



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

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

Absent: Councilor Kalis

City Staff: Lou Taverna City Engineer, Josh Morse Commissioner of Public Buildings, Jonathan Yeo Chief Operating Officer and Alex Valcarce Deputy Director of Public Buildings

#385-22 Appointment of Jay Snyder to the Citizens Commission on Energy

HER HONOR THE MAYOR appointing Jay Snyder, 2117 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton to the Citizens Commission on Energy for a term of office to expire June 15, 2024. (60 days: 09/09/22)

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

Note: Mr. Jay Snyder joined the Committee to discuss his appointment to the Commission on Energy for a term expiring June 15, 2024. Mr. Snyder noted that he has lived in Newton for 11 years and has over 10 years of experience in the energy industry. Mr. Snyder recently became aware of the Commission on Energy and believes it will be an opportunity to contribute to the community with his experience. Mr. Snyder confirmed that he has some knowledge of combined heat and power, but will bring the topic to the Commission on Energy as a topic for further investigation. Committee members thanked Mr. Snyder for his willingness to serve on the Commission and voted 6-0 in favor of a motion to approve his appointment from Councilor Danberg.

#384-22 Eversource petition for Grant of Location in Kinmonth Road

EVERSOURCE ENERGY petitioning for a grant of location to install 145' ± of conduit in Windsor Road southerly from pole 469/5 and install 145' ± of conduit in Kinmonth Road westerly from Windsor Road thence turning southerly.

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

Note: Eversource representative Joanne Calender presented the request to install 145'± of conduit in Windsor Road to connect to conduit in the private way on Kinmonth Road to service the new development located at 20 Kinmonth Road. City Engineer Lou Taverna noted that Kinmonth Road is a private way and the grant of location will only authorize the portion of the project in Windsor Road. The Public Hearing was Opened. No member of the public wished to speak. The public hearing was closed. Councilor Crossley moved approval of the grant of location and the Committee voted 6-0 in favor of approval.

Chair's Note: *The back-up for item #383-22 can be found at the following link.*

<https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/5-58-site-plan-approval/>

#383-22 5-58 for the Newton Center for Active Living at 345 Walnut Street

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE petition, pursuant to 5-58, for schematic design and site plan approval at 345 Walnut Street for the design of the new 33,000 SF facility to replace the current Senior Center located at 345 Walnut Street in Newtonville to meet the needs and interests of Newton's older adults.

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Gentile abstaining)**

Note: Deputy Commissioner of Public Buildings Alex Valcarce presented the request for 5-58 schematic design and site plan approval for the Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL), a senior services facility at 345 Walnut Street. Mr. Valcarce noted that the residents and the City have been actively engaged for over four years, the last two years on feasibility work. The Committee was joined by BHA + A Principals Dan Chen and Joel Bergman, Landscape Architect Kyle Zick and Civil Engineer Chris Weber to present project details and respond to questions regarding design.

As proposed, NewCAL will be a barrier-free, accessible, senior center with lounge space, a library, activity rooms, outdoor spaces, dining and fitness areas. The center will be located in the location as the existing senior at 345 Walnut Street/Highland Avenue/Walnut Place, south of the Newtonville Historic Retail District. The facility will be served by 31 on-site parking stalls, as well as spaces on Highland Avenue and in the Austin Street parking lot. Mr. Chen confirmed that a traffic impact and parking study was conducted as part of the project development. Regarding the existing landscaping, Mr. Chen confirmed that the landscape architect will use best efforts to preserve and/or relocate trees in good condition on-site. The three story facility will have two main entrances (one off of Highland/Walnut Street and one off of Walnut Place; a third entrance is located under the building). The main spaces on the ground floor are open, but flexible and can be made into smaller rooms and/or larger spaces based on need (theater, dining, etc). Reception and administrative offices are located on the first floor. The building is served by one elevator, one communicating staircase and two stairs for safety. On the second floor, the design includes a 6500 sq. ft. gym that can be divided into two, two classrooms, an arts and activity room and senior services offices. The third floor is intended to be a fitness intensive floor with a suspended walking track, a game room and a fitness area with an outside lounge. Additionally on the third floor is an outdoor deck with space for fitness activities. Approximately 50%-60% of the deck is covered. Mr. Chen showed renderings of the building design. Renderings can be seen in the presentation attached to the end of this report. The facility has large windows for light and the front entrance has an overhead canopy. The design features the use of stone, brick, decorative railings and the historic stained glass from the existing senior center. The building includes a cupola to mimic the design of the existing senior center. The neighborhood context has been taken into careful consideration during development of the building architecture. Mr. Chen noted that from the front of the building, the building presents as two-stories and becomes the larger three-story building along the rear.

Mr. Kyle Zick, Landscape Architect, presented the proposed landscape plan. A copy of his presentation is attached to the end of this report. As proposed, the design has the main entry point of the facility near the intersection of Highland Avenue and Walnut Street. Visitors to the site may drive up to the building. The perimeter of the building is buffered by plantings, paved spaces and seating. A robust terrace and garden is located near the intersection of Walnut Place and Walnut Street. The Terrace is accessed from the interior of the building. Mr. Zick noted that cars will enter the surface parking from Walnut Place and will exit onto Highland Avenue. At the rear property line is a 6' tall screen fence which will be buffered by existing and additional plantings. At the rear of the site will be a backup generator and some mechanical equipment. An existing steel picket fence and granite curbing will be recycled and maintained on site.

Civil Engineer Chris Weber detailed site utilities. He noted that the building will be served by gas, electrical, sewer, domestic water and fire service. The Planning Department has commented on the proposed stormwater plans. Mr. Weber confirmed that recommendations made by the Planning Department with respect to stormwater design will be incorporated into the final plans. Mr. Weber noted that the plans include a series of area drains along the southern edge of the building to collect stormwater. A roof drain flows without further treatment into the infiltration system, which has been designed to treat the water quality volume and reduce peak flows and overall volume running off the site in the existing drainage system. A series of catch basins will be installed in the parking lot, collecting into a treatment system.

Mr. Valcarce noted that as part of the site plan submission, the proposed facility has committed to be a fossil free, all-electric building. The new facility will reduce energy usage to 40%-60% less than the current facility and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As a majority of the energy usage is based on heating and cooling, there is a focus on maintaining temperatures in the building. The building energy use will be offset through solar arrays on the roof and minimizing the amount of glass on the building. It was noted that 82% of the carbon footprint is coming from construction and construction materials (concrete and steel make up 60% of embodied carbon). Images of the shadow studies conducted can be seen in the attached presentation.

Commissioner of Public Buildings Josh Morse confirmed that the staff and design team will continue to investigate opportunities to improve efficiencies, reduce the energy load and explore cost savings wherever possible. The Commissioner noted that the City has been negotiating the acquisition of an abutting parcel located at 47 Walnut Place. The City has come to an agreement with the property owner for acquisition of the property, with the understanding that the property owner will reside in the home for the rest of her life. Mr. Morse explained that the design team has worked on design development on the site plan for over a year and has unanimous support from the Design Review Committee, much of the community, the Council on Aging and many City Councilors. He noted that based on the property owner residing in her home for the rest of her life, it may be over ten years before the property is under the City's control. He explained that upon acquisition, the property will best serve the facility by added green space, community gathering space, additional parking spaces, reduction in heat island, tree plantings, passive recreation and outdoor programs, expanded pollinator gardens, etc. He explained that the design of the facility as currently proposed utilizes respectful design principles, steps back the

massing from Walnut Street, creates more green space than exists today with over a 3000 sq. ft. increase in square footage, increase in program time and minimal impact to abutments. Mr. Morse noted that based on costs associated with the development, any delay to moving the project forward would come at a considerable cost. Mr. Morse stated that using the abutting property for design of the project would not provide a benefit to the facility programming.

