

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2001

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chair), Gerst, Antonellis, Salvucci, Yates, and Mansfield

Absent: Ald. M. Lipof

Also Present: Ald. Baker

Others Present: Edward Murphy (Chief of Fire), Gayle Smalley (Associate City Solicitor), Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer), Nick Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings)

#383-00      ALD SALVUCCI requesting discussion with Boston Edison regarding double poles located throughout the City.

**ACTION:**      **HELD 6-0**

**NOTE:**      Joe Connolly from NStar and Peter Bowman from Verizon joined the Committee for the discussion of this item. Mr. Connolly stated that NStar has a good handle on the removal of the double poles. NStar has been removing the poles at a rate of 10-12 poles a month since January. Mr. Bowman stated that Verizon has dedicated two crews to pole removal in answer to Gayle Smalley's letter addressing Verizon's and NStar's lack of response to the City's repeated requests to remove double poles.

Ald. Salvucci requested that Verizon and NStar provide the Board with monthly updates on what double poles have been removed. Ald. Mansfield suggested including target dates for poles within the report, which would allow Aldermen to better answer constituents questions on the removal of double poles. Verizon and NStar split maintenance of utility poles. Verizon is responsible for the maintenance of poles located south of Commonwealth Avenue and NStar is responsible for poles located north of Commonwealth Avenue. There are approximately 50 to 60 double poles located on the north side of the City and approximately 150 double poles, 50 or 60 which are pullable, located on the south side of the City,

Double poles have been an issue in the City for many years and the City will proceed with legal action if these poles are not removed. Double poles create safety hazards to many citizens of Newton. The Board needs to see progress made in the removal of double poles or a complaint will be filed with the Department of Telecommunication and Energy. Mr. Bowman and Mr. Connolly agreed to provide the updates or status reports to the Board by July 6, 2001. These status reports should reflect a timetable and pole ownership. Ald. Salvucci moved hold, which was voted unanimously.

#508-00 ALD. SALVUCCI AND GERST requesting an amendment to Sections 23-5 and related sections of the City of Newton Ordinances requiring owners of poles located in a public way to petition for grants of location for second telephone poles.

**ACTION:** **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0**

**NOTE:** The City cannot create an amendment, which would require utility companies to obtain a grant of location for double poles. Therefore, the Committee voted the item No Action Necessary.

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

#103-01 ALD. BAKER, SCHNIPPER & LIPSITT requesting discussion of City response to power outages, including emergency pumping assistance for basements during severe weather.

**ACTION:** **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0**

**NOTE:** Chief Murphy and Joe Connolly from NStar were present for the discussion. The Committee discussed this item previously; unfortunately, Mr. Connolly was unable to attend. Residents of Hammond Street south of Beacon Street lost power for a number of hours. Ald. Baker questioned Mr. Connolly regarding the outage. Mr. Connolly explained that the manholes in that area became flooded damaging the electrical wiring. The Committee questioned why these wires are not waterproof. The wires are old and were installed before waterproofing was available. NStar makes an effort to replace older wiring when problems occur.

The Committee felt that NStar was doing the best they could to resolve power outage problems during severe weather. Ald. Salvucci moved No Action Necessary, which passed unanimously.

#368-00 ALD. SCHNIPPER requesting discussion with Boston Edison regarding frequent power outages in the Ward One and Ward Seven Areas.

**ACTION:** **HELD 6-0**

**NOTE:** Mr. Connolly from NStar was present for the discussion. This item was discussed in October of 2000 and held to allow NStar to resolve the problems. The Ward Seven area has been dealt with and barring a storm power outages no longer occur. Ald. Gerst stated that he has received no calls from his constituents in the Ward One area regarding power outages. He has also noticed NStar trucks working in the Newton Corner area and assumes that they are working to resolve the problem.

The Committee questioned Mr. Connolly regarding an incident at Newton North High School. NStar shut down power at the school on Friday night and Saturday even though they had been told that a play was scheduled for Friday night and SAT testing was to begin at 8 AM on Saturday morning. Mr. Connolly was unaware of this and agreed with the Committee that it was reprehensible. He will find out about it and contact the Committee.

Although streetlights are not part of this item, it was discussed. The Committee received a letter from Ald. Johnson (attached) regarding a street light outage on Schofield Drive in Newtonville. The street light cannot be repaired due to a legal disagreement with NStar. There is a question as to who has ownership of the lights and connecting wires.

The Committee felt that a complaint should be filed with the Department of Telecommunications and Energy to resolve this issue. This would probably be to the mutual benefit of the City and NStar.

Ald. Gerst moved hold, which the Committee passed unanimously.

**REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

# 97-01(B) **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$49,612 from Free Cash for the purpose of funding the environmental compliance projects as follows:

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Municipal UST Leak Detection System ..... | \$ 33,075        |
| Municipal UST Testing and Repairs.....    | \$ 16,537        |
| <b>TOTAL .....</b>                        | <b>\$ 49,612</b> |

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 6-0**

**NOTE:** Nick Parnell was present for discussion of this item. This item was held in March at the request of Sandy Pooler. Mr. Pooler wanted the Public Buildings Department to re-evaluate their needs. The request is for leak detection systems for gas tank sites. The request for \$33,075 for the leak detection system can be reduced by approximately fifty percent. Ald. Salvucci moved approval, which passed unanimously.

**CHAIRMAN'S**

**NOTE:** The Committee asked Mr. Parnell for information of what occurred at Newton North High School regarding the power outage. Mr. Parnell explained that NStar had contacted the school to schedule a shut down of power. The shut down was necessary in order to upgrade a power line that provides power to operate elevators at the school and several other institutes. NStar originally planned to shut the power down on May 19<sup>th</sup> but the school had programs scheduled that weekend and requested that NStar wait. NStar agreed to reschedule.

Nick Parnell, school officials and NStar had a conference call and it was determined that work should be done the weekend of June 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Parnell received a phone call from the principal of Newton North explaining that the date would not work as there was a play and SATs scheduled for that weekend. Mr. Parnell called NStar who refused to reschedule but agreed to get the power back on by early Saturday morning in time for the SATs if the school would cancel programs on Friday evening. However, NStar ran into problems and did not have the power on by Saturday morning causing the SATs to be cancelled. Newton North High School is trying to become a designated New England Test Center and this does not reflect well. NStar did not get the power back on until approximately 7 p.m.

The Committee felt that the actions of NStar were reprehensible. NStar should have rescheduled the work once they learned that SATs were being administered at the school. The Committee feels that a complaint should be filed with the Department of Telecommunications and Energy and voted the following resolution unanimously.

368-00(2) PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE resolving that a complaint be filed with the Department of Telecommunications and Energy regarding the inappropriate action of NStar involving disruption of power at Newton North High School on June 1 and 2.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 6-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chair