

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2010

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

Also present: President Lennon, Ald. Fuller, Johnson

City Staff: Bob Rooney (Chief Operating Officer), John MacGillivray (Veterans Services Officer), Rebecca Smith (Committee Clerk)

Others present: George Mansfield

#298-09 ALD. MANSFIELD proposing Home Rule Legislation to amend **Article 2, Section 2-1(c) Composition; Eligibility; Election and Term** of the Newton Charter to establish four-year terms for Aldermen-at-Large with the provision for one Aldermen-at-Large to be elected from each ward at each biennial municipal election. [09-29-09 @ 6:45 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 6-1 (Sangiolo opposed, Hess-Mahan not voting)**

NOTE: Former Alderman Mansfield joined the table for a discussion with the Committee. He explained that the main objective of the item is to simplify the ballot for municipal elections; these elections can be overwhelming for voters because of the size of the ballot. For any one ward voters have seventeen Aldermanic offices to vote for (sixteen Aldermen-at-Large and one Ward Alderman). Because of this, voters don't always make well informed decisions on Election Day. Mr. Mansfield proposed that in order to make the ballot less overwhelming, and to give Aldermen who run at large a benefit for the effort of running City-wide, an Aldermen-at-Large's term should last for four years. Under this proposed model, the public would be electing eight Aldermen-at-Large and one Ward Alderman (Ward Aldermen would continue on the two year election pattern). Mr. Mansfield added that offering a 4 year term would give more choice to those running for office and would provide those interested with more time to accomplish the things they'd like to in office. As it stands now, a two year term only truly allows for 1.5 years of work before campaigning becomes a focus again.

Mr. Mansfield discussed some of the other outcomes that could stem from the extension of Aldermen-at-Large term lengths. He explained that should an Alderman-at-Large on a four year election cycle, that does not coincide with the Mayoral election, choose to run for Mayor, he/she would not have to give up his/her seat because his/her name would not appear on the ballot twice. The Committee discussed the idea of this with Mr. Mansfield, and determined that they are not in favor of this advantage especially because it would, at some point, cause a special election. The Committee believes that if someone is running for a new office then they should forfeit the seat that they currently hold. Should this proposal eventually be adopted the Committee would like it stipulated in the Charter that an Alderman must relinquish his/her seat if running for Mayor.

Alderman Blazar began a discussion with the Committee about the public's point of view that the Board of Aldermen is too large. Mr. Mansfield responded to this, saying that extending the term lengths of Aldermen-at-Large would shorten the ballot and lessen the public's perception that the Board is too big. Ald. Baker and Sangiolo noted that this issue that has been discussed at length in the past; Ald. Sangiolo may re-docket a discussion item in the near future to see how this board feels about the idea. Mr. Mansfield further noted that the public may not fully recognize that the work the Aldermen do takes place in committees of eight and not on the floor of the full Board. If you downsize the Board then you'll affect the process; with fewer total members the progress will be slower and more burdensome with more members having to attend more meetings.

Ald. Baker made it clear that he does not support downsizing the Board or changing the term lengths. He is concerned that changing the structure of the election and terms lengths will change the internal dynamic of the Board which has been, and continues to be, very successful. Furthermore, Ald. Baker made the point that it is a citizen's responsibility to be informed about who they are voting for ahead of time; reducing the number of people on the ballot does not necessarily make a citizen's voting decisions better.

The Committee concluded this discussion by theorizing about how the implementation of an extended term length would work and if a four year term for Aldermen-at-Large would be favored by the public. Some Committee members feel that the public would be much less comfortable committing to an Alderman for four years and that a four year commitment may actually discourage some people from running for the position. Subsequent to these last comments, Ald. Baker moved to hold the item.

#262-07 ALD. VANCE AND HESS-MAHAN seeking approval by the Board of Aldermen of a home rule petition to the General Court that would authorize an amendment to the charter of the City of Newton that would change the length of terms of the members of the Board of Aldermen to three years and would provide for electing one-third of the aldermen, one from each ward, every year. [08/22/07 @ 3:53 PM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Merrill not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Hess-Mahan informed the Committee that he and former Ald. Vance have decided not to pursue this item at this time. With that said, Ald. Baker moved a vote of No Action Necessary which carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#322-10 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) from the FY11 Budget Reserve Account to the Department of Veterans Services for the purpose of supplementing the FY11 budget for veterans' benefits. [11/08/10 @ 6:42 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Hess-Mahan not voting)**

NOTE: John MacGillivray joined the Committee to discuss this item. Mr. MacGuillivray shared with the Committee that the Department of Veteran's Services has

recently acquired many more cases and is in need of additional funds. Mr. MacGuillivray explained that the Commonwealth reimburses the City with 75% of the funds that the City initially expends for these services. For this specific request, the City will only be paying \$10,000 of its own dollars since it will be receiving a reimbursement of \$30,000 from the Commonwealth. This money goes towards providing assistance for senior veterans as well as veterans just recently returning from overseas. After a brief discussion with Mr. MacGuillivray, Ald. Linksy moved approval of the item which carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#262-10

PRESIDENT LENNON AND ALDERMAN FULLER

recommending that the 2010 – 2011 Rules and Orders of the Board of Aldermen be amended to establish a FINANCIAL AUDIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE. The advisory committee will report to the Board of Aldermen through the Finance Committee. The focus of the committee’s work will be on the annual financial audit of the City and any other fiscal accountability matters, as deemed important by the Finance Committee, needing review. [09-13-10 @ 1:52 PM]

APPROVED BY FINANCE 7-0

APPROVED BY RULES SUBCOMMITTEE 4-0 ON 11-10-10

ACTION:

APPROVED 5-0 (Hess-Mahan, Merrill, Fischman not voting)

NOTE:

President Lennon presented the item. He began the discussion by describing to the Committee the work that has taken place so far in creating this draft language. Ald. Baker then brought the Committee up to speed on the Rules Subcommittee meetings that were held to determine the best way to create this Financial Audit Advisory Committee while still adhering to the City Charter and the Board Rules. He explained that there is a rule which makes a distinction between the purpose of an Order and the purpose of a Resolution. The Rules Committee determined that the best way to create this Advisory Committee is through a Continuing Resolution. Though the document passed by Finance looks different because of edits for the Rules aspects, Ald. Baker, Fuller, and President Lennon stressed that the substance and intention of the document is the same. After this discussion, Ald. Baker moved approval of the item which carried unanimously.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#273-08

ALD. JOHNSON proposing a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor requesting that the Executive and Human Resources Departments develop a comprehensive human capital strategy for the city to include: performance management, talent development, succession planning, and compensation. [07/17/08 @ 9:53 AM]

FINANCE VOTED NO ACTION NECESSARY ON 3/8/10

ACTION:

HELD 7-0 (Hess-Mahan not voting)

NOTE: 273-08, 271-08, and 270-08 were discussed together. Bob Rooney, Chief Operating Officer, and Ald. Johnson joined the Committee at the table to discuss these items. Ald. Johnson began the conversation by touching upon all three items. First she discussed the importance of providing the Human Resources Departments with the power to conduct proper performance reviews and create performance management strategies. Second, she touched upon the cooperation between the Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments. She noted that no action need be taken by the Board on the item since the Mayor already has this as a focus and is getting underway with it. Finally, regarding the organization of the Informational Technology Department, Ald. Johnson shared that the City needs a more comprehensive and City-wide I.T. strategy and our equipment needs to be updated and streamlined in order to progress. Additionally, Ald. Johnson suggests having a Chief Information Officer in order to organize and manage all I.T. within the City.

Bob Rooney spoke to these issues as well. He shared with the Committee that the Mayor is on board with all three items. The improvements in Human Resources parallel the Mayor's vision to develop a management team and to develop, encourage, and expect leadership from department heads. In order to have a well-running City, performance reviews, feedback, and evaluations are crucial, so the Mayor intends on transitioning into a better system of performance management in the near future.

The Executive office has spent much time talking about the overlap between the Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments and the internal resources that they can share in order to save the City money. Mr. Rooney agrees with Ald. Johnson that there is no reason to pursue this resolution within the Board as the Mayor is already focused on the issue.

With regard to IT, Mr. Rooney noted that the City is moving forward, but not as quickly as the rest of the world is. To mitigate this, the Executive office is working on a vision for IT and will be creating a steering committee within the next month. A steering committee is necessary to provide suggestions for the structure of IT and direction about the progress we make; software and hardware is very expensive and having a committee to aid in decision making will help to ensure that the City, across all departments, spends its money wisely. The City needs to work against having a disparate system by streamlining all of its departments and technology; this will require a lot of big challenges, but the City needs to take them on.

REFERRED TO PROG. & SERV. AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEES

#271-08 ALD. JOHNSON proposing a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor requesting that he work with the Board of Aldermen, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Department of Public Works in order to determine the most effective and efficient way to organize the work of managing our public resources. [07/17/08 @ 9:53 AM]

**PUBLIC FACILITIES VOTED NO ACTION NECESSARY ON
3/8/10**

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Hess-Mahan not voting)

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#270-08 ALD. JOHNSON proposing a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor requesting that he work with the Board of Aldermen, School Department, and School Committee in order to determine the most effective and efficient way to organize the Information Technology Departments.
[07/17/08 @ 9:53 AM]

FINANCE VOTED NO ACTION NECESSARY ON 3/8/10

ACTION: HELD 7-0 (Hess-Mahan not voting)

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

#301-10 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE proposing a Resolution to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services for the purpose of increasing the tobacco seller's license fee.

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0(Hess-Mahan not voting)

NOTE: This Committee voted No Action Necessary on this item in order to remove it from the agenda. During the creation of the docket this item was inadvertently listed twice. The vote of NAN removes this unnecessary iteration.

#363-09 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting a discussion to increase the tobacco seller license fee. [09/13/19 @ 1:07 PM]

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0(Hess-Mahan not voting)

NOTE: The Committee voted No Action Necessary on this item since an action item has been docketed which renders this discussion item unnecessary.