

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

BUDGET

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2015

Present: Ald. Rice (Acting Chair), Sangiolo, Blazar, Kalis, Baker, Norton, Hess-Mahan and Leary; Also Present: Ald. Ciccone
City Staff Present: Bob DeRubeis (Commissioner, Parks & Recreation), Marc Welch (Director, Urban Forestry), Carol Stapleton (Recreation Manager), Judy Dore (Recreation Manager), Carol Schein (Open Space Manager), Kenny Delgizzi (Parks & Recreation), Elaine Gentile (Director, Environmental Affairs), Stephanie Lapham (Recreation Manager), Dori Zaleznik (Chief Administrative Officer), Aaron Goldman (Performance Manager), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#375-14(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter the FY16 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$361,997,264 passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY16-FY20 Capital Improvement Program (#375-14). [04/15/15 @ 5:08 PM]
EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 04/21/15; LAST DATE TO PASS THE BUDGET 06/05/15

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#375-14 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY16-FY20 Capital Improvement Plan pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter. [10/15/14 @ 3:01 PM]

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#375-14(4) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY16-FY20 Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan. [04/15/15 @ 4:57 PM]

BUDGET & CIP

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The proposed FY16 Parks & Recreation Department budget is \$5,805,458 which is a 35.08% increase over last year's budget. The increase largely represents the addition of new personnel for the Community Beautification (9 new personnel) effort and for Forestry (3 new personnel).

Commissioner DeRubeis explained that in years past, the budget for playground structures has been \$12.K from the Boston Athletic Association marathon receipts with the locations chosen based on assessments of all the structures. The Executive Office has added \$150K to the department's operating budget for FY16 to handle two playground structures this year. The first

playgrounds to receive the upgrades are at Horace Mann and Auburndale Cove based on the assessment

As mentioned, 3 forestry crew members have been added. Two of those workers will spend almost entirely the whole first year removing 900 stumps in the City. Stumps are not removed in conjunction with tree removal as it is a completely different operation involving different equipment. The third person will be on a crew working on trees. If the extra personnel were not being added there is no way they could possibly remove over 500 trees next year. The department has the equipment it needs for these projects.

The Beautification crew that was in the Department of Public Works seemed a more natural fit for Parks & Recreation, therefore, a Community Beautification unit will be added to the department, headed up by Elaine Gentile as the Director of Community Beautification assisted by Lucio Camilli as the Asst. Superintendent. Five personnel on that DPW crew had been working on cleaning and planting in village centers and will continue to do that work in Parks & Recreation. In addition, they will also work on parks and playgrounds with litter clean up. The other two personnel ran the trash trucks and will do trash pick-up at the parks and playgrounds. Big Belly trash cans will be brought into the parks and village centers and the “smart” Big Bellies can tell them when they are full so trash runs can be reduced. This frees up time for other tasks. This is an additional of 12 personnel to Parks & Recreation for this unit.

There is also \$30K in the budget for regulation-size field renovations at Cabot, the two high schools fields, Lincoln Warren and West Newton Common. They are planning on getting one field done a year.

Commissioner DeRubeis provided handouts detailing FY15 accomplishments and desired outcome for FY16 in Recreation Programs, Renovations/Beautification, Projects/Partnerships and Urban Forestry. The handouts are attached to this report for review.

Committee Questions/Comments

Tennis Courts

Committee members asked about the tennis courts in the City. It was asked if Har-Tru surfaces were going to be incorporated on other courts in the City as in Newton Centre. Commissioner DeRubeis explained that Har-Tru is very expensive to maintain with \$5K-\$6K in start-up costs each season. It is the only pay-to-play court in the City, in order to support maintenance costs.

The Newton South tennis courts are being proposed through the CIP for work this fall with bids going out in June or July. Next year, they will be proposing Warren House and Burr Park tennis courts for repair. Commissioner DeRubeis noted that they will be looking at the possibility of using post-tension concrete for the Burr Park project, but more research needs to be done to determine if it is a viable option for conditions in the northeast.

Friends of Newton Tennis have been in touch with Commissioner DeRubeis with some proposals. He took them up on their offer of assistance with cleaning and sweeping some of the courts. Since there are 69 courts in the City this is very helpful. They have also discussed bubbles over the courts but that is not an active pursuit at this time.

Playgrounds*Horace Mann*

As mentioned earlier, \$150K has been added to the FY16 budget for park and playground improvements with \$75K dedicated to Horace Mann as first on the list of 56 sites. He is meeting with the PTO Council in May and has been working with the Executive Office to finalize the plan. One concern is that the Aquinas site is being acquired and some of the building uses are going to be reconfigured. This all needs to be reassessed for plans going forward and look again at exactly what should be done at Horace Mann. Ms. Zaleznik assured everyone that Horace Mann will be done, as promised. They are working on ways to manage this program so that extensive fundraising will not be necessary from the PTOs going forward and will bring that to the PTO Council as soon as possible.

Newton Highlands Playground

It was asked if the tennis courts there would need to be closed as they are in terrible condition as well. The Commissioner said they ripped out the playground equipment there because it was in such bad shape and was a danger. They will consider if a similar approach should be taken with the tennis courts.

Upland Road, leading into the park area, will need to be fixed before the playground is completed because it is in terrible condition. The Commissioner has spoken with DPW and they agree they can get the work done and the contractors on the playground project will be advised to use care on the new road as work progresses. The businesses on the road will also be advised not to leave cars parked on that side indefinitely as is the current practice. A Committee member thought that if the road is re-paved, it will invite more traffic because it is already used as a cut-through fairly extensively. The Commissioner said they will take a look at that.

Newton North Baseball Field

At the Newton North baseball diamond, foul balls are heading with some regularity to at least one abutting home causing damage to the houses and cars. There have looked at various solutions including reconfiguring the field but the size of the lot will not accommodate any shifting of the diamond or flipping the baseball and softball fields. There is a solution in a very high fence but the cost is about \$320K with 60 foot poles and fencing that runs 100 feet down both the first and third base lines. This would significantly reduce the number of balls that leave the field, but probably not all. Ms. Zaleznik said other urban baseball fields, including Northeastern's field, use this type of solution and it works well. It is in the CIP at #8. Ald. Kalis asked Ms. Zaleznik if the schools could pay for this with any excess funds they might have at the end of the year. She said she would look into that.

It was mentioned that extensive discussions took place when Newton North was being designed and it was clear that the site would be tight and there was very little room to maneuver the field.

Crystal Lake

It was asked if the canister filters in the storm water outfalls were in place this year and the Commissioner said they were. Some storm basins need to be reconstructed to accommodate the canisters and they are working on that.

An RFP has been drawn up for a lake watershed management plan. They would like to get that in place by the end of this calendar year because if an algae bloom occurs they would like to do

some remediation. The snowy, cold winter may have been a preventative to that but it is something they are aware of.

The Committee asked if there is education around Crystal Lake relative to what can and cannot be used in the watershed area. The Commissioner said there is a major education piece sent to all those residents in the watershed area and the Crystal Lake Conservancy has helped with that immensely. Watershed signs are placed all around the region with universal signs for no fertilizers, car washing, etc. They are letting people know they should not be using phosphorous.

Urban Forestry

A Committee member asked if tree personnel work on other projects in winter. The Commissioner said there is very little down time for forestry and when there is, they crew members are working on their equipment and tools to keep them maintained. They did help with putting up banners in the past couple of weeks and will help as needed for those types of projects. Of the 6 person crew this year, 2 will work on stump removal, 2 will work on tree removal, and the remaining two will work primarily on pruning with some removal.

It was asked how Mr. Welch (Director, Urban Forestry) determines which trees must be removed. The Commissioner explained there is a ranking system that is used by the USDA for risk. The scale goes from 1-12 with 12 being the most at-risk. There are no 12s in the City but there are plenty of 9-11s. All trees that are categorized for removal are in that category. Any request for a live tree to be taken down must go through a public hearing process and just one resident voting against removal will prevent the tree from coming down.

The Committee asked about replacement of trees that have been lost this winter in West Newton Square. It seems an inordinate number are gone. There is also a problem with gas leaks in that area that is decimating the tree population. The Commissioner said they are looking at that and adding three people to the forestry crew will get them closer to planting many more trees. They are definitely taking down more trees than they are planting by 5 to 1 so they want to reverse that trend. Mr. Welch said until this current fiscal year, the City had not funded tree planting since the early 1990s. FY15 allowed for 100 trees to be planted and the FY16 budget has money to plant 240 trees. They hope to see that trend continue. The tree conservancy plants trees as well.

Some trees in Newton Corner have metal cages and fences on them. It was asked they those cages and fences would be removed. Mr. Welch explained that some of the trees have incorporated the metal into the tree itself so removing it would kill the tree. Trees are adaptable and most will be fine even with the metal growing into them. Some of those trees belong to the Mass Pike, some are on private property but the vast majority belongs to the City.

Beautification

Some Committee members were pleased that trash will be better dealt with in the parks through this new program. With this move, however, there was concern that there was only 1 person left in recycling and trash. Dori Zaleznik, Chief Administrative Officer, responded that someone will be hired but has not been recruited yet. A Committee member was concerned that with the departure of the previous recycling coordinator, the job was downgraded as was the pay. It seems unlikely that a qualified candidate could be found at that level of pay. Ms. Zaleznik felt it was possible, but if not, it would be re-evaluated. There would also be slight changes to the position to make it a more in-the-field position freeing up time that had been devoted to paperwork. That will be taken over by someone else. Ms. Gentile explained she is doing a

significant amount of work to get things organized for an easy transition. She is excited for a change from the type of work she has been doing to this new position. This will be a wonderful opportunity to take a great group of people working with Parks & Recreation to beautify the City. The Committee thanked Ms. Gentile for all her wonderful work, saying she would be sorely missed as the head of Environmental Affairs. They are very pleased she will be continuing her work in the City in this new capacity.

West Newton Farmer's Market

A Committee member thanked Judy Dore for her fantastic work in getting this new farmer's market together. About 900 people attended that market each week which is wonderful.

Marathon Funds

The Commissioner said those funds go into the executive office and he does not see those funds. He was very involved in the Marathon and one of the big concerns, especially over the last couple of years has been public safety. NEMLAC is a regional police group made up of a number of different departments. They sent crews to Newton during the Marathon and had a significant presence here the last two years, with no charge to the City. He believes this will be the new standard for security whether it is a terrorist threat or a protestor threat. This year they were most concerned with protestors and thankfully things went very well this year.

Integrated Pest Management Group

It was asked if any progress had been made in this area. The Commissioner said he was hoping to meet with some people in May or June as he is very interested in working on this. Ald. Sangiolo recommended that Ald. Leary docket an item to explore this further.

Revolving Funds

Commissioner DeRubeis said they have tapped into the revolving fund mostly for seasonal wages. The minimum wage increased so they have used more than in the past. Running the camps requires excellent personnel on site daily. The camp directors and assistant camp directors are usually either teachers or college students so the pay has to be competitive. The cost of camp was raised a little to help mitigate this but they are still very well below any private camp.

The Committee thanked Commissioner DeRubeis and his entire staff for their dedicated and hard work.

Ald. Rice took a straw vote of the Committee in order to approve the Parks & Recreation Department budget. The Committee voted 8-0 in favor.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Rice (Acting Chairman)



Annual Budget

Highlights FY2016

Recreation Programs

FY2016 OUTCOMES

- Develop middle school age programs; fitness at the cove, eco explorer program
- Implement a day trip ski program
- Institutionalize 2015 Newton Festival of the Arts in 2016 with 65 newton organizations and schools
- Site specific programming; Auburndale Cove: senior pickleball, partner with Newton recreation business, Replace Excerptail equipment (focus on seniors)
- Reinstate the permanent part-time assistant position through a private/public partnership with Athletes Unlimited
- Over 55 to partner with Therapeutic Recreation program to promote inter-generational activities
- New Fitness programs for seniors, couch to 5K at NSHS and a strength program
- Over 55 to expand pickle ball program, and the swim program at Cabot Village.

FY2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Friday Night Ski program to include 5th graders
- Increased Canoe Explorers middle school age program from 1 week to 3 weeks
- Created intergenerational bingo night with Over 55 and Therapeutic Recreation participants
- Achieved full enrollment in Newton Youth Theatre program
- Attained full enrollment in art, music and creative movement enrichment classes for children 18 months to 3.5 years
- Created a month long Festival of the Arts

Renovations/Beautification

FY2016 OUTCOMES

- Newton Highlands Playground -Manage Project-Final design/bid documents
- Newton Centre Playground accessibility - Construction Phase IV, V, VI of pathway (CDBG)
- Farlow Park Pond & Bridge Project- RFP for bridge design out to bid, manage project
- Waban Hill Reservoir - manage implementation
- Update Playground Policy & Procedure manual
- Create a strategy for partnership City/Community and Playgrounds
- Replace playground equipment at the Horace Mann Elementary School
- Replace playground equipment at the Auburndale Cove
- Reconstruct the NSHS 12 tennis courts- in house design
- Repair Emerson basketball courts and replace standards

FY2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Renovated Cabot Park off-leash site
- Design and Installation of Play Structure at Emerson, utilizing Common Backyard Grant
- Renovation of Cabot Park tennis courts
- Field Renovation of Weeks Field & McGrath Park
- Renovation of (middle) City Hall pond
- In-house assessments of all playground structures, tennis courts, and basketball courts

Projects/Partnerships

FY2016 OUTCOMES

- Co-sponsor with Friends of Kennard Park for temporary public art show (Fall 2016)
- Upper Falls Greenway - Engineer managing; to be completed; depends on continuing with Iron Horse or providing funds for in-house work
- Lyons Field concession building (NWLL) being built by volunteers - accessible route at 75%
- Adopt-a Space improvements and bench donations
- Implement Crystal Lake Watershed Management plan

FY2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Crystal Lake Watershed Management Plan Draft RFP co-sponsored by the Crystal Lake Working Group.
- Newton Highlands Playground final design contract
- Farlow Park Bridge & Pond Project RFP co-sponsored by the Friends of Farlow Park
- Waban Hill Reservoir (CPC Funding) acquisition and improvements

Urban Forestry

FY2016 OUTCOMES

- Add three additional tree work positions
- Remove 560 trees posing the greatest risk to the public
- Prune 450 trees posing risk to the public
- Establish tree holding/ temporary nursery
- Grind down 900 tree stumps
- Plant 240 trees in the areas of greatest need based on FY16 plan
- Address 80% of all tree removal requests
- Address 10% of all tree pruning requests

FY2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 450 high risk trees removed
- Over 120 trees pruned
- 70 tree stumps removed
- 55% of removal requests received this fiscal year have been completed
- 8% of pruning requests have been completed.
- Recommendations drafted that will address backlog issues.

Budget Changes

\$150,000 for Play Structures

\$75,000 per site

First two sites

Horace Mann

Auburndale Cove

Forestry

Addition of three staff members (additional crew)

Maintenance/Beautification

Managing City Squares and Park trash removal

Addition of eight staff members and equipment

\$30,000 for Field Renovation

Parks and Recreation Department

