

**COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC LANDS  
WOBURN CITY HALL  
COMMITTEE ROOM  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2018 at 6:11 p.m.**

Voting Members present: Chairman Richard Gately, Alderman Mark Gaffney, Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, and Alderman Edward Tedesco. Absent: Alderman Joanne Campbell

Non-Voting Members present: Alderman Michael Anderson and Alderman Michael Concannon. Absent: Alderman Lindsay Higgins and President Richard Haggerty

**On the Resolve relative to inspections and permitting of National Grid gas line installation projects during employee lockout:** Appearing were Joseph Cincotta, and Neil Crowley, United Steelworkers Union 12012. Mr. Cincotta said both he and Mr. Crowley are gas workers with National Grid. Mr. Cincotta said there has not been that much movement between the union and management. He said employees have been locked out since June 25, and there has really been no progress since then. Chairman Gately asked how many unions are locked out. Mr. Cincotta said there are two unions locked out, with 360 members of local 12003 and 900 members of local 12012, for a total of about 1,250 employees. Chairman Gately asked what has happened since the explosions in the Merrimack Valley on September 14. Mr. Cincotta said there have been phone calls between management and labor since the explosions, but there has been no movement on a contract settlement. He said he is hopeful an agreement will be reached. He said the cause of the explosions in the Merrimack Valley has not come out, but he knows it was an over-pressurization of the gas lines. Chairman Gately said he got a couple of phone calls after the explosions. He said there were inspections, yet mistakes were still made. He said that is something to think about. Mr. Cincotta said he knows the cause of the explosions was no mechanical failure. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said it is not within the City Council's purview to get involved in labor discussions, but the council did request and received a memorandum from DPW Supt. Jay Duran regarding a proposed gas line installation moratorium. Alderman Mercer-Bruen read the memo, which states: "Pursuant to the City Council's request on my opinion on this matter, I offer the following: No new installation permits of services and/or mains have been issued from the Woburn Dept. of Public Works since the start of the lockout. The only permits that have been approved are for Grade 1 leaks and for demolition cutoff permits which in my opinion present an imminent threat to public safety." Alderman Mercer-Bruen reiterated the council cannot get involved in labor disputes. Mr. Cincotta said he is not asking the council to get involved. He said his concerns are about safety. He said National Grid's plan before the Merrimack Valley explosions was to go into phase two of a contingency plan, which he said was to start laying lines again. Alderman Concannon asked if there is a meeting this week with the Dept. of Public Utilities. Mr. Cincotta said he is hopeful there will be a meeting, but the DPU has not gotten back to the union. Alderman Concannon asked if National Grid management was invited to the committee meeting. Clerk of Committees said it was not. Mr. Cincotta said many cities and towns have invited National Grid to meetings, but they have yet to show up to one. Alderman Concannon said the council asked for some sort of opinion, but the council didn't get that. He said he is not prepared to vote for a moratorium until the council at least hears back from the DPU that there are safety concerns. He said the union is asking the council to conclude work isn't being done safely. Mr. Cincotta said what the union is saying is the people who have been

locked out were the ones servicing the system. He said he has worked for National Grid for 28 years, and that a lot of the replacement workers do not have that experience. He said a lot of the field jobs are being filled by people who ordinarily work desk jobs. Alderman Concannon said he expects the DPU would adjudicate any safety issues. Mr. Crowley said DPU is wildly understaffed and one of the reasons the union brought the safety issue forward was to bring it to the DPU's attention. Mr. Cincotta said DPU canceled their most recently scheduled meeting. Chairman Gately said council members are starting to get heat from people who are undertaking new construction. He said a couple of restaurants are waiting to open but they can't because they can't get gas service. Mr. Cincotta said he is aware of incidents where people without gas service are being told to get propane. Alderman Gaffney asked how long the union has been locked out. Mr. Crowley said the lockout started on June 25. Chairman Gately said Woburn is not in a moratorium, but only projects involving fixing leaks and cutoffs are being undertaken. Motion made by Alderman Mercer-Bruen to table the matter until the council hears from the DPU. Alderman Gaffney asked what union members are doing for money. Mr. Cincotta said employees are collecting unemployment because they are locked out. He said he told members to get themselves a little nest egg in anticipation the lockout would go for a while. Chairman Gately suggested keeping the matter in committee until there are further developments. Mr. Cincotta said the Attorney General sent a letter to National Grid to advise them investigations into the safety component would start, but National Grid hasn't responded yet. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said she wants to withdraw her motion. Motion made by Alderman Tedesco and seconded by Alderman Mercer-Bruen to accept Supt. Duran's memorandum and make it part of the permanent record.; approved, 4-0.

**Motion made by Alderman Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Alderman Tedesco to adjourn; approved, 4-0.** Chairman Gately adjourned the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Gordon Vincent  
Clerk of Committees