

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2004

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

Also Present: David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Ann Cornaro (IT Director), Mark Gilroy (Commissioner of Inspectional Services), Kathy Glick-Weil (Library Director), Chief Joe LaCroix (Fire Department), Nick Parnell (Public Buildings Commissioner), Bob Rooney (DPW Commissioner), Jeff Sacks (Community Preservation Committee)

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#180-04 LINDA HILLER, 41 Bound Brook Road, Newton Highlands, appointed as a full member of the NEWTON TAXATION AID COMMITTEE for an initial term of one (1) year; said term to expire on May 1, 2005.
(60-day Board action date: 6/5/04)

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: Linda Hiller was present this evening. A letter dated March 26th was submitted to the Committee by the Mayor indicating that he was appointing Linda to the Newton Taxation Aid Committee for a one-year term. The Mayor indicated in this letter that he is basing this appointment on her outstanding experience. By profession, Ms. Hiller is a Social Worker and she has worked with the elderly and those with chronic diseases. She has also been a member of the Mayor's Committee for People With Disabilities for 2 years. She has been involved with the Countryside PTO, and has been a guest speaker on disability issues.

The Committee, after reviewing Ms. Hiller's resume and holding brief discussion with her this evening regarding her appointment, agreed that she has lots to offer to the Taxation Aid Committee. The Committee voted 7-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve Ms. Hiller's appointment.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#181-04 DAVID LESCOHIER, 93 Adena Road, West Newton, appointed as a full member of the NEWTON TAXATION AID COMMITTEE for an initial term of two (2) years; said term to expire on May 1, 2006.
(60-day Board action date: 6/5/04)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Gerst, Parker, Linsky, Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: Mr. Lescohier was present this evening. The Committee reviewed the appointment letter submitted by the Mayor dated March 24th. Mr. Lescohier has professional background in human services and is currently working for the Communities for People organization in Boston. He has in-depth experience in general management and marketing, strategic planning, and media relations.

After reviewing Mr. Lescohier's resume and holding brief discussion with him regarding his appointment, the Committee agreed that he also has a lot to offer the Taxation Aid Committee. The Committee voted 4-0, with Ald. Gerst, Parker, Linsky and Gentile not voting, to approve Mr. Lescohier's appointment.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#182-04 ALD. JOHN STEWART, 23 Pierrepont Road, Auburndale, appointed as a full member of the NEWTON TAXATION AID COMMITTEE for an initial term of three (3) years; said term to expire on May 1, 2007.
(60-day Board action date: 6/5/04)

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: As Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee, Ald. Stewart has assisted in the formation of the Newton Taxation Aid Committee. In order to get this Committee up and running, it will be necessary to provide oversight on Ald. Stewart's part. He has shown a keen interest in assisting the elderly with this program.

The Committee determined that, to date, \$26,000 has been raised to distribute for aid on taxes as a result of the voluntary check-off option on tax bills. It was agreed that Ald. Stewart would be the appropriate Board of Aldermen representative to serve on the Taxation Aid Committee. The Committee then voted 7-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve Ald. Stewart's appointment.

#183-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$2,500 from Free Cash in order to supplement the overtime account in the City Clerk's office.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: A letter dated March 30th was submitted to the Committee. It explained that, unfortunately, due to a temporary shortage of staff in the City Clerk's division (one of the four staff members was out on maternity leave for 12 weeks), there was a requirement for the remaining staff members to work overtime in order to accomplish the annual dog license renewal project and other document processing that required timely attention.

Understanding that this request was necessary and appropriate, the Committee voted 7-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this item.

#184-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$705,000 from Salary Reserve for the purpose of fully funding health insurance costs in the General Fund for the remainder of FY04.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: A letter dated March 30th was submitted indicating that, at the beginning of FY04, the City made collective bargaining proposals to its unions to pay increases in wages from within changes that were going to be made in health care benefits. In particular, these savings were to come from increased prescription co-payments and the introduction of deductibles for certain services. Eventually, the City and the unions settled contracts implementing these changes. There was also a forecast for an 18% increase in health insurance premiums this year.

The effect of the health insurance changes was to lower the increase to 14.5%. Now that the City has settled contracts with most of the unions and did not change the 80/20 split, the funds that were originally set aside for wage adjustments need to be transferred back into the health insurance fund to cover the shortfall for the premium payments.

The Committee understood and supported the need for this item and voted 8-0 to approve this request.

#185-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$90,836 from Free Cash for the purpose of purchasing computer software, hardware, licenses and other equipment through the Information Technology Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Ann Cornaro, IT Director, was present this evening. She presented a letter dated April 2nd that explained that these funds will be used to upgrade 21 computers and one high-volume printer (\$22,740), to purchase software licenses (\$16,250), replace 4 critical servers, and upgrade the network backbone in order to process high-speed activities throughout city departments (\$43,612), and Arcview Licenses (\$2,426).

The Committee reviewed the extensive backup provided (that was attached to this evening's agenda). The Committee agreed with the direction in which the IT Department is bringing the City through these upgrades and licenses. The Committee voted 8-0 to approve this item.

#186-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$165,319 from Free Cash for the purpose of upgrading the Pentamation accounting software system and purchasing the CommunityPlus permitting module for the Inspectional Services Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Ann Cornaro also presented this item to the Committee. A letter dated March 30th was presented for Committee review, indicating that the Pentamation Company is ending its support for some of the earlier programs (the Open Series) and they are now putting all of their technology and design work into a new web-based system. Over the past 9 months, the Budget Director and the staff members from IT, Comptroller, Treasurer/Collector, Purchasing, Human Resources and School departments have reviewed the new system, along with a system from MUNIS. The City has determined that it is absolutely imperative at this time to move to the proposed new web-based system. Since the switch to the new Pentamation system is an upgrade (as opposed to the purchase of an entire new system), the total cost, including the cost of previous appropriations approved by the Board of Aldermen, will be approximately \$260,000.

The second component of this item is the purchase of the Community Plus module. This will provide for major improvement in the operations of the Inspectional Services Department. This system will speed up the issuance of permits and reduce the amount of administrative time required to process requests, as well as create a central permit database. The new system will change the current paper-based system to an electronic system that will provide for more efficient management and access.

Mark Gilroy, Commissioner of Inspectional Services, was present this evening. He indicated how important it is at this time to get this system in place and functioning properly in order to assist in the overall effective operation of ISD.

The Committee understood the appropriateness of the two aspects of this docket item and supported moving forward with these technological purchases. With that, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve this item.

#187-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$5,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of supplementing the Veterans' Benefits account for the remainder of FY04.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0 -- NOTE: Letter received from Mayor on 4/16 requesting that appropriation be increased to \$7,500 (SEE ATTACHED)**

NOTE: The backup information that was attached to this evening's agenda explained the need for this appropriation. Without debate, the Committee fully supported this appropriation and voted 8-0 to approve the item.

CLERK'S NOTE: On 4/16, Mayor Cohen submitted the attached letter requesting that this appropriation be increased to \$7,500. This increase may either be voted as an amendment on the floor of the Board on 4/20, or it may be docketed as a separate new item on the docket for 5/3.

#188-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$208,683 from the Salary Reserve fund in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the Newton Police Association.

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: This union agreement is a one-year agreement. It provides step increases, computer stipend increase, and a slight change in vacation schedule. This is a pattern bargaining settlement similar to the other union contracts settled this year. After this police contract is completed, the only union contract outstanding is that of the firefighters. This contract will expire on June 30, 2004.

Without debate, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#160-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$50,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of supplementing the overtime account in the Library for the remainder of FY04.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 4-0 (Baker, Parker, Sangiolo not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Kathy Glick-Weil, Library Director, was present this evening. She presented a letter indicating that, as she had expected, her department requires this \$50,000 to cover the costs for overtime in the Library for the remainder of this fiscal year.

The Committee reviewed the background of overtime costs from FY01 through this fiscal year. This year's total estimated cost for overtime is \$119,000. The Executive Department has assured that sufficient overtime funds for FY05 will be included in the forthcoming Budget. The Committee indicated its support of the continuation of Sunday library hours, and voted 8-0 to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#196-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$111,500 from Free Cash for the purpose of replacing bunker gear used by firefighters when responding to a fire or other incident.

PS&T APPROVED 4-0 (Gentile, Linsky not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#196-04(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$30,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of replacing outdated electrical watch desk control consoles at two (2) fire stations.

PS&T APPROVED 4-0 (Gentile, Linsky not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: Chief LaCroix was present this evening. He indicated that, on the first item, this is the first year of a three-year program to replace bunker gear for all firefighters in the city. When the three-year program is complete, all equipment for existing personnel and new equipment for new recruits will be in place.

The Committee reviewed the current status of uniforms and quotes provided to the City by the clothing manufacturer for their replacement. There are 51 people in the Department who will receive equipment as this first year replacement program. The cost for replacing this equipment is estimated at \$1,510 per employee. For the 16 new recruits will be \$2,153.45, since they will require all new equipment. The total cost of this three-year program will be \$334,501.20.

The Committee agreed that this is an urgent safety measure that requires support and funding for the protection of our firefighters. With that understanding, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve item #196-04.

The Committee then went on to review the subsequent request for funding of the replacement of watch desk consoles in two firehouses.

Chief LaCroix explained that \$30,000 is necessary to replace these 1950's model consoles at the fire stations. The quote provided by the RB Allen Company is \$15,000 per unit. This state-of-the-art equipment is necessary in order to effectively and efficiently process calls coming in to the department. This equipment will be installed in station #7 (in Newton Upper Falls) and station #2 (on Commonwealth Avenue in West Newton).

The Committee reviewed this information and supported the purchase of this vital equipment. The Committee voted 8-0 to approve item #196-04(2).

REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#197-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$280,000 from Free Cash to supplement the Fire Department overtime accounts for the remainder of FY04.

PS&T APPROVED 3-0-2 (Lennon, Linsky abstaining; Gentile not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: The Committee and the Board had anticipated that there was going to be a need for additional overtime funds to carry the Department through the remainder of this fiscal year.

Chief LaCroix explained that these funds are needed because the department has lost some of the firefighters hired off of the state layoff list (they were called back to work in Lynn, Fall River and New Bedford). Since these vacancies have not yet been filled, this overtime is required to keep minimum staffing levels. The City has recently appointed 16 new firefighters to fill these positions, but they are currently attending fire academy training. It is hoped that the hiring of these 16 firefighters will greatly reduce future needs for overtime funds in the Department.

The total overtime cost for the department for this fiscal year will be \$1.2 million.

The Committee understood the need for this overtime appropriation and voted 8-0 to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#198-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$30,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of funding the repair of poles and associated apparatus in fire houses throughout the city.

PS&T APPROVED 5-0 (Gentile not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Chief LaCroix explained that the sliding poles in each of the firestations are the original brass poles. Unfortunately, over the years, the seals that prevent garage exhaust fumes from filtering up into the living quarters have worn out.

The Committee reviewed the backup information provided and understood the need for this important safety improvement. The Committee voted 8-0 to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PUB. SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#199-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$65,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund for the purpose of refurbishing Fire Pump Truck #10.

PS&T APPROVED 5-0 (Gentile not voting) on 4/7/04

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Chief LaCroix presented a letter dated April 1st. He explained that Fire Pump Truck #10, a 1987 engine with 63 miles on it, is in need of being refurbished. The transmission is in excellent condition. This project will provide for reconditioning of the pump, installing a complete new brake system, and repair and replacement of any

damaged equipment and body work. The truck will also be re-painted (in red and white to match the rest of the fleet).

The Committee saw the need for this refurbishment project and supported the item by a vote of 8-0.

REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#202-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$150,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of replacing windows at the Pierce Elementary School.

PUB FAC HELD 7-0 (Salvucci not voting) ON 4/7/04

ACTION: HELD 8-0

REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#202-04(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$26,950 from Free Cash for the design of new windows at the Pierce Elementary School.

PUB FAC APPROVED 7-0 (Salvucci not voting) ON 4/7/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: These items were discussed by the Public Facilities Committee on April 7th (see that report for details).

Nick Parnell was present this evening. He explained that this project has been on the project list since 1996 and it is now on the top priority list.

The Committee agreed this evening to hold the original request and move forward with the subsequent item for design work on this project. Therefore, the first vote was 8-0 to hold item #202-04. The second vote was 8-0 to approve item #202-04(2) so that the design phase of this project can begin.

REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#204-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$381,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of completing the funding of snow and ice costs in the Department of Public Works for the current year.

PUB FAC APPROVED 7-0 (Yates not voting) ON 4/7/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: Commissioner Bob Rooney was present this evening. He presented detailed backup information relative to the costs of snow and ice this season. (this information was attached to this evening's agenda)

The Committee reviewed the provided information and, without debate, voted 8-0 to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PUB. FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#205-04 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$120,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of purchasing a new street sweeper for the Department of Public Works.

PUB FAC APPROVED 6-0 (Gerst, Yates not voting) ON 4/7/04

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: A letter dated March 30th was submitted. Commissioner Rooney explained that a new sweeper is being ordered to assist in effectively keeping the streets clean (including daily sweeping of village squares). Replacement of these street sweepers every ten years is absolutely necessary. This new equipment is being purchased to replace a sweeper that is over ten years old.

The Committee indicated its support of the street sweeping program by voting 8-0 to approve this request.

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

#162-04 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$30,000 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for purposes of funding a grant for \$30,000 to fund the Stearns/Pellegrini Long-range Park Plan.

**CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 6-0-1 (Hess-Mahan abstaining)
ON 3/23/04**

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: Jeff Sacks was present from the Community Preservation Committee. He reviewed an analysis of the CPA request for an open space plan in order to make sure that the project will meet the recreation needs of the citizens and make sites handicapped accessible. This is the beginning of what will be an approximately \$250,000 expense to upgrade these facilities. The proposed Board Order indicates that these funds will be expended under the direction of the Director of Planning and Development. The long-range plan will be submitted before the end of 2004 in order to provide guidance for future improvements.

The Committee voted 8-0 to approve this appropriation request.

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

#163-04 COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending that the sum of \$263,000 be appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund for purposes of funding a deferred forgivable loan to create two (2) units of community housing at 19 West Street.

CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 7-0

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: This item is a request to assist a local non-profit organization in making an acquisition of this two-unit home on West Street. The goal is to make it into a group home. The Committee reviewed the background on this project which indicates that the Framingham-based non-profit agency (established in 1975) provides housing and support services to individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities, chemical dependency and other related problems.

The applicant acquired this property in January, 2004 for a total of \$606,000. The proposal is to use this forgivable loan to pay down the line of credit that was used to purchase to property. The total development cost of this project is \$676,400 (which includes three sources of financing). Community Preservation funds will be the first source of funds, \$76,400 of the company's funds were used, and the last source is a commitment from the City of Newton for \$337,000 in CDBG funds.

The Committee reviewed the information submitted, and voted 8-0 to approve this request.

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

#124-03(2) **COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE** recommending that the sum of \$376,750 that was appropriated through Board Order #124-03 (pertaining to the community housing project for City employees at Christina Street) be rescinded.

**CMTE COMM PRES APPROVED 6-0 (Parker not voting) ON
3/23/04**

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: This item will provide for the funding originally set aside for this project to be returned to the Community Preservation fund. These funds are not needed for the originally intended project any longer.

With that understanding, the Committee voted 8-0 to approve this item.

#190-04 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$100,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of adding funds to the Municipal Liability Self-Insurance Fund as part of a multi-year plan to increase this fund.

ACTION: APPROVED 8-0

NOTE: Sandy Pooler and David Wilkinson discussed this issue with the Committee. They indicated that, at this time, there is a need to build up the Liability Self-Insurance Fund to \$500,000. At this time, there is \$273,000 in the fund. It is a worthwhile goal for the City to raise the funds in this account to a minimum of \$500,000 for the foreseeable future so that the City can settle various lawsuits.

The Committee supported the building of this fund, and voted 8-0 to approve this request.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman