



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

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

Absent: Councilor Gentile

Also present: Councilor Bowman

City Staff: Lou Taverna City Engineer, Josh Morse Commissioner of Public Buildings, Jonathan Yeo Chief Operating Officer, Jason Sobel Transportation Director and Jim McGonagle Commissioner of DPW

#469-22 Comcast petition for Grant of Location in Lake Ave

COMCAST OF MASSACHUSETTS petitioning for a grant of location to underground utilities starting at UP 504/1 on Kenmore Street to Lake Ave and continuing on Lake Ave to the location between 162 and 170 Lake Ave and will be placing the vault on the property line to feed building 162 and 170 Lake Avenue.

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

Note: Manny Furtado, Comcast representative presented the request for a grant of location to underground utilities starting at UP 504/1 on Kenmore Street to Lake Ave and continuing on Lake Ave to the location between 162 and 170 Lake Ave and will be placing the vault on the property line to feed building 162 and 170 Lake Avenue.

It was noted that this is a part of the larger Levingston Cove project.

The public hearing was opened.

Nathan Wong, representative for the homeowners 170 Lake Ave questioned if the vault would be placed above grade? Mr. Furtado explained that this vault will be below grade and that he would have a further conversation with Mr. Wong regarding the cable that is above the property.

The public hearing was closed.

Councilor Danberg motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**#472-22 Request to transfer \$100,000 from the Energy Stabilization Fund**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from the City's Energy Stabilization Fund for the design of a new HVAC system to replace the aging 30+ year old systems at the Newton Free Library. The project will replace the existing chiller, cooling towers and boilers with a heat pump chiller to convert the building to be fully electric.

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 7-0**

Note: Josh Morse, Commissioner of Public Buildings presented the request to transfer \$100,000 from the Energy Stabilization Fund for the design of a new HVAC system for the Newton Free Library. Commissioner Morse explained that this has been in the CIP for a number of years and this one project of many that the City is working to electrify. By electrifying these buildings it is the equivalent to planting 500,000 trees from a carbon sequestration perspective and a new reduction of 2,000 tons of carbon per year. He noted that the equipment at the library is coming to the end of its useful life especially with the high temperatures that were reached this past summer. Both of the projects being discussed tonight will go through the Design Review Committee. During this phase it will be determined if there is a need to upgrade the electrical system.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: What is the estimated cost of this project and what would be the cost if the electric system needs to be upgraded?

A: Commissioner Morse explained that this project could cost in the \$1,000,000 to the \$1.1 million if an electrical upgrade was necessary. It was also noted that if the heat pump alternative was used there would not be a major different in cost.

Q: How much money is currently in the energy stabilization fund?

A: Commissioner Morse explained that there is approximately \$330,000.

Q: How many years have the chillers been used to cool the library?

A: Commissioner Morse explained that that they have been used since the library was built. The chillers made ice at night which was stored underground and that ice was melted and the cold water was pumped through the building. This started to fail eight years ago and about five years ago they started running the chillers throughout the day to cool the building. Commissioner Morse explained that this will be an upgrade to this system.

Q: Will there be improvements made to the building envelope to help with efficiency?

A: Commissioner Morse explained that there will be tests done to evaluate options for air sealing. He also noted that he will update the Committee on these options.

The Chair allowed public comment from Philip Vergagt who is a member of the Energy Commission. He questioned if geothermal will be considered for this project. Commissioner Morse explained that they did do a geothermal analysis at the library a few years back. It would be expensive and would not be practical for the library.

Councilor Crossley motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#473-22 Request to transfer \$65,000 from the Energy Stabilization Fund

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of sixty-five thousand dollars (\$65,000) from the City's Energy Stabilization Fund for the design of a new HVAC system that will convert the existing fuel system at Pierce Elementary School to a fossil free fuel HVAC system.

Action: **Public Facilities Approved 7-0**

Note: Josh Morse, Commissioner of Public Buildings presented the request to transfer \$65,000 from the Energy Stabilization fund for the design of a new HVAC system for the Pierce School. Commissioner Morse explained that the Pierce School is one of the few buildings left in the City that uses heating oil. It is operating on one boiler that is 70 years old and is overdue to repeat the heating system. They will be evaluating a number of different options during the design process. He noted that steam buildings are much harder to electrify. This will be an opportunity to look at newer technology.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: What is the estimated cost for the project and when will this work be done?

A: Commissioner Morse explained that they should be in the \$500,000 to \$600,000 range. He noted that the design will take some time and then it would take additional time to procure the equipment. It was also explained that there is a back-up plan if the boiler breaks down before this project begins.

Q: Is there is a timeline to get the rest of the schools off of fossil fuels?

A: Commissioner explained that they do have a plan to electrify all of these buildings and there should be a 16% reduction in fossil fuels with just the projects that are currently in line.

Councilors noted the importance of this project for the Pierce School.

Councilor Kelley motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

#468-22 Request to rename a portion of Brandeis Road to Lion Drive
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting approval of the renaming of a portion of Brandeis Road to Lion Drive. The limits of this name change would begin at a line east of #131 and #132 Brandeis Road to the intersection of Greenwood

Action: Public Facilities Approved 7-0

Note: Jim McGonagle, Commissioner of DPW presented the request to rename a portion of Brandeis Road to Lion Drive. This request was made by the Newton South Administration and has supports from the community. It was noted that this will only be the street in front of Newton South High School.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed unanimously

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#407-22 Appropriate \$50,000 from Special Permit Fees, Austin Street and Lowell Ave
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from Acct #5568R401-432017 Special Permit fees, Austin and Lowell, to improve safety for all users by constructing traffic flow changes at two intersections on Lowell Ave, which is consistent with the intent of Special Permit #175-21, Condition 6.

Public Facilities Held 5-0 on 09/21/22

Action: Public Facilities Approved 7-0

Note: Jim McGonagle, Commissioner of DPW and Jason Sobel, Director of Transportation presented the request to appropriate \$50,000 from the Special Permit Fees, Austin and Lowell Ave. The Chair noted that this was discussed by the Committee on 09/21/22. Since that meeting the attached memo was provided to answer the outstanding questions.

A councilor made a motion to amend the item so that the full \$50,000 is allocated to the Austin Street project which is closer to the original project which provided the mitigation funds. This motion was later withdrawn.

It was also discussed if the item should be split to deal with the Austin Street intersection and the Hull Street intersection. The Committee ultimately decided to keep the item as is.

It was questioned how much both projects would cost and Mr. Sobel that both projects would cost approximately \$500,000 and the rest of these funds could come from the operating budget.

Councilors agreed that these were all safety improvements that needed to be made.

Councilor Norton motioned to approve which passed unanimously.
The Committee adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Alison Leary, Chair**

City of Newton

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Ruthanne Fuller

1000 Commonwealth Avenue

Mayor

Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

Date: October 5, 2022
To: Public Facilities Committee
From: James McGonagle, Commissioner
Subject: Request Mitigation Funds for Safety Improvements at two Lowell Avenue Intersections

Dear Councilors,

Please see the below information pertaining to Docket Item #407-22 requesting approval of \$50,000 from a special permit mitigation fund to improve safety at the Lowell Avenue and Austin Street intersection and the Hull Street, Highland Street, and Lowell Avenue intersection.

The section of Lowell Avenue between Austin Street and Hull Street was identified in the 2017 traffic calming prioritization memo as the number one priority for traffic calming and has continued to remain a top priority in each of the following years' memos. This area of Lowell Avenue is a walking and biking route to school. DPW provided an update to City Council regarding our Traffic Calming evaluation and prioritization process at a joint meeting of the Public Facilities Committee and Public Safety & Transportation Committee on June 8, 2022 (Item #70-22). Traffic Calming at both Lowell Avenue intersections were discussed at the June 8, 2022, meeting.

The intersection of Lowell Avenue and Austin Street sees multiple vehicular accidents a year and is not pedestrian friendly. Adding bump outs and pedestrian medians will greatly improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists by reducing crossing lengths, reducing speeds, and improving sight lines.

The intersection of Lowell Avenue, Highland Street, and Hull Street is a high pedestrian crossing for students going to Newton North High School and is located very close to a pick-up and drop-off area for the school. The addition of bump-outs to this intersection will narrow the roadway, which will shorten pedestrian crossings and reduce vehicle speeds. It is important to note that DPW will be addressing a drainage issue that is causing roadway deterioration at the intersection of Highland Street and Lowell Avenue this spring or summer. The repair will require us to excavate at the intersection and this will give us the opportunity to efficiently address the drainage issue and improve safety at the same time.

Regarding the request for additional information about Traffic Calming spending from the already approved DPW operating budget, in FY22 a total of \$397,580.11 was expended from the Traffic Calming budget. As discussed at the September 21, 2022, meeting, we were fortunate that DPW was able to transfer-bill \$215,401.82 to the Buildings Department Zervas School project, as that project specifically allocated money for "off-site improvements" that were utilized for Traffic Calming on Beethoven Avenue and Allen Avenue. As a result, DPW was able to carry-over significant funds from FY22 into FY23, and DPW is not asking for the approval of any additional funds beyond the \$50,000 from a special permit mitigation fund.

James McGonagle
Commissioner

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