

CITY OF NEWTON
IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT
BUDGET

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2014

Present: Ald. Sangiolo, Rice, Blazar, Norton, Kalis, Leary, Baker and Hess-Mahan

Also Present: Ald. Fuller

City Staff Present: David Olson (City Clerk), Dori Zaleznik (Chief Administrative Officer), Rob Symanski (Budget Analyst), Linda Walsh (Interim Commissioner, Health and Human Services), Donnalyn Kahn (City Solicitor), Jayne Colino (Director, Senior Services), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#403-13(2) **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** submitting in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter the FY15 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$345,044,967 passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY15-FY19 Capital Improvement Program (#403-13). [04/14/14 @ 5:43 PM]
EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 04/22/14; LAST DATE TO PASS THE BUDGET 06/06/14

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#403-13 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** submitting the FY15-FY19 Capital Improvement Plan and Long Range Projection pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter. [10/21/13 @ 9:59 AM]

BUDGET AND CIP

CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD

The proposed FY15 budget for the City Clerk/Clerk of the Board is \$1,603,131 which is a .65% decrease from FY14. There are no major changes from last year.

David Olson, City Clerk, addressed the Committee. He explained that this is the first full year of an integrated department with the inclusion of Elections. Some efficiencies have been realized and there are some reductions in the budget to reflect that. Since January, the dog license renewal mailing has gone out; the initial census and follow-up mailings have gone out; and the office is in the process of certifying signatures for the fall election. The deadline for most candidates to have their nomination papers in for certification was yesterday at 5:00pm. By the end of business today, over 10,000 signatures have been certified for state and local races. Thirty-two thousand census forms were sent out and 25,000 have been returned and processed. The second mailing of 6,500 went out with 2,600 returned and processed so far. A final mailing will be sent out in early July informing residents that they will become inactive for not having returned their census. This will give people ample time to come into the Clerk's office and

update their information to they can remain active and not have to activate their voting status at their polling place. All of this has taken place without any overtime or needing additional, temporary staff to come in to help with Elections tasks as has been the practice. Rearranging the tasks and staff in both Elections and City Clerk departments has made this possible and has worked out very well.

CIP

Capital projects are being covered by the Public Buildings Department. The floor of the Aldermanic Chamber needs to be refinished or it will be lost. It has not been refinished in as long as anyone can remember. The desks will be removed, conduit will be run under the floor to allow for more electrical outlets and the microphone wires will be under the floor as well. The plan is to do the work after the July Board meeting and if the work is completed in time, the August Board meeting can take place. If not, President Lennon will cancel the August meeting unless there is an urgent need, in which case the meeting can be held in the Druker Auditorium.

The other capital project will be to create some offices within the Department. Mr. Olson said he has been trying to get offices with doors, especially for the Board Committee Clerk's, for some time now. It is very difficult for the Clerk's to work and write in the space that is shared with a very noisy, active City Clerk/Elections office. Ald. Crossley has volunteered to do the floor plan for the construction.

There are two applications before the Community Preservation Committee. One is for an assessment of the War Museum in the Veteran's Wing to determine what each item needs in terms of conservation work. The other application is to do a strategic plan for archival storage for the City.

The Archives project is going well. The part-time archivist is paid through the Library budget, but all her supplies come out of the City Clerk's budget. She is doing a great job and has been going through materials and preserving things appropriately according to the retention schedule. Much of this is being sent to archival storage in the Library.

Computers in City Hall which are over 5 years old are being replaced over the course of the next few years. His department is in the first tier of replacement and in fact, one of the computers died yesterday and is being replaced tomorrow.

Committee Questions and Comments

Storage

Ald. Sangiolo asked where the construction models for special permits are being kept. Mr. Olson explained that his office does not have possession of them and he believes they are no longer around. The 3D massing models are now collected on CD.

Training

Ald. Blazar asked what training opportunities there would be for aldermen as stated in FY15 desired outcomes. Mr. Olson said that there is new aldermen training each term, but not everything can be covered in that short timeframe. He would like to provide some additional information and training on things such as land use and navigating the website to find materials.

He is also working with NewTV to produce short explanatory videos on various things. There will be links to these videos on the City website.

Technology Issues

There is an effort to find a way to make the materials on the website more easily searchable. Joe Mulvey, Cheryl Lappin and Mr. Olson have been working together to deal with this issue. There is at least 10 years' worth of information from the Board of Aldermen on the website but it is not always easy to find something specific. Ald. Sangiolo said the older search engine worked much better. Mr. Olson said the website was simple and so the search engine could more easily find things. There are now more functions on the website so it has added complexity and once all the data was added to the website, it became clear then that it wasn't as easily searchable.

There was a question about using the new email system. Mr. Olson said it is up and running. If any aldermen is interested they should email Joe Mulvey in IT and he will instruct them on what to do. Some asked if they could continue using their own email, and they may, however they do need to be sure to keep any city-related emails as they are public records. They will be captured if they come through the City's system but not if it's from personal email. If there is a public records request, someone from the Law Dept. would have to go through personal email to gather those public records.

Ald. Sangiolo asked if the aldermen could get tablets in bulk with some discount. Mr. Olson said there is no municipal discount and the educator discount does not apply. A cost benefit analysis was done on paper versus the tablet. It would take 5 years to recoup the cost of the tablets, at which time, they would be pretty much obsolete, so it breaks even. The question then becomes a different one – do you want to be “green” or not. Ald. Sangiolo wondered if the schools could pass their older tablets down to the aldermen when they upgrade.

Department Consolidation

Ald. Rice said he Mr. Olson did a great job on merging the departments as it can be tricky to do. Mr. Olson said there were some bumps in the road but everyone is working together and things have smoothed out. He said he has a great staff who knows what to do and gets things done.

Area Councils

Ald. Rice also noted that the Area Councils are coming to David Olson quite a bit and he's getting many, many questions from them and requests for assistance. He said he's happy to help with that but he has been down one staff member this year because of maternity leave, and then she decided not to come back. He is trying to fill that position of compliance coordinator. This includes open meeting law training and the conflict of interest summaries that every City employee must complete each year and training that has to happen every other year. He feels once that position is filled, he would have more time to help with the Area Councils. Ald. Sangiolo asked if he needed another staff person for Area Councils. Mr. Olson said if another one is formed, he may.

The Committee voted to hold the City Clerk's budget.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The proposed FY15 budget for the Health and Human Services Department is \$3,281,994 which is a 3.47% increase over FY14.

Linda Walsh, Interim Commissioner, Health and Human Services joined the Committee. She explained that she has been in this new role for 12 days only but she has a long history with the City and the department. Environmental Health, School Health, Public Health, Emergency Preparedness, Human Services, Licensing and Weights and Measures are the divisions in the department.

Accomplishments, Ongoing Initiatives and Goals

In the area of Environmental Health, they have received an FDA grant (\$70K a year for 5 years) to standardize food safety inspections and hire a coordinator for this program. Food safety inspections are not standardized in Massachusetts so this is the beginning of bringing consistency to the state. The onus has always been on the owners of food establishments to know the standards and meet them. Spot inspections are done by the City but the day-to-day safety has to be maintained by the owners. The City will be moving to a letter grade system and this new program will provide more training and education to help owners make the grade.

The School Health program is unique in that there are school nurses (26) in each school, and one public health nurse. Community nursing has come to the fore in the schools and it is a very collaborative model. The flu immunization program continues in the schools even though many communities have dropped the program when the H1N1 outbreak ended. The program is very successful, however, and allows easy access to an important immunization. This year 25% of students were immunized.

A Public Health Nurse Educator has been a great addition to the staff. She works to bring more health education to community groups, the Senior Center, schools, etc. They have many great ideas to bring to the community through the nurse including a shingles vaccine (for those over 60) and Diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis vaccines (this would be directed to adults who are daycare providers to protect themselves and the children they care for). There will be advertising and education on these when they become available.

