

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2006

Present: Ald. Coletti (Chairman), Lennon, Linsky, Gentile, Salvucci, Parker, Schnipper and Lipof

Also Present: Ald. Baker and Sangiolo; David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Doris Breay (Appointee to Cousens Fund), Lane Sofman (Cousens Fund Board of Trustees), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Elaine Gentile (DPW), Rob Ricchi (CPC Planner), Josephine McNeil (Can-Do), Alan Schlesinger (Attorney for B’Nai Brith),

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#138-06 DORIS BREAY, 19 Blake Street, Newton, appointed on March 14, 2006 as a member of the Board of Trustees of the HORACE COUSENS INDUSTRIAL FUND; said term will expire on June 1, 2008.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:** A letter dated March 14, 2006 was submitted to the Committee by the Mayor indicating that, due to the unfortunate passing of Loretta Kowal, there is currently a vacancy on the Board of Trustees of the Horace Cousens Industrial Fund. Therefore, the Mayor is pleased to submit the name of Doris Breay to serve the City in that capacity. Sally Pellegrom of the Cousens Fund had encouraged Ms. Breay to apply for this position. Ms. Breay is currently the Assistant Dean of Academic and Student Affairs at Brandeis University. In that capacity, Ms. Breay indicated that her responsibilities include overseeing the planning and well-being of students who are in the advanced degree programs at Brandeis; she has also worked as a Special Needs teacher and has worked in the Newton Public Schools (as a reading and math teacher from 1984-1992) in the past. Ms. Breay has lived in Newton since 1979 and the Committee interviewed her this evening.

Lane Sofman, Board of Trustees member, introduced Ms. Breay to the Committee this evening. The Committee was very impressed with and appreciative of her willingness to serve the City in this capacity. The trust corpus of the Cousens Fund is approximately \$1.3 million; it distributes approximately \$80,000 each year to needy Newton residents.

Ultimately, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve Ms. Breay’s appointment.

#161-06      HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting acceptance of and authorization to expend the sum of \$17,000, received as grant funds from the Department of Environmental Protection, Municipal Environmental Stewardship Compliance Assistance. This grant will aid the Department of Public Works in development of an Environmental Management System that will bring together management and union members to develop best management practices in the Department's operations; this program continues the City's longstanding commitment to sound environmental practices.

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:**      Elaine Gentile Donovan from the Public Works Department was present this evening. She explained that this has been an ongoing Newton initiative which was started in approximately 2002. She informed the Committee that the City has developed an EMS (Environmental Management Systems) program. This program integrates environmental concerns into the daily practices, compliance and operations of various departments; however, this grant will specifically tie into the Public Works Department operations. The framework has been developed towards garage operations, fire consultant and in-house EMS operations. The EMS team consists of approximately 12 people who had almost complete support of all of the workers in DPW. Because of its commitment to the environmental safeguards in the workplace, Newton has received in excess of \$620,000 in grant funds from the DEP. Ms. Donovan was quite proud of the work done thusfar on this project, particularly the environmental work that has been accomplished using grant funds. She stated that most of all the objectives will develop the City's environmental policy and statement and will empower the workforce to make decisions about their environmental responsibilities and, most importantly, to implement a process that stresses training, communication, operational controls and goals towards minimizing environmental risks.

The Committee thanked Ms. Donovan for her grant writing work in assisting the City to get these funds awarded for this purpose. The Committee also indicated its concern that these funds have already been spent (the project has been underway since 2002). The Public Works Department used its recycling funds for this project (in anticipation of receipt of this grant), and, therefore, these grant funds will be used to replenish the recycling funds. With that understanding, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES, PS&T AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#163-06 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$40,000 from the Parking Meter Receipts Fund for the purpose of installing a new pay station at the Cypress Street municipal lot and for the purchase and installation of 100 replacements for obsolete parking meter heads throughout the City.

**PUB. FACILITIES APPROVED 6-0 ON 4/5/06**

**PS&T APPROVED 7-0-1 (Lennon abstaining) on 4/5/06**

**ACTION:** **FINANCE APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:** A letter dated March 28, 2006 was submitted to the Committee for review. This letter indicates that the Executive Department, through the Traffic Engineer, is attempting to modernize and simplify the municipal lot (which contains 57 metered spaces) located on Cypress Street in Newton Center. The removal of the existing parking meters will provide replacement or new installation equipment for other areas of the City, which will result in increased revenue. The first \$20,000 of this request will be used for the purchase and installation of the pay station. The remaining \$20,000 will be used for the purchase and installation of 100 additional replacement meters (for obsolete meter heads located throughout the city).

Under this new setup, those motorists who use this parking lot will park their cars and make payment for their desired amount of time at the pay station. The pay station will allow for more efficient collection (than the need to empty 57 individual meters) and will also aid parking control officers in reading the amount of time purchased for each space (for ticketing purposes). The re-deployment of these 57 meters, along with the new 100 meters, will assist in bringing 157 metered spaces in Newton Center up to date on the parking meter rates that were implemented over the past couple of years (the existing meters did not have the capability to be re-programmed to accept the new rates at the time, and therefore, they are all still at the previous rates). This will also provide for additional revenue.

The revenue per metered space is approximately 200 per year, which means that these 100 new meters will pay for themselves over the course of the next year. The City has an inventory of approximately 1,700 parking meters spread throughout its villages. The City estimates that we lose approximately \$35,000 per year by not having either functioning or updated meters to collect the current parking meter fees.

With the understanding that this purchase will enhance revenues, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve this request.

**REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#162-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$130,000 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the FY06 Fire Department overtime account.

**PS&T APPROVED 7-0 (Harney not voting) on 4/5/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE APPROVED 7-0 (Linsky not voting)**

**NOTE:** A letter dated March 27, 2006 was submitted by Fire Chief LaCroix to the Mayor indicating that, through February of this year, the Fire Department had expended overtime funds in the amount of \$291,312. This is the lowest amount of overtime expenditure for the Department over the past 8 years. The Chief indicated that the Fire Department continues to do a good job in controlling sick leave use and filling of vacancies in a timely manner. This appropriation request should cover the needs of the Department for overtime funds for the remainder of this fiscal year.

The original appropriation for FY06 for the Department was \$335,984. In past years, the Department has exceeded \$1 million in annual overtime costs; this is a substantial improvement, particularly due to the filling of vacancies in a timely manner and having a minimal number of transfers out of the Fire Suppression group into other communities in the Commonwealth.

The Committee held brief discussion with the Chief about the current status of the workforce. The Committee then voted 7-0, with Ald. Linsky not voting, to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMM. PRES. AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

#467-05 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$23,633 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for purposes of funding the design and study of the *Williams School Outdoor Intergenerational Community Classroom*.

**CMTE.ON COMM. PRES. APPROVED 8-0 ON 3/28/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE APPROVED 7-1 (Salvucci opposed)**

**NOTE:** Representatives from the Community Preservation Committee presented this project to the Committee this evening. They explained that this proposed outdoor classroom and pocket park will be located within the Willams School's boundary area (off of Hancock Street in Auburndale). The Williams PTO requests this money to pay for the study and planning phase of this construction project. According to the application, once constructed, the park will be used for active and passive recreation and to provide an outdoor resource for the Williams School educators to support curriculum in cooperation with local seniors, to advance neighborhood relations, and to add beautification for historical reflection to the area.

The proposed park will have gardens and a shaded area suitable for reading, gathering, or hosting of outdoor classroom work. There will be an open-air wood construction structure with a solid roof that will contain chess tables and benches beneath it. The structures are intended to enhance the current under-utilized playground area for the use of the entire Auburndale community. The \$23,633 will be used for (\$21,633) professional services of an architect, landscape architect and project manager, and (\$2,000) for legal costs.

The assumption is that, at some point, there will be an estimated \$250,000 expenditure for construction of this project after the design phase is complete. The Committee had questions about how much fundraising would be available to supplement that construction cost. The project, to date, has had a great deal of school community and neighborhood support; architects have donated their time and other advocates have also donated their time in order to prepare this project for presentation to the CPC, and the Board of Aldermen.

Ald. Salvucci expressed some concern about the expenditure of these funds, as did Chair Coletti, regarding potential misuse of the planned setup for skateboard use and other dangerous activities. Comments regarding this concern were taken under advisement by the architect present this evening.

A motion to approve this item carried by a vote of 7-1, with Ald. Salvucci opposed.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMM. PRES. AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

#140-06 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$351,025 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for the purpose of funding the *11-13 Cambria Road* community housing project in West Newton.

**CMTE.ON COMM. PRES. APPROVED 8-0 ON 3/28/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:** Josephine McNeil of Can-Do was present this evening. She explained that this proposal was to purchase a property to provide two units of low-income family rental housing in West Newton. The property, which was, in fact, recently purchased by Can-Do, requires minor renovations, such as de-leading, window replacement, and upgrading of electrical wiring. The total cost to purchase this unit \$625,000. Basically, the funds requested through this item will assist in the pay down of the mortgage on this property.

There will be two, very low affordable housing rental units at this location (less than 50% of adjusted median income). The proposal breakdown includes \$850 for Law Department expenses, \$175 for registering legal documents, and \$350,000 for the contribution to the project.

The Committee reviewed the budget for the project, and was pleased to see that various departments in the City have interacted (in terms of providing necessary comparable prices for homes and property) with Josephine to assist her with information contained in this proposal. This property is located across the street from a prior Can-Do project; the owner of the property of 11-13 Cambria Road actually approached Can-Do to offer them an opportunity to purchase this property at a fair price for this proposed use. Based upon the original application submitted by Can-Do, the City has already expended \$200,000 in Housing Development forgivable loan funds to the project. There is no significant construction work that needs to be done on this property, outside of the minor renovations listed and de-leading. The total cost for renovation and repairs is approximately \$89,000.

The Committee thanked Ms. McNeil for the presentation and planning on this proposal; this seemed like one of the most appropriate uses for CPA funds, especially in light of the fact that this project will provide rental units (and not condominiums). Therefore, a motion was made to approve this request; that motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMM. PRES. AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

#144-06 **COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE** recommending that the sum of \$78,500 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for the purpose of funding the *Durant Kenrick Homestead Needs Assessment* historic preservation project in Newton Corner.

**CMTE.ON COMM. PRES. APPROVED 7-0-1 (Linsky abstaining)  
ON 3/28/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE APPROVED 6-0-2 (Gentile, Salvucci abstaining)**

**NOTE:** This item came up this evening as the result of work done by the Newton Historical Society and Aldermen from Ward 7. This property, which is a home located on Waverley Avenue, pre-dates the American Revolution; it was constructed in 1732 and has been in continuous ownership by the Durant Kenrick family (or its trust) for many years.

In 2005, the Foundation considered selling some of the land on this property for construction land. The City has increased the assessment on the buildable portion of this land to the point where the Foundation can no longer afford to support the financing required to keep this property as is. Therefore, the Foundation has offered this property to the Historical Society for the purpose of use as a museum. All of the furnishings contained in it are original and of antique quality; the building and its buildable lot are incredible specimens of the period in which it was built. There is a current value (between the land and the building and furnishings) of \$3 million for this property.

The Committee held lengthy discussion in relation to the City's needs for a property of this type and how it would be operated and maintained. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done in order to understand the ramifications of the acceptance by the City of

this property; it would be very important to undertake an assessment study and develop a Capital Improvement Plan for it.

It is anticipated that this item will be placed on Second Call at the April 18<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, therefore, additional details regarding the debate that took place in Committee will be provided at that time. Also, please refer to details contained in the Committee on Community Preservation Report of 3/28/06, which was distributed under separate cover to all members of the Board on April 7, 2006.

This property will provide a great educational and enjoyment opportunity for Newton residents. It was once part of a 91-acre estate, which includes much of Farlow Park and, most likely, the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course land as well.

Because the gifting of this valuable property seems like such a wonderful opportunity, the Committee voted 6-0-2, with Ald. Salvucci and Lennon abstaining, to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMM. PRES. AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

#141-06 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$1,207,825 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for the purpose of funding the *Covenant Residences* community housing project in Chestnut Hill.

**CMTE. ON COMM. PRES. APPROVED 6-0-2 (Linsky, Parker abstaining) on 3/28/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE APPROVED 4-0-3 (Linsky, Salvucci and Parker abstaining; Gentile not voting)**

**NOTE:** It is expected that this item will be placed on Second Call at the April 18<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, therefore, please review the attached information for this project in advance of that meeting.

Basically, the project description for this item is that the applicant, B’Nai Brith Housing of New England, requests this funding in order to support a community housing project for low to moderate income homebuyers in Chestnut Hill. This property is located at 27-35 Commonwealth Avenue, and currently consists of a 12-unit multi-family building. A new 44-unit building will be constructed behind the existing building to complete this project, providing a total of 56 units, which will be affordable in perpetuity to households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income. The developer will provide 11 units of affordable housing in the building, and has also agreed to provide 3 additional affordable units. The market-rate units have an estimated price range of \$300,000 to \$430,000.

These funds being requested are for uses including: \$1.2 million to support housing, \$7,650 for Law Department expenses, and \$175 for registering deeds and legal documents. The goal of this project is to provide 14 units of affordable low to moderate

income units. The petitioner will also apply for \$500,000 from the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust. These units will create some additional affordable housing units in an area of Newton where this type of housing is difficult to find. The subsidy is approximately \$85,714 per unit, and seems to be a low-cost way of providing this type of housing.

One of the other goals to come up with a compromise proposal instead of the original proposal for demolition of the existing building and construction of two towers of condos and the submission of a 40B project, which would have created well over 100 units of housing. Because the original proposal was not in the best interest of the community, neighbors and members of the Board of Aldermen, along with representatives from the Newton Housing Partnership and the League of Women Voters have worked with the petitioner to come to this agreed upon proposal.

There was some concern by Ald. Salvucci and others that there will be condo documents which will prohibit undergraduate purchase of these units for students at Boston College. At the same time, there were very few other restrictions on the purchase and occupancy of these units.

Ultimately, the Committee voted 4-0-3, with Ald. Linsky, Salvucci and Parker abstaining and Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO FINANCE AND CMTE. ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION**

#426-05 ALD. BAKER et als proposing acquisition by the City of Newton or related agencies of all or partial interests in appropriate properties in Newton using Community Preservation or other funds to preserve or enhance such properties for various public purposes.

**CMTE.ON COMM. PRES. NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Lappin not voting) on 3/28/06**

**ACTION: FINANCE NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Gentile not voting)**

**NOTE:** The Committee, without debate, voted to support the recommendation of the Committee on Community Preservation for NO ACTION NECESSARY on this item by a vote of 7-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman