

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2004

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

Absent: Ald. Lappin Also present: Ald. Linsky

City personnel: Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Nicholas Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings), David Naparstek (Commissioner of Health), Michael Cronin (Operations Manager; School Department), Jeffrey Young (Superintendent of Schools), Susan Heyman (School Committee), Dori Zaleznik (School Committee), Reenie Murphy (School Committee) Sandy Guryan (Assistant Superintendent, Business/Finance; School Department), Heidi Black (Administrator of High School Construction and Strategic Planning; School Department) and Elaine Gentile (Director of Environmental Affairs)

**REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEES**

#83-03 ALD. GENTILE, BRYSON, COLETTI AND LIPSITT requesting that the Health Commissioner conduct/oversee a testing program to evaluate the air quality at Newton North High School and, if necessary, make recommendations to ensure the safety of all students and staff in the building.

**ACTION:** **HELD 7-0**

**NOTE:** The Programs and Services Committee, David Naparstek and Michael Cronin joined the Committee for discussion of this item. The previous reports on this item are attached. The test results from early December through early January were reviewed. There has been as much as a 40% decrease in carbon monoxide levels, since the previous tests in March and April 2003. The decrease is related to the education of staff regarding blocking and turning off univents and repair of the univents. However, there are still problem areas in the school that need to be further investigated.

There are several blocked exhaust vents, which remove the bad air from rooms. Some of the blocked exhaust vents are due to a design flaw, as they are located behind doors that are not always closed. Other blocked vents are the result of material being placed in front of the vent. Mr. Cronin will review the necessity of keeping all the vents open with the faculty, and review the Tools for Schools training. It is his hope that if all the ductwork is working as designed there will be an improvement in air quality.

The third floor of the high school has the largest influx of readings over 1,000 parts per million of carbon monoxide. After further training and review of the rooms on the third floor, a third test will need to be done. Ald. Parker asked if it

were possible to add operable windows to some of the classrooms. Mr. Cronin responded that it would be a large expense as the school is brick and the outside walls are very thick. However, it is possible to make some of the existing windows operable. The members of both Committees questioned if the air quality was safe. The Commissioner stated that though the school is not optimally vented it is safe as long as current practices are not changed. The question of how the tests correlate with other comparable buildings was raised. Commissioner Naparstek responded that he is unsure if anyone has compared results but he will investigate. Ald. Gentile asked if the custodian was still checking the univents on a daily basis. The custodian is now checking the vents three days a week and Mr. Cronin will add the exhaust vents to the checklist. Ald. Hess-Mahan asked if all the vents are fixed what percentage of the classrooms will fall below the State's recommended level. Currently, 48% of the classrooms register above 800 and it was estimated that the number would drop to below 40%. Newton North High School was not designed to handle the required amount of ventilation.

Ald. Gentile pointed out that the tests were not done as the school was designed. He would like the test to be done with all of the ventilation systems working as they were designed. The test must be done with the building occupied because it is the only way to get true results because people and doors do block vents. Ald. Sangiolo asked when the Tools for Schools training was first implemented. Some schools started the training three or four years ago, it was implemented at Newton North in October 2003. Ald. Sangiolo urged that all schools in Newton take part in the training as most of the schools would benefit.

**Summary:** A third air quality test is necessary after the exhaust vents at Newton North High School have been unblocked or repaired. The staff and faculty will have received further training regarding the importance of keeping vents clear and keeping classroom doors shut. The third tests will be conducted before the end of April and the results should be available for review in May. Ald. Sangiolo moved hold in the Programs and Services Committee, which carried. Ald. Yates moved hold in the Public Facilities Committee.

There is a remediation plan being, which will be shared with the Board of Aldermen when it is completed.

# 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 7-0**

**NOTE:** Commissioner Parnell, Heidi Black, Dick Ampster, Project Manager, Turner Construction and Carl Franchesci, Architect, DRA Architects were present for the

discussion of this item. The discussion on this item is ongoing, as the project has not been completed. Ald. Salvucci has concerns regarding the cafeteria floor and the restrooms in the renovated wings at Newton South High School.

The cafeteria floor is linoleum and the best choice for the use. The problem with the floor is not the material but the installation. The adhesive was spread unevenly causing the floor to bubble. The contractor is attempting to repair the floor by injecting adhesive into the bubbles or pulling back the linoleum and applying adhesive. The manufacturer of the floor has been consulted and the contractor is using specific repair protocol. The issues with the floor occur regularly and have been successfully repaired.

Ald. Salvucci asked why we are accepting a floor that is compromised when the City paid for a floor in perfect condition. Mr. Ampster responded that the repair is not damaging the floor, as the contractor is welding the seams of the linoleum after more adhesive is applied and the injection of adhesive does not damage the floor. He will make sure that the floor is repaired and in good condition before he signs off on it. Commissioner Parnell stated that himself; Michael Cronin and Heidi Black will judge when the floor is acceptable. Ald. Salvucci also asked why the air-conditioning in the cafeteria was on in the cafeteria in the winter. Mr. Franchesci explained that the system brings fresh air into the cafeteria and that may be what Ald. Salvucci felt. Training on the HVAC system is required and the system may need to be tweaked.

Ald. Salvucci asked why the bathroom walls were not retiled at the time of the renovations. Mr. Franchesci explained that retiling the bathrooms was not part of the original project. The City has to prove environmental conservation in order to receive a green grant for the project, and this was one way to conserve. The tiles were damaged during the demolition; therefore, the tiles will be replaced.

The Committee reviewed the recent change orders. The architect explained the necessity of each of the change orders. The architect, project manager and the City personnel involved in the project are not happy about the amount of change orders for this phase of the project. Everyone involved with the project including the Law Department carefully review the change orders. Ald. Salvucci asked if something was not designed correctly why the architect was not held responsible for the cost of changes. Mr. Franchesci explained that the design might need to be altered because of unforeseen circumstances beyond the architect's control. Ald. Stewart asked if there had ever been an analysis of change orders in regards to the percentage resolved in favor of the contractor and if there is an analysis where would this project fall. Mr. Parnell responded that he did not know but would find out.

**Summary:** This item is an ongoing discussion as the project is not complete and there will be more change orders. The Committee feels that it is important to monitor the change orders and have a sense of how the project is moving forward. Ald. Yates moved hold on the item, which carried.

#107-04 COMMISSIONER ROONEY requesting approval of the concept plans for a traffic island at the intersection Wilde Road and Beacon Street.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 6-0-1 (Stewart abstaining)**

**NOTE:** John Frieze and Albert Fine, residents of Wilde Road were present for the discussion, as well as Commissioner Rooney. Mr. Frieze and Mr. Fine voiced their approval of the project and explained that it is the neighborhood's intent to adopt the island. The Commissioner explained that the intersection currently is expansive and unmarked. He would like to make the island larger creating safer pedestrian crossing and allowing more signage to make the intersection less confusing for motorists. Beacon Street is scheduled to be repaved in the next five years and it is necessary to do this type of work beforehand. The current island lacks curbing, which should be there. The expanded island will have granite curbing, which is most of the cost of the project.

Several Committee members asked why this type of project is being done when there are many streets that have been waiting years to be accepted. The Commissioner stated that the estimated cost of this project is \$6,000 and funding will come from the operational budget, while street acceptances must be appropriated by the Mayor and are much more costly.

**Summary:** The majority of Committee members were in favor of the project, as it would enhance pedestrian safety at the intersection. It is also the most opportune time to expand the island as Beacon Street is due to be repaved and the cost to the City is minimal. Ald. Yates moved approval of the item, which carried. Ald. Stewart abstained because he felt that there are many older proposed projects that have been waiting for funding.

