

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2003

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

Absent: Ald. Schnipper

Also Present: Ald.-Elect Harney; David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Mike Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), Chief Joe LaCroix (Fire), Lou Taverna (Utilities Director (DPW))

#523-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$18,075 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the AFSCME Local 2443 (Newton Foremen) Union.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#524-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$20,721 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the Massachusetts Nurses' Association.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#525-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$7,444 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the salary and benefit costs for the employees of the Retirement Board.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#527-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$28,325 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the AFSCME Local 2913 (Newton Police School Traffic Supervisors) Union. This settlement includes Parking Control Officers and two Detention Attendants.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#528-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$172,904 (\$167,091 from Salary Reserve and \$5,813 from Sewer Surplus) in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the AFSCME Local 3092 (City Hall Associates) Union.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#529-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$13,459 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the AFSCME Local 3092B (Building Inspectors) Union.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#530-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$49,109 from Salary Reserve in order to fund the cost items set forth in the labor contract agreed upon with the Newton Police Superior Officers Association union.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Mike Rourke, Chief Administrative Officer, was present this evening. He reviewed all of the details regarding these proposed wage adjustments. All agreements provide for a 2% wage adjustment and, in some instances, there are also other details (i.e. adjustments for clothing allowance or certain stipends). In all cases, the settlement pattern is the same for all of these.

The Committee took separate votes on each of these items. They were all approved by a vote of 7-0.

#526-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$148,365 (\$145,143 from Salary Reserve and \$3,222 from Sewer Surplus) in order to fund salary and benefit costs for Hay group and other non-union employees.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0-1 (Parker abstaining)**

NOTE: This item is similar to the above listed contract settlements. Mr. Rourke explained that all Hay (management, non-union) group employees will not be receiving step increases this year, but it is proposed that a 2% cost of living adjustment be approved at this time.

Ald. Parker was concerned that Hay employees should not receive their salary adjustments before the final three unions (Patrol Officers, Firefighters and Public Works Laborers) settle their contracts.

Mr. Rourke explained that the same contract settlement pattern will be offered to the remaining three unions in order to make these adjustments equitable across the board.

With that understanding, the Committee voted 6-0-1, with Ald. Parker abstaining, to approve this appropriation request.

#531-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$8,885 from Budget Reserve in order to fund the purchase and installation of partition panels in the City Clerk/Clerk of the Board's office.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**

NOTE: Mr. Rourke explained that there was a request for a specialized partition system for the City Clerk's office in order to provide for a distinct physical separation between the two divisions of the department (City Clerk and Clerk of the Board) as well as noise control. The partitions that were in the department for many years were removed with the moldy carpeting that was replaced with linoleum flooring in July of this year.

Ald. Ciccone asked whether the department could use the office partitions that were donated to the City by Cingular.

Mr. Rourke's understanding was that the partitions donated are to be used elsewhere. The Clerk's office staff has worked with the vendor on an office layout that should provide for the purchase and installation of these panels to suit the needs of all staff members.

The Committee was in full support of this appropriation and vote 6-0, with Ald. Gerst not voting, to approve this request.

#532-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$7,966 be appropriated from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the City's matching funds to a federal COPS Homeland Security Overtime Program Grant.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**

NOTE: Mike Rourke also presented this item to the Committee. He explained that these funds are requested because the City ended up receiving a larger grant than was originally anticipated, therefore, the matching funds requirement was increased by this amount.

The Committee reviewed the backup that was presented (as attached to this evening's agenda). The information showed that the total project cost under this grant will be \$131,863. The federal share will be \$98,897 and the local share will be \$32,966.

The Committee fully supported this appropriation and voted 6-0 with Ald. Gerst not voting, to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#533-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$30,000 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the overtime account in the Library.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 5-1 (Coletti opposed) ON 12/3/03

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (Stewart not voting)

NOTE: A letter dated November 21 was submitted to the Committee indicating that, as in the past, there were additional overtime funds required in order to continue to keep the library open on Sundays. For the past four years, the library overtime account has been under-funded (at \$37,000). Therefore, it has become necessary for supplemental appropriations to this account in order to provide funds after other surplus funds in the department (from vacancies) have been exhausted.

The Chairman raised the concern that Budget Reserve is not an appropriate funding source for this item since that fund is used for unanticipated expenditures. In the backup information provided, the letter indicates specifically that it was understood that the account was intentionally under-funded. A request was made to the Executive Department to forward a letter stating that, if the City chooses to keep its library open on Sundays, then the overtime salary funds should be included in the annual budget and approved when the entire departmental budget is approved for the fiscal year is set.

The Mayor's office has agreed to increase the overtime budget for FY05.

With that understanding, the Committee voted 6-0, with Ald. Stewart not voting, to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#535-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$310,000 (\$300,000 from Overlay Surplus and \$10,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund) for the purpose of funding the replacement of Newton Fire Engine Three with a new state-of-the-art foam truck.

PS&T APPROVED 5-0-1 (Lennon abstaining) on 12/3/03

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Chief Joe LaCroix was present this evening and presented a letter dated November 21 which indicated that the engine to be replaced is a model 1983 Spartan engine with 107,000 miles on it. It was refurbished in October of 1992. Attached to this evening's agenda was a 26-page summary of the vehicle's service record and accompanying invoices provided by the company that maintains and repairs the city's fire equipment.

The problem with the engine, at this point, is that the motor is starting to emit large amounts of smoke and there is a substantial amount of repair required to keep this engine

working as a front-line vehicle. The proposal is to move this engine to the second line and replace its position on the front line with a new state of the art foam truck. Foam trucks are used for burning vehicles and fuel fires.

The Committee reviewed all of the information regarding this request. The Committee also had significant discussion regarding other issues in the department (which included the issue of fire station repairs as well the concerns over the unsafe condition of other front line vehicles in the department). The Chief has indicated that, although all that is being sought at this time is the truck, he is aware of these other priorities and will work with the Executive Department to pursue funds in the future.

With that understanding, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this item.

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

#94-03(4) ALD. PARKER requesting His Honor the Mayor submit Home Rule Legislation to create a separate rate structure for water and sewer rates for condominiums and apartments.

PUB. FACILITIES REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD ON 12/3/03

PROG. & SERV. REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD ON 12/3/03

ACTION: REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)

NOTE: Without debate, the Committee went along with the recommendations of the two substantive Committees and voted 6-0, with Ald. Gerst not voting, to refer this item to the 2004-2005 Board.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#534-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$50,000 be transferred from the Department of Public Works salary account to an expense account for the purpose of allowing the Engineering Division to employ the services of an independent traffic engineering firm. These funds will allow the Engineering Division to proceed on its review of several proposed projects, including special permit applications.

PUBLIC FACILITIES APPROVED 7-0 ON 12/3/03

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0-2 (Gentile, Parker abstaining)

NOTE: A letter dated November 25 was sent to the Committee indicating that there is a vacancy in the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department. This has created a surplus of salary funds, and it is being requested that these funds be transferred at this time in order to get some additional outside consultant services in order to keep the workflow moving. The letter states that the work to be covered by this consultant includes completing signalization and sign plans for Lexington Street, River Street, the Burr School area and Wolcott Street. There will also be analysis and traffic work to be done on several petitions as well as traffic signal pavement markings.

This request is not unique. The City was in a similar situation last year (when the Traffic Engineer resigned). An appropriation of \$30,000 was made at that time for this same purpose.

After very brief discussion of this request, the Committee voted 5-0-2, with Ald. Gentile and Parker abstaining, to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#536-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$50,000 (to be funded equally from the Water and Sewer Surplus funds) for the purpose of funding a consulting contract between the Utilities Division of DPW and the Weston and Sampson company to perform an evaluation of the City's water meter system in order to make recommendations for upgrading the system.

PUBLIC FACILITIES APPROVED 7-0 ON 12/3/03

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Lou Taverna, Director of Utilities, was present this evening. He presented a letter dated November 21 (please refer to attached materials). The City is currently seeking to replace the meter reading system in order to go to a monthly billing system for water/sewer as well as utilize less manpower for reading the meters and depend more on automation in order to do "drive-by" meter reads to expedite the billing and provide more accurate readings.

The problem that the City has is that the new technology being used to do these type of meter readings do not work with the current meters installed in over 30,000 locations throughout the city. In order to implement new technology, the City would have to replace all water meters throughout the City. The current water meters used are only between 15 and 20 years old and, in some cases of new construction they are much newer than that. They are in good operating condition and there is no substantial difficulty associated with proper readings. The problem the City has is that, in about 20% of the locations, the remote reader (mounted on the outside of the home) has been damaged and the technology for accurate reads is diminished. It could take as long as three years to install and implement this new program.

This \$50,000 appropriation will allow for a study (see attached scope) and further recommendation for new technology to be considered for possible implementation in the future. It was understood that the cost for this program will be over \$5 million (plus interest for the bonds).

The Committee agreed that this study is necessary in order to determine whether a total meter replacement program is the direction that the City needs to take at this point. With that, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#295-99 ALD. GENTILE, COLETTI AND SALVUCCI, requesting an ordinance that would require any proposed settlement, which would include any funds from the Liability Trust Fund, must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Aldermen.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 4-0 on 2/23/00

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (Gerst not voting)

NOTE: The Committee voted to support the recommendation of the Programs and Services Committee. Ouida Young has provided draft language on this item (see attached). The vote on this item was 6-0 to approve, with Ald. Gerst not voting.

It is expected that this item will be placed on Second Call at the Full Board meeting on 12/15 for further discussion. If a consensus cannot be reached at that time, then this item will be referred to the 2004-2005 Board.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#221-02 ALD. COLETTI et al requesting home rule legislation or any other legal instrument that would allow the City a maximum of \$350,000 to be set aside in overlay reserve to provide tax relief for eligible senior homeowners.

PROG&SERV NAN'D 5-0 ON 11/19/03

ACTION: NAN 6-0 (Gerst not voting)

NOTE: At the request of Chairman Coletti, this item was voted NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0, with Ald. Gerst not voting.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE: *The Committee read each of the following items and, without debate, voted to refer them to the 2004-2005 Board:*

#380-02 ALD. YATES proposing that the City of Newton exercise the new option offered by Ch.184 and Ch.51 of the Acts of 2002 to adjust the age, income and asset requirements seniors must meet to qualify for tax exemption under Ch.59 and Ch.51 (41C) and the amount of the exemption granted to eligible seniors.

ACTION: REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)

REFERRED TO ZONING & PLANNING AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#168-02 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the Board of Aldermen establish new civil fines under Section 20-21 of the City of Newton Ordinances for the violation of various environmental provisions enforced by the Conservation Commission.

ZAP REFERRED TO 2004-05 BOARD 6-0 on 11/24/03

ACTION: REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)

- #429-02 ALD. PARKER requesting progress report from Treasurer/Collector on addressing Management Letter audit issues.
ACTION: **REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**
- #206-00(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to expend \$35,000 from Hebrew College pursuant to provisions of Special Permit #66-98(3) and a Traffic Mitigation Agreement between the City and Hebrew College, which funds will be used toward the cost of traffic improvements, studies or transportation programs selected by the City for the purpose of mitigating potential impacts of the Hebrew College project on Herrick and Langley Roads or improving traffic and flow in the Herrick Road area. NOTE: #206-00, approved 6/5/00, authorized acceptance of these funds; #206-00(3), approved 6/19/00, requested implementation of accounting measures to track future expenditures; #206-00(2), the actual expenditure, was held in Committee on 6/19/00 to allow Board review of proposed mitigation measures and costs on a case-by-case basis. (ITEM HELD IN COMMITTEE AT 6/19/00 FULL BOARD)
ACTION: **REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**
- #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: **REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**
- #33-01 ALD. YATES proposing an ordinance to establish a special assessment policy for the substantial rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential properties listed in the State Register of Historic Places (Sec. 5J. of MGL Chapter 59).
ACTION: **REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**
- #239-02 ALD. LENNON requesting a discussion with appropriate personnel regarding the process for appealing parking tickets.
ACTION: **REFERRED TO 2004-2005 BOARD 6-0 (Gerst not voting)**

The Chairman thanked the Committee for its work over the last two years. The Committee adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman