

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2010

Present: Ald. Ciccone (Chairman), Yates, Shapiro and Fuller

Absent: Ald. Johnson, Swiston, Harney and Freedman

Also Present: Ald. Fishman and Danberg

City Staff: Chief Joseph LaCroix (Newton Fire Department), Chief Matthew Cummings (Newton Police Department), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer), David Koses (Transportation Planner) and Candace Havens (Interim Director, Planning & Development Department)

REFERRED TO PUB. SAF. & TRANS AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#118-10 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the amount of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) from Budget Reserve for the purpose of making repairs to two Fire Department ladder trucks. [04/13/10 @ 7:09 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 4-0**

NOTE: Chief Joseph LaCroix, Newton Fire Department joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Chief LaCroix said this appropriation is necessary to replenish the outside repair account which is depleted due to the number of repairs throughout the year. He said he has transferred approximately \$16,000.00 in the utilities account and was able to pay off these expenses but the department is still short funded and can not make necessary repairs to Ladder #1.

Chief LaCroix provided Committee members with information and indicated the following repairs are necessary:

- Ladder #3, was damaged during the recent Centre Street fire with an estimated cost of \$9,414.32.
- Engine #7, hit by a landscape truck removing the mirror with an estimated cost of \$520.00.
- Engine #2, the operator backed the truck into a tree, has considerable right rear damage and is awaiting an estimate which will be approximately \$5,000.00 to \$6,000.00.
- Engine #12, has a cracked structural member on the dashboard which makes steering difficult with an estimated cost of \$1,288.80.
- Engine #3, computer has malfunctioned and will not go into the pump mode. Repairs have been made at the cost of \$1,149.82. Currently, the pump mode works but there is a problem with the transmission. A quote is pending for tail shaft spinning in the transmission. Estimate varies with diagnostics.
- Ladder #4, lost its reverse, with an estimated cost of \$4,250.00.

- Towing costs for Ladder #1 and Ladder #4 with a cost of \$500.00 each.
- Ladder #1, complete transmission failure with an estimated cost of \$15,975.00.

Ald. Yates said the docket item refers to making repairs to two trucks and asked for written clarification of this docket item. Chief LaCroix said Ladder #3 was damaged during a fire when the aerial was extended. The operator retracted the aerial but did not notice there was an axe on the rail which wedged between the retainers damaging them at an estimated cost of \$9,414.00. The incident is still under investigation. Chief LaCroix said Ladder #1 transmission failed at an estimated cost of \$15,975.00, Ladder #4 was used as a backup truck for Ladder #3 before losing its reverse.

Ald. Fuller suggested amending the language in the docket item and to refer to the appropriate number of trucks. She asked if this appropriation is typical at this time of year and if the Fire Department is underfunded for repairs. Chief LaCroix said this was an unusual year for repairs.

Ald. Shapiro asked if insurance money or warranties would cover these expenses. Chief LaCroix answered no.

Ald. Shapiro made the motion to approve this item as amended to change the wording from two to five Fire Department trucks needing repairs. Committee members voted in favor 4-0.

Committee Clerks Note: On April 23, 2010, Chief LaCroix provided an amended letter of six apparatus needing repairs with an estimated cost of \$25,000 - \$33,000. On April 22, 2010, the Executive Department submitted a letter requesting to amend the appropriation to \$33,000 for the repair of six fire trucks (both letters are attached to this report).

REFERRED TO PUB. SAF. & TRANS AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#119-10 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a transfer of funds in the amount of one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) in unexpended funds from the salary account of the Police Department to the capital outlay and improvement account in the Police Department. [04/13/10 @ 7:09 PM]

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0; SUBJECT TO 2ND CALL

NOTE: Chief Matthew Cummings, Newton Police Department joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Chief Cummings said himself and the Executive Department has agreed there will be no additional cuts in the Police Department this fiscal year. The Executive Department is requesting \$180,000 from the Police Department as a capital asset which unfortunately is not available. Chief Cummings said he is hopeful in receiving additional revenue in the future from the Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) system to assist in the capital asset account.

Chief Cummings said the Police Department was down three positions making it possible for him to hire eight officers from the lay off list. Four positions are still vacant leaving \$125,000 available in the salary account. He expects to fill these positions in the next fiscal year. Chief Cummings said he asked the Executive Department if they would allow him to set aside these unused salaries and turn it into a capital outlay account which would allow the Executive Department to make \$180,000 in budget cuts. Chief Cummings also requests the Board of Aldermen allow him to take this year's unused salary and place it into a capital outlay account. It is the Executive Departments intention that the Police Department will begin to expend these capital funds during the current fiscal year with carry-over to FY11, allowing the City to propose a reduction in the Department's capital outlay account in the FY11 budget.

Ald. Fuller asked for clarification on the difference of \$125,000 and \$180,000. Chief Cummings said he has \$125,000 available in unused salaries and will have to forfeit a few cruisers to make up the difference to \$180,000.

Ald. Shapiro asked if any officers will be hired prior to July 1. Chief Cummings said he will start the lengthy process but will probably not be ready to hire officers until July.

Ald. Shapiro made the motion to approve this item, subject to 2nd call. Committee members voted in favor 4-0.

Committee Clerk's Note: Subsequent to the meeting, it is the Chairman's understanding Ald. Fuller's question was answered in the Finance Committee meeting on April 26, 2010.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT requesting presentation and discussion of a "complete streets" study performed by Northeastern University civil engineering students of Washington Street between Commonwealth Avenue and Parsons Street.

NOTE: Students from Northeastern University (TraffCo Designs) joined the Committee and provided a PowerPoint presentation. This project was proposed by the City's Engineering Department.

Washington Street is currently a four-lane roadway with parking on each side, which serves both inter-and intra-town traffic. The team is recommending a bicycle path along the Washington street corridor extending from Parsons Street to Commonwealth Avenue which will provide safer cycling and pedestrian connections to different areas. Areas include the Mass. Turn Pike, commercial areas, residential, libraries and the movie theatre. With advancements in highway engineering, reevaluating the current design of the project area will not only accommodate cyclists on the road, but it will also account for the safety of pedestrians, and enhance the overall safety of the roadway to reduce vehicular crashes. TraffCo designs have redesigned the Washington Street area from Parsons Street to Commonwealth Avenue, to a multi modal facility which will accommodate motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. TraffCo has observed that there are

no formal bicycle accommodations and therefore, identified the need to transform the existing corridor to encourage more cyclists in the City of Newton.

The Washington Street corridor will be divided into four sections, all of which will include complete streets. These sections are Washington Street from Parsons Street to Chestnut Street, Washington Street from Chestnut Street to Elm Street, Washington Street rotary, Washington Street from Perkins Street to Commonwealth Avenue.

A study of the existing conditions was carried out determining current problems throughout the four sections of the Washington Street corridor and a subsequent traffic analysis was performed at intersections. The intersections that were analyzed are those that are signalized to improve vehicular service or to accommodate bicycle facilities where necessary. Existing intersections along Washington Street were compared to the proposed designs based on the level-of-service, the delay, and the volume to capacity ratios.

The proposed design will include a bicycle facility (cycle track) that is physically separated from vehicular traffic throughout all sections of Washington Street. A unique improvement proposed to this area is a modern landscaped approach that would act as a pedestrian refuge, increasing their safety, as well as allow for a varying four feet to nine feet green land along major sections of Washington Street. The proposed design includes the addition of reverse angled parking, which approximately doubles the amount of parking along Washington Street from Parsons Street. The analysis further includes an additional section that proposes two roundabouts at Washington and Watertown Streets intersection and at Washington and Elm Streets intersection. The team suggests roundabouts create shorter and safer crossings, which has been incorporated in other areas by implementing bulb-outs, and acts as a traffic calming measure.

The proposed designs accounts for a two-way cycle track throughout the Washington Street area. The cycle track is implemented for the majority of Washington and Greenough Streets intersection, where the designs proposed switch to a mixed use path for cyclists and pedestrians. For the cycle track feature there are four foot medians that run parallel and act as a buffer zone, ensuring a physical separation for cyclists from motorists.

The final design was selected based on a series of different alternatives. All alternatives included formal bicycle accommodations as well as pedestrian and motorists adjustments. The design prioritized safety for bicyclists and pedestrians so that all age groups can benefit.

Ald. Yates asked if any communities in Massachusetts use reverse angled parking. A student said Amherst, MA tried it for a short time, later removing it because people could not adjust with learning new techniques. He then asked how drivers would be informed and educated on proposed changes. A student answered by installing temporary or permanent street signs. The first few days of course would prove confusion then drivers would realize traffic patterns and would change their behavior. The students hope to make the community aware prior to any road changes by way of local paper, fliers notifying residents of changes and encouraging them to attend meetings. Ald. Yates expressed his concerns if traffic signals are eliminated pedestrians would be hesitant and feel unsafe crossing the street. He also asked if they considered re-installing the toll booth on the Mass. Turn Pike and if this presentation has been provided to any

merchants in the area.

Ald. Fischman asked if traffic counts were completed during the analysis. A student answered traffic counts were performed during the morning, mid-day and evening commutes. He then asked if parking would remain on Washington Street.

Ald. Shapiro asked if any research was conducted on the economic values referring to property value, what this may do to retail sales and how much additional tax revenue would be brought into the City. A student answered they have not explored the economic value in this area. He said making an area more accessible tends to bring more business to an area.

Chairman Ciccone opened the discussion to members of the public who were present.

Public Comment:

Lois Levin of Bike Newton commended the students on their efforts and developing this design. She feels the students ideas are a wonderful opportunity to bring back the feeling of a community to Newton.

Alicia Bowman of Safe Routes to School said having these bicycle routes connected would allow easy access to Newtonville, West Newton and Charles River.

George Kirby of Newton Bicycle Pedestrian Task Force complemented the students on their efforts. He said these changes would promote a more sense of a community. Mr. Kirby said the elimination of traffic signals would promote a better traffic flow and asked if the estimated driving time would remain the same. A student answered by eliminating three traffic signals on Washington Street would allow for no backups at intersections. Mr. Kirby asked if the medians or planters would interfere with the cycle track being plowed. A student answered medians will interfere with drainage issues but this was beyond their project.

Ald. Fuller commended the students' efforts and asked how the City could proceed with their recommendations in order to move this project forward.

Mr. Schuckel also commended the students on their efforts. He said the City would like to advance through the State Transportation Improvement Program on the section of Washington Street from Commonwealth Avenue to the Mass. Turn Pike. Mr. Schuckel said he would ask the successful candidate to also analyze this analysis and provide feedback. He said funding would take approximately five to ten years. The City would have to research the plowing and care of plantings. Mr. Schuckel asked if a review was made on the net change in parking and if there will be a fixed border between the cycle track and sidewalk. A student said the cycle track is at grade level and crosswalks could be installed and made handicap accessible.

Chairman Ciccone thanked the students for a fantastic presentation and said they should all be very proud.

#101-10 PLANNING DEPARTMENT requesting presentation and discussion of the Pedestrian Mobility Project to be completed by the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Pedestrian Mobility Project Team. [03/29/10 @ 10:45 AM]

ACTION: HELD 4-0

NOTE: Students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute joined the Committee and provided a PowerPoint presentation. This project was proposed by the League of Women Voters (LWV) and is co-sponsored by the LWV and the City's Planning Department.

The Pedestrian Mobility Project Team project included four villages (Newton Corner, Newton Centre, Chestnut Hill and West Newton) of Newton. The team focused on safer, more convenient and accessible walkways for pedestrians use. During research the team found three agencies which could assist them; Federal Highway Administration, Metropolitan Planning Organization and the American Disabilities Act. These agencies will help the team understand what challenges pedestrians face.

In each village, pedestrian behavior was observed during the morning, mid-day and evening commutes which indicated what changes are necessary and what travel areas pedestrians avoid.

Newton Corner Observations and Recommendations

- Brick surfaces on Washington Street can make it hazardous for pedestrians to travel and are also difficult to maintain. The team recommends using pressed concrete which is safer for traveling. This can be implemented overtime as bricks decay.
- The team recommends opening the park to the public by removing the fence.
- The Crowne Plaza Hotel, south side does not have a handicap ramp. The team recommends installing a ramp ensuring accessibility for all persons.
- Bus stops lack bike racks and overhead shelter. The team recommends installing bike racks or signs indicating a location where they are located and the installation of an overhead shelter.
- Right turn on red traffic signals. These signs pose significant difficulty to pedestrians because drivers do not stop allowing pedestrians to cross the street. The team recommends no right turn on red traffic signals be de-activated when walking lights are activated. They also recommend changing the location of some traffic signals, leveling medians and changing the direction of some crosswalks.

Chairman Ciccone opened the discussion to members of the public who were present.

Public Comment:

Richard Belkin asked what one item is the most dangerous in Newton Corner. A student answered right turn on red traffic signals because drivers tend to travel at high rates of speed and do not stop allowing pedestrians to cross the street. Mr. Belkin said this particular intersection was funded by CEBG funding and did not initially have a right turn on red when the light was installed.

Ald. Fuller commended the students for their efforts and asked how traffic and pedestrian needs are balanced and the process the City uses to determine a right turn on red traffic signal. Mr. Koses suggested docketing an item relating to a right turn on red traffic signal for discussion in a Traffic Council meeting.

Newton Centre Observations and Recommendations

- Intersection of Langley Road and Beacon Street. The team found a challenge on Langley Road at the intersection of Summer and Beacon Streets at the median. The walking lights are not synchronized with both crosswalks. The walking light at the median is inaccessible to people with disabilities. The team recommends moving the walking light to make it reachable, install curb cuts or make the light last long enough avoiding to have to press it at several locations.
- Incline curb cut at Beacon Street and Langley Road. This incline is extremely steep baby carriages and elderly are forced to change their route due to this incline.
- Crosswalk on Beacon Street is extremely long and the curb cut locations are not in the best spot. If the sidewalk was reconfigured perhaps it could be a solution and will also allow easy accessible curb cuts, making the walking distance shorter.
- Beacon and Centre Streets right on red turn signal. The turn from Centre to Beacon Street is extremely dangerous because people have to compete with vehicles, the signal should be synchronized with the walking light. The team recommends squaring off this corner forcing vehicles to slow down and to make the crosswalk perpendicular with adjacent crosswalks.
- Centre, Bowen and Gibbs Streets are one-way streets. The main issue in this area is traffic congestion. The team recommends signs, road paintings and perhaps a beacon light be installed to make drivers aware of the crosswalk to the school. The bus stop also has no shelter, bike rack or benches.
- Crosswalks on Pelham and Pleasant Streets. The team recommends installing a pedestrian beacon on Pleasant Street because the study proved pedestrians choose to use this crosswalk over the crosswalk on Pelham Street.

A resident asked if a strobe light could be added to the traffic signal. Ald. Yates asked if strobe lights can cause people who are sensitive to light to have seizures. The students have not researched his question but will consider the hazards or potential hazards of using strobe lights in their future studies.

Ms. Havens asked if a mid-block crossing median was considered in the two major intersections on Beacon Street. A student answered the location of Walgreens was considered but they were discouraged to speak with the owner.

Mr. Schuckel asked if there was an estimated number of hours available on students performing trials using crosswalks and if drivers yielded to them. A student answered each crosswalk was tested forty-eight times while cars were approaching the crosswalk. Ald. Danberg said she agrees with squaring off the corners at Beacon and Centre Streets and also agreed shorter crosswalks would be beneficial. She asked if there is a recommendation to improve Beacon Street and Langley Road corner avoiding the backup

of cars in order to allow pedestrians to cross without difficulty. A student answered they have not looked at traffic issues in this area. He said the team tries to recommend ideas avoiding traffic increases but they do not necessarily solve the issues. The team focuses on what is the best improvement to keep traffic where it is or hopefully improve situations.

Ald. Fischman suggested an all traffic stop be installed or a change in pavement texture be installed which would be visual and felt by drivers. Perhaps drivers would be more cautious.

George Kirby asked if the students could prioritize the importance of their findings regarding accident or injury rates. A student answered they will incorporate this into their study hopefully making future recommendations.

Chestnut Hill Observations and Recommendations

- Many of sidewalks and crosswalks are in good shape except for the location where Hammond Pond Parkway crosses under Route 9.
- Pedestrians have difficulty crossing Hammond Pond Parkway, they cross to the middle of the median. The team recommends installing curb cuts, crosswalks, a pedestrian beacon or walking light.
- Pedestrians travel underneath Route 9 overpass. The team recommends installing signs advising pedestrians to use crosswalks and sidewalks in the area and signs to discourage them using the underneath overpass because there is not enough room to implement a sidewalk.
- Verizon, Star Market parking lot. Pedestrians traveling from the “T” choose to cut through this parking lot entrance with marked path ways that stop at the CVS parking lot. The markings connect to parking spaces but lack connecting to store fronts. The team recommends installing crosswalks from parking spaces to store fronts.

Ald. Fuller agreed there is not enough room to build a sidewalk. She asked if the City could visit this site perhaps recommending widening this area in order to build a sidewalk.

West Newton Observations and Recommendations

- Many sidewalks are in poor shape with debris and parts of them are broken. Specifically, the area towards the Mass. Turn Pike bridge which makes it hazardous for the elderly, pedestrians, carriages etc.
- Three Commuter Rails in West Newton. Not one of these stations are handicap accessible. The team recommends installing ramps at these locations.
- Bus Stops do not include shelters or bike racks. The team recommends installing these to encourage people to use public transportation.
- Elm Street crosswalk pattern. The team recommends installing curb cuts and additional crosswalks.
- Pedestrian beacon in parking lot near the commuter rail station is facing the wrong way. The team recommends changing this to face the correct direction.

- The team recommends installing additional crosswalks at park locations.
- Waltham, Chestnut and Watertown Streets alley way location. This alley is not known to pedestrians. The team recommends making this alley more visible so that pedestrians will have easy access to shops, shortening their commute and to avoid vehicles.
 - Traffic Congestion on Washington Street due to the five traffic signals. The team recommends re-timing traffic signals so that vehicles will not be backed up onto crosswalks.

Ald. Shapiro asked if the alley way had lights. A student answered signs and lightening would be beneficial.

A resident said she noticed drivers stop on crosswalks. She asked if there was a better way to make crosswalks more visible. A student answered crosswalks should be painted within the border making them noticeable.

Mr. Schuckel asked what the next process is and an approximate time frame for completing this project. A student answered the next steps would be to prioritize their recommendations, the estimated project costs and effectiveness.

Chairman Ciccone thanked the students for a fantastic presentation and said they should all be very proud.

Ald. Yates made the motion to hold this item allowing students the proper time to complete their studies and finalize their presentation. Committee members agreed 4-0.

At approximately 10:35 pm, Ald. Yates moved for adjournment. Committee members agreed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Ciccone, Jr. Chairman



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS
FIRE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS



1164 Centre Street, Newton Center, MA 02459-1584
Chief: (617) 796-2210 Fire Prevention: (617) 796-2230
FAX: (617) 796-2211 EMERGENCY: 911

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

April 23, 2010

Joseph E. LaCroix
Chief

Honorable Setti D. Warren, Mayor
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Mayor Warren,

As requested by the Public Safety and Transportation Committee, at their April 21st meeting, I am submitting this amended roster of apparatus in need of repair funding. This item was docket number 119-10.

Minuteman Trucks, Inc:

Ladder 3 – Damaged at 3 alarm fire on Centre Street	\$ 9,414.32
Engine 7 – Mirror hit by other truck	\$ 520.00
Engine 2 – Backed into pole – Estimate	\$ 5,000 - \$6,000

Greenwood Emergency Vehicles:

Engine 12 – Cracked structural member – Dashboard	\$ 1,288.80
Engine 3 – Drive to pump control (computer) Vocation module replaced	\$ 1,149.82
Quote pending for tail shaft spinning in transmission estimate varies with diagnostics (see transmissions below)	\$ 2,000 - \$10,000

Power Products:

Ladder 4 – Transmission module \$ 4,250.00

Negoshian's Towing & Service Co:

Ladder 1 – Towing	\$ 500.00
Ladder 4 - Towing	\$ 500.00

Estimated Total Need: \$25,000 – 33,000

I have moved funds from my Utilities account to cover the Ladder 1 transmission rebuild in the amount of \$15,975.00, but I still need funds for the other repairs.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Joseph E. LaCroix
Chief of Department

JEL

Cc: Maureen Lemieux

#118-10

Telephone
(617) 796-1100

Telefax
(617) 796-1113

TDD
(617) 796-1089

E-mail
swarren@newtonma.gov



SETTI D. WARREN
MAYOR

**City of Newton, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor**

April 22, 2010

Honorable Board of Aldermen
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On April 13, 2010, I wrote to request that your Honorable Board docket an item providing additional funds for repairs for Fire Department apparatus. At the time, the equipment was being evaluated and we estimated the repair needs to be \$30,000.

We have reviewed the available estimates and would like to amend Docket #118-10 to request an appropriation of \$33,000 from the Budget Reserve to the Fire Department. Please see the attached letter which includes a list of estimates for the remaining known apparatus repairs through FY10.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Setti D. Warren".

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

10 APR 23 PM 3:40
CITY CLERK
NEWTON, MA. 02159