

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2003

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

Absent: Ald. Stewart

Also Present: Chief Edward J. Murphy (Fire), Eddie Aucoin (Police Dept.), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer), Mike Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), Fran Towle (Commissioner of Parks and Recreation), Bob DeRubeis (Deputy Commissioner, Parks and Recreation), Bob Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works), Mike Trotta (Deputy Commissioner, DPW)

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV.&FINANCE COMMITTEES

33-03 ALD. COLETTI requesting discussion with representatives of the School Department and Superintendent of Schools regarding lease vs. purchase options for technology equipment to develop a policy for acquisition of computers and technology for schools.

PROG. & SERV. NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 ON 3/5/03

ACTION: HELD 4-0 (GERST, PARKER, SCHNIPPER NOT VOTING)

NOTE: Due to budget appearances by Superintendent of Schools and his Ed Center staff, the Chair agreed to hold this item this evening. This item will be discussed at a later date with the Chair, Anne Larner, President Lipsitt, David Wilkinson, and appropriate School Department personnel to attempt to come up with a policy for the lease and acquisition of computer equipment. It is expected that there will be a request made (for Board of Aldermen approval) during April of this year.

With that in mind, a motion to hold this item carried by a vote of 4-0, with Ald. Gerst, Parker and Schnipper not voting.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#115-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$199,384 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of funding current and future snow and ice and tree emergency expenses in the Parks and Recreation Department.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 7-0 ON 3/5/03

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (SCHNIPPER NOT VOTING)

NOTE: Some of the Committee members had sat through the Programs and Services discussion on March 5th regarding this request. Fran Towle (Commissioner of Parks and Recreation) and Bob DeRubeis (Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Recreation) were present this evening. Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer) was also present.

Since there are sufficient funds in Budget Reserve to cover this request and, given the weather patterns this winter, the Committee felt that this appropriation was necessary at this time. After reviewing the backup information regarding departmental expenditures for snow and ice control thusfar, without debate, the Committee voted 6-0, with Ald. Schnipper not voting to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#118-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$1,130,731 from Free Cash for the purpose of supplementing the current year DPW snow and ice control accounts.

PUBLIC FACILITIES APPROVED AS AMENDED @ \$998,658 6-0 ON 3/5/03

ACTION: APPROVED @\$1,130,731 6-0 (SCHNIPPER NOT VOTING)
SUBJECT TO SECOND CALL

NOTE: DPW Commissioner Bob Rooney and Deputy Commissioner Mike Trotta joined the Committee this evening.

At the time that the Public Facilities Committee discussed and approved this item, the total had been amended to \$998,658. Since that vote was taken on March 5th, we have had another 6 inch snowstorm, which has now made that original \$1,130,731 out to be an appropriate amount in order to continue to fund snow and ice control accounts in the Public Works Department accounts.

The Chairman had met with Commissioner Rooney and Brian Connolly to review these numbers.

The Committee reviewed how these accounts had been monitored in order to determine that a portion of this money was actually to cover storms dating all the way back to February 6th. Although money had been previously appropriated to cover storms back then, there was still a deficit (of approximately \$260,000). The Committee reviewed the figures for the costs associated with cleanup the 2/16 storm and subsequent hauling done to clear village centers and municipal lots, etc.

Once the bookkeeping was re-evaluated and the Commissioner shared the totals of actual expenditures, the Committee had no problem with the amount of funding used to clean up storms to date. The Committee questioned whether the Executive Department will properly fund the needed accounts for snow and ice control (at least at a more accurate level) in the FY04 operating budget.

Mr. Pooler indicated that, by budgeting for the lower amount to begin with, that offers the Board of Aldermen the opportunity to continue to review expenditures when they occur, as well as review the overall control of snow and ice.

The Committee agreed that it (and the Board) would be willing to continue review in this same manner (essentially on a case-by-case basis). The Chairman did express a concern to Mike Trotta that neither the Mayor nor the Commissioner of Public Works is allowed to deficit spend in these accounts unless they are prepared to transfer monies from their own operational accounts within the departmental accounts. This is because it is always a possibility (however small) that, with these requests for additional appropriations, the Board of Aldermen may not approve the funds (or part of them), thereby leaving the accounts in the red. There seems to be a concern that the DPW continues to deficit spend without getting approval (or at the least authorization from the Chair of Public Facilities and the Chair of Finance) to spend these funds.

The Committee voted 5-0, with Ald. Schnipper and Parker not voting to approve this request. Please note that this item will be SUBJECT TO SECOND CALL due to the fact that the vote of the Finance Committee differs from that which was approved by the Public Facilities Committee.

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

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

NOTE: A motion to hold this item until March 24th carried by a vote of 6-0, with Ald. Parker not voting.

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: **NAN 7-0**

#483-02 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$181,090.62 from the RCN gift fund (received pursuant to its franchise agreement with the City of Newton). Said funds are to be expended through the Planning Department in the form of a grant to the NCAC for the promotion of public, educational, and governmental access programming and for other cable-related purposes.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: The Committee had a presentation from Mike Rourke, Chief Administrative Officer, this evening in regard to both of these related items. The Committee reviewed some of the basic information regarding the contracts and how much both RCN and Comcast will be paying to the City.

After a very brief discussion, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve item #483-02. The Committee then voted NO ACTION NECESSARY, in accordance with the vote by the Public Facilities Committee, by a vote of 7-0.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman