



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Thursday September 8, 2022

Present: Councilors Leary (Chair), Norton, Danberg, Kelley, Laredo, Kalis, Gentile and Crossley

City Staff: Lou Taverna City Engineer, Jonathan Yeo Chief Operating Officer, Lisa Dady Director of Historic Newton and Lara Kritzer CPA Program Manager

#428-22 **Appointment of Cory Alperstein to the Citizens Commission on Energy**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR appointing Cory Alperstein, 19 Hibbard Road, Newton to the Citizens Commission on Energy for a term of office to expire September 9, 2024. (60 days: 11/06/22)

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 8-0**

Note: Cory Alperstein joined the committee to discuss her appointment to the Citizens Commission on Energy. Ms. Alperstein explained that she has been working informally with the commission and has worked with 350 MASS. She also explained that she has been invested in getting involved to help with climate issues at the local level.

Councilors thanked Ms. Alperstein for her willingness to serve.

Councilor Crossley motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#433-22 **Request for a main drain extension at 29 Westgate Road**
Richard Saris, 183 Oak Street 503C, Newton, petitioning for a main drain extension that begins at an end of the line drain manhole in front of #45 Westgate Road and extends +/- 91 feet southeasterly to a new drain manhole from which a lateral connection will extend onto the property. This will provide a means for an overflow connection to the proposed-on site infiltration system that was designed for the new dwelling.

PETITIONER TO PAY ENTIRE COST

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 8-0**

Note: Verne Porter, representative for the petitioner, presented the request for a main drain extension that begins at an end of the line drain manhole in front of #45 Westgate Road and extends +/- 91 feet southeasterly to a new drain manhole from which a lateral connection will extend onto the property. This will provide a means for an overflow connection to the proposed-on site infiltration system that was designed for the new dwelling. The petitioner will be paying the entire cost of the project. Mr. Porter explained that is to prevent hazardous and icy conditions during the winter. The plans

have been submitted and approved by the Engineering Department. The Chair noted that this is in line with the City's new stormwater ordinance.

The public hearing was opened and with no member of the public wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Councilors asked the following question:

Q: How will the street be reconstructed?

A: Mr. Porter explained that it will be patched. Lou Taverna, City Engineer explained that this road has not been repaved in the last five years. Mr. Porter also noted that they will be repaving where the utility connections meet in one larger patch.

Councilor Danberg motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#429-22 Request for a grant of location in Commonwealth Avenue

NATIONAL GRID petition for a grant of location to install and maintain gas main in Commonwealth Avenue as follows:

- 2036' ± of 12" plastic main in Commonwealth Avenue from Woodbine Road to #2104 Commonwealth Avenue to replace 1987' of 12", 8" and 6" cast iron main and 49' ± of 6" plastic gas main
- 263' ± of 6" plastic main in Woodbine Street from Commonwealth Avenue to the end to replace 223' ± of 4", 6" and 8" cast iron main and 40 feet of 3" coated steel gas main
- 110' ± 8" plastic main in the intersection of Islington Road and Commonwealth Avenue to replace 72" ± 8" cast iron and 38' ± of 8' plastic main
- 115' ± 8" plastic main in the intersection of Ash Street and Commonwealth Avenue to replace 95" ± 8' cast iron and 20" ± 8' coated steel gas main
- 100' ± 12" plastic main in the intersection of Melrose St and Commonwealth Avenue to replace 100' ± of 8" and 6" cast iron gas main
- 390" ± 12" plastic main in the carriage of Commonwealth Avenue from Melrose Street to Lexington Street to replace 318" of 6' Cast Iron and 72" ± 6' plastic gas main

Action: Public Facilities Approved Subject to Second Call 6-0-1 (Councilor Leary abstaining and Councilor Kelley not voting)

Note: Before discussing the item, the Chair noted that the Public Facilities Committee has limited authority over National Grid. They are subject to state statute under the Department of Utilities. The Chair also noted the importance of working with the State to help reach the climate action goals. There have also been questions raised regarding the cost of replacement versus repairing these older gas mains.

Mary Mulrone, representative from National Grid, presented the above request for a grant of location in Commonwealth Avenue. This is due to the ongoing MassDOT project. Lou Taverna, City Engineer explained that due to the fact that the existing gas mains are close to the other utilities, the grant of location was needed so that they can be relocated. This way if the other utilities need maintenance, they will not encroach on the gas main.

Councilors asked the following question:

Q: Has National Grid done a cost analysis regarding the cost of replacement versus repairing gas mains?

A: Ms. Mulrone explained that she could not speak to that but she knows that National Grid's first priority is safety because these pipes go back to 1898.

Councilors made the following comments:

It was noted that it is important in this project that National Grid replaces these pipes from the 1800s instead of repairing them due to the materials that were used to construct the pipes. Additionally, it was noted that the committee has expressed their support for renewable energy.

One councilor noted that these gas mains will be used at least in the short term.

The public hearing was opened.

Sekou Dilday, 2226 Commonwealth Avenue questioned if this work was going to take place in the intersection of Islington Road and Commonwealth Avenue?

Mr. Taverna explained that this will happen within the intersection.

The following residents expressed their concerns with replacing the pipes instead of just repairing pipes, when the City is trying to move towards renewable energy. One resident noted that the cost is lower for repair then replacement. It was also questioned why the pipes would be replaced if there are no leaks in this area?

The City Council should create a working group to put together a city-wide plan for the gas leaks in Newton. It was also questioned if there was a possibility of having a moratorium on these petitions until a plan is set in place?

The Chair noted that this is beyond the scope of the committee's authority.

Nathan Philips

Cindy Calloway, 83 Grove Hill Avenue

Eli Goldberg (comments attached)

Leslie Zebrowitz, Ward 6 (comments attached)

Cory Alperstein
Peter Barrer, 16 Endicott Street

The public hearing was closed.

The Committee discussed approving the item subject to second call so that they can receive a cost analysis the Friday before the next City Council meeting (September 19).

A councilor questioned if a delayed voted would affect the larger MassDOT project?

Mr. Taverna explained that the engineers are currently at 75% design and are looking for TIP funds in FY23, which would begin in July. A slight delay of a couple of weeks to a month should not be an issue.

Councilor Gentile motioned to approve subject to second call which passed 6-0-1 with Councilor Leary abstaining and Councilor Kelley not voting.

#430-22 **Request for a grant of location in Lowell Ave, Commonwealth Ave, Homer Street**
NATIONAL GRID petition for a grant of location to install and maintain gas main in Lowell Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue, and Homer Street as follows:

- 400' ± of 12" plastic main in in Lowell Avenue from 525 Lowell Avenue to Commonwealth Ave to replace 400' ± of 12" of cast iron gas main
- 935' ± of 12" plastic main in Homer Street from Commonwealth Avenue to the existing 12" cast iron at City Hall Drive to replace 935' ± of 12" cast iron main
- 610' ± 12" plastic main in Commonwealth Avenue from Lowell Avenue to Valentine St to replace 610' ± 12" of cast iron main

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Leary abstaining and Councilor Kelley not voting)**

Note: Mary Mulrone, representative from National Grid presented the above request for a grant of location in Lowell Ave, Commonwealth Ave and Homer Street.

Lou Taverna, City Engineer explained that there have been gas leaks in this area for a number of years. National Grid has been repairing these leaks to the best of their ability but it is more efficient at this time to replace the leak prone pipes. There is also a MWRA water main in this area, which means that the new pipes need to be relocated.

Councilors made the following comment:

There is a discrepancy on the attached answers regarding the number of leaks that National Grid provided, and the information provided by Mr. Taverna. National Grid should be providing additional information regarding the leaks.

The public hearing was opened.

Nathan Philips, 73 Charles Street asked for clarification regarding the MWRA pipe. He also noted that there is one large leak in the area and the rest are grade 3 leaks. Mr. Philips explained that these pipes could still be repaired instead of replaced.

Mr. Taverna explained that there is no issue with the MWRA pipe it is just shallow which restricts National Grid where they can place their pipe.

Eli Goldberg, representative from Mothers out Front expressed her concern with replacing the mains instead of repairing them since the goal is to move away from fossil fuels.

Ron Blau, 111 Wood End Road expressed concern regarding how National Grid is replacing these pipes and the coordination with the road work.

The public hearing was closed.

Councilor Laredo motioned to approve which passed 6-0-1 with Councilor Leary abstaining and Councilor Kelley not voting.

#431-22 Request for a grant of location in Ward Street

NATIONAL GRID petition for a grant of location to install and maintain gas main in Ward Street as follows:

- 1270' ± of 8" plastic main in Ward Street from Westbourne Road to Waverly Avenue to replace 1270" ± of 12', 6' and 4' cast iron gas main
- 10' ± of 6" plastic in the intersection of Westbourne Road and Ward Street to replace 10' ± 6" of cast iron gas main
- 10' ± 6" plastic main in intersection of Coolidge Rd and Ward Street to replace 10' ± 6' cast iron gas main
- 30' ± 6" plastic main in in the intersection of Eastbourne Road and Ward St to replace 30' ± 4" cast iron gas main
- 10' ± 6" plastic in the intersection of Avondale Rd and Ward St to replace 10' ± 4" of cast iron gas main
- 30" ± 6" plastic main in the intersection of Exmoor Rd and Ward St to replace 30" ± 6" of cast iron gas main
- 10" ± 6" plastic main in the intersection of Grant Ave and Ward Street to replace 10" ± of 12' and 6' cast iron gas main

Action: Public Facilities Approved 8-0

Note: Mary Mulroney, representative from National Grid presented the above request for a grant of location in Ward Street. She explained that is due to DPW road work.

Lou Taverna, City Engineer noted that the MWRA is proposing to replace their main and DPW will replace the city owned main in this area. National Grid needs to relocate their gas mains away from the MWRA and City of Newton water mains.

The public hearing was opened and with no member of the public wishing to speak the public hearing was closed.

Councilor Laredo motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#432-22 **Eversource petition for Grant of Location in Farlow Road and Waverly Ave**
EVERSOURCE ENERGY petitioning for a grant of location to install 50" ± of conduit easterly from pole 9/31 at Farlow Road and to install 790" easterly at Waverly to pole 149/9 and install 48" of conduit northwesterly from pole 148/17 at Chamberlain Road
Action: **Public Facilities Approved as Amended to add the relocation of the guy wire 8-0**

Note: Joanne Callender, representative from Eversource presented the above request for a grant of location in Farlow Road and Waverly Avenue. This is for an upgrade to 132 Farlow Road.

Lou Taverna, City Engineer explained that there is a guy wire from the pole to an existing tree and Engineering is requesting the City Council to amend the request to include the relocation of the guy wire to the ground.

The public hearing was opened and with no member of the public wishing to speak the public hearing was closed.

Councilor Laredo motioned to amend item #432-22 to relocate the guy wire to the ground with the condition that the street is paved curb to curb which passed unanimously.

Ms. Callender noted that the road will be paved curb to curb.

Councilor Laredo motioned to approve as amended which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#440-22 **CPC Recommendation to appropriate \$75,000 in CPA funding**
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending appropriation of seventy five thousand dollars (\$75,000) in Community Preservation Act funding from the FY23 Historic Resource Reserve Fund to the control of the Planning & Development Department to complete the first phase of the Jackson Homestead Basement Restoration Project by hiring a preservation consultant to develop plans to remediate the existing water and humidity issues in order to preserve the historic structure and protect its important collections.
Action: **Public Facilities Held 8-0**

Note: Lara Kritzer, CPA Program Manager and Lisa Dady, Director of Historic Newton joined the Committee to discuss the CPC recommendation to appropriate \$75,000 for the Jackson Homestead Basement Restoration Project. Ms. Kritzer presented the attached PowerPoint.

Jennifer Molinsky, Chair of the CPC explained that they expressed their support for the project but also believed that it should be done in phases. There is the understanding that they will be back to the CPC to request additional funding.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: What will the total project budget be?

A: Ms. Dady explained that they have been discussing a very broad estimate with the Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse and it has started to look like a six figure project. But they need to get through Phase 1 first to have a budget for the project. Additionally, Ms. Dady explained want to find a permanent solution for the basement of Jackson Homestead because of the archives that are housed there for public showing. She also noted that there is the immediate need to fix the crumbling foundation.

Q: Is there a way to construct an addition to the building instead of using the basement since they are prone to flooding?

A: Ms. Dady explained that they have a number discussion around additions and that is why they want this study done.

Councilors made the following comments:

The Committee should receive additional information regarding the future phases of the project.

It was noted that this money may not be needed for phase 1 when there is a free service that can give a quote on the project.

One councilor noted that he does believe that this is an important project because of the history behind the Jackson Homestead. These funds are necessary to hire the right firm but it is also important that these consultants are managed properly.

The Committee discussed holding the item until they receive the scope of the project and to give time for Historic Newton to reach out to a firm for a free quote on what the project would cost before going to a consultant.

Ms. Dady explained that they would be willing to look into getting a quote best still expressed the need for funds incase the free quote does not give them all of the information.

Ms. Kritzer provided the below link for the scope of work after the conclusion of the meeting.

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/86808/637921047719200000>

Councilor Laredo motioned to hold which passed unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 9:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Leary, Chair

September 8, 2022

From: Ellie Goldberg, 79 Elmore Street, Newton, MA 02459

To: Members of the Public Facilities Committee

Re: Objection to Gas Pipeline Replacements

Gas is not safe, not clean, not green. As we remember the September 13, 2018 Merrimack Valley explosions and the vivid images of flames and destruction, we can easily visualize the danger of Newton's leaky gas infrastructure and its system-wide long-standing deficiencies. I am writing to share my heightened sense of urgency to reduce the risks of gas in our community.

As the review of the Gas System Enhancement Plan revealed, replacing pipelines does not make the system safer and diverts public funds from cost-saving, clean and efficient energy solutions.

We know better. Today, you wouldn't ignore the health hazards and liabilities of lead paint, asbestos, chlordane and UFFI insulation. Now, it makes no sense to ignore the health hazard of gas as it contaminates the air we breathe all along the pipelines from the drill pads to our kitchens. And, it makes no fiscal sense to deliberately increase the cost to ratepayers for decades to come. National Grid is already charging customers for the lost gas from hundreds of pipeline leaks.

This week we are witnessing the dramatic severity of extreme weather -- the heat, the droughts, and the flooding. We know our degrading pipeline system is increasingly vulnerable to failure because of the extremes of freezing and thawing (and water infiltration in the pipes). Let's rethink our assumptions about environmental stability and realize it is shortsighted to allow piecemeal pipeline replacements that allow methane to continue to drive that instability.

Rachel Carson was right: Prevention is the Imperative. I urge you to deny future grants of location and insist that National Grid adopt a coordinated comprehensive whole city **triage and transition** plan for public health and safety, emissions reduction and consumer protection.

TRIAGE means repair the largest, most hazardous and wasteful leaks. Use resources wisely to target the leakiest pipes, especially by fixing the high volume leaks and maintaining safety features such as ensuring accessible gas turn off valve caps.

TRANSITION: Accelerate a managed, just transition to safe clean energy. It is imperative to stop capital expenditures on more fossil fuel infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration.

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September 8, 2022

Dear Members of the Public Facilities Committee:

I am writing in opposition to the National Grid petitions to install new gas pipelines in three areas of Newton. There are many good reasons for this opposition that have been outlined in a letter to which I am a signatory. Here I wish to provide documentation from the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030 that supports accepting the recommendation in that letter, namely to pause a decision on this proposal until more information can be made available and understood about the most cost effective option to safely manage our gas system while adhering to Newton's Climate Action Plan. Specifically, many sections of the CECP advocate restraint in installing new gas pipelines and a preference for repairing rather than replacing. For example, it states [emphasis added]:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/clean-energy-and-climate-plan-for-2025-and-2030/download>

**p. 25.** Continued investments in natural gas pipelines can create stranded costs that must be borne by either remaining gas ratepayers or gas utility shareholders. **Thus, any additional pipeline investments must be made with deliberation and care.**

**p,29.** While existing gas pipeline infrastructure will continue to serve customers through 2030, **the declining throughput should motivate efforts to reduce gas system fixed costs as soon as possible.**

**p. 49.** **“The Commonwealth’s plan for building decarbonization should include strategies to mitigate the risks of locking in additional investments and costs of pipeline systems that must eventually be paid for by either ratepayers or gas utilities’ shareholders”.**

**p. 78.** “...the DPU is seeking to develop a regulatory framework to guide the gas utilities and align with decarbonization efforts...**gas utilities will need to assess the need for full replacement versus lower-cost repairs, minimizing additional capital investments** and avoiding the risks of installing a brand-new asset which is likely to be stranded in the future”.

Thank you for considering these arguments.

Sincerely,

Leslie Zebrowitz  
62 Pine Crest Rd.  
Newton 02459

374- 430 Homer St, 1095 – 1125 Commonwealth Ave,  
Newton 1350723

All Grants of Location for the City of Newton must answer the following in detail:

- A. Are there any leaks on this road? If yes, how many?
  - Yes, several repaired main leaks and two active grade 3 leaks. Will be replaced once approved.
  
- B. If not, why is the gas main being extended or replaced?
  - This gas main is being moved further away from the proposed location & existing main due to underground utility congestion in the northern side of Commonwealth Ave. Since we had to move further away the city of Newton had requested a Grant of Location application.
  
- C. Is it in response to upcoming roadwork or new development?
  - No
  
- D. Is capacity increasing? If yes, why?
  - No

Requested by the Commissioner: When NationalGrid engineers develop the GOL plans these standard questions be answered in a written format & submitted with the GOL package.

# Jackson Homestead Basement Rehabilitation Phase I CPA Funding Recommendation

Community Preservation Committee  
Presentation to  
Public Facilities Committee  
September 8, 2022

## Project Overview

- ▶ The ca. 1809 Jackson Homestead serves as the City's History Museum and historical archives facility
- ▶ Water infiltration and humidity issues in the basement are causing the foundation to deteriorate, threatening the stability and preservation of the structure and its collections
- ▶ Basement galleries are now closed and the collections removed from the basement for their protection



## Current Funding Request

CPA funding is requested to hire a preservation consultant to study the existing conditions and develop plans for the remediation of the water and humidity issues in the basement of the Jackson Homestead.

This work is Phase I of an overarching project to address the basement's water and humidity issues in order to preserve and protect the building and its collections.

## Recommended CPA Project Funding

| CPA Funding Accounts                 | Amount          |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Historic Resource FY23 Reserve Funds | \$75,000        |
| <b>TOTAL CPA PROJECT FUNDS:</b>      | <b>\$75,000</b> |

CPA Funding is recommended to be Historic Resource category funding.

## Proposed Budget

| <b>Funding Sources and Uses</b>                      | <b>Funding Amount</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>CPA Recommended Funding</b>                       | <b>\$75,000</b>       |
| City Staff Time for Project Oversight and Management | \$7,000               |
| <b>Total Project Costs</b>                           | <b>\$82,000</b>       |

The current CPA funding request is only for Phase I of the Jackson Homestead Basement Rehabilitation Project. The CPC anticipates that additional funding will be requested for construction in the future.

## Timeline

- ❖ Phase I - Conditions Assessment and Development of Remediation Plan (10 Months)
- ❖ Phase II - Basement Construction, including funding and bidding processes (16 months)
- ❖ Phase III - Gallery Installation and Reopening of Basement to the public (3 months)

# Questions & Discussion

Thank you!