

MASONRY INDUSTRY FAIR WAGE ALLIANCE

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CHARLES RASO, CHAIRMAN
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October 28, 2009

Re: Newton North High School

Dear Alderman,

The enclosed pictures were taken at the Newton North High School project on October 27, 2009 in a stairwell in what I believe was the Tier 8 section of the school.

While the pictures clearly speak for themselves regarding the horrendous workmanship performed by the masonry contractor; D'Agostino & Associates, Inc., it should be noted that these are just a few pictures taken in one small spot of the school.

When constructing a masonry wall, the mason must take care to ensure the wall is built level, plumb and range (the surface must be straight or flat with no lips or protruding edges) and the units laid with 3/8" mortar joints in between. Normal construction tolerances allow for 1/4" maximum variations from level, plumb and range usually in a span of no less than 20'. One can easily see from the pictures these variations were exceeded in a span as little as 1 inch.

Some of the pictures show block marked with an "X", presumably to indicate which block need to be replaced. Other pictures show where block have already been replaced and another shows a worker chipping out individual block that will be replaced.

It is important to bear in mind that in most instances block cannot be replaced without damaging the structural integrity of the wall. If you looked at a block wall with x-ray glasses, you would see a skeleton of reinforcing rod (rebar) encased in cement (grout) within the wall intersecting at different points vertically and horizontally, especially around door openings, etc. where added strength is needed. It appears from the pictures that in these locations, the rebar and surrounding grout are being cut and chipped out along with the block that's being replaced. This is like cutting a link in a chain and then replacing the link but leaving it unconnected. Conversely, if they are not cutting out the whole block, then they are just replacing the face of the block, almost like installing a tile on a wall and if that's the case, the joints are sure to crack soon enough. By replacing a few blocks here and there instead of properly rebuilding the wall, the long term structural integrity of the work is being sacrificed in order to make the work look halfway decent, perhaps just long enough for the contractor to get paid and then it will be the City of Newton's problem.

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While walking through the building, it was obvious that there were many other locations where the work was noticeably sub-standard and should be replaced but possibly due to time and cost constraints, the decision may have been made to just "let it go".

How many other walls in this brand new school look this terrible? For that matter, how much of the work on the entire project was performed in such a defective manner with such a careless disregard for craftsmanship? Will these contractors be held accountable for this travesty or is this just another case of taxpayer dollars being squandered away?

Perhaps the individuals involved in decisions regarding quality control think that the owners of this school; the taxpayers of Newton, will find this brand of incredibly poor workmanship acceptable. After all, they only spent \$198 million to build the most expensive high school in the country and a mere \$9.6 million on the masonry. I guess that kind of money doesn't buy what it used to.

This is a big problem and something has to be done!

If there are any questions in this matter, I can be reached by telephone at (508) 397-0301.

Sincerely,

(File Copy)

Steven A. Troiano

Masonry Industry Compliance Investigator

