



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton **In City Council**

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

Present: Councilors Crossley (Chair), Albright, Brousal-Glaser, Laredo, Danberg, Gentile

Absent: Councilors Lennon, Lappin

City staff present: City Engineer Lou Taverna

#302-17 Verizon petition for grant of location Windsor Road

VERIZON petition for a grant of location to install one new Pole (P.469/20S) on the northerly side of Windsor Road 500'± from Kent Road, to remove a guy wire from a tree. [(Ward 5) 09/11/2017 @11:30 PM]

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 6-0**

Note: City Engineer Lou Taverna reviewed the proposed Verizon plan. Mr. Taverna stated that the petition for grant of location on Windsor Road is to install one new pole across the street from an existing pole in order to allow the removal of a guy wire that is being held up by a tree. Mr. Taverna noted that there is an additional tree on private property, which must not be affected by the installation of the new pole. It was confirmed that although the wire will cross the street, this is the most effective way to resolve the pulling of the wires on the existing utility pole.

The Public Hearing was opened and closed with no member of the public wishing to speak. Councilor Laredo motioned to approve the item which carried unanimously.

#315-17 Discussion with DPW regarding sewer extension billing

COUNCILOR GENTILE requesting a discussion on how the City currently bills residents for sewer extensions. [09/18/17 @ 3:51 PM]

Action: **Public Facilities Held 6-0**

Note: Councilor Gentile docketed item #315-17 after being contacted by constituents on Staniford Avenue who are interested in petitioning the City for a drain extension to connect to the City's sewer system. The constituents, who are currently on septic, received cost estimates from the City that seem cost prohibitive. The City historically billed residents one dollar per linear foot of frontage and twenty five cents per square foot and the City paid the remaining balance. This formula resulted in approximately 10% of construction costs assessed to the resident and the balance being funded by the City due to the inflation of construction costs, over time. Since the 2012 revision of the ordinance, the City assesses the resident(s) 50% of the betterment cost and the City funds the balance of the construction. The proposed drain extension at Staniford Avenue calculated by the old formula would result in \$2,200 expense to the resident. Calculated by the new formula, the resident's cost would be approximately \$22,000 and the City's expense would be \$22,000.

City Engineer Lou Taverna noted that it is the City's preference to have residents connected to the sewer system. He stated that septic systems require constant maintenance and are often neglected, falling into a state of disrepair or failure. This leads to discharge into the groundwater and public waterways. Mr. Taverna noted that there are approximately 200 septic systems scattered throughout the City and no mandatory testing of the septic systems. State law requires septic system testing at point of sale. If a septic system fails, the homeowner is required to connect to an existing sewer main or rebuild the septic system to meet title V requirements. Mr. Taverna confirmed that rebuilding septic systems can be as expensive as extending sewer mains, if they do not exist.

Committee members were in agreement that the failure or disrepair of septic systems throughout the City could be a public health issue. Councilor Gentile suggested that the Committee investigate reevaluating the ordinance to reduce the burden on homeowners who wish to connect to the sewer system. Committee members stated that it would be difficult to make a decision without knowing what the impact on cost is. One Committee member noted that there are reserves in the sewer enterprise fund. Mr. Taverna noted that the current ordinance is written so that the City funds a minimum of 50%, with the option for more. The Chair noted that the Water/Sewer Subcommittee should meet to continue the conversation and report back to the Committee. With a motion from Councilor Gentile to hold the item, Committee members voted unanimously in favor.

#216-17 Approval of Building Design and Construction Sustainability Guidelines
HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting approval of the "City of Newton – Public Buildings Department – Building Design and Construction Sustainability Guidelines."
[07/03/17 @ 12:28 PM]
Action: Public Facilities Approved 6-0

Note: The Chair read the item into the record, and introduced Co-Chairs of the Design Review Committee Peter Barrer and Ellen Light, Design Review Committee and Energy Commission Member Jonathan Kantar and Sustainability Director Ann Berwick. It was noted that the Design Review Committee, Public Buildings Department and High Performance Building Coalition has been collaborating to craft the proposed Building Design and Construction Sustainability Guidelines (attached) for a number of years. The Chair noted that the design guidelines have been approved by the administration and it is the intent that with Council approval, a clear set of objectives will be provided to vendors, when an RFP is issued and contract drawn for future City projects.

Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse provided a high level overview of the plan to formalizing THIS design and construction approach for City buildings. The Commissioner noted that the process of Integrated Design is an approach that that, from the beginning of design, evaluates the impact of each system on the total project and making the corresponding modifications, early in the design phase. He provided an explanation of how one decision can create a ripple effect in simplifying other design features and long term maintenance. The Commissioner's narrative illustrating this effect is attached.

The Commissioner stated that most design teams are not evaluating project details as a team. Project design is typically iterative and often results in having to revisit previous project details. It is the Commissioners belief that this policy document will serve as a map for vendors and for the City in future projects. Ms. Ellen Light noted that many design professionals are trained in sustainability, but do not know what the City's expectations are up front. She stated that the structure of government process can prohibit a holistic approach from the start of the project. Ms. Light is confident that by making clear what the City's standards are up front, including an energy model requirement to assess the building design; will help create a more efficient process and avoid redesigns. Mr. Barrer reiterated that the document has been a work in progress for a number of years and provided the attached Q&A. Mr. Barrer noted that this comprehensive way of looking at projects will also impact designer selection. Ms. Ann Berwick noted that the document also institutionalizes learning from experience.

Committee members praised the work of the DRC and Public Buildings in crafting the design and construction guidelines. One suggested minor edits to be make a more affirmative statement. Committee members questioned how the document would be implemented. It was confirmed that the document will be included as part of the RFPs/RFQs and will be part of the final contract with vendors. It was noted that modification of the design phase and energy model will likely increase the upfront design costs, but that savings are expected from a simplified design, less backtracking throughout the design process and long term maintenance and operations costs.

A Committee member asked if there was any indication that the inclusion of the design guidelines would limit the pool of design professionals. Mr. Kantar believes that it is unlikely that the pool of bidders for City projects will decrease and thinks that it is possible that the number of interested firms could increase. He noted that many people are excited to work with progressive communities who are at the forefront of sustainability.

Councilor Danberg motioned to approve the design guidelines with minor edits suggested. The revised document is attached. Committee members voted unanimously in favor. It was confirmed that because the design guidelines are to be included as part of contracts, the guidelines cannot be used as a retroactive standard for projects currently in the design phase.

#317-17 Resolution to support House Bill to protect ratepayers

COUNCILOR CROSSLEY on behalf of Mothers Out Front, requesting a resolution from the City Council in support of H.2683/S.1845 that seeks to protect consumers from leaked gas while providing economic incentive to providers to repair infrastructure so as to reduce methane leaks into the environment [09/25/17 @ 3:07 PM]

Action: **Public Facilities Approved as Amended 6-0**

Note: Ms. Ellie Goldberg presented the request for support on behalf of Mothers Out Front. She noted that Mothers Out Front started as a group of mothers who felt the urgency of addressing climate change. The organization, founded in Arlington and Cambridge, has gained support and is now a national movement. Mothers Out Front has established three task forces

including; stopping new fossil fuel infrastructures, focusing on renewables and efficiencies and addressing gas leaks. State law adopted in 2004 requires utility companies to report gas leaks. The Home Energy Efficiency Team from Cambridge mapped and maintains a database of unrepaired gas leaks in Massachusetts municipalities and their classifications. There are approximately 588 remaining gas leaks in Newton. Details can be found at www.heetma.org. Ms. Goldberg noted that utility companies have only prioritized the most explosive leaks and have not included methane emissions as a significant climate change driver. Utility companies are now working with Mothers Out Front and Gas Leak Allies to share information, concerns and identify gas leaks. Ms. Goldberg noted that the intent is to focus on the worst leaks first ("super emitters" and noted that a small percentage of gas leaks in the City are contributing a large percentage of methane emissions. THE utility companies have been charging rate payers for the gas lost through unrepaired leaks. Sometimes utilities would allow grade 3 leaks to be "watched" and not schedule repairs. Bills H.2683/S.1845 would require utility companies to pay for the gas lost through leaks, providing a monetary incentive for them to repair the leaks faster. Mothers Out Front seeks City Council support of the bills. Our Legislative delegation is in full support of these bills.

Ms. Goldberg noted that charging utilities for gas will ultimately benefit the rate payers. The Chair noted that a member of Gas Leaks Allies, Ed Woll, hopes that community support of these bills will put pressure on the utilities to enhance their own leak detection and repair programs. It was noted that while DPW is working with NGrid and trying to coordinate on a monthly basis, gas leaks in old and failing steel and cast iron mains will continue to impact the Accelerated Roads program schedule.

Committee members were supportive of the resolution and in agreement that this is one step that can be taken to put pressure on the utilities. Committee members made slight modifications to the resolution and asked that the bills BE available for the Council vote. With a motion from Councilor Laredo, Committee members voted unanimously in favor of the resolution.

#300-17 Mayor's re-appointment of Marian Rambelle to the Solid Waste Commission
MARIAN RAMBELL, 2 Harrington Street, Newtonville, re-appointed as a member of the Solid Waste Commission for a term to expire October 31, 2020. (60 days 11/17/17) 09/08/17 @ 9:11 AM]

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 5-0 (Brousal-Glaser not Voting)**

Note: Committee members reviewed the re-appointment of Marian Rambelle by the Mayor to the Solid Waste Commission. A Committee member spoke in support of Ms. Rambelle's appointment to the SWC. Committee members were in agreement that the process for appointments should be standardized. Councilor Danberg motioned to approve the item which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah J. Crossley, Chair