A tabletop exercise was undertaken prior to the Marathon to address Emergency Preparedness. It was very successful and educational in simulating an emergency response. Chief Proia is dedicated to coordinating more of these exercises with the appropriate departments in the City.

The social worker in the Human Services division works with residents relative to a variety of issues. They would like to incorporate some financial literacy support in the coming year to educate people in a more comprehensive way on budgeting. This will help people learn some skill to anticipate expenses in order to avoid financial crises. Ald. Sangiolo suggested that Linda Walsh speak to the state treasurer's office as they are doing some work on financial literacy.

Licensing is fairly new to the Health and Human Services Department and Ms. Walsh feels staff is learning quickly and things are going very smoothly. Dori Zaleznik said the big thing that the Board of License Commissioners has been working on is revising their regulations. They are nearly finished and will have a public meeting in the next week or so, then incorporate any

suggestions from that process into the regulations. The new regulations are made more simple and easy to understand. Approximately 3 times the amount of fees have been collected than used to be and it's unclear why that's happening. She feels that standardizing the process may have helped that enormously.

Suicide Prevention

The Newton Cares Coalition is newly formed in response to three tragic teen suicides in the City. The rate of suicide death in the City seems pretty consistent, at about 6 a year, and it isn't mostly teens, it is actually seniors, middle-aged people, parents of young children. The Mayor asked the department to meet with all the community partners to pull something meaningful together. The focus is across the lifespan and not just on teens. There are many efforts in place in the schools to deal with the students as well. A number of initiatives are being implemented including training, education, seminars, referrals, etc. It will be a long-standing program and some of the money that was approved recently by the Board was used to help implement this program. A specialist was hired to implement programs in both high schools which was not an easy endeavor. Every senior in both schools will have gone through the program.

Revolving Accounts

There are a number of ongoing revolving accounts for the Department. The new one reflects money that was approved for a 3-year stress management training program in the middle schools. The Committee commented that revolving accounts used to show current balances and they do not. Ms. Zaleznik said she would pass that along to Maureen Lemieux.

Committee Questions and Comments

Apartment/Condo Inspections

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked about the inspections that are supposed to take place when a condo is sold or an apartment changes tenants. Ms. Zaleznik said it is impossible to know when those happen so unless they hear about it somehow, they can't inspect. Housing inspections are done and complaint driven housing inspections are done and recorded each month. The regular turnover of apartments or condos, however, is not something they could know about. Ms. Walsh said it is an unfunded and unreasonable expectation for city government to do all those inspections. The Newton Housing Authority inspections are done by request for any that are problematic, but generally, Newton Housing does their own inspections. Ms. Walsh said that the code enforcement team through the Inspectional Services Department deals with problematic and/or safety issues as well. Ald. Baker felt there could be some cooperation with other departments in the City to give an indication when something is being sold.

Suicide Prevention

Ald. Sangiolo would like to know how much of the \$100K that was approved by the Board has been spent and on what. Dori Zaleznik said the specialist's salary, training, QPR training booklets and a very small amount for a logo that will carry through all the programming for years to come. Ald. Sangiolo said when the money runs out there will be requests for more which but that should become part of the budget. Ms. Zaleznik said they are keeping a very close recording of all the funds spent. She feels they are probably sufficiently funded for this year.

Riverside Community Care got some additional state money for suicide prevention and programming in Newton. Youth Outreach workers and Outreach counseling centers at Brigham House and in Newton Corner never turn people away even when the Newton Grant money runs

out. They look to a different funding source or they just take the loss. Newton did ask for more money from the City for those contracts for Riverside prior to the suicides and they did receive additional funds. Wait lists are unacceptable because when parent and kids finally get to the point where they will accept help, you can't tell them they have to wait 6 months. It's just too risky. Project Interface is also available to walk people through the process of finding mental health services. Last year the funding for that was split between the city and the schools (\$9K each) but previously had been funded through grant money. This year there is \$20K in the school budget for this. Ald. Sangiolo said it was important to see how all that works together.

Concussion Testing

Ald. Rice asked how the concussion baseline testing was going. Ms. Walsh said the testing has been implemented in the schools for certain sports teams. This allows the schools to know if an injury has taken place so the student can be monitored and school work, practice and sports accommodations can be made

Mosquito Control

Ald. Kalis asked how this is treated. Ms. Zaleznik said \$38K is budgeted for mosquito control. Newton treats catch basins with larvacides. It is a bacteria that spreads from mosquito to mosquito and is very effective. If surrounding communities find mosquitos infected with West Nile Virus there is reserve money if a pocket of infected mosquitos is found in the City. The community is told to use insect repellents and to cover up if they are outside, especially around dusk. She did not think that any particular part of the city is at more risk than any other part. The communities that are using aerial programs are doing so to prevent Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). Newton does not have the type of vegetation that hosts those types of mosquitos and has never found an EEE infected mosquito.

Senior Citizens Outreach

Ald. Norton thought it would be helpful to reach out to seniors who are living alone. Perhaps there could be some sort of safety net calls; if the senior doesn't answer then a follow-up call or visit is initiated. Ms. Walsh said she would talk to the Public Health Nurse and Jayne Colino about having the nurse be at the Senior Center a couple days a month. She will also talk to others who work with elders in the community.

Survey

Ald. Norton also wondered if they could do a "happiness survey" in the City to see what might be missing for people. Somerville does something similar.

The Committee thanks Linda Walsh for her work and presentation and voted to hold the Health and Human Services Department budget.

LAW DEPARTMENT

The proposed FY15 budget for the Law Department is \$1,420,612 which is a 5.7% increase over FY14.

Donnalyn Kahn addressed the Committee. The biggest change in this year's budget is the addition of an attorney. There are many building projects in the City including school buildings and fire houses. The department needs more help in this area as the current staff is working to full capacity. They are looking for an attorney with extensive experience in large municipal projects and real estate to cross-train with Ouida Young to take on some of that work. After that

transition has been made and the new attorney is up to speed, she would add some worker's compensation work. There is outside counsel doing workers compensation work out of the Human Resources Department and they would be bringing that in-house.

Accomplishments

There has been comprehensive review of Christian's Law which allows parents to bring Coast Guard Certified flotation devices for their children to use at lakes. This came from a case in which a child died after being denied use of a device because it was the lake's policy. The City reviewed the statute with Parks & Recreation relative to Crystal Lake and their brochures were rewritten to highlight Christian's Law, along with a handout to emphasize the law. The City is extending this provision to pools as well. There may be further regulations coming from the state and they will be monitoring any changes.

Medical Marijuana Dispensary ordinance work took quite a bit of staff time this year. There is an RMD applying to locate in Newton.

Simplifying permits and licenses was very successful. There were many licenses for things like Christmas lights and skating ponds that are recurring but temporary. They decided to change those sorts of things over to a permitting process which is standardized, simpler and smoother for everyone. The response has been very positive.

They began work with organizing fees and fines but the work is ongoing. David Olson is helping to gather information on this. The fees need to be based on actual work by departments and it seems in many instances the fees are too low. This analysis will continue and the organization of the fees schedule need to be simplified and clarified. This is going to be an inter-departmental effort. Ald. Sangiolo would like to receive the initial data that has been gathered.

Goals for FY15

Cross-training of the staff is an ongoing initiative as well as working in teams on complex issues. The model of having only one person who knows the details of a particular issue is not effective. This knowledge needs to be shared and also helps with burnout as well as provides a consistent level of service if someone is not available. The team approach provides a greater dynamic flow of knowledge and ideas.

Efficient, timely and fair resolution of claims is an ongoing focus and goal. Claims are now handled by category by particular attorneys which makes it a more efficient process. Trends can also be detected more easily and it makes it easier for claimants to communicate with the City.

The department will be working with the new HR director on implementing and disseminating information on all city policies.

They continue work on collecting older monies owed for police details. In FY2012 they collected \$65K; FY13 \$22K and to date for FY14 they have collected \$19K. This is all found money that would have just been written off. They just had a meeting with Police and Comptrollers to determine what was worth trying to collect. Everything over a year old that is more than \$1K is being analyzed to determine if the money is collectable or not. If it is deemed non-collectable, the Comptroller will write it off.

Scanning of all City Solicitor opinions is underway. There is only one person in the department who has the institutional knowledge of what is in those opinions and that is not a reasonable model. Someone has come into to scan them for free and Ms. Kahn is looking for a good searchable software to help access them.

Two attorneys are dedicated to education law which includes training and issues that come up on short notice. Issues could range from teachers being subpoenaed in child custody cases to educational plans to issues of arrest or drugs in school. The issues are vast and varied and one of those attorneys fields these calls practically 24/7. They work very closely with the schools and provide advice to teachers, principals, etc.

There is an experienced labor lawyer on staff and he has been cross-training with another attorney in the office. She is doing work with the smaller unions. They are now at the beginning of collective bargaining. Moving this in-house was a great idea because it engenders trust and the working relationship is so much better. The anger and angst and billable hours are no longer an issue as they were with outside counsel.

Renegotiating all of the cable franchise agreements is underway. Verizon, Comcast and RCN are the three providers. The department has gotten them all on the same timeline for contracts and it makes the process of renewal and negotiation much easier.

Ms. Kahn said she is committed to thorough investigation of all cases and claims and preparation for any court appearances, depositions, etc.; she is also committed to the highest level of quality in any work that goes out of the office; and they are the resource for training, advice and questions on all legal issues for the City and have an open door policy for that.

Committee Questions and Comments

Ald. Baker said he was appreciative of the work that has been done with the defense of legislative privilege.

Zoning Reform Support

Ald. Baker is supportive of the new position and wonders if it will be enough. He is quite concerned with the zoning reform process and the work that needs to be done. The zoning consultant has brought back a reorganization draft which imports the current ordinance, and it has revealed a long list of “fixes” just in this phase. Until he is confident that everything has been transferred correctly to the new outline and that the Law Department has signed off on legal form and character, he will not support it. This will take a tremendous amount of detailed work from someone who is familiar with the current ordinance, such as Ouida Young. He would like to have some of her time available to look at this and so some of her time has to be freed up. Hiring a new person to handle this is not what he wants. He is very worried that the Law Department won't be able to take on this work as currently staffed. He would be supportive of a Resolution. The mayor had budgeted money to pay consultants on the zoning work, but now time has to be spent fixing what the consultants are doing. The message needs to get back to the Planning Department and the Executive Office that if they are committed to this work, the resources need to be made available.

Ms. Kahn said she would like to consult with her staff to determine the need and if the new attorney could pick up some slack to free people up for this work. She will get back to the Committee on this.

Labor Law

Ald. Blazar felt it was a great idea to bring the labor law work in house. He felt that because the Board has to approve the money for the contracts, he would like to know what is happening in the negotiations. He understands the way it has always been done and the Board is not involved in that process, but he would like to be informed. Ms. Kahn said they are just beginning the process. Ald. Sangiolo asked if an update could be delivered in executive session. Ms. Kahn said she would not feel comfortable divulging the details of active negotiations. These are very confidential and the trust is built on that confidentiality and the ability to speak freely. The expectation is that this round of negotiations is not going to be terribly contentious.

Police Detail Collections

Ald. Blazar asked what was still owed on the older police detail collection accounts. Ms. Kahn said she would provide that information. Clerk's Note: Ms. Kahn later provided the following information: *The Law Department has calculated the current amount of police details (unpaid and late because they are 90 days or more) to be around \$40,500. We are actively working to collect on these and/or determine if any of them will be written off as uncollectible.*

Gas Leaks

Ald. Sangiolo asked that when they have some updated information, there could be a report on what is happening with National Grid on the gas leaks in the City.

The Committee thanked Ms. Kahn for her presentation and work and voted to hold the Law Department budget.

SENIOR SERVICES

The proposed FY15 budget for the Senior Services Department is \$594,398 which is a 2.66% increase over FY14. Jayne Colino, Director of Senior Services addressed the Committee and introduced a few members of her department and the Council on Aging.

Ms. Colinos noted that a budget for Programs has been added and that is the magnet that draws people to the Senior Center, so she is very pleased. She has always had to find in-kind program provision or find sponsorship for a program and that will continue, but they really needed a reliable revenue stream for a coordinator to create new programming.

She advocated to Maureen Lemieux that their revolving account is generated by the program donations, fees and what is sold at their store. Those revenues had been used for operations for a number of years for office supplies, custodial fees, printing and postage, as well as programs. Their budget received a small increase in printing, postage, vehicle reimbursement and in-state conferences. A larger increase was received in office supplies and custodial supplies. All of this won't need to come from the revolving account which will allow them to grow a sustainable program budget.

They are saving some money in the natural gas budget because the systems have been converted. The electricity needs have gone down as well.

Accomplishments

Ms. Colino explained that her department is funded through several sources including the City, CDGB funds, various grants and donations. The Engagement position is completely funded through the state Formula Grant; the Program Coordinator is funded through City money as well as CDBG money; Transportation almost completely funded by the City with a small donation from the Senior Citizen Fund which allowed them to expand the service to Village Centers. The department has met and even surpassed the majority of the outcomes that were proposed for FY14.

FY15 Goals

These goals fall in the same categories as FY14 as they are the core services offered by Senior Services of engagement and connectivity, transportation, programs and social services. These are the goals that will help the City become a livable and sustainable community for the 21st century. They use software that helps them carefully track data to determine the needs and try to meet them.

Staffing

Ms. Colino said they are trying to increase their volunteer corp by 10%. About 100 volunteers currently contribute their time and skills to the Senior Center and contributed over 7,500 hours. They have hired a Volunteer Coordinator, which is a new position, specifically to grow that number and recruit more volunteers to the Senior Center and to establish relationships in the community to determine needs there. They are currently recruiting for friendly visitors and friendly phone-callers. It was determined that this service is needed to help combat isolation and keep in touch with those who aren't able to get out that much. This Volunteer Coordinator will also oversee the senior tax work-off program which is a change. The Aging-in-Place Project Manager previously had responsibility for that program but that position has been eliminated and the duties reorganized under the new Volunteer Coordinator position, and others. The executive administrator is now managing the Contractor Referral Program which vets home contractors and provides referrals.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging has gone through a strategic planning process. They did some very deliberate recruiting of new advisory board members based on areas the strategic plan highlighted. There is a new elder law attorney who focuses on LGTB law and the Volunteer Coordinator is also working on LGTB Senior Programming. There is a housing developer who was appointed to the Board as well and a demographer/researcher who is new to the Board.

Over 50 Study

The Tufts Health Plan Foundation funded a study called Community Profiles 2014. This is groundbreaking work in the elder network as it is the first time valid data has been harvested and put into tools specific to each municipality. Ms. Colino asked that the Committee to visit the Healthy Aging Collaborative website and see how Newton exists in terms of health indicators such as chronic disease, falls, the walkability of the community, and other categories. This data helps Senior departments understand where they need to be putting their resources and where they could be collaborating with other organizations to address issues. The lead researcher on this study, Beth Duggin, has been recruited to the Board. She is a Newton resident and a UMass Gerontology Professor. She is helping them understand the data and its implications. A needs assessment was commissioned by Newton of the UMass Gerontology to evaluate the 50 and over population. The data collection is closed and targeted 4,000 households in the City with at least

one person over the age of 50. There has been a 26% response rate which comes close to the highest response they've had in other communities which is 30%.

The CDBG office started their needs assessment process for the next 5-year funding cycle. They are doing quite a bit of data collection and the Senior Services is collaborating with them. CDBG is using Newton's needs assessment information and Newton is using their data that's being collected through the MAPC (Mass Area Planning Council), the American Community Survey and the US Census data. The researcher/demographer on the Board will be able to help them understand all this data. The Mayor has commissioned the Dukakis Center to do some demographic analysis as well.

Growth Rate

All the data is saying that Newton is getting old, fast. We are ahead of the state and the nation in terms of that growth rate. The age 60 and over population is 22% of the population based on 2010 census data. That means that 40% of the households in Newton have at least one person over the age of 60 in it. The growth of this population continues to climb through 2030. The overall population in the City of Newton is likely to decline while the 60 and over population is likely to increase by anywhere from 30%-60%, based on who is collecting and analyzing the data. The hope is that Newton's own data collection is going to focus that data and better predict the trend.

Plans are in the works to co-sponsor programs with the Library to present the findings and discuss the implications around housing, transportation, mobility, engagement, and services that will be necessary. There will be the need for a higher level of access to services. Part of the UMass project is a comparison to other communities, and the Council on Aging is initiating a much larger benchmarking study as well. Newton wants to be a leader in the network and understand what is happening in neighboring communities.

Transportation

They have added more destinations to the transportation service and are including village centers and the Parks & Recreation Department's Over-55 programs. Helping people stay connected is the goal.

Revolving Accounts

As was mentioned in other departmental discussions, the Committee would like to know the balances in the revolving accounts as that is not reflected.

Ms. Colino said she and her department have had to cobble together money using revolving funds as well as other resources, but this is not a sustainable model. She is pleased that the budget this year is taking a step away from that model. Any growth in revenue will be for growth in programs and services and the revolving accounts assist them in that goal.

Committee Questions and Comments

Transportation Services

Ald. Sangiolo asked for some data on which village centers are getting the most requests. Ms. Colino said they would also like to look at where in the centers people are frequenting. If there are many, many trips to CVS, perhaps CVS could provide some funding. They made a commitment to include every village center for one year and collect the data to see what the need is. Ald. Sangiolo said this would be good information for the EDC and the Planning Dept. to

have as well. It could help identify gaps in resources around the city and try to attract businesses that fill those needs. They also found that some people were using the village center transportation to get to work.

Ald. Leary asked if they will provide transportation for Village Days. They started providing rides to special community programs that weren't necessarily senior programs, but events at the library or the museum, for example, along with Village Days. Ald. Leary said this concept goes along with making communities that are more walkable and sustainable, and having various housing types near transportation, etc. The Nexus bus is something she was familiar with and wondered if a program like that should be restored. Ms. Colino said it was realized that the majority of Nexus users were older adults, so the money went to Senior Services instead to administer a more focused system than the loop system that Nexus was using. The transportation program then really blossomed because it could be grown to meet the demonstrated need. The Community Life Cluster has talked about a bus program and she is involved in that conversation.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said he thought the transportation services was wonderful and provided such a tremendous improvement to quality of life for so many people. He also said he was very pleased with all that she does. He asked if the voucher system for rides had been changed in any way. Ms. Colino said that when the MBTA Ride fare went up, they also raised their contribution suggestion. They average contribution they receive is about \$2 a ride. They ask for \$4 and won't take less than \$2 unless a rider qualifies for an exemption. About 10% qualify for an exemption which means they still make a contribution but it is generally smaller. They generate about \$35K/year from the contributions.

Accreditation

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked when the Senior Center was up for accreditation. Ms. Colino said they are overdue and it was an FY14 goal. There were several transitions in staff that delayed that process and also one of the requirements in the new accreditation standards was to have completed a strategic planning process. They had to complete that before they could apply.

World Health Organization Status

Ald. Hess-Mahan mentioned that Brookline was recognized by the World Health Organization as an age-friendly city. That involved strategic planning including all the issues that Newton seems interested in and is that something she would pursue. Ms. Colino said Newton is acting under the principles of the World Health Organization concepts. When they looked at the concept of livable communities and age-friendly communities there are a number of different models but they all have the same core concepts. Newton is focusing on transportation, housing, mobility and engagement. There are other aspects that can be looked at but these are the ones they feel they can focus on successfully and they are not looking at the World Health Organization status. The City of Boston is initiating.

Along those lines, Holly Gunner is a member of the Transportation Advisory Group and she advocates ideas for seniors. They are having some input into the categorizing of streets and it is an opportunity to create a category to address the needs of seniors. They are trying to come up with something like mobility sensitive zones which might be appealing to a wider population. They also have someone attend Housing Partnership meetings to keep an ear open and offer a voice when necessary.

Support Programs

Ald. Norton asked about vulnerable seniors and programs that might be put in place to help. Ms. Colino said there is an "Are You OK?" system which sends an automated call to a household and if there is not a response, there is a follow-up protocol. The Police Department would generally administer this to those who enroll in the program. She said she would have to talk to the Police Department and there would need to be research on cost for implantation and maintenance. It is just another idea to keep in touch with vulnerable and at-risk people. The concept is to get out into neighborhoods to strengthen themselves and on that local level, provide neighbor to neighbor help and support. Technology is great but it needs to be a combination of both efforts.

Housing Needs

Ald. Norton asked about having seniors stay in their homes in the City and that the data she is collecting and receiving can be helpful in figuring out who is staying, who is leaving and why. This goes to the accessory apartment conversations that are taking place. Ms. Colino said there need to be housing options available for people to have the choice to stay.

Capital Needs

Ald. Norton also asked about the Senior Center building and what her needs might be. Ms. Colino explained that the FY14 CIP was giving them an upgrade to the HVAC system. Her last conversation with Josh Morse was that it is still being assessed to determine what exactly is needed for the proper upgrade. The air handlers are 20 years old and have surpassed their life expectancy and the hope is that the improvements will come before the end of FY14. Outside of the CIP, the Senior Citizens Fund donated money for the needs assessment, so they were able to use a sizeable donation for capital needs. The building is being painted on the interior in stages with that money. The lobby and bathrooms have been done and she's waiting to hear when more can be scheduled. The entire building really needs to be re-painted, inside and out. The other portion of those funds will go to build a permanent vestibule on the building to provide shelter for those waiting for transportation and to keep the winter chill out of the lobby. The new boiler is working efficiently.

She said she has spoken with the administration about the capital needs of the building. The Newton Senior Center is no longer a leader. Looking at other communities, Needham, Waltham, and Belmont have all opened new, big, senior centers and this is all part of the benchmarking process to look at that. Ald. Sangiolo said years ago, Newton was the leader and those other communities were in bad shape. They used the Newton model to improve, but now Newton is behind the curve. Ms. Colino noted that twenty years ago Newton invested \$1M on the Senior Center and that was unheard of. Now other communities are investing up to \$8M. It is time for Newton to try to get to the next level and to what reflects the community and the commitment Newton has to it. In reality, the next major development should be a multi-generational center that includes youth, seniors, a cultural center, administrative space, etc. She didn't really know where that could be as the current center can't be expanded. They are looking at convening another Building Committee within the Council of Aging. There used to be a Board of Directors that fundraised for the Center, along with a Friends group. They need to look at all this again.

Snow Shoveling

Ald. Rice asked if there had been a lot of requests for help or exemptions with shoveling this winter. Ms. Colino said the number of people requesting the exemption under the ordinance has diminished over the years. Over 100 applied the first time for the exemption and half qualified.

The next year those qualified 50 applied again, and this year about 30 applied and only one or two were denied. It appears that people are now understanding the exemption guidelines.

For those people who wanted their sidewalks cleared, they could access the volunteer snow shovelers if they had the exemption, however, the volunteer snow shovelers program didn't really work out. Ms. Colino said this ordinance does not promote good will and if fines are adopted, the applications for exemptions will go up dramatically. Some Committee members felt the City should be clearing the sidewalks, not residents. The department does not include snow removal companies on their contractors' referral list. Most snow contractors are doing driveways and streets when most people just need their sidewalk shoveled. Ms. Colino said she does not want her Volunteer Coordinator dealing with snow shoveling issues. It is far too complicated and time consuming and she does not want to get deeply involved in that at all. She noted that there is a new company she ran across that provides and matches up snow shovelers with people using an Uber kind of model.

The Committee thanked Ms. Colino for all her excellent work and voted to hold the Senior Services budget.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Mah Sangiolo