Public Hearing Comments

Sally Pian, 38 Kenmore Street, complimented Mr. Morse on the progress of the project and the design. Ms. Pian thanked Mr. Morse for his work on the project and is happy to see the project move forward.

Ann Duvall, 33 Madison Avenue, worked in social services for elders for many years. Ms. Duvall commended the design of the project and emphasized her support for the facility. She urged the Committee to move the project forward. She expressed interest in seeing a solution for water runoff collection. With respect to the abutting parcel, Ms. Duvall noted it could help in the future with parking, community gardens or other community amenities.

Louis Atamian, 11 Eliot Street an active member of the senior community. He noted that Commissioner Morse has done a terrific job to increase utility and programmatic elements for the senior center. He commended Mr. Morse's patience and urged Councilors to not delay the project further.

Donnalyn Kahn, Newton resident that the exit will be on Highland Avenue and expressed concern relative to pedestrian safety. She noted that the Highland Avenue facade is less attractive than the other building facades and asked the design team to consider modifications.

Maria Steele, 58 Playstead Road, was a member of the Council on Aging when the current senior center was built. She expressed her support for the proposed facility and complimented the design.

Meredith Warshaw, 69 Hartford Street, urged the Council to not let the best be the enemy of the good. She noted that so much thought has gone into the project and urged the Committee to move forward with approval.

Leonora Linsky, 99 Walnut Hill Road, expressed excitement for building of the facility. She noted that there is only one elevator and questioned what the capacity is for the elevator. Mr. Chen noted that it is a 3500 lb elevator which can accommodate 22 people/a stretcher and/or multiple wheelchairs. She questioned whether there might be a shortage in elevator service during high traffic events. Mr. Chen confirmed that an elevator consultant was engaged for the project and one elevator was determined to be sufficient.

Russell Feldman, 85 Langley Road, believes the project is well designed and is appropriate for its village center location. Mr. Feldman supports the project as well as the acquisition of the adjacent parcel. Mr. Feldman offered his professional opinion that any redesign of the parcel would not materially change

the building organization or the program, and as a consequence it would not be the best use of the land. He urged the Committee to approve the project as currently proposed.

Beth Tischler, 287 Langley Road, encouraged project approval as quickly as possible.

Ellen Light, 36 Irving Street, Co-Chair of the Design Review Committee, noted that the project was very well received and unanimously accepted. She noted that the building was designed particularly with privacy and consideration for the abutters in mind. Ms. Light noted that although the DRC letter made note of the great design on the constrained site, the concerns about site size are alleviated based on the acquisition of the parcel at 47 Walnut Place.

Dan Shaw, 16 Church Street, member of the Council on Aging, expressed gratitude that the design of the facility mimics the character of the existing building. Moving the building further into the site would cast shadow and would delay the project unnecessarily. He expressed support for seeing the abutting parcel used for open space or landscaping.

John Rice, 9 Selden Street, was on the NewCAL building Committee for many meetings before he left the Council. Mr. Rice noted that he supports the design of the building. Mr. Rice noted that the projections related to numbers of visitors are similar to the usage at the Hyde Center when it was used for senior services.

Robert Fizek, 47 Forest Street, expressed no concerns about the quality of the design/site design, but noted that the site at Albemarle may have been more efficient and more flexible. He noted that the Austin Street site may have also been beneficial to the City for the senior center. Mr. Fizek urged the Council to understand the embodied carbon costs.

Mr. Morse confirmed that an embodied carbon analysis has been presented to the community and the Design Review Committee. He confirmed that the analysis will be done on all projects moving forward. He confirmed that he can provide the information to Mr. Fizek.

The resident at 401 Cherry Street expressed appreciation for the design team, City staff and members of the community who contributed to the project design. He emphasized his support for the project. Mr. Brigham questioned whether there was consideration for the church/New Arts Center or the outdoor spaces at the center (add more solar, additional weather protection in the parking lot).

Fred Lewis, 236 Lexington Street, noted that the facility will be community space for seniors. He commended the work of the design group and urged the Council to move forward with approval.

Angela Elizar, 160 Stanton Avenue, thanked Mr. Morse and the design team for their efforts on the project. She questioned if the acoustics in the theater have been considered to minimize noise bouncing in the theater, whether the floors would be slanted, whether there would be permanent chairs and whether there would be storage?

Commissioner Morse noted that it is a multipurpose room intended to be used a cafeteria, theater and/or for speakers. He confirmed that they have thought about the acoustical spaces and will treat all of the rooms in the facility. He noted that the rooms will also have assisted listening spaces. Mr. Morse noted that because the space is multi-functional, the floor will not be sloped and the chairs will not be fixed. He confirmed that the stage will be fully accessible, the chairs will be comfortable and functional and there will be adequate storage.

John Pelletier, 92 Central Ave, member of Council on Aging, urged the Committee to move the project forward and complimented Mr. Morse for the work done on the project.

Tom Hart, 173 Oak Street, noted that the proposed facility will enable more residents to attend programs there. He noted that the walking track will have a considerable improvement for seniors.

Martina Jackson, Newton resident noted that Newtonville isnt necessarily an urban center and stated that newer facilities in other communities have been designed with more land around them. She expressed concerns relative to parking in the Austin Street parking lot and overflow parking. Ms. Jackson expressed some concern that issues raised by members of the public have been dismissed without consideration.

Vivienne Shine, Newton resident noted that the current senior center is too small and not in good condition. She noted that they looked at sites with more square footage and none of the options were acceptable to the public. The team had to come back to the site of the current senior center. She expressed support for the design of the project and emphasized the importance of community space for the senior population.

Robert Kavanaugh, 69 Court Street, questioned what percentage of seniors currently use the senior center and what percentage is expected to use the senior center?

Senior Center Director Jayne Colino noted that based on 2020 census data, it is projected that the City will have 25,000 residents over the age of 60 (representing half the households). Typically new senior centers quadruple participation in new facilities. Prior to covid the senior center had a participation rate of 25%. Ms. Colino noted that participation is different now that prior to the pandemic.

Richard Rousala, 285 Tremont Street, is a member of the working group, noted that pushing the property further into the site is not currently possible because the City does not currently own the abutting parcel at 47 Walnut Place. He stated that pushing back the building would cause an enormous impact to the other two abutters on Walnut Place and noted that the space is adequately sized and any additional space should be used for outdoor needs of the center and urged the Council to support the project.

Alice Ingerson, 1923 Beacon Street , expressed her support for moving forward with the project. She suggested that some flexibility for future renovation into the side of the building would be helpful in leaving the City's options open. Ms. Ingerson asked the design team to consider a more modern design for the cupola.

No other member of the public wished to speak. Councilor Danberg motioned to close the public hearing which carried unanimously.

Committee Discussion

Councilors recognized and thanked Commissioner Morse, the working group, the design team, and members of the community for the effort that has gone into the careful, thoughtful design of the project. Councilors were supportive of the project size, the new facility, the expanded programming, the open spaces, the sustainability features and noted that the design takes into consideration the neighborhood character as well as historic elements of the senior center.

Mr. Chen responded to questions from the Council regarding site design. It was noted that there are 31 parking stalls on site, 13 parking stalls on Highland Avenue and 105 parking stalls at Austin Street. The peak annual demand is approximately 100 parking spaces, but it is anticipated that the monthly parking demand will be 40 parking stalls.

Mr. Chen stated that the gas line will be for a standby generator, but they are looking at battery power and/or propane. The commercial kitchen should be operated with electricity and propane. Commissioner Morse confirmed that there will be no natural gas on the property. He explained that it is important to include the gas detail on the site plan so that it can be fully investigated, but the intent is to have the backup generator fueled by diesel so that as technology advances, it can later, more easily be converted into electric.

Mr. Chen confirmed that the mechanicals located on the roof will be in a roof well so that they are not visible from the exterior view.

A Committee member questioned whether water runoff can be collected and used for irrigation on the adjacent parcel in the future. Mr. Weber confirmed that although the design team has not considered the use of greywater from the site, they can evaluate opportunities for recycling of the water.

The Committee discussed how the acquisition of the parcel at 47 Walnut Place might impact the design of the proposed facility. Some Councilors questioned whether programming might be different if the adjacent parcel was considered during design development. It was noted that the site of the senior center was selected after larger sites were taken out of consideration. The Commissioner noted that the only programmatic change from the senior center at Albemarle was the reduction in gym space from 10,000 sq. ft. to 6500 sq. ft.. Councilors questioned if the Design Review Committee's (DRC) recommendation might be different now knowing that the acquisition of the abutting property is a possibility. It was noted that the DRC's recommendation complimented a great design on a constrained site. Commissioner Morse reiterated that the property at 47 Walnut Place may not be under the City's control for ten years. He noted that it would be unusual to have the DRC weigh in on conditions that may arise ten years in the future.

All Councilors were supportive of the proposed project and project design. Some Councilors questioned whether it might be prudent to have the Design Review Committee meet to review the proposed design, with the understanding that the adjacent parcel may be acquired, to understand whether there might be additional design opportunities for the facility, noting that the acquisition will represent 10,000 additional sq. ft. Councilors understood that any major changes will cost time and money.

Several Councilors and members of the public emphasized that it is more beneficial to keep the building at its current size and that the abutting parcel will be a great benefit for use as open space, recreational space and/or for parking in the future. The Commissioner noted that programming space will be expanded as well as programming times. A Councilor noted that any land that can be preserved in the village center, should be. It was noted that the co-Chair of the DRC suggested that some of concerns related to the site size are alleviated by acquisition of the abutting parcel.

Councilors thanked members of the public for speaking on the item and reiterated their gratitude for Commissioner Morse's work on the project. Councilor Crossley moved approval of the item. A Committee member asked that Commissioner Morse ask the Design Review Committee to meet in advance of the City Council meeting on August 8, 2022 to consider the project in light of the acquisition next door and whether or not the recommendation and/or conditions might change at all. With that, that Committee voted 6-0-1 in favor of approval (Councilor Gentile abstaining).

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#345-22

Appropriate \$19.5 million for the Newton Center for Active Living

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend nineteen million and five hundred thousand dollars (\$19,500,000) and authorize a general obligation borrowing of an equal amount for the Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) and authorization to apply any premium received upon the sale of the bonds or notes, less the cost of preparing, issuing, and marketing them, and any accrued interest received upon the delivery of the bonds or notes to the costs of the project and to reduce the amount authorized to be borrowed for the project by like amount.

Action:

Public Facilities Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Gentile abstaining)

Note: Commissioner of Public Buildings Joshua Morse presented the request to appropriate \$19.5 million dollars for the NewCAL project. He confirmed that a financial breakdown was included in the agenda packet and stated that the project budget has been adjusted based on market conditions and anticipated conditions in the upcoming year.

A Committee member noted that a lawsuit was filed by members of the public on the proposed project. It was suggested that the Law Department may have or is planning to file a motion to dismiss, but the outcome of that motion and any appeals to that motion is currently unclear. A Committee member stated that it would be fiscally irresponsible to appropriate public tax dollars and spend any money on the project while the lawsuit is pending.

Commissioner Morse confirmed that the project cannot move forward without site plan approval and without additional funding at this point. Councilors believed that the lawsuit will be dismissed and that there will be no impact on the project.

Councilors expressed support for having more information from the Law Department with respect to the lawsuit and questioned whether an open conversation in Executive session might inform the Council's decision. A Councilor suggested that the money be appropriated and divided to minimize the risk. Commissioner Morse confirmed that the funds can be divided and options will be presented at the Finance Committee meeting and noted that the Law Department will be present at that meeting.

Councilor Crossley motioned to approve the item which carried 6-0-1, Councilor Gentile abstaining.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alison Leary, Chair