

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011

Present: Ald. Linsky (Vice-Chairman, Acting Chairman), Baker, Hess-Mahan, Fischman, Blazar, Merrill, Rice, Sangiolo
Also Present: Ald. Johnson, Freedman, Fuller, Harney, Shapiro
City Staff: Bob DeRubeis (Commissioner of Parks and Recreation), Maureen Lemieux (Chief Financial Officer), Rebecca Smith (Committee Clerk)

#52-07 ALD. PARKER, SANGIOLO, MANSFIELD, HARNEY, DANBERG, VANCE, LINSKY, HESS-MAHAN, BURG, ALBRIGHT & JOHNSON
requesting an ordinance amendment to create a health care advisory committee whose function would be to recommend measures to control the rate of increase of health insurance costs, as recommended by the Newton Finance & Management Working Group in 2005 and the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Municipal Budget in 2007.
[02/09/07 @ 12:36 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Baker not voting)**

NOTE: Former Alderman Ken Parker joined the Committee for this discussion. The committee discussed the language that was proposed by Ald. Blazar which outlined the proposed Advisory Committee's purpose. Ald. Blazar will discuss this draft with Marie and Mr. Parker; they will then produce a document, as well as a draft ordinance, which will be brought to Committee when it is next discussed (proposed date: July 13, 2011). Ald. Hess-Mahan opined that it is important to have this advisory committee so that we understand the options available for health care; we need to reduce costs and not just shift them. Mr. Parker addressed the Committee sharing that this advisory committee is meant to be a structured resource in order to tap into the expertise that is available in this city. The intent of their mission is to determine what would control costs, while maintaining the quality currently offered.

Maureen Lemieux, CFO, stated that she is concerned that opening up information on health care to a committee comprised of members of the general public as it could potentially pose a privacy issue if information is leaked. All information would need to be kept confidential to ensure we don't cross any lines. Ald. Freedman disagreed with this position, stating that the group would be discussing general ideas about how to go about health care, which would be fine for an open meeting; the advisory committee would not be discussing individuals' information. Mr. Parker echoed this view, stating that we must be sensitive to legal issues, but that there is no reason why this group can't hold meetings to discuss health policy. Ald. Sangiolo and Ald. Blazar also aligned themselves with this assessment.

Ald. Hess-Mahan moved hold on the item which carried unanimously.

#207-08(2) PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEE requesting discussion with the Executive Department and various City Department heads regarding use of debt exclusions to address city needs. [03-14-11 @ 10:26AM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Baker not voting)**

NOTE: The Committee docketed this item in order to continue the conversation about debt exclusions as a means to fund our capital needs. Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer joined the Committee at the table to discuss this. Ald. Sangiolo began the discussion by asking what the status of the capital assessment is. Ms. Lemieux stated that the assessment hasn't started yet, but that the contract is being prepared. The assessment should be substantially complete in time for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in October, which will be a full 5 year prioritized CIP. Ald. Sangiolo followed up by asking about how the board will be included in this process. Ms. Lemieux stated that she expects the Mayor will have a meeting with the Board prior to the presentation of the CIP. Ms. Lemieux also clarified that the CIP is just for buildings. Other infrastructure (i.e. water/sewer, roads) is dealt with through other assessments. Ald. Sangiolo explicitly asked whether there is any discussion about having debt exclusion. Ms. Lemieux replied that at this time there is no discussion within the administration about the consideration of debt exclusion.

Ms. Lemieux gave the Committee a brief synopsis on where the City is regarding its deficit. In FY2011 the City had a deficit of \$11 million. For FY2012 we will have a deficit of \$8 million. FY2013 should be our peak year for debt service; once we hit our peak year we're going to have declining debt service. Ms. Lemieux stated that over the next couple years the city needs to get itself to the point where the budget is crafted with no more than \$1.5 million of free cash being utilized. She stressed that by FY 2015 we need to be in balance and, once we are, then we'll be able to talk about doing projects without automatically thinking we have to have debt exclusion.

Ald. Sangiolo asked Ms. Lemieux whether the administration is considering an operating override; Ms. Lemieux again stated that the administration is not considering anything like that at this time. She told the Committee that she will certainly bring this conversation back to the Mayor but stated that decisions such as this are not hers to make. Her role is to identify the needs and the funding and then advise so that the City can come as close as possible to funding all the things we want to do.

Ald. Fischman proposed that if the administration got to the point where the policy shift of considering debt exclusion was something they'd at least think about, then perhaps there could be an additional document presented with the CIP to show the alternate scenario that debt exclusion would create.

Ald. Hess-Mahan brought to the Committee's attention that the town of Arlington, for the second time in 6 years, has passed a \$6 million override; he requested that we have an open and honest discussion about an operating override.

Ald. Linsky asked about the status of the reserve funds. Ms. Lemieux stated that we are using \$4.8 million right now and have about \$4.8 million left over. She stated that we will likely use \$3.2 million next year, and then \$1.6 million the following year. FY

2014 is the last year we can use the funds; they will then be depleted which is why by FY 2015 we must be in balance.

Ald. Sangiolo moved hold on the item and urged the committee to take it up again in October when there is a better sense of what has been done. Ald. Sangiolo also requested that the Mayor attend that fall meeting. The motion to hold carried unanimously.

#355-10 PRESIDENT LENNON and ALD. LAPPIN requesting a change to the rules of the Board of Aldermen to eliminate the Real Property & Reuse Committee. Issues regarding reuse of public buildings to be referred to the Public Facilities Committee and issues regarding reuse of City owned land would be referred to the Land Use Committee. Effective date of this change will be January 1, 2012. [11/26/2010 @ 11:59 AM]
REFERRED TO RULES SUBCOMMITTEE 12/8/10
RULES SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS APPROVAL 06/08/11

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Programs and Services discussed items #355-10, #356-10, #357-10, and #357-10(2) together. Ald. Baker, Chairman of Rules Subcommittee, gave a synopsis of the discussion and decision that took place in the subcommittee. For an account of that meeting please see the Rules Subcommittee report. Ald. Baker moved to hold the items, stating that Programs and Services must have a determination and understanding of the alternatives, should the Committees be dissolved, before the items are reported out to the full Board.

#356-10 PRESIDENT LENNON and ALD. LAPPIN requesting a change to the rules of the Board of Aldermen to eliminate the Post-Audit Committee. All post audit/follow-up items will be discussed in the substantive committee that originally heard the item. Effective date of this change will be January 1, 2012.[11/26/2010 @ 11:59 AM]
REFERRED TO RULES SUBCOMMITTEE 12/8/10
RULES SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS APPROVAL 06/08/11

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: See note for item #355-10

#357-10 PRESIDENT LENNON and ALD. LAPPIN requesting a change to the rules of the Board of Aldermen to eliminate the Committee on Community Preservation. All Community Preservation items will be referred to the Finance Committee. Effective date of this change will be January 1, 2012. [11/26/2010 @ 11:59 AM]
REFERRED TO RULES SUBCOMMITTEE 12/8/10
RULES SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS APPROVAL 06/08/11

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: See note for item #355-10

#357-10(2) ALD. YATES proposing a change in the proposed rule to eliminate the Committee on Community Preservation: community preservation items relating to housing and recreation shall be referred to the Programs and Services Committee; items relating to historic preservation and open space shall be referred to the Zoning and Planning Committee; all items shall then be referred to the Finance Committee. [12/6/2010 @ 10:57PM] REFERRED TO RULES SUBCOMMITTEE on 01-19-11
RULES SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS ITEM BE CONSIDERED WHEN DETERMINING COURSE OF ACTION FOR 357-10.
06/08/2011

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: See note for item #355-10

#114-11 ALD. HESS-MAHAN & SALVUCCI proposing to amend section 3-26(a)(2) of the Revised Ordinances to update the list of currently designated tot lots which dogs are prohibited from entering. [04-13-11 @10:52AM]

ACTION: **APPROVED SUBJECT TO SECOND CALL 7-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Ald Hess-Mahan introduced the item explaining that this arose out of a situation at Wellington Playground in Ward 3. Wellington is clearly a tot lot but isn't listed in the ordinance as such which posed a problem for enforcement when people abuse the area by letting their dogs run around inside the fencing and most often without a leash. The purpose of this item is to add Wellington, as well as Hunnewell, onto the list of playgrounds protected from the presence of dogs (on or off leash) in the ordinance.

The Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Bob DeRubeis, stated that he has problem with this and that dogs should not be permitted in these areas. He posed the question to the committee of whether they should consider taking this further and expand protection to other play structures, whether fenced or not, from the presence of dogs. He stated that this would be a bit of a challenge but something worth thinking about. Ald. Hess-Mahan suggested that we docket a parens 2 to this item to discuss the definition of tot lots and to explore the possibility of that expanded protection. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of that suggestion.

Ald. Hess-Mahan requested that we take an action on the item this evening and report it out as "approved subject to second" taking the time at the full Board to review the ordinance language and discuss it if necessary (attached). The motion to approve carried unanimously.

#95-09(2) PROGRAMS & SERVICE COMMITTEE requesting establishment of an Advisory Committee to review processes of the Board of Aldermen and report recommended efficiency improvements to the Board of Aldermen. Members of the Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Programs & Services Committee and the President of the Board. [11/16/09 @ 3:59 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Baker not voting)**

NOTE: This item was held without discussion and will be taken up again at a later date.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Sangiolo, Chairman

HEALTH CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Health Care Advisory Committee will be composed of government representatives and private individuals in the City of Newton whose mission is to gather information, analyze, discuss and recommend policies and procedures relating to health benefits provided to city workers and their families, including retirees.

At present, the City is self-insured and offers plans with Tufts Health Insurance and Harvard Pilgrim, who administer health insurance claims and payments. Newton also has an excess health insurance plan with Westport Insurance Corporation to cover catastrophic claims. Participants in the Tufts and Harvard-Pilgrim Plans currently pay 20% of medical premiums, while the City pays 80%. Both current employees and retirees pay the same percentage amount, although the employees' percentage is negotiated with the unions while the retirees' contribution is set by the Mayor which, pursuant to current state law, can be 50% at a maximum.

The City requires those individuals who are 65 or over and Medicare eligible to use Medicare as their primary coverage. At present, the City reimburses 80% of the payments for Medicare Plan B (money owed to doctors and other medical professionals), and funds 80% of the cost of a supplemental insurance policy that makes up the difference between what Medicare pays and what would otherwise be covered under the Tufts or Harvard-Pilgrim plans.

The total cost to the City for its medical benefits (health premiums, Medicare payroll taxes and Medicare Part B reimbursements) provided to employees and retirees in fiscal year 2010 was \$44 million, approximately 12.5% of the City's annual budget.

The purpose of this Committee will be to review the cost and efficiency of Newton's current health benefits plan, to look at possible alternative methods of securing health insurance for its participants, to investigate possible avenues of providing better medical care and treatment outside of the traditional model at a lower cost and to issue a report setting forth the findings and recommendations of the Committee. It is anticipated that this Committee will issue at least a preliminary report within one year after it is established. It shall also consult and work with other organizations and committees that are interested in examining these issues.

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CITY CLERK
NEWTON, MA. 02159

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ORDINANCE NO.

June , 2011

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF NEWTON
AS FOLLOWS:

That the Revised Ordinances of Newton, Massachusetts, 2007, as amended, be and are hereby further amended with respect to Chapter 3, Article II **Dogs**, as follows:

1. Insert alphabetically, in the list of Tot Lots contained in Paragraph (a) (2) of Sec. 3-26 **Restraint of Dogs**, the following two Tot Lots:

“Hunnewell Park”

“Wellington Playground”

Approved as to legal form and character:

DONNALYN B. LYNCH KAHN
City Solicitor

Under Suspension of Rules
Readings Waived and Adopted

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Approved:

(SGD) DAVID A. OLSON
City Clerk

(SGD) SETTI D. WARREN
Mayor