



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

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

Absent: Councilor Kalis

City Staff: City Engineer Lou Taverna, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan, City Engineer Jonathan Yeo

#545-22 Eversource petition for Grant of Location in Westfield Rd

EVERSOURCE ENERGY petitioning for a grant of location to install 10'± of conduit in a southerly direction from new relocated JOL pole #984/5 to the property at #39 Westfield Rd. This is a two-part petition by Eversource Energy, the first is the relocation of jointly owned pole 984/5 from its current location to approximately 40-feet northwesterly; then installing a 10-foot underground lateral to service house #39 Westfield Road. (Ward 3)

Action: Public Facilities Approved 6-0 (Councilor Norton not voting)

Note: Eversource Representative Hannah Cooper presented the above request for a grant of location on Westfield Rd.

Councilors asked the following questions:

A Councilor asked if City Engineer Lou Taverna could help facilitate moving a power line swap project on Westfield Rd into the City's Work Order system.

Q: Mr. Taverna agreed to put Ms. Cooper in touch with City Engineer John Daghlian.

Public Hearing Comments:

Jack Burns, 30 Westfield Rd, asked if there was any way to move the lines from a previously existing double-pole that had been damaged by construction, to the double pole that Eversource is looking to install.

Committee Chair Leary closed the public hearing.

Councilor Kelley motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

#546-22 Request for a grant of location in Paulson Road

NATIONAL GRID petition for a grant of location to install and maintain gas main in Paulson Road, Ferncroft Road, Evelyn, Helene Road, and Cotter Road, as follows:

- 1125' ± of 6" plastic main in Ferncroft Road from Paulson Road to the existing 8", cast iron at #1 Ferncroft Road to replace 1125' ± of 4", bare steel.
- 710' ± of 4" plastic main in Helene Road from Paulson Road to the existing 6" plastic in Cotter Road to replace 215' ± 4" cast iron, and 25' ± of 4" plastic and 470' ± of 4" bare steel
- 90' ± 6" plastic main in Evelyn Road from Paulson Road to #64 Evelyn Road to replace 5' ± 8" cast iron main, 90' ± of 4" bare steel
- 1040' ± of 6" plastic main in Paulson Road from Gordon Road to 145 Paulson Road and install 120' ± of 6" plastic in Paulson Road between the gap between #145 Paulson Road and #155 Paulson Road to replace 905' of 4" bare steel and 135' ± of 4" cast iron. (Ward 5)

Action: **Public Facilities Held 6-0 (Councilor Norton not voting)**

Note: Committee Chair Leary commented that the committee is aware of the controversial nature of this item, and its juxtaposition to the City's climate action plan. She noted that she had consulted the City's law department, who advised that this Committee is limited in their authority in this matter. Rather, the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is conducting a review of their climate goals as they pertain to the installation and maintenance of gas infrastructure.

National Grid representative Mary Mulroney presented the above request for a grant of location on Paulson Rd, Ferncroft Rd, Helene Rd, and Cotter Rd. Miss Mulroney stated that this work is recommended by National Grid as part of the water intrusion program.

City Engineer Lou Taverna explained that as metal pipes age and are continuously exposed to the elements, they begin to deteriorate and experience water intrusion. This work will replace metal pipeline with plastic, making them less subject to deterioration.

Public Hearing Comments:

Cindy Callaway, 83 Grove Hill Ave, asked if the pipes are being replaced due to a leak, and if they are not leaking, why they're being replaced with larger pipes.

Miss Mulroney stated that while the pipes are not currently leaking, this work is to uphold the current infrastructure. The pipelines are situated by a natural creek, leaving them susceptible to significant damage if there is even a pinhole sized leak.

Morris Sazer, 5 Helene Rd, asked when this work would begin and how long it will take.

Mr. Taverna stated that National Grid can begin work 20 days after the City Council approves the item. While he did not comment on the length of the project, he noted that National Grid will be able to work through the winter if weather permits. Mr. Taverna stated that he does not know how National Grid schedules their work or how many crews they will be allocating to this project, so he is not able to estimate how long this work will take.

Peter Barrer, 60 Endicott St, stated that he supports Councilor Leary's efforts to advocate for the City's climate goals. He added that the Committee has the authority to have some say in protecting the public from undue traffic burdens. His final point was that there are many gas leaks in Newton that should be prioritized.

Philip Vergagt, 56 Cloverdale Rd, echoed Mr. Barrer's point that gas leaks should be prioritized. He added that he and other concerned citizens had sent a letter to the Mayor and City Council of Newton asking why gas lines were being expanded when the City's climate action plan indicates a need to transition away from gas infrastructure.

Nathan Phillips, 73 Charles St, asked whether National Grid had responded to Councilor Gentile's motion to provide a replace vs repair cost estimate for the previous 1.6-mile pipeline replacement request. He also inquired as to whether studies regarding alternatives to pipeline replacement had been shared with the Public Facilities Committee and National Grid, and asked about the new operating pressure of these pipes would be, since much of the pipeline is being expanded from 4" to 6". Lastly, he urged the committee to hold this item until these questions are answered.

Ms. Mulroney stated that she did not believe that the capacity or operating pressure would be increasing.

A Councilor stated that National Grid did not respond to Councilor Gentile's motion to their knowledge. They added that many of the questions Mr. Phillips asked are in the purview of the DPU, and this Committee has no authority to demand these answers. The Councilor closed by stating that they don't see why these pipes couldn't simply be re-lined to help with water intrusion.

A Councilor clarified that just because the work can start 20 days after the City Council approves the project, it does not mean that it necessarily will. They added that the start date and duration of the project is crucial information that National Grid has not provided. The Councilor added that they have continuously not gotten answers to reasonable requests for information, which does not bode well for National Grid.

Councilor Gentile motioned to hold the item.

A Councilor stated that they support holding this item and asked for further information regarding street repairs subsequent to this work. They added that the pipeline replacement in Newton Upper Falls had been completed for quite some time, but the repaving and patching of the road still has not been done. The Councilor added that the Committee should get commitments on the repaving of the streets affected.

A Councilor stated that they agree that holding this item is the best course of action. They added that that they feel that Grants of Locations have recently been accepted too easily and without in-depth

analysis. The Councilor appreciated that Committee Chair Leary has clearly defined the limits of the Committee, but they still need to do what is best for public safety, and cannot do so without more information.

Ellie Goldberg expressed concern for the added pressure on down-pipeline leaks as a result of the increased capacity of the new pipelines, adding that Newton has over 50 high volume leaks. She added that with climate change and environmental hazards, the conversation should be around retiring gas infrastructure that is susceptible to the elements and seeking to electrify houses.

Ms. Mulroney stated that the operating pressure of the pipeline will not be changing. She added that the work is expected to take roughly 4 ½ months, weather permitting.

A Councilor expressed their support for holding this item.

Committee Chair Leary closed the public hearing.

Councilor Gentile's motion to hold passed unanimously.

#547-22 Discussion on the City's Phosphorus Control Plan

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS requesting to provide an update to the Public Facilities Committee on the City's progress towards the development of the City's Phosphorus Control Plan.

Action: Public Facilities Held 7-0

Note: Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan stated that this is to present an overview of the Municipal Separate Stormwater General Permit (MS4 Permit). The presentation will be facilitated by Zach Henderson of Woodard & Curran and is attached to this report.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: A Councilor asked when Mr. Henderson expects to have a firmer understanding of what the capital investment from the City will look like.

A: Mr. Henderson that he anticipates having a clearer understanding by the Spring of 2023.

Q: A Councilor asked how this project will be funded.

A: Ms. Sullivan stated that this project will be funded by combination of stormwater fees, potential grants, and potentially additional funding from the City.

Q: A Councilor asked if there are any environmental tradeoffs to this work.

A: Mr. Henderson stated that the most tangible tradeoffs are stormwater treatment facilities in undeveloped parcels of land. He added that their smart controls for these facilities are unable to be placed into wooded areas due to the amount of deforestation that would need to occur. Mr. Henderson noted that these facilities can also be designed as green infrastructure and become naturalized over time.

Q: A Councilor asked what discussions Mr. Henderson has had with the City's Planning Department since they have started rewriting the zoning code for the Village Centers and adjacent residential areas.

A: Ms. Sullivan stated that the DPW and Planning Department are meeting with Woodard & Curran in the next month to discuss the phosphorus control plan.

Q: A Councilor asked what is being done to educate the public on this matter.

A: Mr. Henderson stated that program development where the support of a local organization is enlisted will be key. He added that these projects add fiscal value as well.

Q: A Councilor asked if the estimate considers the improvements in lowered risks and incidents of flooding.

A: Mr. Henderson stated that no, those factors were not looked at for this presentation. He added that there will definitely be some co-benefits to this work that impact flooding.

Q: A Councilor asked if the environmental engineering position had been filled.

A: Ms. Sullivan anticipates posting the position by the end of January 2023. She added that the job description was nearly 20 years old, so it must be rewritten.

Councilors made the following comments:

A Councilor expressed concern with the \$500 million price tag of the project.

Mr. Henderson clarified that these are just estimates and not immediate costs, and these estimates will continue to be reviewed.

A Councilor stated that this item should come before this Committee in the future once the financial cost is more concrete.

A Councilor stated that the amount of phosphorus that needs to be removed will not be achieved without collaboration with the private sector. The Councilor also expressed concern about raising stormwater fees and feels that pursuing grants and EPA regulation on the private sector will be a better means to achieve phosphorus removal goals.

A Councilor urged Mr. Taverna to deeply discuss with his department what requirements should be imposed on developers.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the City's stormwater ordinance should help clarify what requirements developers will need to meet.

Mr. Taverna stated that Josh Morse of the Public Buildings Department will be a major player in this discussion.

A Councilor echoed another Councilor's statement regarding stormwater requirements for new developers.

A Councilor emphasized the importance of childhood education on this subject.

A Councilor stated that \$500 million may seem like a lot of money, but it's going toward protecting hundreds of multi-million-dollar homes from flooding.

A Councilor stated that so many projects are moving forward without analysis of flood mitigation and phosphorus removal, which leads them to wonder how much phosphorus needs to be removed by the Phosphorus Control Plan. They added that there's significant public support for flood mitigation and studies surrounding this subject, and those resources should be used.

A Councilor suggested that this needs to be incorporated into regulating new development everywhere. They added that public education is crucial and sharing this information across multiple departments will help inform decision making.

Councilor Laredo motioned to hold which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Leary, Chair