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July 29, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works convened on July 29, 2009, with Chairman John Connolly presiding and Committee Member Alderman Sean O'Donovan also present and voting. Also present were Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker, DPW Commissioner Stan Koty and representatives from Spectra Energy, NSTAR, Algonquin Gas and National Grid.

Chairman Connolly explained that the meeting was called to discuss the safety of the older gas lines in the city as well as to review the safety practices of the above named utility companies. Each company was asked to summarize how it handles service calls, from the smallest to emergencies.

National Grid:

Representatives from National Grid told the committee that safety is a priority in its daily operation and that the company is pro-active in providing communication and policy issues to the city as well as working collaboratively with the DPW. Dedicated lines and manpower are provided for 24 hour emergency assistance and all employees are well trained to detect and repair gas leaks. A mobile survey is conducted each year and includes fall and spring re-checks. Additionally, businesses are inspected and residential meters are checked. National Grid's policy with respect to service responses is more stringent than the state mandated policy. Care is taken to protect the city's infrastructure. Any call from the public or from a city official is treated as a serious situation and a response vehicle, with a street crew, is dispatched to handle the problem. When an emergency call is received, National Grid contacts the appropriate city personnel and proceeds to the site of the trouble. A review of all of its pipes is performed and replacement of old cast iron pipes is prioritized. A policy is in place for repairing all old pipes.

Commissioner Koty was asked for his comments and he informed the members that National Grid's presentation was untrue. The company is slow in responding to problems and it needs to improve their replacement of pipes or nothing will be done effectively. Instead of addressing the problem by replacing pipes, National Grid continues to make repairs to them.

Chairman Connolly asked National Grid to explain, in writing, the issues stated by Commissioner Koty. Mr. Nagle agreed to compile a report and to sit with Commissioner Koty to iron out the problems mentioned.

NSTAR:

Mr. William Zamparelli informed the members that there is an 800 number that should be used to report any problems to NSTAR and he stated that gas leaks are a priority and that NSTAR tries to respond to gas leaks within 30 minutes. NSTAR maintains contact with city officials and is working with the city to

replace a cast iron main. Mr. Zamparelli said that NSTAR has a commitment to Somerville, maintains an office in the city and insists that it work collaboratively with the city. Mr. Kevin Kelly stated that NSTAR meets with the DPW when a cast iron main is replaced to inform the city of what work is being planned. Offices are manned 24 hours per day and technicians are trained to handle reported problems.

Spectra Energy:

Mr. Peter Kerrigan informed the members that Spectra Energy has 2 pipes in Somerville and that their inspections and work is governed by the Department of Transportation. Their work involves standard operational maintenance and only their employees are allowed to work on their lines. An on-call supervisor determines if a particular problem requires immediate attention or not. If necessary, the appropriate city departments are notified, forthwith. Mr. David Neal reported that nearly all of Spectra's work in the city is complete, noting that Medford Street, Highland Avenue and Skelton Street remain to be done. Mr. Koty stated that Spectra Energy has done a good job up to this point in time. A few minor problems have come up, but Spectra is working with the DPW to resolve those issues.

Chairman Connolly requested that the utility companies present provide the committee with a list or snapshot of reported problems to include the time the call was received, the response time, actions taken and the final result of each call. Chairman Connolly stressed that all utility companies are to ensure the safety of all residents of Somerville and that each company's service is delivered in a safe manner.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman John M. Connolly, Chairman
Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works