

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2003

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

Also present: Ald. Samuelson, Lennon, Bullwinkle, Lipof, Johnson, Gentile, Coletti, Parker, Lipsitt and Fischman

City personnel: Michael Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), David Willet (City Engineer), Evelyn Addante (Transportation Planner), Candace Havens (Chair of Traffic Council), David Naparstek (Commissioner of Health), Ann Cornaro (Acting Director of Information Technology), Joe Mulvey (Information Technology Department), Theresa Parks (Planning Department) and Jeff Knight (Communications; Fire Department)

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PS&T COMMITTEES

#88-03 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting discussion with Executive Department, DPW Commissioner and City Engineer regarding how the vacancy of the City Traffic Engineer position has adversely affected operations, including the work of the Traffic Council and the Public Safety/Transportation Committee.

ACTION: **PUBLIC FACILITIES HELD 8-0**
PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION HELD 4-0

NOTE: The Committee met jointly with the Public Safety and Transportation Committee to discuss this item. Commissioner Rooney and Dave Willet joined the Committees for the discussion. Ald. Schnipper asked that the discussion be framed around how long the position has been open and what affects does the vacancy have. Commissioner Rooney stated that the position has been vacant since September 6, 2002, when Roy LaMotte left the position. The Commissioner felt that it was prudent to wait until the City Engineer's position was filled before beginning the search for a Traffic Engineer, as the City Engineer is the direct supervisor of the Traffic Engineer. Dave Willet was hired as the City Engineer and began on September 30, 2002.

A dozen applications were received for the position and a committee comprised of Aldermen, Public Works, Police, Planning and Human Resources representatives interviewed six candidates. The Traffic Engineer's position is critical to the Department of Public Works, Planning, Police and Fire Departments. Unfortunately, this is a specialized position and there were very few applicants with enough experience. There are only twelve licensed civil engineers specializing in traffic within the state. The position was offered to Nina Wang on

December 5, 2002 but Ms. Wang declined the position. On January 2, 2003, the second candidate was interviewed for the position and was offered the position but the candidate turned it down due to the salary. The third candidate has no municipal experience and is under qualified for the position. The position was re-offered to Ms. Wang on January 6, 2003 but she again turned the position down. The position will be advertised again and should draw more candidates.

Currently the work effort is divided between Nina Wang, Dave Willet and an outside consultant. Nina Wang is responsible for the Traffic Council and the Public Safety and Transportation Committee reviews and studies. The consultant and Mr. Willet are handling special permits and other building projects. Ald. Lennon and Ald. Samuelson voiced their concerns about the continuity and timeliness of reviews. There is a large backlog of traffic petitions and not enough resources or staff to address the workload. Commissioner Rooney explained that a position was added to the budget but due to budget constraints it will not be filled this year. Fortunately, the Planning Department has added a part-time transportation planner to their staff. Ald. Samuelson asked if there was any one trained within the traffic division to conduct studies besides Ms. Wang. Commissioner Rooney stated that it is Ms. Wang's responsibility to set the parameters of the study and the laborers in the Traffic Division's responsibility to set-up the equipment. Commissioner Rooney is implementing a cross-training program within the Department of Public Works, which will rotate employees within the different divisions.

Candace Havens spoke about the necessity of hiring someone as soon as possible as the backlog for Traffic Council is growing daily. It was decided to hold the item until the position is filled. Ald. Salvucci moved hold in Public Facilities Committee, which was voted unanimously and Ald. Bullwinkle moved hold in Public Safety and Transportation, which carried unanimously.

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: **PUBLIC FACILITIES HELD 7-0 (Gerst Not Voting)**
PROGRAMS & SERVICES HELD 6-0

NOTE: The Committee met jointly with the Programs and Services Committee for discussion of this item. Ald. Gentile explained that he docketed this item in response to several questions raised in regards to the safety of students at Newton North High School due to poor air quality. David Naparstek, Health Commissioner, joined the committees for the discussion of this item.

Commissioner Naparstek explained that indoor air quality is a problem because there are no standards and there are no convenient, easy measures. Carbon Dioxide is a measure of how effectively the ventilation system works, is it taking out stale air and bringing in fresh air. There are many areas of Newton North High School that are uncomfortable and that are not adequately ventilated. There is no way of saying whether Newton North High School is safe. Periodically there are sources of contamination that might cause a problem. Newton North was designed as a closed system during a time of energy concern and it was designed adequately and appropriately but during the intervening years rooms have been moved and changed, ventilation systems have been modified. Simple things such as leaving doors open during class create problems as the system was designed to keep the doors closed. The system probably was designed properly at the time for the standards in place but all the modifications and alterations have changed all of it. The windows do not open which means you cannot moderate things. It is necessary to look at what possible sources there might be for contaminants that could be harmful to children.

Based on experience, Commissioner Naparstek feels that tests for air quality are inconclusive because there are no set standards for chemicals inside a building except for carbon dioxide and radon. It is his recommendation that the School Administration implement "Tools for Schools", which was developed by the Environmental Protection Agency. "Tools for Schools" is a number of different modules, one for faculty and teachers, one for custodians, one for school nurses, and one for school administration. It empowers and educates all employees of the school by teaching them who to call, what to look for, how to prevent problems and what to do about it. Commissioner Naparstek has investigated extensively to see if anyone had any suggested set of tests besides carbon dioxide and radon. Everyone he spoke to suggested using "Tools for Schools" and developing an indoor air-quality team to educate the rest of faculty and administration. The National PTA Association, the Healthy Schools Network, the American Lung Association and the Environmental Protection Agency recommends "Tools for Schools". Bart Kaufman and Laurie Freidman who were present for the discussion voiced their support of implementing "Tools for Schools"

The Committees would like the Commissioner to test for carbon dioxide and radon at Newton North High School. The Commissioner agreed to test with evacuated containers. It was decided to hold the item in both Committees for the results of the tests.

#261-02(2) PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE establishing a taskforce of Aldermen, departmental officials and citizens to monitor the sewer problems, prepare periodic reports for the public on the actions being considered by the City to address the problem, and serve as an initial clearinghouse for information for Board of Aldermen and for citizens.

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Gerst Not Voting)**

NOTE: The item was held without discussion until March 5, 2003.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

32-03 ALD. COLETTI requesting discussion of status of Executive Department's negotiations regarding AT&T and RCN Cable Franchise Renewals and institutional network status as well as proposed City of Newton Fiber Project.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Gerst Not Voting)**

NOTE: Michael Rourke, Jeff Knight, Ann Cornaro, Theresa Parks and Joe Mulvey were present for the discussion of this item. Ms. Cornaro, Mr. Mulvey and Mr. Knight provided the committee with a presentation of the status of the fiber network of the City (attached). When the project is completed all city buildings including schools will be connected. There will be four loops for back up and redundancy. The City is hoping that Boston College and Newton-Wellesley will agree to become part of the system for emergency situations. The Committee asked that Emerson Community Center, Schuman Center and Hawthorne Field House be connected as well. Ms. Cornaro said that it would not be a problem to connect them.

Michael Rourke and Theresa Parks updated the Committee on the status of the license renewals for RCN and AT&T. The goals of the Newton Cable License Contracts are attached. The City has been relatively successful in reaching the four goals. A license agreement with RCN was reached a year ago but the agreement with AT&T has been difficult and is near completion. RCN has added 1% to the current fees to offset the City's costs and they have installed a network, which is valued somewhere between \$400,000 and \$1,000,000. The City has used the RCN cable for telephones and will continue to do that until the full fiber network is installed.

The change in the interest of AT&T itself has complicated the license agreement. The City has substantial agreement on all the financial conditions of the license. It mirrors the RCN license, and adds to it in some ways. AT&T will provide \$500,000 to the City for fiber network extension, \$300,000 for NCAC and \$26,000 annually to the City for maintenance.

The Committee is very pleased with the progress of the fiber optic project and the agreements between the City and RCN and AT&T. It was decided to vote the item no action necessary, which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman