

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2004

Present: Ald. Coletti (Chair), Gerst, Linsky, Gentile, Stewart, Parker, Schnipper and Lipof

Also Present: David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Re Cappoli (Chief Procurement Officer), Lou Taverna (Director of Utilities, DPW), Gayle Smalley (Associate City Solicitor)

#125-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a transfer of funds in the amount of \$2,725 from the Clerk of the Board full-time salary account to the City Clerk expense account for the purpose of allowing the City Clerk to purchase vital records binders. This transfer of funds is possible due to surplus funds created by a vacancy in the Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: A letter dated February 9, 2004 was attached to the agenda from the City Clerk indicating that a transfer is required within the City Clerk/Clerk of the Board budget. The transfer is needed in order to buy additional binders for vital records for the City Clerk's Division. The City is required by law to keep hard copies of birth, death and marriage records in our vault permanently and these binders are a means of keeping the records well protected and in good order.

Due to the dimensions of the original documents, which is regulated by the Secretary of State's Office, the City is required to order custom cut binders. Attached to the agenda was a proposal from Viatech, the company that provides the binders. Viatech will provide 25 marriage/birth certificate binders for \$75 a piece and 10 death certificate binders for \$85 a piece. The Committee reviewed the backup information and determined that the Clerk's Office needs the expenditure to protect vital statistics. A motion was made to approve and the item carried unanimously

#127-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$23,885 from the Capital Stabilization Fund for the purpose of funding the purchase of a new postage machine by the Purchasing Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Re Cappoli was present this evening and presented a letter dated February 9, 2004 that was sent to the Mayor. The City's postage machine, located in the mailroom in City Hall, has required in excess of thirty service calls since July of this year. The machine is fourteen years old and the manufacturer (that no longer makes parts),

therefore, must search nationwide to secure used parts to repair the machine. The manufacturer has also stopped training new technicians in the repair of the equipment and, consequently, the machine is down for long periods of time. When the machine is down, the City sends over 500 pieces of mail a day over to the School Department in order to get it processed quickly and efficiently.

Pitney Bowes has accommodated the City with a long-term loaner but it is a smaller machine that is much slower than the original machine. Re Cappoli indicated that many of the departments are gearing up to send out mass mailings. Some backup items regarding the replacement machine were attached to the agenda. The new postage machine is \$24,885 and the annual maintenance cost will be \$1,889. There will be an additional annual software maintenance cost of \$325. The annual savings in switching to the new machine will be \$1,054 from what the City is currently paying for the maintenance of the old machine. The Committee, understanding the age of the machine and the volume of postage needing to go through the machine, had no problems with this item. A motion was made to approve, which carried unanimously.

#126-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to expend the sum of \$16,377.84 from the Sewer Surplus fund for the purpose of settling a claim by two residents whose home was flooded with sewage after a City crew opened a cleanout cap in the basement of said home without first checking to see if the sewer line was surcharged.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Backup information in the form of a letter dated January 20, 2004 was presented to the Committee. The claimants are Daniel Stepner and Laura Jeppesen and the claim involves a sewer incident, which occurred at their residence at 941 Centre Street on March 24, 2003. A backup affecting the basement laundry sink occurred and they called the City sewer crew. The crew proceeded to open the cleanout cap without investigating whether the sewer main was surcharged. As it turned out, the stoppage was in the main sewer and the crew's action caused the release of a large quantity of sewage into the basement.

Mr. Stepner and Ms. Jeppesen made a claim against the City for professional cleaning, damages to the basement and its contents. The original demand was in the amount of \$28,793. After negotiations, the Stepner and Jeppesen family has agreed to settle for \$16,337.84. This amount is fair and good settlement, reflecting the actual losses. Therefore, the City Solicitor recommends this item be approved and the case settled.

The Committee requested that Gayle Smalley provide a breakdown of how much was actually for damages and how much was for cleaning to the Board of Aldermen (attached). Based on getting that information before the next Board of Aldermen's meeting this item will be approved on first call. A motion was made to approve and the motion carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#129-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$250,000 (\$188,600 from Water Surplus and \$61,400 from Sewer Surplus) be appropriated in order to supplement the overtime accounts in the Water and Sewer divisions of the Public Works Department.

PUBLIC FACILITIES APPROVED 8-0 ON 2/18/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: The backup information was two letters dated February 10, 2004 that were sent to the Board of Aldermen from both the Mayor and the Commissioner of Public Works. They will be attached to the report. The letters indicate that this money is required in order to supplement the overtime accounts in the Sewer and Water Department.

There are three reasons for the request. First, the overtime budgets in the Water and Sewer Department will run short this year because they were cut at the beginning of the year in anticipation of adding a second shift for water and sewer emergencies. Because of the ongoing difficulties in negotiating with the union to create the second shift, the shift has not been implemented at this time. Therefore, overtime is required for night work while this second shift is not implemented. Secondly, January was a colder than normal month and the Water Department experienced significantly more water line breaks that required the workers go out on emergency basis. Lastly, the installation of new security equipment at Waban Hill Reservoir has been delayed and as a result there is a requirement to keep the police presence at the Waban Hill Reservoir in place for an additional month on an overtime basis. In the attachment, you can see that the Sewer Account will need about \$61,155, the Water Account will need \$71,527 and the Police Account will require \$33,978.

The Committee understands the need for the additional overtime and hopes that the additional use of funds for security at the water reservoir will end very shortly. The Committee also understands the need to continually repair the water service breaks during this cold weather. Therefore, a motion was made to approve as submitted the request for \$188,600 from Water Surplus and \$61,400 from Sewer Surplus to be appropriated into the overtime accounts. The motion carried by a vote of eight in favor and none opposed.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman