

City of Newton



PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

A. NICHOLAS PARNELL, AIA, COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (617) 796-1600

Fax: (617) 796-1601

TTY: (617) 796-1089

52 ELLIOT STREET

NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461-1605

David B. Cohen

Mayor

November 3, 2009

Honorable Members of the Board of Aldermen,

You recently received a letter from the "Masonry Industry Fair Wage Alliance" claiming that mason work being performed at Newton North High School is substandard. I write to assure you that this accusation is absolutely false and unsubstantiated. This project has stringent quality control measures in place to ensure that our workmanship standards are being met.

The construction of a block wall involves four elements: the block, grout, rebar, and mortar. Each of these elements is carefully examined by UTS, an independent quality control agent that works for the city, along with Turner Construction and Dimeo Construction. The blocks meet construction standards prior to being shipped to the site. The grout is sampled and tested to ensure proper strength. The rebar is tested to ensure it is the correct size and that it is being installed in proper locations. The mortar is tested to ensure proper strength. As is routine, the walls are inspected and where flawed, corrected to ensure the finished product is structurally sound, safe and aesthetically appropriate.

The masonry work on this job is being performed by D'Agostino Associates, Inc., a highly regarded Newton business that has been operating for nearly 50 years. D'Agostino is one of a handful of companies in New England that has experience on a job of this size, where roughly 800,000 units (blocks or bricks) are being laid. They were by far the low bidder on this project, coming in at \$2 million below the next-highest bidder. The photographs they've shown you depict a wall that is undergoing routine inspection and modifications before becoming the final product. The rebar is untouched, and the structural integrity of this wall is not compromised by the swapping out of blocks. Considering that this is a project involving 800,000 units, it is to be expected that a routine punchlist including the touching up of blocks and walls would be generated.

It is significant to note that D'Agostino Associates, Inc. is a non-union company. As described in their letterhead, the "Masonry Industry Fair Wage Alliance" represents "over two hundred seventy five union contractors employed in the masonry industry." They have trespassed on our worksite no fewer than 12 times, and in fact had to be escorted off the premises by our police detail last week.

I have full confidence that the taxpayers of Newton are getting the highest quality masonry work for the best possible price by D'Agostino. I can attest that the highest quality standards are being met on this job, contrary to the unsubstantiated claims in the letter sent to you by union representatives who failed to win the Newton North contract.

Sincerely Yours,

A. Nicholas Parnell, AIA
Commissioner, Public Buildings