

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2004

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

Absent: Ald. Schnipper and Lipof

Also Present: Ald. Johnson; Elizabeth Dromey (Director of Assessment Administration), William Chenard (Board of Assessors), Dolores Hamilton (Director of Human Resources), Lori Burke (Workers' Compensation Manager, Human Resources), David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Martha Horn (Conservation Planner), Lara Kritzer (Historical Planner), Charlie McMillen (Community Preservation Committee), Bob Staulo (Brigham House)

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#147-04 WILLIAM D. CHENARD appointed on February 20, 2004 as a member of the NEWTON BOARD OF ASSESSORS, filling the unexpired term of William Figler; said term to expire on February 1, 2006.
(60-day Board action date: 4/30/04)

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: Elizabeth Dromey was present with Mr. Chenard. Mr. Chenard provided a copy of his resume. He is currently a resident of the town of Natick, MA and is currently responsible with the direction of the Natick town Assessor's office. This includes property revaluations in excess of \$5.4 billion and over \$1 billion in commercial property. He also works with computer-assisted mass appraisal software and he has done a significant amount of work in the development of the Town Assessors website. He has also done some consulting work with various communities regarding municipal assessing. Mr. Chenard has a very strong background in technology as it relates to the field of municipal assessment administration. He has served the town as it's Director of Assessment since 1996 and served as assistant Assessor for one year prior to taking on his current post.

The Committee was very impressed with Mr. Chenard's background and qualifications. They thanked him for his willingness to serve on the Newton Board of Assessors and voted 5-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve his appointment.

#148-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$157,000 (\$140,000 from Free Cash; **\$15,732** from Sewer Surplus, and **\$1,268 from the Sewer Rate Relief Fund**) in order to supplement Workers' Compensation accounts for the remainder of this fiscal year.

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 as amended (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: Dolores Hamilton, Director of Human Resources and Lori Burke, Workers' Compensation Manager, were present this evening. The Committee reviewed the backup information (attachment #1) that indicated that there have been 5 more claims during this fiscal year that have added more than \$100,000 to the cost of this benefit this year. There were also four additional cases that will require surgery in the future, which will add to the anticipated medical costs by approximately \$48,000. Although there was a surplus in the Workers' Compensation Trust Fund, it does not have sufficient funds to cover the City's potential liability in 2004. Attached to this evening's agenda was a supplemental document which was a balance sheet indicating that there is approximately \$6,054,000 in this fund as of 2/29/04. It also showed the amounts that have been paid out of this fund. In order to maintain the actuarial requirements and fully fund this Workers' Compensation Trust Fund, the City cannot transfer funds out of this trust at this time.

The Committee discussed the item and reviewed some of the surgery requirements and how the City can keep up with these costs. Based upon the information provided, including the modification to the funding source, the Committee voted 5-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this request.

67-04(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting acceptance of and authorization to expend the sum of an additional \$2,000, received from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to the Newton Health Department for support of emergency preparedness activities.

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: A letter dated February 19th was submitted by the Mayor's office indicating that there was an original grant of \$18,000 that the Health Department had received (which was approved under docket item #67-04) for support of emergency preparedness activities. Since that item was approved, the City has received an additional grant in the amount of \$2,000 for the same purpose. Therefore, approval of this request would simply increase the overall amount available to the Health Department for these activities.

The Committee reviewed the information provided and, upon recommendation by the Comptroller, voted 5-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this request.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE: *The Committee discussed the following items and reviewed the backup information that was provided as attachments to this evening's agenda. Because this information has already been distributed to all members of the Board on two separate occasions, the only backup information that is attached to this report is the draft board order for each item:*

**REFERRED TO CMTE ON COMMUNITY PRESERV. AND FINANCE
COMMITTEE**

#130-04 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$90,000 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund as a grant for \$40,000 and a loan for \$50,000 for the purpose of completing the installation of the new black ornamental steel fence and two new gate sets at Houghton Garden.

CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 7-0 ON 2/24/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0-2 (Stewart, Gerst abstaining)**

NOTE: This request is to complete the installation of 710 linear feet of new black ornamental steel fence and two new gate sets with ornamental posts at Houghton Garden. This will serve to define the edge of the property and secure the site against vandalism, dumping, and entry of motor vehicles. In addition, the new fence will be a significant upgrade to the existing chain link fence and will add visual beauty to the park.

The Community Preservation Committee found that this item meets the recreation goals of the Community Preservation Act. The recommendation is that the \$50,000 loan will be repaid upon receipt of grant funds from the Massachusetts Preservation Fund. As proposed, no more than one plaque will be installed on the fence and work will commence no later than December 31, 2004. This project will be completed no later than December 31, 2005.

With all of this information in mind, the Committee voted 4-0-2, with Ald. Stewart and Gerst abstaining, to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO CMTE ON COMMUNITY PRESERV. AND FINANCE
COMMITTEE**

#131-04 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that sum of \$2,000 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund as a grant for the purpose of funding the design, fabrication and installation of sixteen historic district signs for the Newtonville and Newton Upper Falls Historic Districts.

CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 7-0 ON 2/24/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: The applicants on this project, the Newton Upper Falls Historic District and the Newtonville Historic District, are requesting funds for the design and installation

of sixteen historic district signs (eight for each of the two districts) to be installed at key locations throughout these districts.

The Committee reviewed this item with representatives of the Historic District commissions and Lara Kritzer. The Committee felt that this item does meet the standards of the CPA and agreed to support this request. After very brief discussion, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve this item.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMMUNITY PRESERV. AND FINANCE
COMMITTEE**

#132-04 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$20,000 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund as a grant for the purpose of conducting a restoration/preservation needs assessment for the Brigham House at 20 Hartford Street.

CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 7-0 ON 2/24/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Ald. Johnson and Bob Saulo, both Board members at Brigham House, were present this evening. They indicated that these funds are being requested to restore various exterior and interior elements of this Queen Anne style building that was constructed in 1886. However, the applicants are now planning to hire a preservation architect to conduct a needs assessment leading to the preparation of construction documents and supervision of the work for the restoration of the building as Phase I of this project is begun. Phase I will be approximately \$105,600.

The Committee reviewed the information as to who will be hired to perform this project. According to the Board Order, this work will be performed under the direction and control of the Public Buildings Commissioner for funding a grant to hire a preservation architecture firm to conduct the needs assessment (this work will not be done “in-house”). A memorandum of understanding will be executed by the Historical Commission and the Mayor will require that any major alterations to the exterior of this building will be reviewed and approved by the Historical Commission. There are additional requirements that more permanent measures for the protection of the historic and architectural integrity of the building be in place, which requires all renovations to be approved by the Historical Commission in order to get landmark status for this building (since it is leased from the City for \$1 per year). This work is to be completed between December 31, 2004 and December 31, 2005.

Although there were some concerns about how this study and the expenditure of \$20,000 was going to be done, the Committee was ultimately supportive of this item and voted 6-0 to approve the request.

**REFERRED TO CMTE. ON COMMUNITY PRESERV. AND FINANCE
COMMITTEES**

#227-03(3) COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that, in accordance with Board Order #227-03, the sum of \$65,375 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for the purpose of funding the June 15, 2004 interest payment on \$5,000,000 in general obligation bonds.

CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 7-0 ON 2/24/04

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: David Wilkinson discussed this item with the Committee. He indicated that \$65,375 is the first payment to be made on the bonds for the purchase of the Kessler Woods property. These bonds have been, in fact, sold already. The closing has not yet happened, but board order #227-03 specifies that bonds or notes issued pursuant to the board order shall be repaid from the Community Preservation Fund in each year.

On that basis, the Treasurer sold \$5 million in general obligation bonds on December 16, 2003. The first payment comes due on June 15, 2004. Once appropriated, these funds will be used to make that payment.

With that understanding, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#264-02(2) PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE requesting adoption of an ordinance to establish the composition, terms of office, and procedures in order to implement the Aid to Elderly Taxation Fund (to which voluntary donations may be made for the purpose of defraying the real estate taxes of elderly citizens in Newton per acceptance of G.L. c. 60 §3D.)

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 7-0 AS AMENDED ON 2/18/04

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: A copy of the new ordinance relative to the composition of the committee (staggered terms and reporting requirements as well as other requirements) was attached to the agenda this evening and can be viewed as attachment #2 to this report.

The Committee reviewed this final draft that is ready for approval at this time. Without debate, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve this item, as amended (as reflected in the attached draft).

#120-98 ALD. PARKER AND COMPTROLLER recommending the appointment of a special subcommittee of the Board to work with the Comptroller in developing a summary level financial report for public information.

ACTION: NAN 6-0

#241-02 ALD. PARKER, GERST, LINSKY, MANSFIELD, CICCONE, LIPSITT
requesting discussion of City policy with respect to city-owned vehicles,
in particular, the use of such vehicles during non-working hours.

ACTION: NAN 6-0

REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES, PS&T AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

34-03 ALD. COLETTI requesting discussion with Executive Department and
Fire Department relative to street light maintenance contract with
Wellesley Power and Light with the possibility transferring this function
to of the Fire Department's Wire Group.

ACTION: NAN 6-0

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#426-03 DAVID DONAHUE, GINNY GARDNER, ROBERT ANTONELLIS
requesting His Honor the Mayor, appropriate 1.2 million dollars from free
cash to the School Department for the purpose of eliminating all user fees,
i.e. sports, bus, parking.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES NAN'D 7-0 on 1/21/04.

ACTION: NAN 6-0

NOTE: It was agreed by Committee members that these items are currently not
necessary to be carried on the agenda. It was understood that any one of these items may
be re-docketed in the future for further discussion. With that, the Committee took
individual votes on each of these items, all of which were NAN 6-0.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman