

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2005

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

Also present: Ald. Johnson and Linsky

City personnel: John Daghlian (Associate City Engineer) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#299-05 KEYSPAN ENERGY DELIVERY petitioning for a grant of location to install and maintain 170'± of 4" gas main in BAKER PLACE from the existing 6" gas main in Concord Street northerly to 51 Baker Place.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Fran O'Leary, Keyspan Permit Representative, joined the Committee for discussion of this item. The gas main will provide heat, hot water and gas for cooking for a newly renovated home on Baker Place. The public hearing was opened and no one spoke for or against the petition. Ald. Stewart pointed out that the street is in terrible shape and the addition of the gas line will improve the condition of the street. Ald. Stewart moved approval of the petition, which carried unanimously.

#300-05 BOSTON EDISON COMPANY petitioning for a grant of location to install one pole, #437/21A, in WALNUT STREET to provide service to 218 Walnut Street.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Maureen Carroll, NStar Representative, was present for the discussion of this item. The pole is needed to provide service for a new air conditioning unit at a church on Walnut Street. A new transformer is needed and there is no room on the other poles in the area. The public hearing was opened and Thomas Lee and Andy Tay, officials from the church spoke in favor of the petition. The air conditioning is very important to the church, as the temperature in the church was over 100 degrees this summer.

Ald. Mansfield asked why the circuit and transformer could not be placed underground. Ms. Carroll responded that it is the customer's choice. John Daghlian explained that the cost of placing the equipment underground is much more expensive. Ald. Albright moved approval of the item, which carried unanimously.

#301-05 BOSTON EDISON COMPANY petitioning for a grant of location to install 160'± of conduit in COMMONWEALTH AVENUE southerly approximately 750' east of Algonquin Road to #8 Commonwealth Avenue.

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: Maureen Carroll was present for discussion of this petition. The petition is to provide air conditioning to St. Ignatius Church. The service will be provided by underground conduit. The public hearing was opened and no one spoke for or against the petition.

#246-05 ALD. LINSKY, SCHNIPPER, JOHNSON AND ALBRIGHT requesting a discussion with representative(s) of NStar regarding why sections of Newtonville seem to be experiencing ongoing brownouts despite representations by NStar that service to the area has been improved.

ACTION: HELD 7-0 (Mansfield not voting)

NOTE: Joseph Walsh, NStar Community Relations Representative, Ald. Linsky and Ald. Johnson joined the Committee for the discussion of this item. Mr. Walsh recently spoke with Alderman Linsky regarding the impact of the addition of 11 condominiums units in Newtonville on the electrical service in the area. Mr. Walsh stated that he could not give specific information on the engineering and planning for the condominiums as no one has applied for permanent service at the location of the new units. However, Mr. Walsh provided the Committee with some general information on Circuit #27708, which is the circuit that provides electricity to the area.

There have been three outages on that circuit since January of this year. Two of the outages were due to circumstances beyond NStar's control. One outage was caused by a lightning strike and the other was due to a pole, which was knocked down by a car. Only one of the outages was due to equipment failure and NStar repaired the equipment as soon as possible.

Ald. Linsky provided a letter to the Committee from NStar (attached) in response to outages in 2002 and 2003. NStar upgraded the circuit to provide better service to the area. Ald. Linsky explained that there were three outages in a row this summer. Residents are concerned that the circuit is not capable of bearing the addition of 11 new units of housing and a new high school. He would like to know what load the circuit can bear and what can be expected in the future.

Vicky Stein, 23 Otis Street, stated that she has experienced outages since she moved to the Newtonville area in 2001. When she first arrived, she noticed sequential outages for several hours at a time and could not get any information from NStar. She was relieved when NStar upgraded the service in Newtonville. However, she is surprised that the area is still experiencing outages and as a member of the liaison committee for the Christian Science Center condominium conversion, she is greatly concerned that the circuit will not be able to bear the load of the 11 new condominiums.

Mr. Wash responded that very little could be done about car accidents and lightning strikes. Circuits are reviewed annually and if a circuit goes over 85% of its capacity, it is upgraded. Ald. Salvucci asked for the actual usage percentage of Circuit # 27705. Mr. Walsh stated that he would provide the actual percentage to the Committee. Ald. Salvucci asked why

that neighborhood is experiencing brown outs. NStar has only received three calls on that particular service since January 2005 and all of the calls were regarding outages not brown outs. Mr. Walsh is not aware of any particular low voltage problems, such as occurred in West Newton Square. NStar performs an infrared survey and a manual survey on all circuits at least once a year. NStar is currently checking the circuit in question once a week and have found no problems.

Mr. Walsh also explained that anytime there is an addition such as the 11-condo units a re-engineering of the system is required. Ald. Salvucci asked why NStar has not begun to re-engineer the system, as they know the condominiums will be added to the system shortly. Mr. Walsh responded that NStar could not begin the work unless they are approached and provided with schematics.

John Daghlian asked Mr. Walsh where the sub-station that feeds the circuit is located, how old the circuit is, whether there is an alternate line that can be used as a backup for the circuit, how much additional capacity is required for the 11 condo units and what is the load capacity of the circuit. Mr. Walsh responded that he would need to get that type of information from NStar's Engineering Department.

Ald. Johnson stated that complaints began in 2002 and the Board of Aldermen received assurances from NStar that the addition of 11 condominium units would not be a problem. Mr. Walsh reiterated that NStar would re-engineer the circuit before the units are added.

The Chair stated that she is disappointed with NStar's response to the docket item. She suggested holding the item until further information can be provided from NStar. Ald. Yates moved hold until October 19, 2005, which carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

#203-05 ALD. STEWART proposing the establishment of a commission to investigate the creation of a municipal electric distribution enterprise in Newton.

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

NOTE: Ald. Stewart provided the Committee with an update on this item. Forty-one cities and towns in Massachusetts have their own electric distribution enterprise. Many cities and towns are interested in starting their own distribution centers. Cities and towns can negotiate with NStar to purchase the assets; however, NStar does not have to accept the offer. There is legislation pending to make the purchase of NStar assets within the city or town easier.

The only way Newton will make any headway with undergrounding utility wires is to own all of the equipment and distribution rights. Cities and towns that provide electricity insist that it is much more cost efficient and utility bills are 15 to 20% cheaper. If Newton were to provide electricity, the savings could go towards the cost of undergrounding utility wires. John Daghlian pointed out that it is a large investment to begin with, as the city must purchase equipment, hire staff and purchase sites for distribution centers.

Neither the Undergrounding Task Force nor the Citizens' Commission on Energy is willing to take on the issue of electrical distribution. Ald Stewart is not sure whether it should be a joint effort of both groups or if a separate committee should be formed, as there are several other groups that have an interest. He suggested that the Committee hold the item until the pending legislation has been acted upon and it is determined whether it is possible for the city to have its own electrical distribution center. Ald. Stewart also pointed out that NStar is basically a monopoly and if we can create competition, the city may get NStar to be more cooperative. Ald. Stewart moved hold on the item, which carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#134-05 **CITIZEN'S PETITION**, Newton North Ballot Committee of the Newton Taxpayers Assoc., Samuel Robbins, 300 Prince Street, W. Newton submitting a petition pursuant to Section 10-2 of the City Charter, which contains approximately 73 signatures validated by the Newton Election Commission requesting the Board of Aldermen to hold a Public Hearing which seeks the passage of the following measure:
"The total cost of renovating and expanding Newton North High School shall be limited to \$65 million including reimbursements. Cost increases due to inflation, as reported by the Consumer Price Index of the U.S. Department of Labor, will be allowed."

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0-1 (Gerst abstaining; Mansfield not voting)**

NOTE: The public hearing for this item was held on May 5, 2005. The advocates of the measure wished to collect signatures for an initiative petition to place the measure on the ballot. The petitioners opted not to pursue the signature drive and the date, which the signatures would need to be submitted by, has passed. Therefore, a motion of no action necessary carried. Ald. Gerst abstained, as he would like to get a clear answer on some questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman