

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2001

Present: Ald. Coletti, Chairman; Ald. Gerst, Ciccone, Bullwinkle, Bryson, Schnipper and R. Lipof

Absent: Ald. Parker

Also Present: Chief Ed Murphy (Fire), Dan Funk (City Solicitor), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer)

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE: The Committee was called to order at approximately 7:55 p.m. due to the fact that the special Committee of the Whole meeting regarding the high school renovation projects had run longer than expected.

81-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a grant of \$108,661 from the Executive Office of Public Safety, Firefighter Safety Equipment Program which will allow the Fire Department to purchase two new thermal imaging cameras and monitoring equipment, three new pieces of auto extraction equipment, and other safety equipment.

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Chief Murphy was present this evening. He presented some background information on this item (which had been attached to the Committee agenda). He explained that the State office of Public Safety reviews each city's grant application, and in Newton's case, a determination was made that these funds would be made available to assist in purchasing enhanced firefighter equipment. The thermal imaging equipment would be used for locating hot spots in walls as well as detecting human presence inside of a building. This is state-of-the-art equipment.

The Chief also informed the Committee that a small amount of money was recently donated to the city by the Omni Foods supermarket in Chestnut Hill. This money will supplement that gift in order to purchase 3 sets of thermal imaging and emergency response equipment as well as firefighter training equipment. Most of the additional equipment will include 3 full sets of jaws of life, since the existing equipment for this use is in excess of 15 years old. This equipment will be used in extricating victims from wrecks and collapses of buildings.

Chief Murphy indicated that the city is grateful to be receiving these funds to improve fire safety.

The Committee, without debate, voted 7-0 to approve this item.

82-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$8,243.31 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of paying a claim for damage to a private vehicle caused by a collision with a City of Newton Police cruiser.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: City Solicitor Dan Funk was present this evening. He explained that on January 4, 2000, an unmarked Newton Police cruiser proceeded through a red light on Homer Street and collided with a civilian vehicle travelling through a green light on Walnut Street. There was a witness to the accident that the cruiser proceeded through the red light with no warnings activated. The civilian vehicle received extensive damage to the right front fender, hood, and bumper, totalling \$8,243.31. The individual's insurance company settled its client's claim and paid to repair the damage; that company is now seeking reimbursement from the City of Newton.

Dan Funk indicated that the City has no defense where this claim is concerned, therefore, he recommended that these funds be paid at this time.

The Committee, without debate, voted 7-0 to approve the appropriation of these funds in order to pay this settlement.

83-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$31,400 from Free Cash for the purpose of replacing photocopy machines in five departments.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

83-01(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a gift of half the cost of a new photocopier, up to a value of \$3,500, to replace the photocopier in the Senior Center.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Since these two items were related, the Committee discussed them at the same time. Sandy Pooler, Chief Budget Officer, was present this evening. He indicated that in the CIP there were requests for replacement of copy machines in the DPW, Engineering, Treasurer/Collector, Senior Center, Purchasing and Library departments. He explained that a private donation in the amount of \$3,500 had been given to the City towards the purchase of a new copier at the Senior Center. Mr. Pooler also indicated that the copier that is currently used in the Purchasing Department will be moved to another area in the building with less volume of copying required.

He explained that the average cost of photocopier machines is approximately \$7,000. Mr. Pooler stated that the machines to be replaced are owned by the City and are at least 9 years old

The Committee reviewed the policy on the purchasing of replacement copy machines. Committee members agreed that this is an appropriate use of these funds and that the replacements are warranted at this time. Therefore, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve item #83-01.

The Committee then discussed item #83-01(2). This donation was received from Betsy Leitch, a Newton resident volunteer who has been very committed to the Senior Center. The Board of Aldermen expresses its sincere thanks to Betsy for her generous donation of this gift. The Committee also voted 7-0 to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES & FINANCE COMMITTEES

74-01 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$55,000 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the Law Department's Legal Assistance account, which principal use has been for labor counsel.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Dan Funk presented his letter dated February 7, 2001, which indicated that it has become apparent that the budgeted appropriation for outside labor counsel will be insufficient to cover future bills for the balance of FY01. Although the City has encumbered \$65,000 for the services of the law firm of Morgan, Brown and Joy for FY01, the city has already expended \$59,678 for these services during the first 6 months of this fiscal year. Accordingly, Dan Funk is now making this request of \$55,000. It is important to note that this is a year in which all 15 of the city's union contracts are up for renewal. The labor counsel has been part of the negotiating process with the City on many of these contracts. More importantly, during this process, there has been a number of grievances filed (including more in the Police Department), which has required the labor counsel to negotiate some conclusion to them, which has made it impossible to stay within the budgeted \$65,000 appropriation for outside labor counsel.

The Committee quickly reviewed some of the instances where additional funds were required and agreed that this additional appropriation should cover the collective bargaining needs for outside labor counsel for the remainder of this fiscal year. With that, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this appropriation.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chair