

CITY OF NEWTON  
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2003

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

Absent: Ald. Ciccone

Ad Hoc Community Preservation Committee Members Present: Ald. Sangiolo (Chair), Linsky, Bullwinkle, Yates, Basham, Baker and Lappin (Absent: Ald. Merrill)

Also Present: Ald. Lipsitt; Chief Edward Murphy (Fire), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer), Mike Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), David Wilkinson (Comptroller)

**REFERRED TO AD HOC COMMUNITY PRESERVATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#95-03      COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE recommending CPA funding in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for planning studies and appraisal services for the property known as Kessler Woods in order to assist the City in the preparation of a formal bid for the purchase of this land.

**ACTION:**      **HELD 6-0 (PARKER NOT VOTING)**

**NOTE:** The Committee voted 6-0, with Ald. Parker not voting, to hold this item, therefore, there will be no written report on this item at this time. The Ad Hoc Community Preservation Committee will meet on Thursday evening, February 27<sup>th</sup> to deliberate on this item. If, at that time, there is a recommendation to move forward on this item, the Finance Committee will hold a VERY BRIEF special meeting on MONDAY, MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup> at 7:15 p.m. to discuss this item ONLY.

The Committee then discussed the following items:

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

#93-03      HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$470,000 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the Fire Department overtime account.

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Chief Murphy was present this evening. The Committee was also joined by Sandy Pooler, Chief Budget Officer, and Mike Rourke, Chief Administrative Officer. They presented a letter from the Mayor dated February 13, 2003 that indicated the need for Fire Department overtime during the first 7 months of FY03 has been driven by two factors. The first is that there has been a sharp increase in usage of sick leave. That has required 131 shifts to be covered on overtime by other firefighters. The second factor is the increased minimum manning requirements for winter months. The number of firefighters during the winter is 42 per shift.

The Committee reviewed the sick leave analysis that was distributed as an attachment to this evening's agenda. This analysis shows the differences between 2001 and 2002. Thusfar during FY03, the need for overtime funds has jumped to \$618,000. The injured on duty and out on sick leave status for the department is higher than it has ever been. In conjunction with that discussion, the Committee reviewed the status of the "Enhanced Longevity Recognition Plan" (which was put into place in 2001). This is a plan that provides incentive to employees with more than 20 years of service who has had no serious disciplinary actions and at least 50 24-hour tours of special leave accumulated. The additional financial incentive for this program is calculated into their highest 3 years towards their retirement pension.

Unfortunately, under the termination clause, the plan stipulates that, if the City has spent \$450,000 or more in overtime costs, there is a good possibility that the plan will expire on June 30, 2002, if not, it shall expire on June 30, 2004.

At this point, the use of sick time has exceeded the amount allowed under the plan. As a result, the Mayor's office has indicated its intention to terminate this incentive plan.

The Committee reviewed with the Chief the possibilities of utilizing floating personnel to fill in for shifts at various stations in order to meet manning requirements.

The Chief explained that, with the amount of benefits, sick leave, etc. that would be accumulated to the floating personnel, adding more personnel does not necessarily take care of the sick leave problem.

There were other Committee members that suggested that, when the manpower on one fire apparatus (usually 4 firefighters) is cut back due to sick leave or disability, then that particular piece of equipment could be put out of service temporarily and those firefighters who were originally assigned could work a temporary float shift to fill in for vacancies at other stations. This action would allow for full manpower (minus one apparatus), without creating the need for overtime.

It was explained that one overtime shift (which is actually 2 shifts on a 24-hour work schedule), a firefighter makes approximately \$700 per week for that extra shift.

With the understanding of the problems associated with controlling sick leave use, the Committee agreed that it is necessary at this time to appropriate these funds. With that, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this request in order to continue to maintain the overtime levels in the Department.

#69-03            VINCENT FILIPPONE requesting that there be a requirement that all parking ticket appeal hearings be tape-recorded.

**ACTION:**        **HELD 4-3 (COLETTI, LIPOF, SCHNIFFER OPPOSED)**

**NOTE:**            Mr. Filippone was present this evening. The Committee reviewed a letter from Ed Spellman indicating his ambivalence regarding whether there was a change that required taping of these hearings. The Committee was concerned that this seemed to be an issue with just one citizen. The vast majority of those citizens requesting hearings that get processed through the Treasury Department do not carry the process any further than the first meeting with the Parking Clerk. If someone wanted to appeal a \$10 or \$15 to court, obviously they might want a copy of a tape of the hearing for evidence.

At the same time, the Chairman pointed out that there is no prohibition against the person requesting the hearing to bring their own tape recorder to the hearing in order to have a permanent record of the conversation.

The Committee opinion was somewhat split on this item. It was determined that more information is necessary before taking final action on this request. With that, the Committee voted 4-3, with Ald. Coletti, Lipof and Schnipper opposed, to hold this item.

**REFERRED TO PROG.& SERV., PUB.FAC. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#503-02            MAYOR COHEN AND PRESIDENT LIPSITT requesting RESOLUTION of support for expenditure of up to \$50,000 to complete work of the Newton North Citizens Task Force. Source to be funds previously authorized for the high school renovation project.

**PROG. & SERV. NAN 4-0-1 (PARKER ABSTAINING; COLETTI NOT VOTING) ON 2/19/03**

**PUBLIC FACILITIES NAN ON 2/5/03**

**ACTION:**        **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0-1 (PARKER NOT ABSTAINING)**

**NOTE:**            In accordance with the recommendations of both the Programs and Services and Public Facilities Committees, the Committee voted NAN 6-0-1, with Ald. Parker abstaining, on this item.

**REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

# 32-03      ALD. COLETTI requesting discussion of status of Executive Department's negotiations regarding AT&T and RCN Cable Franchise Renewals and institutional network status as well as proposed City of Newton Fiber Optic Project.

**PUB. FACILITIES NAN 7-0 (GERST NOT VOTING) ON 2/19/03**

**ACTION:**      **HELD 7-0**

**NOTE:**      After thorough discussion by the Public Facilities Committee on 2/19, the Chairman requested that this item be held until the next regularly scheduled meeting. At that time, the Committee will also review the Mayor's item, #483-02, acceptance of the \$181,091.62 gift for the Newton Cable Access group.

Committee members agreed that it would be proper to take up those two items together on March 10<sup>th</sup>, therefore, this item was held by a vote of 7-0.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman