

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2005

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

Also present: Ald. Coletti, Harney, Hess-Mahan, Lennon, Linsky, Samuelson and Vance

City personnel present: Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Michael Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), Nick Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings), Caroline Sarno (Facilities Manager; Public Buildings), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Candace Havens (Chair of Traffic Council), Gayle Smalley (Associate City Solicitor) Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#82-05 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$960,978 (\$457,856 from Free Cash/\$503,122 from Overlay Surplus) for the purpose of supplementing the snow and ice control accounts in the Public Works Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Commissioner Rooney joined the Committee for discussion of this item. The request will cover last night's storm. The Commissioner has requested reimbursement from FEMA for the blizzard of January 22, 2005. He estimates that the City will receive \$500,000 from FEMA, which will be placed in Free Cash.

Ald. Stewart is somewhat critical of the extra work of snow removal and salting and sanding especially in the spring as the sun is hotter, and snow melts quickly. He asked if it would be possible to reduce labor in the spring. The Commissioner responded that if the City plows it is committed to paying contractors by the inch for snow plowing. He disagrees with Ald. Stewart regarding salting and sanding. It is necessary to sand in a situation where there is hard-packed ice and snow on a roadway as it will not readily melt. The City needs to create safe driving conditions for residents and commuters.

Ald. Gerst asked if the City has looked at different ways to handle the problem of funding snow and ice removal. He asked if it were possible to set-up something like the City's self insurance policy for the removal of snow and ice. The Commissioner responded that he would investigate different options.

Ald. Mansfield asked the Commissioner if the City used contractors on every storm. The City does not use the contractors on every storm. It depends on weather and the number of inches of snow.

Ald. Lappin moved approval of the item, which carried unanimously.

27-03 ALD. SALVUCCI, SCHNIPPER, LINSKY, STEWART, LAPPIN AND YATES requesting a review of all change orders to date with Public Buildings Commissioner and the Project Manager on the Newton South High School project.

ACTION: **HELD 8-0**

NOTE: Ald. Salvucci asked that the Committee hold the item, as the Law Department is working on some change orders. However, Ald. Schnipper asked that Commissioner Parnell update the Committee on the commissioning of Newton South High School. The Commissioner stated that the Mayor is docketing an item to request funding for the commissioning in the upcoming week.

Ald. Schnipper asked if the commissioning would cover more than the HVAC. Commissioner Parnell explained that they have not been seeing any significant electrical or plumbing problems. The fire systems will need to be tested by the Fire Department.

The estimated cost of the commissioning is \$450,000 but it is an insurance policy and there will be improvements to the system. The commissioning also includes a thorough visual review of the system. Ald. Lappin asked if the HVAC were faulty would the manufacturer or installer be held responsible. The Commissioner responded that the HVAC system is under warranty; therefore, it would be covered.

The item was held for future discussion.

#14-05 ALD. HESS-MAHAN AND JOHNSON requesting discussion of fire safety, health and environmental concerns in areas converted for instructional uses at Horace Mann Elementary School.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 8-0**

NOTE: Ald. Hess-Mahan and Commissioner Parnell joined the Committee for discussion of this item. Ald. Hess-Mahan explained that the Horace Mann suffers from chronic overcrowding and that there is a space crunch for educational programs. One of the spaces eyed for an art room was a basement room used for storage by the PTO and custodians. It was decided to pursue using the space for the art room instead of doing art on a cart. However, several problems have arisen in regards to fire safety, health and air quality. When the conversion was made, there was a problem with the fire exits, as the second means of egress was blocked by the gym door. In addition, many students could not use the room due to allergies and air quality.

Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that many of the issues have been resolved although the room will never be ideal for an art room. Unfortunately, there is still one student who cannot use the room due to allergies. His main concern was that the room is safe for students.

Commissioner Parnell reviewed the different repairs that were made to the room. There is a new wall, entrance and ventilator. The Commissioner had not heard

that there was a mold problem in the room. Ald. Yates asked if there were still two ways out of the gym. The Commissioner responded that yes there were still two exits from the gym. Ald. Yates asked if there were any way to use the Boys and Girls Club for art classes. The Commissioner is not sure that there has ever been any discussion regarding this option. Ald. Mansfield asked if there was a problem with the ventilation in the gym, requiring the door to be opened. Commissioner Parnell explained that the school has a flat roof that encourages heat build up and the school was designed for air conditioning that was never put in place. The Public Buildings Department will be putting an operable window above the gym door, which exits to the outside.

Ald. Schnipper asked Ald. Hess –Mahan why he had not approached the School Committee with the problems. Ald. Hess-Mahan did speak with a member of the School Committee and was told it was a building issue. The art room has been in use since last year and he was concerned that the problems had not been communicated to the Public Buildings Department.

Ald. Albright has viewed the space and it is not a great place to hold an art class. She felt that many of the situations the City resolved during the Tier 1 projects were being recreated.

Ald. Salvucci asked if there was any plan to move Horace-Mann to the Carr School building. Ald. Hess-Mahan responded that the idea has been raised but there is tremendous division in the community. Ald. Stewart asked why the City did not redistrict to alleviate the overcrowding at the school. Ald. Hess-Mahan pointed out that most of the schools are overcrowded.

Ald. Hess-Mahan commended Commissioner Parnell on the response time of the Public Buildings Department once it was involved. Ald. Yates moved no action necessary, as the problems have been addressed. The motion carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PS&T AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEES

#479-04 **ALD. LENNON, GENTILE, SALVUCCI, COLETTI et al** requesting that a detailed analysis be conducted by the Public Buildings Dept., Fire Dept. (and any necessary outside sources) of all necessary improvements for each fire station within the city. Said analysis should include, but not be limited to living quarters (bedrooms, kitchens, etc); offices and workstations; HVAC and plumbing systems; window replacement; apparatus floor and any other physical plant improvements. Said analysis should assist the Board of Aldermen in understanding and prioritizing all needed improvements and create a “blueprint” and timeline to have improvements implemented and completed.

PS & T HELD 5-0

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Mansfield not voting)**

NOTE: The Public Facilities Committee and the Public Safety and Transportation Committee discussed this item jointly. Ald. Coletti joined both Committees for the discussion. Ald. Lennon stated that he docketed this item, as he felt the best way to approach the problems with the fire stations was to understand the conditions. Ald. Lennon arranged a tour of all the fire stations on February 12, 2005 and

prepared a packet of findings from the tours (attached). He would like to see all the needed improvements, the costs for the renovations and the City take a comprehensive approach to dealing with the renovations.

Ald. Coletti spoke on the item. He stated that there have been a number of docket items regarding improvements to the fire stations over the past couple of years. There have been some improvements but the stations are in horrible shape. Ald. Coletti had docketed an item in Post Audit and Oversight and Public Safety and Transportation Committees in 2003, the Post Audit and Oversight report of the discussion is attached. Ald. Coletti would like to see a spreadsheet listing proposed improvements and any improvements made. He feels that the City needs to address the fire stations over the next three years by funding the renovations through bonding or the renovations will be even more extensive.

Ald. Salvucci stated that he took the tour and could not believe the living situations in the stations. Many of the firefighters had provided their own air conditioners, desks, chairs, lamps and kitchen stock. The electrical, heating and plumbing systems were seriously outdated and broken. The buildings have been neglected for a number of years and are in serious need of renovation. Ald. Harney stated that the conditions are a disgrace and beyond belief. There are fire and health hazards in many of the stations. Ald. Albright supports the renovations but asked if it were possible for a petty cash account to be established for minor repairs that the firefighters could do in the meantime.

Mike Rourke spoke on the fire stations. The City has spent money in the past few years to improve the air quality in the stations. He stated that everyone is aware that the fire stations need to be renovated. However, there is a different opinion on how to fund the renovations. Mr. Rourke suggested a comprehensive analysis be done over the next five to six months. The list will state what needs to be done first. He is proposing a comprehensive list to be addressed within the C.I.P. The City will work with the union and investigate different ways to solve the many problems. He realizes that safety issues abound and the City must keep the equipment and vehicles up to date, as the safety of the firefighter is most important. Currently, the City does not have the resources to address all of the problems with the stations. Mr. Rourke is committed to working with the Board of Aldermen and union to address the problems. Mr. Rourke stated that he is aware that the Fire Chief feels the infrastructure needs to be improved before any cosmetic problems.

Commissioner Parnell stated that he is concerned that little things such as broken windows have not been addressed. Caroline Sarno, Facilities Manager. Will be working to improve the repair time in the stations.

Ald. Salvucci asked why the City did not handle the fire stations like the Tier 1 projects, as they were very successful. He asked why the renovations could not be done through bonding. He felt there was no hesitation to bond when it came to the schools and the City cannot ignore the problem because of the proposed new high school.

Ald. Coletti pointed out that some of the stations have outdated or do not have fire alarms or carbon monoxide detectors. The fire stations would fail any inspection done by the City.

All of the members of both Committees strongly felt that the fire stations must be renovated and a bold and comprehensive approach must be used. Ald. Gerst stated that the situation in the stations contributes to poor morale and the sick leave problem as firefighters are working in sick buildings. If the stations are repaired, there will be a gain in health and morale, which will help the City's financial situation.

Ald. Lappin asked what the Executive Department considered a priority. Mr. Rourke responded that he would like to do the comprehensive study and prioritize when that is finished. Ald. Lennon asked that a time-line, financial plan and a plan stating what needs to be done and how it is going to be done be included in the results of the study. Ald. Schnipper stated that the plan should be done in September and should be quite extensive.

Ald. Lennon moved hold in Public Safety and Transportation and Ald. Yates moved hold in Public Facilities, and both motions carried.

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.

PS & T HELD 4-0 (Vance not voting)

ACTION:

HELD 8-0

NOTE:

The Public Safety and Transportation Committee discussed this item jointly with Public Facilities. Gayle Smalley, Clint Schuckel and David Koses joined the Committees for discussion of this item. Ms. Smalley explained that she is joining the Committees because she would like additional information on raised crosswalks.

Clint Schuckel and David Koses gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached) on the possible criteria for raised crosswalks. Several Aldermen had questions on the presentation. Ald. Lappin asked what was meant by free funding. Ald. Samuelson responded that a private business would pay for the installation of the raised crosswalk. Ald. Albright asked if Mill Street met the criteria. Mr. Koses responded that the criterion needs to be established. Ald. Lennon asked if the width of streets and sight lines would have any bearing on the criteria. Mr. Schuckel explained that safety is the foremost concern of the City.

Ald. Stewart is troubled by the suggestion that the raised sidewalks be referred to four separate committees. He is also troubled by some of the warrants. Ald. Mansfield asked if there were a way to include the many different traffic-calming methods. Ald. Vance pointed out that traffic calming should be the last option as it is a capital improvement. Ald. Salvucci was concerned that the raised crosswalks would have an adverse affect on emergency vehicles. Mr. Schuckel responded that both the Police and Fire Department would be invited to weigh in on raised crosswalks.

Gayle Smalley stated that there are two obvious legal issues. First, State law does not allow cities and towns to set speed limits. The question arises as to whether the raised crosswalks are going to reduce speed to the speed limit or lower than the limit. Second, do raised crosswalks fall under the new ordinance requiring review of changes to a street. She also pointed out that there is no ordinance for crosswalks. She stated that there may need to be a definition for raised crosswalks in the ordinance but she is not sure there needs to be an ordinance to establish the location.

Ald. Schnipper asked Ms. Smalley if the City needed an ordinance to use other methods of traffic calming or if the Public Works Department would be allowed to design other methods without the Public Facilities Committee's approval. Ms. Smalley did not have the answer but will review the existing ordinance.

Ald. Lennon moved hold in Public Safety and Transportation and Ald. Yates moved hold in Public Facilities. Both motions carried unanimously.

#144-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the area along UNION STREET in Newton Centre be designated as Picadilly Square.

ACTION: **HELD 8-0**

NOTE: The Mayor was not present for the discussion of this item. Mr. Rourke asked that the item be held until the Mayor could comment. Ald. Mansfield spoke against the naming. He referenced the Economic Development Commission's report stating that they would like the business area of Newton Centre to become a "vibrant destination and village center." The renaming of a portion of the Newton Centre business area would not be beneficial to the goal of the Commission. He also felt that the City should not support commercial business by naming streets or squares after a building.

The Committee opted to hold the item for the Mayor's input.

REFERRED TO PROG&SERV, PUBLIC FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#369-03 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting a presentation of the findings and results of the *Newton North Feasibility Study* to the Board of Aldermen in a public forum to allow a greater number of the public to hear the presentation and offer public comment.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 8-0**

NOTE: Ald. Sangiolo felt that it was appropriate for the Committee to recommend no action necessary. Therefore, Ald. Yates moved no action necessary, which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman