

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Present: Ald. Sangiolo (Chairman), Linsky (Vice Chairman), Merrill, Hess-Mahan, Rice, Blazar, Baker and Fischman

Others Present: Craig Manseau (Executive Secretary, Elections), Cindy Stone (Director, Newton History Museum), John MacGillivray (Veterans Agent), Bob DeRubeis (Acting Commissioner, Parks & Recreation Dept.)

**Chairman's Note: The Committee is inviting Department heads for brief introductions and informational discussions. Craig Manseau, Executive Secretary of Elections, and Cindy Stone, Director of the Newton History Museum, joined the Committee this evening.**

**The Committee joined the Public Facilities Committee for a presentation from His Honor the Mayor regarding possible reorganization plans for the Public Works, Parks & Recreation and Public Buildings Departments. Please see the joint report for the details of that discussion.**

**ELECTIONS**

Craig Manseau, Executive Secretary of Elections, addressed the Committee. He explained that his department has been very busy with 4 elections in the last 5 months. There was a 29% voter turnout in September and 41% in the October election. The voter turnout for the special elections was 31% and 63%. The special elections cost about \$65,000 each. The Governor had \$7.2M in the budget to defray the costs to 351 cities and towns for special elections and they hope to receive that money soon. The absentee ballots totaled more than 6,000 over this period of time. He said his staff worked extremely hard and did an outstanding job. Ald. Linsky asked what the voter turnout for the Presidential election was. Mr. Manseau said it was 81%.

Ald. Rice said he was working with the Waban branch library to make it more handicapped accessible for a polling site. Mr. Manseau said it would be a great location. The Windsor Club was not suitable. He also mentioned that he would be working with Newton North High School as a polling site once it was operational. Ald. Sangiolo asked if the idea of having schools closed on Election Day had been discussed with the School Committee. Mr. Manseau said he was open to that but the discussion has not advanced. Ald. Linsky suggested exploring the Senior Center as an alternative site to Newton North High School. Mr. Manseau thought was a good idea and would look into that.

Mr. Manseau noted that the Census typically goes out in January, however, the vendors that were involved in printing the census were also involved in printing the ballots for the elections. This caused a slight change in the Census schedule and it will go out by the

end of this week. The first mailing of the Census cost \$10,333.44 in postage. The contract for the vendor was \$13,780 which included printing of all the forms as well as the forms for the second mailing and postcards. Postage costs for the second mailing were expected to be approximately \$5,000 and postcard postage approximately \$3,000. Mr. Manseau reported a household mailing of 29,630 which was down from a little over 30,000. The decrease is due to the fact that they have gotten much better at recognizing vacant properties and withholding mailings to them. Ald. Linsky asked what measures could be taken to optimize the return rate of the Census. Mr. Manseau said there were currently no procedures or legislation for electronic submission or electronic signatures. The only options now are dropping the Census off in person, or mailing it to their office.

**HISTORY MUSEUM**

Cindy Stone, Director of the Newton History Museum, addressed the Committee. She explained that the History Museum had a budget of about \$250,000, and that they also had a private non-profit group as a partner, the Newton Historical Society, with an additional budget of about \$250,000. The Newton Historical Society wanted to add a property to its assets and worked to purchase the Durant Kenrick House. They were able to do this through some CPA funds and fundraising of an additional \$900,000. Their capital campaign also addressed needs at the Jackson Homestead. They were expanding their archives as well as installing a universal access entryway to the building. Ms. Stone said the roof project has been finished and the painting is ongoing. A collection storage unit for the Museums 3 dimensional items was another project they were working on, at the Craft Street stable.

Ms. Stone explained that the History Museum/Newton Historical Society were overseeing the Jackson Homestead, the Durant Kenrick House, and preserving the 3 historic burying grounds in Newton. They also did walking tours and other programs. They had a joint board that consisted of Trustees appointed by the Mayor as well as Directors of the Newton Historical Society. They worked in concert and functioned together so they wanted to diminish confusion and use one name to encompass both organizations. They chose “Historic Newton”. There would still be two legal entities, but for branding purposes, just one name.

Ms. Stone explained that they have an ever changing website to keep the public up to date on events and exhibits. The Chamber of Commerce also listed the Museum in its places to visit. When their new brochures were produced, they would be available throughout the City. Ald. Baker suggested cross advertising with other museums. Ms. Stone said they continue to work on school and student programs.

**REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#37-10 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a transfer of funds in the amount of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) for the purpose of supplementing the FY’10 budget for veteran’s benefits as follows:

From: Veteran Services Salaries.....	\$13,000
Veteran Services Employee Benefits.....	\$3,000
Budget Reserve .....	\$14,000
To: Veteran Services Expenses (Veteran Benefits).....	\$30,000

[01/26/10 @ 11:48 AM]

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 7-0 (Linsky not voting)**

**NOTE:** John MacGillivray, Veterans Agent, joined the Committee. He said that he anticipated a need of \$30,000 to finish the fiscal year. When he started with the department in September, approximately \$19,000 had been spent. From that point through January, approximately \$10,000 was expended. This brought the average monthly expenditure to about \$4,500 per month and he wanted to add a little more to cover unexpected costs, such as burials. He explained that 75% of the funding for Veterans was reimbursed by the state, usually within a 9-12 month period of time.

Mr. MacGillivray explained that his department provided benefits and services to veterans in Newton. This included assistance with medical and dental benefits, assistance with applications to the Veteran's Administration, flags on graves, assistance with burials, etc. He anticipated more elderly veterans and spouses of veterans looking for benefits. Mr. MacGillivray explained that the state mandated that each city and town in the Commonwealth have a full time Veteran's Agent.

The Committee voted to approve this item by a vote of 7-0.

**REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#36-10 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting authorization to appropriate and expend twenty-five thousand five hundred forty-two dollars (\$25,542) from an insurance company payment for the purpose of repairing damage caused by an auto accident to the War Memorial located at the Newton Highlands Playground. [01/26/10 @ 11:48 AM]

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 7-0 (Linsky not voting)**

**NOTE:** Bob DeRubeis, Acting Commissioner of the Parks & Recreation Dept, addressed the Committee. He clarified that the monument was at the corner of the Hyde Playground in Lincoln Street. The monument was hit by a car and it stayed down for a few days because they wanted to give the insurance company a chance to respond. Mr. DeRubeis received a call from former alderman, Bill Brandel, with concerns about how long that was taking. The Public Works Department worked to reinstall the monument. There were fractures in the stone and it needed major repair. After discussions with the Law Department, Mr. DeRubeis went to Newton Memorial Art Company for a permanent replacement and received a quote of about \$24,500. The Law Department worked with the insurance company and received \$25,542 for the replacement. The remaining costs of approximately \$1,000 would include a crane, police detail, etc. He will get the details of the quote to the Finance Committee. Mr. DeRubeis said he would work with the Veteran's office to be sure that all names were included and the information was correct. Ald. Rice noted that the neighbors would like to have a re-dedication ceremony.

The Committee voted to approve this item by a vote of 7-0.

#125-09      THE POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE requesting creation of a public tree protection ordinance and amendment of the current tree ordinance as recommended in the Tree Preservation Ordinance Report. [04/17/09 @ 9:14 PM]

**ACTION:**      **HELD 7-0 (Linsky not voting)**

**NOTE:** Ald. Sangiolo noted that an update from Marc Welch, Director of Urban Forestry was attached to the agenda. In summary, the Urban Tree Commission has been working on a Public Tree Ordinance. It has been submitted to the Law Department for review and some issues have been raised about feasibility and practicability. They were hoping to come back to the Board with a draft by the end of the month.

The Committee voted to hold this item by a vote of 7-0.

#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 (Linsky not voting)**

**NOTE:** Ald. Hess-Mahan explained that this item came from a previous item docketed by Tom Sheff. Originally it was an outside group to be an advisory committee on the efficiency of the Board. Working with Tom Sheff, it became a joint effort with current and former aldermen as well as citizens. The Long Range Planning Committee took this up and made some recommendations, which was not an exclusive list. The report was not attached to the agenda, so Ald. Hess-Mahan felt it would be best to hold the item so it could be reviewed by the Committee. Ald. Sangiolo asked if the Long Range Committee had determined how many people should serve on the committee. Ald Hess-Mahan said 7-9 was suggested. He said they had also looked at finding people with certain expertise such as IT, Process Management, etc. That report is attached here.

The Committee voted to hold this item by a vote of 7-0.

Ald. Sangiolo said she would like the Rules Subcommittee to determine a chair and set a meeting date for the near future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Sangiolo, Chairman

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2009

Present: Ald. Hess-Mahan (Chairman), Albright, Baker, Danberg, and Johnson

#95-09      TOM SHEFF requesting the Board of Aldermen appoint an advisory committee made of up persons who are not elected officials to review the daily processes of the Board of Aldermen and report recommended efficiency improvements to the Board of Aldermen. [03/26/09 @8:34 pm]

**NOTE:**      The item is a request from a citizen to form an advisory committee to look at the processes of the Board of Aldermen and recommend improvements to the Board. Mr. Sheff, the docketor, was unable to join the Committee for discussion of this item but provided an e-mail, which was attached to the agenda. The e-mail outlined Mr. Sheff's suggestions regarding the advisory committee's membership and mission.

Ald. Albright thought that it would be helpful if the Clerk's Office could research docket items and determine how long an item sits on an agenda before it is discussed. Ald. Johnson pointed out that some items such as appointments are dealt with quickly, while items such as the tree ordinance or the noise ordinance take a significant amount of discussion time. Ald. Johnson added that there are also docket items that sit on agendas because it is up to the Chairman whether the items are discussed. Ald. Danberg stated that some type of protocol needed to be established for items that languish on agendas. Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that the federal courts began requiring the clerk for each judge to collect information on how many cases were filed and how many were disposed of within a six-month timeframe. Ald. Baker reminded the Committee that there is a rule within the Rules of the Board requiring docket items to be discussed within a set amount of time.

Ald. Hess-Mahan was thinking about the citizen component of the proposed advisory committee. In talking with Mr. Sheff, he realized that citizens might have entirely different ideas regarding what is inefficient or what is working well. It is his sense that citizens get a very different view. Ald. Hess-Mahan also spoke with Mr. Sheff about procedures that the Aldermen use that may not be transparent to the public, such as proceedings at public hearings. Ald. Mansfield, the Chair of the Land Use Committee, provides written explanation of the procedures at each Land Use public hearing. In addition, President Baker from time to time begins Board meetings with an explanation of first and second call, which is helpful to people unaware of the process. Ald. Hess-Mahan felt that it would be useful to have both aldermanic and citizen input on the advisory committee, as he feels that to most people unfamiliar with City government, the Board of Aldermen meetings are a cipher.

Ald. Hess-Mahan reviewed the information contained in an efficiency report generated by Aldermen in 1972. At the time, the Board of Aldermen did not have any type of process, such as first call and second call. Every single item before the Board was discussed on the floor of the Board and meetings went on until two or three in the morning. There was also some shift

in the Board makeup at that time. Although it was still non-partisan, the Board was dominated by one political party and was in the process of changing over to the other party creating a balance on the Board. During that time, one of the concerns was how often Aldermen voted with each other in blocks. At that time, the Board did not even have Robert's Rules of Order, let alone a set of written rules. The efficiency report was a phenomenal piece of work.

Ald. Johnson suggested looking at the Committee structure, especially when things are docketed to multiple committees. She questioned whether there was a real need for the Post Audit Committee and the Committee on Community Preservation. She believes that the Post Audit Committee could be an important committee, if it was utilized. The advisory committee and Board could do some research on how to better utilize that committee. It is possible that the Board could eliminate the Committee on Community Preservation because applications for Community Preservation Funds have decreased significantly leaving the Committee with a very light workload. The work could go to either the Public Facilities Committee or the Programs and Services Committee depending on the content. Ald. Baker stated that a number of years ago a number of Aldermen looked at the issue of trying to consolidate committees. At that time, the committee structure had two topical issues that were not self-evident. One unexpected benefit was that when some items were discussed in more than one Committee, it seemed to weed out some of the controversy. Those items often went through the Board on first call, where they would not have otherwise. The second issue that generated discussion was the appropriate size for committees. Many Aldermen wanted to discuss certain items while other items did not warrant the same amount of interest. Ald. Baker felt that the Board could benefit by looking at Committee structure again.

Ald. Hess-Mahan noted that there are three basic things that the Committee seems to be discussing as appropriate for discussion by the advisory committee. They relate to workflow, transparency, and committee organization and structure. Ald. Hess-Mahan inquired if there were any other things that should be recommended to Programs and Services Committee.

Ald. Hess-Mahan spoke to David Olson, City Clerk/Clerk of the Board, again about Granicus, which is a web-based software program that would provide additional information to the public on Board meetings. Unfortunately, there has been an ongoing dispute between NewTV and the city over who is going to pay for the program, how much they are going to pay, and who is going to own the equipment associated with Granicus.

Ald. Johnson thought that it would be helpful to have a more user-friendly city website. Ald. Albright pointed out that it is very difficult to search the ordinances and the webpage. Ald. Danberg informed the Committee that she had submitted a stimulus fund request of \$50,000 to redo the city website. She has yet to hear anything regarding the request. She believes that improving the website would go a long way to resolving the transparency issue.

The Committee discussed what type of people should be included on the advisory committee. Ald. Johnson requested a process person with an organizational background. Ald. Albright suggested an information technology professional with database management experience. She would also like to see some type of content management system for docket items, as it would make finding information on webpage much easier. Ald. Johnson stated that

the aldermen appointed to the Committee should represent fairly new members as well as long serving Aldermen. A newer Alderman may have a different view of the Board functions.

The Committee also discussed the size of the proposed advisory committee and felt that between five and eight members was the appropriate size. In addition, Ald. Baker reminded the committee that the Board and Executive office would be in a transition period after the election. He suggested that it might be advisable to institute the advisory committee at the start of the new Board. Ald. Johnson agreed and added that it would be nice to have everything in place by January.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Establish Advisory Committee in early 2010 to review processes of the Board of Aldermen and report recommended efficiency improvements to the Board of Aldermen
- Advisory Committee should be comprised of 5-8 members including past and present aldermen with range of years of service, citizens with expertise including a process person with organizational background, and an information technology professional with database management experience
- Review of processes of the Board of Aldermen should include workflow, public communication, and committee organization and structure as well as other areas of interest to be determined by the Advisory Committee
- Review of workflow should include analysis of the amount of time docket items remain on committee agendas before discussions and/or actions take place, and development of searchable database indicating status of each docket item with links to agendas, reports and other documents
- Review of public communications should include online availability and retrieval of agendas, reports and other documents from the aldermanic website, explanation of process at public hearings and meetings, and methods for providing effective notice of meetings, hearings and other important events
- Review of committee organization and structure should include possible creation, consolidation and/or elimination of committees or functions of committees, and referral of certain types of items to more than one committee

Note from the Chairman: The Long Range Planning Committee did not discuss whether the Advisory Committee should be an ad hoc or a standing committee, which is an issue that the Programs & Services Committee may wish to address.

All other items were held without discussion and the meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair