

Mayor Setti Warren's CIP Remarks  
October 20, 2014

Good evening-

It's great to be with you tonight to put forth Newton's five year financial forecast and FY16-FY20 Capital Improvement Plan. When I became Mayor in 2010, we all knew the financial crisis we faced--including a ballooning structural deficit; crumbling roads, sidewalks and schools; overcrowded classrooms; and no plan to meet our huge future pension and OPEB obligations. This year's presentation is a reflection of what we've been able to accomplish together--the Board of Alderman, School Committee, employees, and residents--dramatic change to ensure that Newton leads our commonwealth in finance, education, public safety, city services, and capital and infrastructure. Together we are building the foundation for a livable, sustainable city. We understand that we have the responsibility through our governance to ensure that our current capital and financial disposition meet the high expectations of Newtonians now, and for generations to come. This means having the willingness to question previous practice when necessary, innovate where possible, and not be afraid to make difficult decisions to move our city forward together. In the last five years we've built strong partnerships with our unions, residents, and business community to make this happen; used a zero-based approach to building our budget every year; and have adopted outcome-based budgeting to meet the needs of our citizens in the most efficient manner possible each year. We've used data and analytics to improve performance and will build upon our success in the coming years.

This year's CIP includes major improvements focused on alleviating traffic congestion on our streets, taking care of our environment and lowering energy costs, and fixing our aging capital--from parks and trees to water and sewer infrastructure to fire stations and schools. All of this will save taxpayer money in both the short and long term and improve the quality of life for our citizens over the next 20 to 25 years.

We are pleased to highlight the fact that our rainy day fund--which did not exist 5 years ago--has grown to over 17 million dollars, reaching the goal we set of 5% of the total operating budget. We are proud to announce that The City of Newton Contributory Retirement Board voted to implement a funding schedule that will fully fund the Newton Retirement Fund, or pension obligation, by the year 2029. In particular, I'd like to thank Chairman of Finance, Lenny Gentile for the great partnership he has provided to achieve both of these major milestones. The City has maintained a Aaa bond rating for debt obligations and Newton has put in place a proactive, aggressive strategy to decrease our OPEB liability over the coming years. In addition, with the Chestnut Hill Square and The Street projects both complete, we have greatly improved a major corridor in Newton, Route 9, and increased revenue by 2 million dollars annually.

In order to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century livable city it is critical that we reduce traffic congestion in our city. Our traffic signalization plan in the CIP targets 17 of the most inefficient, frustrating, and unsafe intersections in the City of Newton. The goals, as stated in our report, are to:

- reduce the long backups that can extend several blocks,
- minimize the queues that prevent traffic from moving through green lights,
- increase the efficiency and number of vehicles that get through intersections,
- add detection systems to adjust signal timing based on traffic volume,
- improve vehicle safety at intersections,
- allow for safer left-turn movements on heavily traveled roads,
- improve visibility of signals to motorists, reduce damage and knockdown of traffic signals,
- enhance pedestrian movements at intersections,
- and ensure ADA compliance to improve safety for all motorists and pedestrians alike.

Over a year ago, our residents made the decision to pass a targeted tax override package to allow us to invest in critical areas to protect Newton's future: education, roads and sidewalks, and public safety. As a result, I am pleased to report that we have spent the money exactly as we promised we would, with excellent returns on these investments to date. The Carr School renovation and addition were completed ahead of schedule and under budget and the Angier School project is on schedule and on budget. Both the Zervas and Cabot projects are also on schedule. The Fire Station 10 and wires division project currently under construction is on schedule and on budget. The Fire Station 3 and Fire Headquarters project is on track as well.

We have completed more than 30 miles of roadwork in the last 5 years, and with the passage of the override and an increase in funding from the state, this year we are completing 80 percent more road and sidewalk repairs in Newton than the City had been doing in the past. In addition, we have replaced or upgraded 450 accessible ramps in the last 3 years to ensure all people can safely use our sidewalks and public ways. When I took office, our sidewalk backlog stood at 2 ½ years, which meant that if you had a broken sidewalk and reported it to the City you'd have to wait 2 ½ years to get it repaired. We've repaired over 1,200 individual requests over the last 2 years to eliminate that backlog. Now we can get it repaired in an efficient manner.

Our administration embraces the complete streets approach, which means our road and sidewalk construction must be fully accessible and multimodal for walkers, bikers, and people with disabilities. Over the past 4 years, we have installed 20 miles of exclusive or shared bike lanes and will continue installing 5 more miles each year.

We know that our strong commitment to environmental sustainability has saved taxpayer dollars, reduced energy costs, and reduced our carbon footprint over the last 5 years. We're proud to announce this year that Newton is on track to save 10 million dollars over the next 20 years due to bold, innovative energy initiatives. For example, our recently completed LED streetlight project will reduce street light electricity use by 60%, equaling 8% of the city's total electricity use. We'll save over 2 million dollars over the next 20 years through this project and at the same time make our streets and sidewalks safer. Through large scale energy efficiency projects in 16 municipal and school buildings, we will save 5 million dollars over 20 years--as well as reduce the city's CO2 emissions by 492 tons, which is equal to 1,114 barrels of oil, over 1 million miles driven, or over 90 cars a year taken off the road.

Over the past 20 years Newton has not made adequate investment in its parks, fields and trees. We know our citizens value these resources, but without proper investment in these assets, the quality of life that makes Newton unique will be compromised. Proper maintenance also saves taxpayer money over time. This year's CIP provides a comprehensive assessment of these resources as well as a roadmap for incremental investment to make improvements in our fields, playground structures, and trees. We have saved a half million dollars over the last 3 years as a result of removing the 500 trees that were ranked the worst in the city. By 2020 we will plant over 1,500 new trees through our urban forest restoration program and will prune or replace an additional 1,500 trees in conjunction with our road projects.

Our water and sewer funds were millions of dollars in deficit in 2010--and 63% of all wastewater sent to MWRA was from ground water infiltration. Currently, we have significant reserves in both accounts, have eliminated all asbestos lined water lines, will complete all necessary upgrades for satisfactory Fire Flow citywide by 2016, and have reduced our ground water infiltration by 24%, saving the city more than \$1 million annually in MWRA assessments.

Now I'd like to introduce our Chief of Staff and Chief Financial Officer, Maureen Lemieux to provide you with an outline of our FY15 CIP and Financial forecast.

[\[PRESENTATION BY MAUREEN LEMIEUX\]](#)

Thank you, Maureen, for all of your incredible work. I'd like to end by acknowledging all of you--our residents, elected officials, and businesses for helping to make Newton the best place to live in the United States of America according to Wall Street 24/7 as reported in USA Today a few weeks ago. This award does not mean we should stop improving and making Newton all it can be. We have much more to do. In the coming months and years our city must begin work

on Master Planning and zoning reform. Our administration is currently preparing a framework for both and will look to engage all parts of our community in the process. We must work to retain the character of Newton, while addressing the need for diverse housing, transportation, parking, economic development, and zoning to ensure our city is a livable, sustainable community for people of all walks of life--now and for future generations. We must not fall into the easy divisions and silos that separate us--but rather come together and recognize our diversity as the strength that it is. We look forward to working with all of you to continue to make Newton the best place to live in America. God bless Newton, the Commonwealth, and our great country.