#### **REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#109-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR AND COMMISSIONER ROONEY requesting approval of an inter-governmental agreement between the City of Newton and the Wellesley Municipal Light Plant for maintenance of City-owned streetlights, under the provisions of MGL Chapter 40 Section 4A. The current contract with WMLP expires on February 16, 2004.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 4-0-1 (Yates abstaining; Gerst, Mansfield Not Voting)**

**NOTE:** Commissioner Rooney joined the Committee for discussion of this item. This is a request for approval of a month by month extension up to one year of the current contract between Wellesley Municipal Light Plant (WMLP) and the City. WMLP

has agreed to the terms of the extension. WMLP has maintained the streetlights since the City purchased them from NStar but the City is beginning to explore other options that may be more cost effective. The City was one of the first municipalities to purchase their streetlights; therefore, there were not many options available for maintaining them.

Ald. Yates asked why some light bulbs were quickly replaced, while others took over a month. He gave an example of lights that he had called about. Two of the lights were changed immediately but the lights on Elliot Street took some time to be replaced. The Commissioner explained that it required a police detail to change the lights on Elliot Street. When a police detail is hired it is for a minimum of four hours; therefore, WMLP waits until they have enough lights out to require four hours of work. Ald. Yates asked why he was not informed of this when he called the City regarding the Elliot Street outages. The Commissioner explained that the City might not have been aware of the need for a detail. Ald. Yates felt that there needed to be better communication between WMLP and the City. Ald. Stewart stated that he has been very impressed with WMLP, and asked why the City wants to switch vendors. The Commissioner clarified his early statement. The City is exploring alternatives and will be doing a top to bottom review of the contract. The City may decide to issue a new RFP, as there are several more bidders now than previously. Ald. Stewart asked if there was a possibility of the Fire Department maintaining the streetlights. The Commissioner responded that the City would evaluate all bidders.

**Summary:** The City needs the extension of the contract with Wellesley Municipal Light Plant in order to continue maintaining street lights while other alternatives for streetlight maintenance are explored.. Ald. Salvucci moved approval of the item, which carried.

#504-02

ALD. LIPSITT AND BASHAM requesting discussion with Commissioner Rooney and representative of Wellesley Power and Light regarding performance under contract to maintain street lights, including level of outages, replacement protocol and compliance with map developed to control bulb selection.

**ACTION:** **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0-1 (Mansfield abstaining; Gerst not voting)**

**NOTE:**

This item was referred to the Public Facilities Committee from the Post Audit and Oversight Committee. The reports of the discussions, which occurred in the Post Audit and Oversight Committee, are attached. The discussion in Post Audit centered on uniformity in the types of bulbs used in streetlights. There are many streets in the City where streetlights have a variety of bulbs that give off different light.

Elaine Gentile and Commissioner Rooney were present for the discussion of this item. There is a master street light plan for the City, which is valid but will take

funding. Ms. Gentile explained that there is no type of directive in regards to the master plan. Boston Edison would not comply with the plan when they owned the streetlights and there was no money budgeted for compliance with the master plan when the City purchased the streetlights. Also, there is no conformity regarding the distance between poles. Some poles in the City are placed too close together and others have a great distance between them. There are several ideas on bulb selection but not one specific idea. There is currently a subcommittee of the Citizen's Commission on Energy reviewing the streetlight system, costs and alternatives to the current bulbs used by the City. When the City has receives the recommendations from the subcommittee, it will consult a professional regarding distance, fixtures and bulb selection.

Ald. Yates asked if it was possible to make the lights shine directly onto the sidewalk. Ms. Gentile responded that there are currently numerous types of light fixtures and some of them contributed to light pollution.

**Summary:** The recommendations from the subcommittee of the Commission on Energy will take some time to complete. When the City has received the recommendations and consulted a professional consultant it will be reported to the Board of Aldermen. Ald. Stewart moved the item no action necessary with the understanding that the Committee would receive a report on the recommendations regarding the master plan.

#15-04 ALD. BAKER requesting discussion and planning of upcoming committee agendas, process, future work, and how to streamline committee work on minor or routine approvals in order to allow time to focus on more major or non-routine matters.

**ACTION:** **HELD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**

**NOTE:** This item was held without discussion, due to the late hour.

The Committee adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman