



Finance Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Present: Councilors Gentile (Chair), Norton, Cote, Grossman and Noel

Absent: Councilors Ciccone, Rice and Lappin

Also present: Councilor Downs

City staff present: Director of Assessment Administration Jim Shaughnessy, Assistant Assessor Brian, Davis, Director of Planning & Development Barney Heath, Director of Transportation Planning Nicole Freedman, Director of Transportation for Public Works Jason Sobel, Comptroller Sue Dzikowski

#286-19 Mayor's appointment of Brian Davis to the Board Assessors

BRIAN DAVIS, 1100 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury, appointed to the Board of Assessors.

Term to expire August 4, 2022. (60 day: October 11, 2019)

Action: Finance Approved 5-0

Note: Director of Assessment Administration Jim Shaughnessy presented the request for Brian Davis to be appointed to the Board of Assessors. Mr. Shaughnessy explained he has full faith in Mr. Davis to hold this position. Mr. Davis started with city a little over 3 years ago as an Assistant Assessor and since February 2019 has been doing the job of a member of the Board of Assessors without being able to sign off. Mr. Shaughnessy explained Mr. Davis has been with the department since 2016; dealing with the residential properties, helping with the statistical models and training staff. Mr. Davis explained that he has loved being a part of the Assessing Department. He has enjoyed going out to homes for inspections and meeting the taxpayers. Mr. Davis has also done more of the background work which includes working with Mr. Shaughnessy doing regression models on condos and single family homes that then are then reported to the Department of Revenue. He was a part of creating the billing file every quarter and creating pamphlets that were sent to the City Council last year during the certification process. Mr. Davis explained that he has always held Newton in high regard and enjoys working for this community.

A committee member asked Mr. Davis how his role in the department has changed with his past position to what he has been working on since February. Mr. Davis explained in his old roll he would go out to a lot of the houses for the permits, do the inspections and he does more of the technological aspect of analyzing data. Now he will be looking at the modeling on how the quality of things are changing over time. A committee member asked how he has been trained for this new position. Mr. Davis explained that he completed he Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) designation within his first 18 months of working for the city and is continuing with the education, which included him going to International Association of Assessors Conference this year. There he learned how other work communities work with parcels of land and brought those ideas back to work with him.

A committee member asked Mr. Davis if he handles the abatements. Mr. Davis explained even in in his

past role he would go out to the homes, perform inspections and gives an opinion of value on the abatements. Mr. Shaughnessy and the Board of Assessors make the final decision, but a lot of the leg work done during the inspection is used during the decision process. Councilor Cote motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#82-19

Authorize the Director of Planning to set the fees for parking meter spaces

COUNCILORS AUCHINCLOSS, DOWNS, LEARY, KRINTZMAN, RICE, NOEL, DANBERG, GROSSMAN, MARKIEWICZ, CROSSLEY, SCHWARTZ AND THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting amendment to Section 19-191. **Parking meter fees.** of the City of Newton Ordinances which sets the specific fees for parking meters be deleted and replaced with the following text: The fees for parking in a parking meter space during the days and hours designated for parking meters will be set by the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Works.

Public Safety Approved as amended 5-0-2 (Cote, Ciccone abstaining) on 04/03/19

Finance Held 5-2(Grossman, Noel opposed) on 05/29/19

Action:

Finance Approved as Amended 2-1-2 (Councilors Cote and Norton abstaining)

Note: The Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Director of Transportation Planning Nicole Freedman, the Director of Transportation for Public Works Jason Sobel and Councilor Downs present their request for an amendment to Section 19-191 which relates to parking meters. A committee member explained the last time they spoke on the matter the committee wanted to set a range instead of letting the Director increase the fees to an unlimited number. Director of Planning and Development explained this was a direction that they were going towards and they have looked at how this has been implemented elsewhere. They have also looked at the implementation of smart meters making this process much smoother. A committee member asked for them to speak on the range they have brought back to the committee. Director of Transportation Planning Nicole Freedman explained they want to go from 50 cents which is the current long term rate to \$5.00 per hour. The \$5.00 would be the maximum amount that the Director of Planning and Development could set. Ms. Freedman explained this came from their research into the Boston project and that smaller shifts were not having an impact on parking to the level they wanted.

A committee member explained that \$5.00 is too high. This can affect low-come residents when trying to park somewhere for a couple hours. But the committee member was pleased that they came back with a range.

A committee member explained that they do support the range of \$5.00 because it is future proof. This gives the department enough flexibility to work within the range. The committee member asked more about the Boston project and where they are with it. Ms. Freedman explained she can find out councilor but believes the rates are still in effect. Director of Transportation for Public Works Jason Sobel explained that the Boston has decided to keep Back Bay at \$3.75 an hour and have expanded that to different parts of the city. This will vary between different areas of the city. Boston is looking to get parking availability

down to 85% through this program and are shooting for one parking space per block. A committee member wanted clarification on the \$5.00 per hour and if it is a range. Mr. Heath explained that this is a range and they are doing this for the availability of parking the city and they want to see what it will take to get the desired impact.

A committee member stated that this is not Boston. The committee member does understand that the range is so they do not have to come in six months or a year and asked what the thought process was for implemented these changes. Ms. Freedman explained that have looked at Newton Centre, the current rate for the long term is 50 cents and a \$1.75 for the short term. They would keep the long term at 50 cents, raise most of the short term to a \$1.00 and raise Union St. to \$1.25 per hour. The committee member asked if there was a mechanism in place for seniors. Councilor Downs explained that if you are over 65 you can buy a parking pass every 2 years for \$5 dollars to park at any metered lots.

A committee member proposed an amendment that will state prior to parking meter fees being increased, written notice will be given to the City Council. Mr. Heath agreed with that amendment and then stated that there will also be public outreach meetings to alert the community to the change in parking meter fees. Councilor Norton motioned to approve this amendment and that passed unanimously.

A committee member stated that they agree with the \$5.00 so that the department can be set for a certain amount of years and they won't have to come back to the Council. This will be demand based and a committee member explained that they do not believe that the demand will be \$5.00 right away.

A committee member asked about the outreach meetings and if they would be going out to the business communities in Newton to see if they understood how this was going to work. Additionally, the committee member stated that the outreach community meetings need to clearly make sure the community knows that they can't change it. Mr. Heath explained that they will be communicating to the public that is how it is going to work, and these are the changes that are going to be made.

A committee member asked if anyone has taken advantage of the shared parking plan. This program was not taken advantage of because the businesses did not want to do it. A committee member expressed that if a business was interested then the public would have taken advantage of it.

Mr. Sobel stated that it is a maximum of 33 cents for 4 minutes which total to \$4.95. Mr. Heath explained that they would want the range to be between 50 cents and \$5.00. A committee member asked the other members what a comfortable range would be for them. A committee member stated that they would be more comfortable with even half of the \$5.00 mark. The committee member also stated that they agreed with the numbers that Ms. Freedman gave regarding Newton Centre. Several committee members agreed that they would like the range to be up to \$2.50. These committee members expressed that the Planning Department could come back in a year to say they need more flexibility on the range. These committee members stated that the jump to \$5.00 is too high. Others on the committee expressed that they wanted to be able to give the Planning Department more flexibility so they would not have to

come back to the committee in six months to a year. A committee member asked Councilor Downs to comment on this range. Councilor Downs explained that Newton has only increased parking meter fees 5 or 10 cents in the last 15 years, so the value has steadily gone down. This range will prioritize different zones that need more parking spaces that are readily available. Additionally, the idea is not to penalize the public but deter them from parking in front of a store for an extended period. A committee member asked if the 12 hour meters would also be subject to this range. Ms. Freedman explained that these meters would be subject to the range and explained that they would be implemented differently. These rates would be lower than the regular meters. A committee member asked how these spots would be used for the people that are taking the train in to work and not for people that just want the lower rate. Ms. Freedman explained that these spots are further away. Mr. Sobel added that the 12 hour spots usually fill up earlier in the day because those people are commuting into work. Mr. Heath explained that the goal for this range is to protect the front door spaces not to make it harder for commuters to park in the 12 hour spots. But committee members are concerned that people will choose the 12 hour spots because they are cheaper and then those will become unavailable to commuters.

A committee member noted that for a while the West Newton Lot was empty because of the price of the lot. Once they lowered the price and St. Bernadette's closed their lot the West Newton T lot was full again. Prior to that lot being used commuters parked all over the place in that area and still do. The committee member explained that raising the price could force commuter parking into the residential areas and suggested that the range should be lower so they can reevaluate the increase at a later time. A committee member commented that the Planning Department will be actively engaged in this project and if something is not working then they can fix it in real time. The overall goal of the city is to have less congestion and they have been working with the T so more people will take public transportation to work instead of driving. Councilor Noel motioned to approve as amended and this passed with a vote of 2-1-2 with Councilor Gentile opposing and Councilors Cote and Norton abstaining.

#331-19 Transfer \$136,020.45 from Water Fund Reserve to Water Main 2018 Debt Service
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of one hundred thirty-six thousand twenty dollars and forty-five cents (\$136,020.45) from the Water Fund Reserve to the Water Main 2018 Debt Service.

Action: Finance Approved 5-0

Note: Comptroller Sue Dzikowski presented the request to transfer \$136,020.45 from the Water Fund Reserve to the Water Main 2018 Debt Service. This is a debt service item for the Fiscal Year 2019, and it was inadvertently left off the Debt Service Budget. This is an outlier project because this borrowing is done off cycle of other borrowings and usually happens in the Fall. This is an MWRA Water Main loan for a million plus that is paid through 10 payments that are interest fee. The Debt Service Fiscal Year 2020 is fully loaded with this item. There will be no ramifications for the audit. Councilor Cote motioned to approve on this item which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard J. Gentile, Chair