

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2001

Present: Ald. Coletti (Chairman), Gerst, Ciccone, Bullwinkle, Bryson, Parker and Schnipper

Absent: Ald. R. Lipof

Also Present: David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Mike Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer), Jeffrey Young (Superintendent of Schools), Sandra Guryan (Assistant Superintendent of Business, Finance and Planning), Verne Vance (Chair, School Committee), Anne Larner (School Committee), Susan Heyman (School Committee), Susan Albright (School Committee), Re Cappoli (Chief Procurement Officer), Dolores Hamilton (Director of Human Resources), Ed Spellman (Treasurer/Collector)

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

96-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$879,190 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the FY01 School Department operating budget.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 8-0 ON 3-21-01

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

#96-01(4) FINANCE COMMITTEE offering a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor respectfully requesting that the Mayor use all of the powers at his disposal to resolve the outstanding deficit of \$600,000 in the FY01 School budget.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (SEE ATTACHED)**

NOTE: The Superintendent, as well as members of the School Committee, (Chairman Verne Vance, Susan Heyman, Anne Larner, Anne Borg and Susan Albright) along with representatives from various departments including Special Education were present at the meeting and met with the Committee to review documents that the Finance Chairman requested be prepared for the meeting. Sandy Guryan was also present and went over the current status of the Deficit Reduction Plan, (Attachment 1 to this report). Currently there is a deficit just under \$600,000 in the School budget. This amount takes into consideration, this \$879,000, which was promised back when the tax rate was set in

December, when the Board of Aldermen levied to the limit and added this additional \$879,000 onto the tax rate.

This original request and proposal for the \$879,000 was done in conjunction with the Mayor's plan to close the budget gap in last year's Operating budget. The Committee has always indicated its willingness to support this item and before the discussion began on the balance of this year's deficit, a motion was made by the Chairman and approved unanimously 7 in favor, none opposed, with one absent, to approve this appropriation from Budget Reserve in order to partially fund the deficit in the School budget.

The Committee then discussed the items relative to the 1.2 million-dollars in cuts, which have been made in this year's School operating budget, in order to meet part of the 1.7 million additional deficits. The Committee reviewed issues regarding staffing, Special Education, budgeting, School maintenance and repair and ultimately agreed that it is critical that the Comptroller's office, Sandy Guryan and the Mayor's office confirm that the proposed reductions in spending in the School department budget, will in fact create the reduction in the deficit that has been projected by Sandy Guryan.

Once that is understood, the next focus is on the remaining \$600,000 deficit and with that before the item was passed through the hands of the Finance Committee, a (2) was created, (Docket Item 96-01(2)), which is a resolution to the Mayor indicating that the Finance Committee respectfully requests that the Mayor use all of his powers to resolve the outstanding deficit of \$600,000.

The Committee requests that the Mayor call a meeting of certain members of the Board of Aldermen, (the Finance Committee Chair and President) and other interested Aldermen, along with the School Superintendent and the Chairperson of the School Committee, to sit down and go over mechanisms whereby we can move some of the City's Reserves in order to clean up the deficit at the end of the year.

This item, the resolution, (Attachment 2 to this report), was voted unanimously, 7 in favor, none opposed by the Committee. The Committee then focused its discussion on whether the collective bargaining agreement could be entirely funded in the event that the deficit is not made up before the end of the Fiscal Year. The Committee is still waiting for an answer to the request for an opinion, which was sent by Dave Wilkinson to the Law Department. The Law Department has yet to respond, whether the Comptroller, has the obligation to withhold payment of the salary adjustment, pending the status of the School department deficit.

A question was asked relative to whether a portion, (since 80% of the adjustment could still be funded), which is approximately 2.3 million, a total salary settlement and the Committee was informed that any of the portion of the appropriation in the salary/payroll disbursement put the school department into a deficit, that the entire item must be

rejected. Therefore, the Committee requested that Dave Wilkinson pursue getting a clear response from the Law Department prior to the next Finance Committee Meeting on May 14th.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#141-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$25,000 be appropriated from Marathon Receipts for the purpose of purchasing new playground equipment at Burr Park and Weeks Park playgrounds.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 4-0 ON 4/25/01

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (PARKER NOT VOTING)

NOTE: Fran Towle and Carol Stapleton were present at the meeting and presented an April 10th letter addressed to the Mayor, which indicated \$12,500 being proposed for a playground safety audit at forty playground sites, \$12,500 for immediate repairs to playground composite structures and free-standing equipment at school and municipal playgrounds. \$12,500 for playground equipment at Burr Park and \$12,500 for playground equipment at Weeks playground.

The \$25,000 at Burr Park and Weeks were upgrades and installation of new play equipment. Both sites had active Community groups who have organized and are planning fund raise for additional equipment. This is part of the City's ongoing program where it allocates \$12,500 a year, per playground for equipment upgrades and we are now going through the second phase of allocation of funds for various playgrounds throughout the City. There are over forty playground sites in the City that need this funding and approximately three to four are done per year.

The Committee reviewed the status of both Weeks and Burr playgrounds and additional work currently being done there and the Committee agreed with the allocation of funds, to be supported by additional fund raising. A motion was made to approve and carried 6-0.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#140-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$25,000 be appropriated from Marathon Receipts for the purpose of conducting a safety audit of playground equipment at playgrounds throughout the City of Newton and making emergency repairs, as necessary.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 4-0 ON 4/25/01

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (PARKER NOT VOTING)

NOTE: This item is for the \$25,000 for conducting safety audits on playground equipment in playgrounds throughout the City. The Committee once again reviewed the status of safety concerns at the various schools. With over forty playgrounds to be analyzed, guidelines will be developed to address playground construction, repairs,

supervision and general safety. In February 2001, the department did a Comprehensive Safety Audit RFP, requesting the inspection of the forty play areas. There will be an additional \$12,500 used to begin immediate repairs at locations which are found deficient in the playground safety audit.

The Committee had no problem with the safety audit and its benefits in protecting and keeping children safe from injury while using the equipment. A motion was made to approve and carried 6-0.

The Committee then spent the remainder of the meeting reviewing the FY02 Budget for four departments, (Purchasing, Human Resources (including employee benefits and City Physician), Executive and Treasurer/Collector (including Parking Clerk)). The Committee, on a straw vote, approved all four budgets 6-0.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman