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## Framingham deals with lingering costs from poor workmanship

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By Danielle Ameden/Daily News staff

**The MetroWest Daily News**

Posted Apr 22, 2011 @ 12:00 AM

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FRAMINGHAM — Slabs of slate occasionally fly off the roof at Fire Headquarters on Loring Drive, a building that's only 16 years old.

Faulty rubber joints holding together the main library's parking garage on Lexington Street, meanwhile, are causing the concrete structure to deteriorate.

Town officials say they're alarmed by such signs of potentially dangerous construction flaws in town projects that were completed years ago.

"It's disgraceful," said Bill McCarthy, chairman of the Capital Budget Committee. "It's no different from the Big Dig. It's just fewer zeroes."

McCarthy said the town is now forced to pay for costly repairs for problems caused by poor workmanship and low-quality materials.

Annual Town Meeting will be asked to spend \$75,000 on repairs to the library garage and an estimated \$200,000 to replace the slate fire station roof that was supposed to last 100 years.

"We shouldn't be having that problem," said Doug Goddard, the town's capital building projects manager. "The reason you put slate on is beauty and longevity. It's the longest lasting roof."

Slates slid off this winter with melting snow near the vehicle bay and back deck that firefighters use. Tiles continue to fall, Goddard said.

It's the latest problem at the station, which opened in 1994 and cost \$3.5 million to build. Crews working on a mold problem last year found gaping holes in the building that affect moisture in the air.

Goddard said he hopes to replace the sloped slate part of the station's roof with a peel-and-stick membrane and cost-effective fiberglass asphalt shingles.

"There's a trend with our buildings not being properly built," he said. "We're playing catch-up with all these projects, trying to repair them."

As for the library garage, which was built in 1978 - "that thing has been a problem since day one," McCarthy told the Finance Committee on Wednesday.

McCarthy said the town has been hurt by the low bid process that leads

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contractors to cut costs and corners so they can profit on a job.

"In many cases we don't find out about it until 10 years later," McCarthy said. "It's really becoming a problem. ... We're one accident away from a big problem."

The Parks and Recreation Department ran into trouble last year after it hired a Groveland firm to build a \$60,000 handicapped-accessible playground at Farm Pond Park.

The project came to a halt in late summer - and is still incomplete - after the town questioned the thickness and composition of blacktop the contractor was using to build paths.

"After repeated attempts by the town to get the materials fixed, (the contractor) walked off the job," Jim Duane, the park department's operations manager, said yesterday. "We ultimately ended up settling with his insurance company through a bond we had on the project."

The town has hired Ellingwood Construction, a local contractor with a good reputation, Duane said, to pick up next week where the other firm left off.

The project should be finished by summer, he said.

"Clearly, we weren't going to accept work that we thought was suspect," he said. "We want to be good stewards of the appropriations that we're given."

Goddard said it's too late to sue contractors and architects who designed certain projects that are giving the town trouble now, like the fire station.

The town can only fix problems that arise, he said, and try to ensure future projects are built to last.

Bowditch Field's \$7.9 million renovation was the town's latest big project.

While the rebuilt stadium was hailed as a success at a grand-opening celebration last fall, the project didn't come without problems.

"We have punch lists, and we have things that we're still investigating," Parks Department Director Bob Merusi said yesterday.

Merusi replaced the owner's project manager partway through the job when unsatisfied with the consultant's performance, he said.

Still, "We feel pretty good about what's been accomplished," he said.

*(Danielle Ameden can be reached at 508-626-4416 or [dameden@wickedlocal.com](mailto:dameden@wickedlocal.com).)*

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#### Comments (19)

Rightdownthemiddle 18 hours ago Report Abuse

It's a sad commentary on society and people's work ethic. Nowadays, everyone is just out to make a buck, they could care less about reputation. Remember when a person's word meant something. I'm disgusted by these developers taking advantage of all of the hardworking, taxpayers in Framingham

BusterP 12 hours ago Report Abuse

Did they hire illegals for the work? Did the building inspectors do their job? Why not name who did the work if they are bad? I wouldn't hire someone who did bad work at another place.

Stoneysays 11 hours ago Report Abuse

Why would anyone order a slate roof - the most expensive kind of roof, and requires a heavy duty framing to be able to bear the weight....on a building that probably won't last 100 years anyway? How is that cost savings? And so many municipal buildings get built, and then there is little or no maintenance on them for years....even when built to last, they still need maintenance. Who was the clerk of the works overseeing the construction - what were the qualifications for that, or was it someone who was 'connected'? And I thought there were specifications that are either followed or not. Don't municipalities go out and look at other work the contractors have done, or at least contact other municipalities they have worked for in the past (or even check with the BBB) before hiring them? That is the

minimum due diligence that should be happening. There was another contractor for municipal buildings that was being sued all over the place, but towns kept hiring him...that is just plain irresponsible.

Mom in Metrowest 11 hours ago  Report Abuse

It's known that contractors who bid public work are the bottom of the barrel. The state needs to revamp the whole decam certification process and the prevailing wage law. That way they can get some good quality local contractors who can bid this work. But if the politicians want their hand in it, like they do at the state house, you will continue to have union built junk.


Kingfisher 10 hours ago  Report Abuse

Built the Union Way.

HLMencken 10 hours ago  Report Abuse

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hoping 10 hours ago  Report Abuse

Gotta love it. Gov't officials blaming others for their POOR decisions. Question #1) Who hired the contractor(s). Question #2) Who researched the contractor(s) ? Question #3) WHO IS THE BUILDING INSPECTOR in said town(s)?

jonnylongball 9 hours ago  Report Abuse

Not sure how town government pays for projects. Or what monitoring goes on while the job is underway. If they don't already, perhaps they need to withhold a large portion of the pay until the project is completed and signed off on. Probably there needs to be qualifications to meet in order to bid on a project.

idk 9 hours ago  Report Abuse

johhnylongball, in this case should the firefighters get out on the roof after you have them done ripping out their own moldy carpets and fixing their own HVAC system?


MN7 8 hours ago  Report Abuse

Union workers no doubt its find the fatsest and cheapest way to complete a project to maximize profit quality and craftsman ship dont really matter.

Decay 5 hours ago  Report Abuse

'WHO IS THE BUILDING INSPECTOR in said town(s)?'

In the 'Ham, I dunno, but there is a cop who likes to pretend she is

sigtau95 5 hours ago  Report Abuse

doing a crappy job by union workers and repeat businesses who win public bids is common practice...it guarantees them future work to repair their crappy work and continues the revenue stream. nothing new. when you vote in corrupt fools thats what happens

Framinghamnorth75 4 hours ago  Report Abuse

Isn't Ellingwood Construction the same company that the Planning Board and the Bldg Insp that issued an order to cease and desist for using an area of the old N&E Sand and Gravel Co ???

Framinghamnorth75 4 hours ago  Report Abuse

This is what happens when the BOS and Planning Board sends the Building Inspector to serve as the towns 'Sign Police' and scofflaw inspector looking to collect fines and fees for minor violations.

FraminghamGuy11 4 hours ago  Report Abuse

This is an excuse. What about maintenance? The buildings are extremely poorly maintained by the Town buildings department. They need to get a professional in charge there when the upcoming retirement happens, someone who instead of being everyone's friend is competent.

switchman 4 hours ago  Report Abuse

Most of these jobs were not done by union contractors.

Karl Childers 3 hours ago  Report Abuse

Ain't no surprise here. The unions and the tradesmen decided quality and craftsmanship was too time consumin and obsolete, way back in the 70's, when they done away with it!

Alright then

texasredman 2 hours ago  Report Abuse

I have to agree with Stoneysays. Also, the pictures give me the impression that the roof is pretty low sloped for shingles of any kind. sixteen years of a freeze-thawing ice cycle will tear up shingles/slate on the low slope. I bet the contractor put the roof on somewhat according to specification. I read design flaws!

Knight owl 46 minutes ago  Report Abuse


Ellingwood Construction.....= Phil Ottiavianni

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