Questions for Ngrid #546-22 Request for a GOL at Paulson Road

The Public Facilities Committee held Ngrids request for a GOL at the December 7th meeting. The reasons the committee decided on this unanimous action include:

**The pipes are not leaking**

Considering the large number of significant leaks all over the city, why are non-leaking pipes prioritized?  The answer from Ms. Mulroney (Ngrid Representative) "*to support the current infrastructure"*was unsatisfactory.The Engineering department noted that the pipelines are situated by a natural creek, leaving them susceptible to significant damage. Since this neighborhood was developed in the 1950s, there have not been any recorded instances of water intrusion. This begs the question; in the event the water table rises: why wouldn’t inserting a sleeve or a liner into the pipe rather than total replacement be a satisfactory repair?

**Repair Versus Replacement Questions Still Outstanding**

A member of the public asked whether National Grid had responded to Councilor Gentile’s motion to provide a cost estimate for the previous 1.6-mile pipeline replacement versus repair request. The Committee has not received an answer to that question. 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.

There is more sophisticated repair technology available to do repair work with laparoscopic equipment which does not require opening the street. We would like specific technical information on how this decision to repair versus replace is made by Ngrid. Prior responses have not been satisfactory.  Part of the answer may be that there is a strong financial incentive for Ngrid to replace without considering repair at all. This goes against the best interests of the city and our ratepayers.

**Increasing Capacity?**

Why are the pipes increasing in size from 4 inches to 6 inches? Ngrid representative said pressure and capacity is NOT increasing. This needs a better explanation. At prior meetings the Committee has been told that an increase in pressure prevents water intrusion.

**Impacts of Opening Streets on the Public and Abutters**

A question was asked about the start date and duration of the project. This is important  information that National Grid has not provided. 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. A member of the public added that the Committee has the authority to have some say in protecting the public from undue traffic burdens, and also agreed with a previous  comment that there are many gas leaks in Newton that should be prioritized. Councilor Gentile added it was a reasonable question to ask and Ngrid should be able to provide an answer.

A Councilor requested information regarding street repairs subsequent to this work. The Public Facilities Committee should get commitments on the trench repairs and repaving of the streets after utility work is completed. The streets in this neighborhood are not in substandard condition and not scheduled for repaving in the near term.

**Not on Track to Meet GHG Reduction Goals**

Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere. NOAA’s preliminary analysis showed the annual increase in atmospheric methane during 2021 was 17 parts per billion (ppb), the largest annual increase recorded since systematic measurements began in 1983. 

Latest information from HEET shows that Newton has 648 open gas leaks, costing $262,527 and releasing 258 metric tons of methane a year.

**Ngrids focus on Pipe replacement rather than triage & repair is a Public Health Hazard**

Except where new mains are required to replace very old leak prone pipe where major roadwork is planned, The Committee feels that Grants of Locations have recently been accepted too easily  and without in-depth analysis. Though the Committee has limits to its authority we still need to do what is best for public safety, and cannot do so without more information.

Respectfully,

Alison M. Leary

Newton City Council, Ward 1

Chair Public Facilities