BOX

9

FOLDER

93

Fire Dept.-Auxiliary Alarm System

1910-1912

Memorandum for the Mayor.

Letter from Fire Commissioner Waldo calling attention to the application of the Electric Protection Company of New York for a franchise, which is now pending before the Board of Estimate. He says there are at present five companies operating auxillary firm alarm systems, supplying about 3,098 buildings in the City. One of these companies, the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company, operates entirely over the Department lines. The others have their own wires into the central office of the Fire Department. In all cases they have a switchboard in Fire Headquarters operated by an employee of the City.

The use of City property by Companies who obtain revenue from the same, is not, in his opinion, a desirable condition. None of these companies pay anything to the City for the services performed.

R.A.

FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

✓ DATE DUE

Headquarters

Fire Department City of New York

157 & 159 East 67th Street

[redacted] COMMISSIONER.
RHINELANDER WALDO
[redacted] DEPUTY COMMISSIONER.
JOSEPH JOHNSON, JR.
[redacted] DEPUTY COMMISSIONER.
ARTHUR J. O'KEEFFE
CHARLES C. WISE, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, BOROUGHS BROOKLYN & QUEENS.
WILLIAM A. LARNEY, SECRETARY.

Borough of Manhattan March 29, 1910.

ANSWERED MAR 31 1910 MAYOR'S OFFICE.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,

Mayor, City of New York.

S i r : -

In connection with the matter of a franchise for the Electric Protection Company of New York which is now before the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, I desire to call attention to the general subject of auxiliary fire alarm signals in this city.

The use of auxiliary boxes in large buildings is believed to be essential. There are at present five companies operating auxiliary fire alarm systems supplying about 3,098 buildings. One of these companies, The Manhattan Fire Alarm Company, operates entirely over department lines. The others have their own wires into the central office of the Fire Department. In all cases they maintain a switchboard at Fire Department Headquarters operated by employees of the city.

The use of city property by companies which obtain a revenue from the same is not, in my opinion, a desirable condition. None of these companies pay anything to the city for the services performed.

I have requested from the Board of Estimate and Apportionment an appropriation sufficient to install a new

HEADQUARTERS

Fire Department City of New York,

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN.

NEW YORK, ... *19*

.....

.....

119A-20-09 (B) 20,000

fire alarm telegraph system in the borough of Manhattan. In connection with this system, if the proposition meets with your Honor's approval, I believe that enough additional circuits should be provided to take care of auxiliary fire alarm boxes. In this case the city could rent these alarms to such buildings as by reason of their construction require the same. The revenue therefrom would thereby go to the city, and be sufficient not only to pay the entire running expenses of the telegraph bureau but the interest on the money expended for the new system.

The Electric Protection Company of New York, which now requests a franchise, has an automatic fire alarm device which, I understand, is excellent. I would, however, recommend that the granting of the franchise be withheld until such time as this entire subject has been given your consideration.

Very respectfully,

Commissioner.

D.

Mar 29/1910

Re-to Franchise
for Electric Protection

Headquarters

Fire Department City of New York

157 & 159 East 67th Street

May 18th, 1910.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor, and Chairman
Board of Estimate and Apportionment.

S i r : -

With reference to the application of the Electric Protection Company of New York for a franchise, which is now before your Board, I desire to invite your attention to the general situation with reference to companies furnishing auxiliary fire alarm service.

The following companies now have a wire connection into the Telegraph Bureau of the Fire Department:

In Manhattan and The Bronx.

Automatic Fire Alarm Company,	1,233	subscribers
Consolidated Fire Alarm Company,	346	"
Manhattan Fire Alarm Company,	3,322	boxes
National District Telegraph Company,	241	subscribers
Special Fire Alarm Electrical Signal Co.	519	"

In Richmond.

Manhattan Fire Alarm Company,	4	boxes

In Brooklyn and Queens.

Consolidated Fire Alarm Company,	311	subscribers
Manhattan Fire Alarm Company,	1,008	boxes
National District Telegraph Company,	131	subscribers.

Of these, the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company (4,334 boxes) furnishes connection from the premises of the subscriber to the nearest department box and from that point use the wires and apparatus of this department without any recompense to the city.

HEADQUARTERS

Fire Department, City of New York,

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN.

NEW YORK, ... *191*

.....

.....

119A-25-10 (B) 20,000

They rent these boxes for Fifty ($50.) dollars a box. This free use of city property for the purpose of revenue by a private company is regarded as being entirely an improper procedure. There are also 25 private boxes in Manhattan and The Bronx, and 245 in Brooklyn and Queens which are connected with department wires, for which privilege the users pay nothing to the city.

Auxiliary fire alarms are necessary in large buildings. They cannot be operated efficiently except by co-operation with the Fire Department. It is therefore believed that they should be owned and controlled by the city.

In the installing of the new telegraph system for this department, the necessary funds for which have been requested from your Board, additional wires could be provided to handle the auxiliary circuits at a comparatively small cost. The city could rent auxiliary appliances to individuals requiring the same. Sufficient funds could be obtained from this source to pay the interest on the cost of the proposed telegraph system as well as the cost of maintenance.

If, however, the proposition of control by the city of this service is not regarded favorably by your Board at this time and it is desired to continue the private control of these systems for the present, the following is then recommended for your consideration:

Any company which shall have at least five-hundred (500) subscribers shall be allowed by the Fire Commissioner to install their instruments in the Telegraph Bureau at Fire Headquarters under proper restrictions and provided that they shall pay to the city the sum of Ten ($10.) dollars for each box installed, the

minimum to be paid to be Five thousand ($5,000.) dollars per annum; and that the city shall reserve the right to cancel this privilege at any time that the Board of Estimate and Apportionment may see fit.

There are now before the Fire Commissioner applications from other companies who have franchises requesting permission to bring their wires into Fire Headquarters, but their requests have not been acted on for the reason that it is believed that this matter should be the subject of uniform action with regard to all applicants.

Very respectfully,

Fire Commissioner.

D.

May 18/10

Re to application
for Franchise of
Electric Protection
Co

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

June 21st, 1910.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,

Hon. William A. Prendergast,
Comptroller,

Hon. John Purroy Mitchell,
President, Board of Aldermen.

Gentlemen:-

Replying to your letter of June 8th, relative to auxiliary fire alarm systems, in which you request information on the following:

(1) What is the scope of the operation of the present auxiliary companies, and in what sections of the city do they now operate?

(A) They operate throughout the entire city, more especially in the dry-goods districts. The following companies are now operating:

In Manhattan and The Bronx.

Automatic Fire Alarm Co.	1,233	subscribers
Consolidated Fire Alarm Co.	346	"
Manhattan Fire Alarm Co.	3,322	boxes
National District Telegraph Co.	241	subscribers
Special Fire Alarm Electrical Signal Co.	519	"

In Richmond.

Manhattan Fire Alarm Co.	4	boxes

In Brooklyn and Queens.

Consolidated Fire Alarm Co.	311	subscribers
Manhattan Fire Alarm Co.	1,008	boxes
National District Telegraph Co.	131	subscribers.

(2) What are the rates charged by the various companies for auxiliary fire alarm service?

(A) From fifty to sixty dollars for the first box, with reduction for additional boxes. Some of the companies, such as the Automatic Fire Alarm Company, do not operate by manual boxes but by thermostatic instruments. It is difficult to obtain their rates as they are the subject of individual agreement in each case.

(3) What, in your opinion, is the cost to acquire the different auxiliary fire alarm companies, provided it is necessary for the city to condemn the same and has the authority to do so?

(A) There is no necessity for the city to acquire any of the property of the auxiliary fire alarm companies operating. The Fire Commissioner need merely revoke permission to enter fire headquarters.

In the case of the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company, they have nothing to sell except the actual fire alarm boxes and a few yards of wire connecting with the department service.

(4) What, in your opinion, would be the cost of installation of an auxiliary fire alarm system for the City to take the place of the auxiliary fire alarm systems now in operation?

(A) In the installation of a new telegraph system additional circuits could be provided in the cables for the purpose of handling the auxiliary boxes. The cost of additional circuits in the cables would be about Forty Dollars per mile, and each circuit would be capable of handling about twenty-five subscribers, with possibly four or five hundred separate boxes. The increased cost for the wiring for this service would, therefore, be nearly negligible.

As an expedient and pending the installation of a new telegraph system the auxiliary instruments could be connected to the nearest street box in the same manner as is now done in cases of boxes provided by the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company

(5) What, in your opinion, would be the cost of operating such a system?

(A) The additional cost of operating the auxiliary system in connection with the regular fire alarm system would be so trifling as to be absolutely negligible, as the additional pairs of circuits in the cables would not increase the cost or difficulty of maintaining the same.

(6) At what rates could service be furnished in order to give the City a fair return upon its investment?

(A) Fifty Dollars for the first box, and Ten Dollars for each additional box. At these rates the revenue would be more than sufficient to pay the interest on the installation and the maintenance of an entire new telegraph system for the city.

It is understood that the average rate obtained by the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company is about Seventeen Dollars per box. This would give for the 4,334 boxes in their case alone a revenue of $73,678. It is difficult to obtain figures from the other companies, but on a basis of only Fifty Dollars per subscriber, which is probably about one-third of what they actually obtain, with their 2,781 subscribers they would have a revenue of $139,050. or a total revenue between all of these companies of at least $212,728. In my belief this would be about one-half of what they

actually receive.

(7) Is the operation of the present auxiliary fire alarm systems in any way a hindrance to the efficient operation of your Department? If so, state in detail.

(A) Under the present system the Fire Department has no control over the methods of construction or installation of the auxiliary systems. The records of the department show that about one-half of the alarms transmitted by these auxiliary companies are unnecessary. In the case of the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company it increases the number of points where danger may be feared from defective insulation as they operate entirely on city wires.

(8) What, in your opinion, would be the advantages to the City in operating its own auxiliary fire alarm system?

(A) The revenue which is now diverted to private companies would go to the city. As the usefulness of all these systems depends absolutely upon co-operation with the Fire Department it is believed that the Fire Department should be responsible for them and control them.

The use of city property as a monopoly for the purposes of revenue by private corporations without return to the city is not believed to be proper.

It is believed that all matters connected with the fire alarm system should be under the control and supervision of the Fire Department.

(9) It is assumed that should the City purchase the present auxiliary fire alarm systems, that the apparatus now used by the companies cannot be used as a part of the installation of the City's system, and that the cost of acquiring the present auxiliary fire alarm companies would in that respect be a total loss to the City. If this assumption is not correct, please advise the Committee.

(A) There would apparently be no necessity for acquiring

the apparatus of the present auxiliary fire alarm companies. The boxes and thermostatic apparatus however might be acquired and used, if desirable.

In connection with the foregoing it is suggested it might be advisable to require the individuals to furnish approved boxes, thermostats or other means of transmission which they might desire to use, and have the city merely connect its wires with them. This would relieve the City from the necessity of purchasing the boxes or thermostatic appliances from the present companies or from other sources. The allowing of individuals to select their own boxes or thermostatic instruments would permit the use of the most improved patented devices, and would remove the objections urged by the auxiliary fire alarm companies against the city ownership on the ground that the subscribers would be unable to obtain the most modern and improved apparatus.

Very respectfully,

Commissioner.

D.

June 23/10

From Lon Ward

Re to Auxiliary

Fire Alarm

System

June 23,1910.

Memorandum for the Mayor:

From Fire Commissioner Waldo, writing to the Mayor, Comptroller and President of the Board of Aldermen, in reply to their inquiry relative to the auxiliary fire alarm system and giving information about the system. He shows the extent of the operation of the present auxiliary companies and answers a number of questions about the situation generally.

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

October 24th, 1910.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,

Mayor, City of New York.

S i r : -

In reply to your letter of October 21st, enclosing a communication from a Mr. Blandy, representing the Manhattan Fire Alarm Company, which is returned herewith. The question of the use of City property by auxiliary fire alarm companies according to law rests entirely in the discretion of the Fire Commissioner. Believing, however, that this matter was one of sufficient importance to warrant action by higher authority than the Fire Commissioner, I referred the whole matter of auxiliary fire alarm service to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment in connection with the request of another company to be granted a permit to operate.

The Manhattan Fire Alarm Company, which is a branch of the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company, furnishes a box or a number of boxes to subscribers, for which they receive a rent, I understand, of Fifty dollars per annum for the first box with a reduction for succeeding boxes. They connect these boxes by wire with the nearest Fire Department signal box. They, therefore, obtain their revenue almost entirely from the use of city property. This use of public property without recompense to the City I believe to be wrong.

In addition to the financial side of this question the connecting of these auxiliary boxes with our alarm service is liable to cause trouble, which might result in great calamity from fire getting a headway before an alarm could be properly transmitted to the department. During the month of September, 1910, four cases are reported where their boxes have thrown our boxes out of adjustment so as to render repairs necessary before communication could be restored. During the first ten days in October, 1910, three of our boxes were thrown out of adjustment in a similar manner.

The auxiliary apparatus, being private property, is not subject to inspection by the Fire Department, but being directly connected to Fire Department alarm circuits places part of the circuit out of our control, which is obviously wrong.

The statement of Mr. Blandy that the device has received the endorsement of every Fire Commissioner during the last fifteen years, including that of the present Commissioner, is true in so far only as the device itself is concerned, but as to its methods of operation over Fire Department wires it has never, in any way, been approved by me. The records of the Department will show that almost all of the Commissioners in past years have endeavored to have this evil condition rectified.

In the Taxpayers suit referred to, as I understand it, the decision merely upheld the rights of the Commissioner to grant this permission if he saw fit.

Mr. Blandy is correct in his assertion that I have refused

to grant any further permits to this company pending the decision of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment upon the entire matter.

Very respectfully,

Fire Commissioner.

Enc.
D.

Oct 24/10

Upon Letter of

Wm Blandy - re

to Manhattan Fire

alarm Co

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

December 20, 1911.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor, and Chairman,
Board of Estimate and Apportionment.

S i r :

I have the honor to request that there be included in the corporate stock salary list of this Department, Fire Alarm Telegraph Bureau, chargeable to "C.F.D. 22- For placing electrical conductors underground in the Borough of Brooklyn", the positions of Assistant Electrical Engineer at $3,000. per annum for one incumbent, and of Draftsman at $1,200. per annum each for two incumbents, established under the provisions of Section 56 of the Greater New York Charter, pursuant to resolution adopted by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment July 27, 1911, approved of and concurred in by the Board of Aldermen November 28, 1911, and which became effective without the approval or disapproval of his Honor the Mayor December 12, 1911.

There are in the telegraph system of the Borough of Brooklyn some 1,119 miles of overhead circuits and 13 miles of underground circuits, the majority of the latter having been placed during the last year. Many of these overhead circuits are carried on the elevated structures in open wires, are in poor condition, in continual danger of interruption from third rail current and extravagant in maintenance in that the City pays to the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company for the privilege of

these connections some $7,600. annually. The number of circuits in the Borough at the present time is entirely inadequate to care for the number of fire alarm signal boxes at present in service and yet there are hundreds of applications for additional boxes, many of which are necessary for the proper protection of property. To carry these overhead circuits many pole lines are maintained by the City, which carry no other wires, and in a great many cases subways parallel these pole lines in which the wires can be placed at no expense to the City except for the necessary cable and connections from manholes to signal posts, thus placing the circuits in a much safer condition and permitting the removal of unsightly and objectionable pole lines. It is for the purpose of preparing the necessary plans and specifications for this underground work that the services of the additional employes above requested are required.

Respectfully,

P. J. Johnson

Fire Commissioner.

PJG.

Dec. 20/1911.

Ltr A. re- to Position of Engineer Asst Electrical and Draughtsman

JCR/hm

Dec. 18, 1911.

Honorable Commissioners of The Sinking Fund:

Gentlemen:

Section 615 of the Greater New York charter provides that the Park Commissioners may give permission to the Fire Department for the construction in the City's parks of buildings for use of the Fire Department. I am informed that this provision was inserted in the charter in order that sites might be provided for the construction of isolated buildings to contain the Fire Alarm Telegraph apparatus of the Fire Department.

The City's Fire Alarm Telegraph system in the Boroughs of Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn is in very bad condition, and the Board of Estimate & Apportionment are appropriating money for the installation of entirely new systems in these three Boroughs. In connection with these new systems, the buildings containing the central office apparatus at which all fire alarms are received and sent to the companies should be located so as to have protection from fire and flood; and in view of the charter provision I have been negotiating with the Park Commissioners for something over a year, looking to the selection of suitable sites. On December 16th, 1911 I received from the Secretary of the Park Board a copy of a preamble and resolution adopted by the Park Board at a meeting held on the 14th instant as follows: "Whereas, The Commissioner of the Fire Department has applied to three of the members of this Board for sites for Fire Alarm Stations in parks of

three different Boroughs; Resolved, That it is the sense of this Board that no buildings, other than those intended for park purposes, should be erected in the parks of our City." As it is necessary that the sites for these buildings be determined before any material work can be done on the new systems, and with the hope of avoiding an apparently unnecessary expenditure on the part of the City I am bringing the matter to your attention.

There is now available Corporate Stock to the amount of $190,000.00 for the construction of the buildings for the Fire Alarm Telegraph central offices in the three Boroughs, which was obtained on the supposition that the buildings could be located in the parks. If the buildings cannot be located in the parks, the money provided for them is, of course, unavailable until sites are obtained.

I have consulted the Real Estate Appraiser of the Finance Department and am advised by him that the purchase of suitable property, not less than 200 feet square, would cost the City at least $750,000.00. The sites for these buildings should be located near the geographical centre of the area to be protected, in order that the circuits may be efficiently operated and maintained. It is also essential that they be protected from destruction by fire, as if they should be destroyed the Fire Department would be practically useless until the equipment could be replaced.

In negotiating with the Park Commissioners, it has been explained to them that the buildings would occupy space of approximately 40'x30', would contain nothing but Fire Alarm Telegraph apparatus and the men to operate and maintain it, that they could be so located as not to interfere with any use of the parks by the people and that

the buildings would be designed under the supervision of the Park Department's architects, the only condition imposed being that they should be absolutely fireproof and contain sufficient space to house the apparatus.

The location of these buildings in the parks would secure for them the maximum protection and would save the City of New York an expenditure of at least $750,000.00, and would not, in my opinion, mar the appearance of the parks in any way or interfere with the people's rights.

The installation of a proper Fire Alarm Telegraph system is of the utmost importance to every citizen and should not be delayed. I should be pleased to be advised by you as to how the Department should proceed to obtain the necessary sites.

Respectfully,

Fire Commissioner.

Dec 21/1911

Re to installing
Telegraph Station
in Ft Clark

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

28

December 21st, 1911.

ANSWERED
DEC 22 1911
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,
City of New York.

S i r : -

I have been trying for several months to persuade the Park Commissioners to allow the Fire Department to erect isolated fire alarm telegraph stations, 40' x 80', in parks in the Boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn and The Bronx. After several months negotiations with each Commissioner I finally got an answer from the Park Board denying my request.

Section 615 of the Charter directly authorizes the Park Commissioners to permit the Fire Commissioner to erect such buildings in parks.

I hand you herewith copy of letter addressed to the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund; also copy of Section 615 of the Charter. Real isolation can only be obtained in the parks, except at very great expense outside of the parks.

Reference of the matter to the Sinking Fund Commission will enable Your Honor either to sustain the action of your Park Board or leave the acquisition of these sites to the Sinking Fund Commission in the usual manner.

May I ask that you urge upon the Sinking Fund Commission an early decision.

Very respectfully,

B Johnson
Fire Commissioner.

D.

Section 615, of the Greater New York Charter.

"Each commissioner is hereby authorized in his discretion, on the application in writing of the fire commissioner, to permit a building or buildings for fire apparatus to be placed in any of the parks, squares or public places situated within the jurisdiction of such commissioner of parks, provided the said building or buildings are so located and constructed as, in the judgment of the commissioner granting such permission, will not disfigure or encumber the said park, square or public place, or interfere with the purposes of public use and recreation, but will tend to the protection of the public and their property.

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

ANSWERED JAN 24 1912 MAYOR'S OFFICE

January 23, 1912.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,
City of New York.

S i r : -

I have your favor of January 22, enclosing communication to you from The Merchants' Association of New York by its president, Mr. Henry R. Towne. He argues for the isolation of fire alarm telegraph stations in the parks in the Boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx and Brooklyn.

Real isolation can only be obtained in the parks, and is provided for in section 615 of the Charter. The charter makers seem to have protected the parks from all encroachments, but specifically pointed out that the Fire Department could erect buildings in the parks for the purpose of protecting life and property.

I venture to say that if the small buildings we purpose to erect (about 40' by 80') were placed in the locations we have in mind that they would be even hard to find by the ordinary observer. I have had sketches made of these little buildings and their architecture is such that they would appear as decorative porticoes.

The expense of buying or condemning land elsewhere would, I think, be much greater than the figure mention-

ed by The Merchants' Association, namely, $750,000.

A new fire alarm telegraph service is a most urgent need of the Fire Department, as I have pointed out to Your Honor in my annual report which you have just ordered printed.

I have already forwarded to the Corporate Stock Budget Committee a request for $3,670,000. in corporate stock, for the purpose of quickly and finally ridding the Fire Department of the present antiquated, inadequate and overloaded system. It will be impossible properly to plan this new system until we have located the central stations.

I would say that the safety of five million people and the protection of seven and one-half billions of property is a consideration which should weigh with Your Honor in overruling the present decision of your Park Commissioners.

Respectfully,

Fire Commissioner.

D.

Jan. 23/12.

Jan. 22/12.

Ecky- letter from Merchants Ass'n.
H. R. Towne, Pres. arguing for
isolation of fire alarm
telegraph stations in parks.

January 24, 1912. b

S i r :

I have a communication from The Merchants' Association urging fire alarm telegraph stations in the parks in the Boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx and Brooklyn.

Please call the Park Board together forthwith. By forthwith I mean not to wait for weeks or months as I am sorry to say you do in important matters. And when the Board has met let a conference be had with the Fire Commissioner, until we see if the sites he selects, or which the Commissioners select, can be made available for such purpose without injury to the parks. It is a very important matter and we should see what we can do to work with the Fire Department. My own opinion is that these sites can be selected in the parks without any trouble and without any detriment whatever to the parks, but if I am mistaken in this I shall expect the Commissioners to point out to me my mistake.

I leave it to the good judgment of the Board, but I expect that the matter will be carefully considered.

The Charter expressly autorizes the thing in Section 615.

I am expecting to hear from you with regard to the letting of the refreshmet place in the park. I am bound to say to you that I thik the thing has run long enough. The same is true as to he lease of the place on the Hudson River. These delys are all very annoying to me and I feel that I should tell you so. While I have every confidence in yo I think that we can act more promptly than we do.

Very truly yours,

M a y o r.

Charles B. Stover, Esq.,
Commissioner Department
of Parks.

THE CITY CLUB OF NEW YORK
55 WEST FORTY-FOURTH STREET

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

February 23, 1912

BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND APPORTIONMENT
City of New York

Gentlemen:

For the past ten years the existing fire alarm system of the city has been under severe criticism. The Merchants Association, the local Fire Underwriters and the National Board have retained experts whose various reports at various times have concurred in finding a system liable to and inviting breakdown at critical times.

As the board of directors of the city government, we hope you will consider it your duty to ascertain the facts, and to authorize whatever may be necessary to secure the most reliable fire alarm system which is possible.

Respectfully,

THE CITY CLUB OF NEW YORK
By Robert S. Binkerd
Secretary

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON FIRE PROTECTION OF THE CITY CLUB

January 26, 1912

Whereas, the greatest essential for the protection of life and property from destruction by fire and the prevention of a conflagration, which is today the one real dread of New York City, is the prompt arrival of the fire apparatus, and high pressure and a good fire department are useless if there cannot be transmitted prompt and accurate notice of the outbreak of a fire which a few minutes delay may turn into a sweeping conflagration; and,

Whereas, this can only be properly accomplished by a modern fire alarm system with isolated central station which not only can be relied upon in all ordinary emergencies byt is so constructed that even a conflagration cannot destroy its serviceability; and,

Whereas, the present fire alarm system in the Borough of Manhattan is antiquated and thoroughly inadequate to perform its important functions and by its liability to fail at a critical moment, is a constant menace to the safety of several millions of people and untold values of property, as is evidenced by the reports of experts who have, from time to time, examined the system and in particular the report of the National Board of Fire Underwriters made after a most thorough examination of the fire alarm system of the Borough of Manhattan, which report reads in part as follows:-

"It has been found that the fire alarm telegraph system of the Borough of Manhattan is fundamentally wrong in design and is in bad physical condition. It is not constructed in accordance with any proper engineering plans, and its physical condition is so bad that it must be characterized as being in an advanced stage of decay. It is liable at any time to such failures as to render it wholly use-

less to the fire department in the time of greatest need. Faulty in original design and construction, the plan has deteriorated and has been patched and repaired in its various parts as they from time to time became unworkable. The system long ago reached the stage where it could not be transformed into permanent proper working order by any further patching or even by radical repairs. The only remedy for the present state of affairs is to establish in the Borough of Manhattan a new fire alarm system separate and distinct from the present one. There is an imminent danger that before a new system can be supplied the present defective fire alarm system may so delay tha arrival of the department or throw it into such a state of confusion that a fire may gain such headway as to get beyond control and thus develop into a disastrous conflagration". and,

Whereas, an example of the danger due to delayed fire alarms, was the substantial destruction of the Equitable Building on January 9th, 1912, which is admitted to have been caused by the delay in transmitting the alarm of fire, and, although in this case the delay was not caused by the failure of the alarm system itself, the result would have proven equally disastrous, had the alarm been promptly sent but the system failed to act, and the property loss of one fire as costly as that of the Equitable Building would reach a sum more than sufficient to entirely reconstruct the present faulty fire alarm system; and,

Whereas, the Fire Commissioner is on record as urgently advocating the appropriation of sufficient funds to reconstruct the fire alarm system without further delay.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That this Committee does hereby recommend the City Club to promptly bring to the attention of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment this most important matter; to impress upon the Board that an emergency exists which endangers lives and property in the entire Borough of Manhattan and which is fully as important, or even more important, than any question now confronting the City; to apprise the Board of the necessity for immediate action and the grave danger due to unnecessary delay and to respectfully request the Board to take action at the earliest possible moment for the appropriation of funds for the entire reconstruction of the fire alarm system in the Borough of Manhattan, along modern lines as recommended by the City's engineers.

WALLACE REID

EMIL FREUND

W. G. SEWALL

CHARLES L. CASE

ROBERT D. KOHN

J. P. H. PERRY

GEORGE C. PRATT

CHARLES BREIDON

THE CITY CLUB OF NEW YORK
55 WEST FORTY-FOURTH STREET

PRESIDENT'S ROOM

March 4,1912.

Hon.William J.Gaynor,
Mayor of the City of New York,
City Hall,
Borough of Manhattan.

Dear Sir:-

On the 23rd of February, we sent to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment a communication relating to the necessity of a new fire alarm system. We desire to supplement that communication by adding that we regard the installation of a new system for fire alarm as a matter of the gravest consequence to the City, and to urge upon the Board of Estimate and Apportionment the prompt appropriation for that purpose of such funds as are available. We understand that the city engineers have approved plans for the installation of such system after the most careful consideration. May we add, what is probably in no sense necessary, that before the Board finally acts upon the precise plan to be adopted, care should be taken to insure such competition as the situation permits, among those desiring to install the system, to the end that special interests, if there be any such, may not be subserved.

We append hereto a copy of the carefully considered report of the Club's Committee on Fire Protection, which the the Board of Trustees has unanimously adopted.

Yours respectfully,

Charles H. Strong

President

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
BOROUGH OF THE BRONX,
ZBROWSKI MANSION, CLAREMONT PARK.

June 4, 1912.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor, City of New York,
City Hall, New York City.

Dear Mr. Mayor:

If you have not already done so, you will possibly receive a large petition from some residents of this borough against the erection of the proposed Fire Alarm Station in Crotona Park, and I also understand that a committee of one hundred is to come down and wait upon you, and I therefore desire to send you some information about this whole subject, so that if you do receive this committee, you will have some facts at hand.

Briefly the statement that I have sent you, and the photographs show the following:

That in October, 1909 Commissioner Berry, who was then Commissioner of Parks, granted to the Fire Department permission to erect a station on what is known as the ball field at Crotona Park. The land

given over at that time was 100 X 100.

To have utilized this corner of the ball field would have surely destroyed one-half of the whole field for baseball purposes.

The amount of ground that we have given under the present agreement with the Fire Department is 35 X 90; we are practically saving two-thirds of the space given in 1909, and on a piece of ground that has never been used as a playground.

Because of the misrepresentations and misstatements of facts that have been sent to the various taxpayers' associations in this borough, in an endeavor to arouse sentiment against this Fire Signal Station, I am preparing, in little pamphlet form, this statement and will send it to all the civic bodies in the borough, so that the whole matter might be thoroughly understood.

Very truly yours,

Commissioner of Parks,
Borough of The Bronx.

L.

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

ANSWERED
AUG 8 - 1912
MAYOR'S OFFICE

August 7, 1912.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor,
City of New York.

S i r : -

Landscape Architect Lay has reported to Park Commissioner Higgins that the Fire Alarm Telegraph site selected by him and me in Crotona Park is the best one, and that the several sites suggested by protesting citizens will not do.

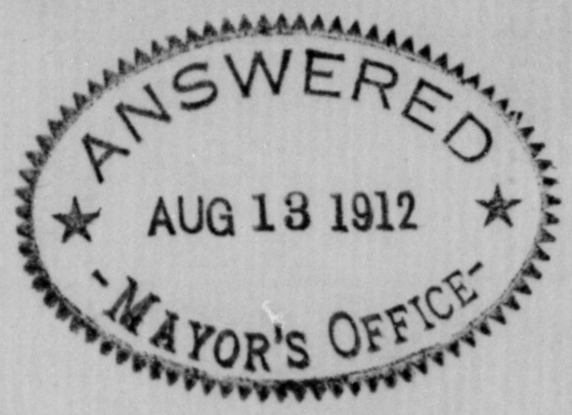
Commissioner Higgins informs me that you have promised a final hearing to the objectors. I am only waiting on their last gasp to go ahead with the erection of the building, which I think by all means should be where we have put it. Commissioner Higgins and myself are in agreement at all points, and he tells me that he will bring off this last hearing soon. If you will suggest that he do this it will finally dispose of the matter.

Very respectfully,

Fire Commissioner.

D.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
BOROUGH OF THE BRONX,
ZBROWSKI MANSION, CLAREMONT PARK.



Aug. 10, 1912.

Hon. William J. Gaynor,
Mayor, City of New York,
City Hall, New York City.

Dear Mr. Mayor:

In the matter of the site for the Fire Alarm Station in Crotona Park, I had practically agreed with Senator Griffin, who represents the protestants, to give him a hearing some time during the week ending August 24th.

The reason for setting that date is due to the fact that the Sanator being a member of the Committee on Military Affairs etc., of the Senate, is going away to the manoeuvres and won't be back in town before that week.

I also think it well if you will agree with me, that the Parks Advisory Committee give the hearing, and give these people an opportunity to expend a great deal of their energy. Even after these people are given a hearing, Your Honor, they will surely want to appear before you, for there is nothing we can

do up here but decide on the site already selected. No matter what they may say this is the best site that could have been selected, and the least harmful to any one.

If Your Honor will recall, you promised these people that nothing would be done towards the erection of the building, or anything of that kind, until they had every opportunity of being heard.

I think it will be well, Your Honor, to let the thing progress in this way, and not give them any chance to say that we did not give them full opportunity in every way to be heard.

Commissioner Johnson won't be delayed much by another week or ten days.

Respectfully yours,

Commissioner of Parks,
Borough of The Bronx.

L.