

Newton North High School Liaison Committee Meeting
Tuesday, December 1, 2009
Meeting Notes

Aldermen and Committee Members Present: Mayor David B. Cohen, Michael Kruse, Jeanne White, Laura Naylor, Sarah Ecker, Jim Robertson, School Committee Member Reenie Murphy, Sgt. James Norcross, NNHS Principal Jennifer Price, Arnie Bauchner, Beverly Spencer, Alderman Susan Albright, Alderman Leonard Gentile, Alderman Stephen Linsky.

The Agenda items included:

- ***Introduction/Comments from Mayor:***

Mayor Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. The Mayor commented that he had spoken to Mayor-Elect Warren and suggested that he continue to work with the Liaison Committee. The Committee unanimously agreed that they would like to continue to meet.

- ***Construction Updates:***

Tripp Elmore, Turner Construction, provided highlights on the project as follows. Dimeo is preparing the site for finishes. The majority of the paving is complete. The tennis court paving is 75% complete. The old fencing around the tennis court area will be taken down to allow completion of the paving. The paving in the area of the new running track is complete. The bedding surface for the turf field is complete. The turf surface will be laid on the bedding in the spring of 2010. The exterior skin of the building is in the high 90% complete. The interior structure and slabs (walls) is in the high 90% complete. Finishes on the exterior of the building are 40% complete.

Commission member, Laura Naylor, asked if the parking for the construction trucks for the winter season would be changing. Tripp said it would not and that he did not anticipate having to park vehicles on the tennis court site. Construction trailers will come out in March and that area will be prepped for the new field.

School Committee member, Reenie Murphy, asked about the chiller unit on the new building (Walnut Street side). Nick Parnell, Public Buildings Commissioner, commented that it had not yet been enclosed with screening but the materials should be arriving in the next few weeks.

- ***Other Items:***

Alderman Linsky asked about the budget for the landscaping project and if the City would be accepting contributions from abutters. Mayor Cohen commented that this had been discussed at the meeting on October 27. The amount budgeted and set aside by the Board of Aldermen for landscaping was a minimum of \$480,000. The Mayor also said that contributions would be considered but only after the budgeted landscaping and had been installed and site work completed. Committee member Laura Naylor also asked that a follow-up look at the landscaping plans relating to the edge of the high school property abutting the Walnut Street neighbors (and close to the tennis courts) be considered, as there are still open issues regarding the fencing.

Mayor Cohen commented that he is trying to work out a schedule to allow the Walnut Street abutters to contribute and provide input while keeping in mind the construction and site work completion dates for specific areas.

Tripp commented that the site fence near the tennis courts would not be removed until later to preserve the screening to the site. Two pine trees will need to be removed, as they are located in the area where the tennis courts will be located. Abutter, Alan Mayer, commented that he was horrified to find out the trees would be removed, as he had been told earlier on that all trees planned for removal had been removed. He and other neighbors had asked previously to sit down with the project landscape architect to discuss the screening of his property and the abutting Walnut Street neighbors. He asked that this problem of no screening and removal of the rusty fence be further addressed. Mayor Cohen suggested that Tripp, Nick and the landscape architect further review the current plan with regards to that area without changing the (Board of Aldermen) approved site plan to address the concerns of the neighbors. Also, on Hull Street, the Mayor asked if there was any school-related purpose for the new tree plantings (that could be moved to another area). Jennifer Price, Principal Newton North High School, commented that she was not aware of any school-related reason for the wooded area to be located on Hull Street. The Mayor asked that Nick make sure there had been nothing decided by the Design Review Committee regarding the Hull Street wooded areas that would conflict with the removal of any proposed additional screening.

Nick, commented that he and the landscape architect recognized there would be areas around the site that would need further attention, for example, Hull Street near the stairway. The Mayor suggested this be further discussed at a future Liaison Committee. His request was that discussions on the landscaping specific to the abutters' requests and concerns not be pre-empted by the construction. Mayor Cohen asked that Nick and Tripp take a look at the landscaping plan in the next few weeks and brief Mayor Cohen to see if these issues could be worked out informally.

Abutter, John Joyce, suggested considering planting on the abutting neighbors' property similar to what is done currently with the berm. Mayor Cohen thought this idea was consistent with the City's practice regarding installation of new street trees. Specific discussions would need to happen with each individual property owner and the landscape architect.

Abutter, Terry Morris, voiced concerns about the area around his home on Elm Road. On the site-landscaping plan it notes existing pine trees to remain. He noted that half are already dead. He asked what could be done about replacing these trees. Also, before construction there was a 4ft. chain-link fence that separated the homes on his section of Elm Road (off Blithedale Street) from the high school area. According to the landscaping plan, it appears as though the fence will not be replaced. He is a concerned that there will be no buffer to keep the students off the nearby private residential properties. Terry also noted that he was more concerned that the installation of any trees would not provide the same "buffer" as any of the mature trees that were removed (and necessary to hide the new 4-story high school building). Lastly, he stated that if the "sidewalk to nowhere" was ripped up, there would be an

additional 8ft. for landscaping. Mayor Cohen asked that Nick and Tripp look in to the possible options.

Alderman Albright asked what had been resolved with the Lowell Street landscaping issues. It was commented that the landscape architect presented at the last meeting that there would be 3-5ft. hedges planted along the parking lot area to partially hide the cars from neighbors. It was also added that this planting area would not be large enough for any new trees.

Alderman Gentile asked Tripp about the footnote in the Board Order designating a minimum amount of \$480,000 set aside for the landscaping. Tripp commented the plantings for the landscaping plan had already been bid out by Dimeo. He thought the bids had come back at around \$600,000 based on what was currently on the approved plan. Alderman Linsky asked to clarify what was set aside versus what came back on the bids and questioned if additional funds would need to be set aside for the additional funds. The Mayor asked that Nick and Tripp confirm what the allowance was in the GNP contract. Nick and Tripp confirmed that all landscaping items in the current plan would be installed. Nick said he felt there was flexibility to move things around at the time of installation. He felt there was money in the contingency fund to add more trees. Abutter, Alan Mayer, asked what the caliber of trees would be. He felt it was imperative to put larger more mature trees to provide more privacy. Tripp commented that they would not be large caliber trees but that they would look at the plans to consider other options. The Mayor said they would look into it further but he could not promise how large they would be but promised to do the best they could. The Mayor indicated he would work with Tripp and Nick to try to get the three landscaping areas on Walnut, and Hull Streets and Elm Road resolved before December 31st so that the new Mayor could come in with as clean a plate as possible.

Abutter, Willa Kuh, 11 Oakwood Road, voiced her concern for public safety on Walnut Street. At a previous meeting, approximately one year ago, she had voiced her concerns to the Committee about the foot traffic on Walnut Street. She had concerns about the safety of teachers and students parking in her neighborhood and traveling across Walnut Street to and from their cars to the high school. She feels that the current detail at the construction entrance has not been helpful to the pedestrian traffic (with the exception of today). Mayor Cohen commented that the most reliable solution, as previously mentioned, is to have a traffic signal in that area. This solution has been docketed with the Board of Aldermen (waiting for their final action) and there are monies set aside in the budget. Alderman Linsky commented that the docket item is currently in Committee and will go before the Board again on December 9, 2009. The Mayor asked Sgt. Norcross (of the Police Department) what additional steps could be taken and if the policeman at the construction entrance could assist to cross pedestrians. Sgt. Norcross commented that the policeman is available to assist. It was noted that there are concerns about future potential accidents especially after the most recent (pedestrian) accident at 550 Walnut Street. Abutters commented about whether or not the proposed traffic light would be an effective solution. The Mayor commented that the City Traffic Engineer and outside consultants had recommended this option as the most effective however, no matter what the outcome, the Board needs to make a decision. Jennifer Price commented that during construction the policeman at the construction entrance would not be helpful for the pedestrian issues. She recommended there be temporary crossing

guard in the area of Hull and Mill Street. The Mayor asked that the Traffic Bureau and the Traffic Engineer work together to evaluate and provide a possible solution. If a crossing guard were temporarily available while construction is taking place, he would like their recommendations on the best place for this person to be stationed in order to enhance public safety. Willa also suggested three additional options for consideration. Implementing neck downs near the corner of Mill and Walnut Streets, more police availability and using the speed detection devices. The Mayor agreed that the Traffic Bureau should add Walnut Street on their list to use the speed detection devices and that increased selective police enforcement were options that could be considered.

One Committee member asked if the process for snow clearance around the high school and abutting areas would be the same as previous years. The Mayor said it would be.

Abutter, Terry Morris, asked about the raised crosswalks installed on Elm Road. He felt that they did not appear to comply with the standards for other raised crosswalks installed in other locations throughout the City. The Mayor asked Tripp and Nick to look into this.

Abutter, John Joyce, asked about the schedule for the completion of the tennis courts. Tripp commented that it would be finished between June and July 2010.

Mayor Cohen adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.