

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2008

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

Absent: Ald. Schnipper and Freedman

City Staff: Nick Parnell (Commissioner of Public Buildings)

#33-02 ALD. LIPSITT requesting report on status of implementation of speed zone and truck exclusion ordinances adopted by the Board of Aldermen.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0**

NOTE: A memo dated September 17, 2008 from Clint Schuckel, Traffic Engineer, regarding truck exclusions and speed limits was attached to the agenda. The memo stated that after discussion in Traffic Council a unanimous vote was taken to rescind all truck exclusions and speed limits that lacked State approval. The Department of Public Works removed all the truck exclusion and speed limit signs on those streets. Mr. Schuckel also provided two memos dated March 10, 2008 and April 4, 2008, which provide a list of all of the streets that have a speed restriction or truck exclusion but do not have State approval.

The Committee reviewed the list of streets. There were questions regarding the asterisked streets. A Norwood Avenue and Crescent Avenue both have a large number of trucks on them. The attached email from Mr. Schuckel dated October 30, 2008, clarifies that the asterisks represent streets that may meet the warrants for truck exclusion but new items will need to be created and if approved, submitted to the State.

Ald. Harney stated that he has spoken with Representative Khan and she has stated on numerous occasions that legislation has been requested that would allow cities and towns to make decisions on speed limits and truck exclusions. The proposed legislation does not seem to be moving forward. Ald. Harney stated that he would speak with Representative Khan and strongly pursue moving the item forward. Ald. Coletti was a little concerned that if cities and towns make these types of decisions, there would be a tendency to over apply.

Ald. Swiston moved no action necessary on the item, which carried unanimously. Ald. Coletti wanted to be sure that all of the signs related to the rescinded ordinances be removed from the respective streets.

#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: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0**

NOTE: Ald. Coletti explained that this item was docketed in response to the filling of positions that were not done through the proper channels. There is now a policy, which explains how a position can be filled, the process that is to be used and a sign-off for the Comptroller was added to the Personnel Action Forms. There was an email David Wilkinson, Comptroller, dated September 17, 2008 stating that the Human Resources Department is following the newly adopted policy. The Comptroller is now certifying that there is an authorized vacancy and available funding before advertising and filling vacancies.

Ald. Harney pointed out that the ordinances contain language that requires approval of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen before a new position is created or there is an increase in the number of full-time positions in a department. Ald. Coletti explained that the related ordinance does not contain language requiring the Comptroller to certify that before a position is filled, a position exists within the budget and is funded within that budget. Recently there have been changes in personnel that have not been funded in the budget or approved by the Board of Aldermen. It is important that the Comptroller signs off on a position before it is filled because there have been some positions created that were not funded and required Board approval.

Ald. Coletti moved no action necessary, which carried unanimously.

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 6-0**

NOTE: Ald. Coletti spoke on the item. This item was the first docket item that started the review of the fire stations. Almost sixteen months ago, there was a commitment from the Executive Office that the city would try to renovate a station every sixteen months. Although some window and roof work has been done on two of the stations, Ald. Coletti is frustrated that the city has not met that commitment. The bulk of the work on Station 4 has not started but should begin shortly. Ald. Coletti is also upset that the design of the second station has not started. The price for these renovations increases the more that they are delayed. He also pointed out there has been some discussion of a private-public partnership for station #3.

Commissioner Parnell spoke on the item. The fire station study identified \$600,000 worth of life-safety work. Once the Public Buildings Department received permission to do Station #4, another \$75,000 allocated for additional life-safety improvements at the other five stations. Station #4 is in the bid process. A pre-bid conference has been scheduled and the project is advertised. The general bids should be in on November 24, 2008.

The firefighters at Station #4 are being relocated to Station 1, during the renovation. Commissioner Parnell pointed out that this should save significant money in temporary housing

for the firefighters. He believes Station 4 will begin this winter, as it is inside work. Some of the preparation has been started at the station.

Some of the stations, such as Station 7, will require either a modular or a temporary structure to house the firefighters. Now that there is discussion of Station 3 being incorporated into a building, it has been pushed back; it will be the last station that is renovated. An RFQ for the next architect to design Station 7 has been prepared and that should get to the Central Register next week. The Commissioner has spoken with the Designer Selection Committee regarding reviewing the received RFQ around November 19, 2008 and then the architect will be hired. With Station 7, Commissioner Parnell has asked for some master plan work for the temporary housing and the schematics for the remaining stations. It looks like four of the stations will need temporary housing during the renovations. The Commissioner is looking at bidding the project a year from now. He would like to keep a schedule of doing a station every year.

Ald. Coletti has received calls asking why there has not been any consideration of building a new station on Dedham Street next to the Highland's playground and combining Station 7 and Station 10. The Commissioner responded that it is a good thought but it has not been mentioned by the Fire Chief or Assistant Chief Proia. The stations are still in good shape and are good renovation prospects. The Commissioner will speak with the Chief Administrative Officer and Fire Chief about the possibility of a new station.

Ald. Lennon stated that the group of Aldermen that have been meeting regularly have been discussing the life-safety improvements and have not discussed the long-range plans. However, Arthur Cabral of the Public Buildings Department provided Ald. Lennon a breakdown of how the money for the life-safety improvements has been spent. He will provide the Committee with a copy of the spreadsheet. As of September 30, 2008, approximately \$100,000 that had not been spent. Ald. Lennon inquired why nothing has been spent from the roofing and windows account. The Commissioner responded that some window and roof repairs were done on-call. Roofs were replaced at Station 4 and Station 7. Ald. Lennon told the Committee that Mr. Cabral also let him know that the boiler at Station 3 is not going to make it through the winter season. Ald. Coletti suggested using electric heat, as it is cheaper to install and a less expensive way to heat a building.

Ald. Mansfield asked what the Commissioner thought would be the cost of renovating all of the stations. The Commissioner responded that the cost of Station 4 will be about \$2.5 million and the cost in the C.I.P for all the stations is \$13 million. Ald. Swiston asked for a grid displaying the different stages of each renovation. The Commissioner responded that he believes that type of spreadsheet is in the fire station study. Ald. Swiston responded that she is looking for a tracking mechanism for the work in progress. The Commissioner is willing to create this type of tracking graph. Ald. Lennon was also willing to work on a planning grid with the Public Buildings Department.

The Committee members felt that it was appropriate to hold the item, at least until renovations have begun on Station 7. Ald. Swiston moved hold on the item, which carried unanimously. Ald. Coletti requested that the Commissioner provide the Chief Budget Officer

with a new time-line for the Capital Improvement Program. The Commissioner agreed to get the information to the Chief Budget Officer.

#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 6-0**

NOTE: Commissioner Parnell spoke with Ald. Lappin regarding this item and explained that he had no new material to present. He asked that the item be delayed until the next meeting of the Post Audit & Oversight Committee. Therefore, the Committee held the item without discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. Albright, Chairman