

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2008

Present: Ald. Albright (Chairman), Harney, Coletti and Mansfield

Absent: Ald. Lennon, Swiston, Schnipper and Freedman

City staff present: Joseph LaCroix (Fire Chief), Nicholas Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings) and Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#178-04(3) ALD. LAPPIN requesting a report from the Commissioner of Public Buildings regarding why no progress has been made on the implementation of the construction project database approved by the Board of Aldermen on April 20, 2004.

ACTION: **HELD 4-0**

NOTE: Commissioner Parnell updated the Committee on his progress populating the construction database. He will bring a laptop to the next meeting and demonstrate how the database is populated, what type of information it contains and how it operates in terms of entering items and finding information. The Commissioner has started to make entries into the database.

Ald. Coletti suggested including projects that went significantly over budget such as the Oak Hill Middle School. He would also like to see some line items regarding project management and the possibility of putting a hold on the contract when not utilized. He asked Commissioner Parnell to be sure that there is fruitful information within the database such as accountability on Newton North High School.

The Committee held the item until they have seen the demonstration.

REFERRED TO PUB SAF & TRANS. AND POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT

26-03 ALD. COLETTI requesting discussion with Executive Department and Fire Department regarding status of fire stations, repairs, and capital improvements in light of cuts in capital improvement plan of necessary health and safety repairs to redirect the emphasis on the fire station repair program.

PS&T NAN on 1/21/04

ACTION: **HELD 4-0**

NOTE: Chief LaCroix and Commissioner Parnell joined the Committee for discussion of this item. The discussion focused on the status of the renovations at the fire stations including the life-safety repairs, the plan for housing the firefighters and equipment.

The Chief plans to involve the captain of each station with the renovation. It is his hope that the firefighters will provide their suggestions or input on the project to the captain, who will pass the information on to the architect. Ald. Harney asked what the projected costs were per

station for the renovations. Ald. Coletti responded that the original plan called for \$1.6 million per station. The renovations will provide amenities to the firefighters and improve the quality of life within the stations.

The Chief reviewed the status of the renovations. He explained that Station 4 was chosen as the first renovation because the roof and windows have been replaced recently making it the easiest station to renovate. Maguire Group, an architectural firm with experience in design of fire stations, is the architect for the Station 4 renovation. The architect recently met with the captain of the station to discuss the renovation. Commissioner Parnell stated that the completed plans should be available within the next few weeks for the Public Facilities Committee to review. The Public Facilities Committee held a large portion of the funding to allow a review of the design before it goes out to bid. If the plans are reviewed and the money approved in May, the job can go out to bid in June. The renovation would begin in the fall and work would continue through the winter, as there is no outside work.

The plan is to relocate the equipment and firefighters at Station 4 to Station 1 in Newton Corner during the renovation. The move will have almost no impact on response time. However, there still needs to be a determination on where to house the medics during the renovation. The Chief is still evaluating the options and will make a decision in the near future. The housing of the firefighters and equipment at some of the other stations is not as easy to determine. Some of the stations have a lot of area to cover and if they are moved out of their area, it will be detrimental to response times. The Chief has spoken with his counterparts in other communities that have renovated their stations. One community went with temporary structures that were very expensive. One community used existing facilities in the general vicinity of the station, which saved a substantial amount of money. Economically it makes sense to move the firefighters and equipment to another station but it creates a problem with response time. However, the Chief pointed out that the plan for the next station does not need to be in place for at least a year. The committee discussed the various options and made some suggestions regarding relocation such as using the Health Department's building and the Cypress Street lot during the renovation of Station 3. Commissioner Parnell suggested utilizing the Department of Public Work's yard during renovation of Station 7. Ald. Coletti stated that someone had suggested building a new fire station on Dedham Street that would replace both Stations 7 and 10. The Chief responded that he would need to consider the possibilities, as he also received a proposal regarding Station 3. An architect contacted Chief LaCroix with a concept plan showing Station 3 as part of a much larger building. He believes that the plan comes from the Newton Centre Task Force.

The Chief and Commissioner proceeded to the update on the life-safety repairs. As the committee and Board are aware, the project hit a snag at Station 3, when a roof collapsed. However, a plan is in place, which have been given to the president of the union and the Commissioner will provide to the Board. It has been determined that the best course of action is to remove fire personnel from the area during any significant work. Committee members asked if there was testing for asbestos and other dangerous materials being done. The testing has already been done and the plan is to test air quality at the onset of a project and the completion of each project.

Ald. Coletti asked that the item be held in order to monitor the progress on the renovations. He would like a timeline on the renovations by the C.I.P. public hearing. He is very disappointed that it appears other projects not contained in the C.I.P. are being pushed forward ahead of the fire stations. Ald. Harney urged a long-range plan for the stations. Ald. Mansfield suggested and the committee recommended hiring a planner to help create a master plan for the fire station renovations to determine the best course of action for housing personnel and equipment. Commissioner Parnell will speak with Maguire Group to see if they provide this type of service or can make a recommendation. The committee approved the motion to hold the item unanimously.

#86-08(2) FINANCE COMMITTEE requesting discussion regarding compliance with Section 2-107 of the City of Newton Ordinances requiring Board of Aldermen approval before a city department increases the number of full-time regular payroll positions and the creation of a policy for review by the Comptroller and sign-off on all Personnel Action Forms before authorization by His Honor the Mayor. [3-24-08 @7:45 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 4-0**

NOTE: Ald. Johnson requested that the item be held, as she is still working with the Human Resources director on the requested policy. Ald. Coletti stated that the Finance Committee has received what it requested and he is satisfied with the draft policy and form. The Committee voted unanimously to hold the item for discussion at the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. Albright, Chairman