August 24, 2005

Jennifer Goldson
Newton Planning Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Jennifer,

Field observations of the condition of the slate roof at the Newton Corner Branch Library have prompted our architect, Russell Feldman, and Commissioner of Public Buildings Nick Parnell to recommend a change in scope for the project. The original specifications called for repair of the existing slate roof as part of the overall renovation project. However, the contractor's lifts have enabled us to approach the roof much more closely so as to observe its condition in detail. This inspection has revealed the following:

1. Many of the existing slates are thin. Slates get thin as they wear away and also as they spall, and many of the slates show severe aging. It also appears that some of the newer slates which were installed during repairs to the roof are thin and of poor quality.
2. The slate coursing is irregular due to the fact that many of the slates are too short. There are many instances where the spaces between 2 slates in a course don't cover the slates below, exposing the roof deck.
3. Much of the copper flashing was improperly installed and is pitted, requiring replacement. I have spoken at length to Art Cabral from the Public Buildings Department, and he is quite sure that although the roof has probably been repaired several times over the 75 years that the City has owned the building (it was purchased in 1931), the roof was never completely replaced. He believes that during some of the repair work, copper flashing was improperly installed. The roof was last repaired in 1993, and it is quite possible that flashing was installed improperly at that time.
4. Chimney crickets and dormer flashing are damaged and in need of replacement. This damage could be due to ordinary wear and tear over the long age of the roof. As I previously mentioned, Art Cabral is sure that the roof was not replaced during the 75 years the building has been owned by the City. The building is 150 years old, and we really just don't know how old the roof actually is. What we do know, however, is that in addition to the roof's age, it was repaired several times over the last 75 years and several repairs were poorly installed.

Vareika Construction has given a quote of $61,801 to remove all existing slate and flashing and replace with a new slate roof with copper flashing to match the original. Less a credit of $6,110 for the scope of roof repair included in the original estimate, the total additional cost would be $55,700. Russ has analyzed the price and credits and considers them appropriate given the scope, quality and complexity of the work.

This will result in a new slate roof and copper flashing to match the existing. This is appropriate given the historical value of the building and the quality of the gutter, fascia and chimney work Vareika is currently constructing.

A new slate roof should last for 100 years, as opposed to an asphalt roof which lasts between 25 and 30 years. (Russ says that some higher quality asphalts are warranted to 40 or 50 years.) Russ believes that the cost of repair of this roof would exceed its replacement cost, without any warranty or the functional life of a new roof.

I am therefore seeking an additional $55,700 of CPA funds for the work. Russ has assured me that the project has sufficient contingency funds currently available to pay for any replacement of roof decking that may be required once the roof is removed and the deck exposed.

Sincerely,

Kathy Glick-Weil
Director, Newton Free Library