a leaking water service at 75 Devonshire Road that may have contributed to the problem. Mr. Taverna explained that there are two feasible options either a new drainage pipe along Larkspur Road or slip lining the existing pipe. He would recommend the new drainage pipe.

Mr. Taverna has contacted the State agencies regarding the permits and knows what is involved and the City can meet the required qualifications for permits.

Ald. Lappin asked Mr. Taverna what percent of the flooding is caused by groundwater. Mr. Taverna replied that it is difficult to say but he has looked at the calculations for a 25 year, 50 year and 100 year storm and there would be flooding in the yards due to groundwater. Ald. Lappin asked if there is anything that can be done about the groundwater. Mr. Taverna explained that there are some options for the residents, such as converting the existing city drain to a French under drain or removing the drain entirely.

Ald. Mansfield asked why the City should abandon the easement if there is a run-off problem in the area. The Commissioner responded that the new pipe along Larkspur Road should take care of any run-off. He has evaluated the City's responsibility and feels the City should abandon the easement.

Ald. Gerst asked if the repairs that the City has made have solved the problem. Ted Jerdee explained that the City has done many tests to try to determine what is causing the infiltration. The sewer and drain lines in the area have been televised and upgraded, all roots have been trimmed and the pipes have been mended. Ald. Yates stated that he is pleased with the City's efforts.

Christina Alpert, 564 Quinobequin Road, stated that the properties have eroded significantly due to the leaking pipe and she would like the City to restore the yards. She does not understand how keeping the existing pipe would be beneficial. She asked if more topsoil would help drain the backyards after storms. Mr. Taverna answered that topsoil would help and it is up to the owners to determine whether they wish to keep the pipe or not. The Chairman clarified that there are several options open to the residents. Doug Miller, Engineer for the property owners, spoke regarding the condition of the properties. Most of the topsoil is gone and the ground is wet clay, the pipe is above grade and there is around 2' of soil gone from the yards. If the ground and vegetation is restored, the yards will be usable and the flooding will be manageable.

Meryl Stowbridge, 69 Devonshire Road, showed the Committee pictures of her yard in 1985 and recent pictures of the yard. The pictures from 1985 showed a well-maintained dry, grassy yard and the recent photos displayed a pond and clay instead of a yard.

Ald. Lappin asked if it was the Public Works Department's intent to fill the back yards and when the work would be completed. Lou Taverna responded that the work should be completed by July or August. Commissioner Rooney explained that the proper mitigation has not been studied; therefore, he is hesitant to answer the question regarding restoration. The Mayor stated that it is the City's intent to solve the problem and work with the neighbors to resolve issues.

Ald. Stewart agrees that the problem needs to be dealt with but feels that the City should look at precedents before assuming all responsibility. He is hesitant to make a bald and complete statement that the City is at fault and will pay.

Ald. Yates asked if the Public Works Department is preparing to submit the requests for permits. The Commissioner stated that the design of the pipe is 90% complete and all of the State agencies are aware of the City's intent. Construction should begin in April.

After a brief discussion, the Committee opted to hold the main item and create an item specifically addressing the Quinobequin Road situation. The new item is below and instructs the Public Works Department to install a new pipe and work with the property owners. Ald. Salvucci moved hold on the original item and approval of the new item. Both items carried unanimously.

#467-04(2) PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE instructing the Department of Public Works to install a new drain pipe in Larkspur Road to divert the flow of water from the backyards on Quinobequin Road and Devonshire Road and to work with the owners to resolve issues surrounding the existing pipe and flooding of the backyards.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:** Please see above note.

**REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#28-05 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend six hundred sixty-five thousand nine hundred fifteen dollars (\$665,915) from Free Cash for the purpose of funding snow and ice costs in the Department of Public Works.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:** Commissioner Rooney presented the item to the Committee. The Commissioner explained that the appropriation request will cover all storms to date and two additional medium size storms. He also pointed out that the salt sheds were completely empty at the start of the season.

Ald. Gerst asked about the increase in the cost of salt. Commissioner Rooney stated that the cost of shipping the salt has increased by 40% creating a rise in the cost to the City. Ald. Yates asked the Commissioner if he has looked at alternatives to salt recently. The Commissioner stated that he has experimented with different products but they are not all that they are cracked up to be environmentally. Ald. Mansfield asked about liquid salt that is applied to the roads before a storm. Commissioner Rooney stated that it is brine and feels it is a possibility.

Ald. Stewart commented that the City uses too much salt, which is a waste of money. Ald. Salvucci stated that he believes that there is an ordinance or policy that requires the City to use a 3:1 ratio of sand and salt. Ald. Salvucci requested that the Committee Clerk investigate this possibility. Two reports from 1988 and 1989, which address the policy, are attached. Ald. Salvucci moved approval on the item.

**REFERRED TO PS&T AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEES**

#478-04 ALD. SAMUELSON and CANDACE HAVENS, along with ALDS. JOHNSON, LENNON, HESS-MAHAN, LINSKY, ALBRIGHT, HARNEY, SCHNIPPER, YATES, DANBERG AND LIPOF proposing creation of a new Ordinance to allow for installation of raised crosswalks, where deemed necessary, as a traffic calming measure.

**ACTION:** **HELD 8-0**

**NOTE:** Ald. Samuelson docketed this item because the City needs a policy or ordinance and design criteria for raised crosswalks in order to implement them. Ald. Stewart does not think it makes sense to have an ordinance to design raised crosswalks. They should be approached by looking at individual situations and making recommendations. Ald. Samuelson responded that she is not sure whether an ordinance or a policy is needed.

Candace Havens, Chair of the Traffic Council, explained that the Traffic Council is limited to stop signs as a means for traffic calming and sometimes that is not the best mechanism for traffic calming. Clint Schuckel stated that the City should look at new traffic calming options.

Ald. Gerst has seen the raised crosswalks in Cambridge on Rindge Avenue and feels they are aesthetically pleasing. He feels that the idea is worth exploring but would like to know how and who would deem raise crosswalks necessary. David Koses responded that the City would need some set of criteria.

Ken Budreau, Fuller Street, spoke on the need for physical changes to roadways in order to slow the speed of traffic. Steve Cummings, Brae Burn Country Club on Fuller Street, stated that Brae Burn is willing to pay for the installation of two raised crosswalks on Fuller Street, as speed is such an issue on that street.

The Committee had several questions regarding raised crosswalks. First, the Committee asked whether raised crosswalks are allowed under ordinance or whether they are considered speed humps. Second, would the Board need to deal with raised crosswalks and if so, which Committee would they be referred to for discussion. It was decided to consult the Law Department on the various questions. Ald. Yates moved hold on this item and the resolution below until the Law Department has an opportunity to respond to the questions.

#321-04(2) ALD. JOHNSON requesting a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor requesting that he expeditiously as possible find funding to create traffic calming measures on Mill Street as requested by the Traffic Council.

**ACTION:** **HELD 8-0**

**NOTE:** Please see above note.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman