

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2009

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chairman), Freedman, Baker, Brandel, Hess-Mahan, Merrill, Sangiolo; Absent: Ald. Parker

Others Present: Fran Towle (Commissioner, Parks & Recreation Dept.), Maurya Sullivan (Planning Dept.), Jennifer Price (Principal, Newton North High School), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#77-09 ROBERT L. KLIVANS, 69 Pine Ridge Road, Waban, appointed as a Trustee of THE NEWTON FREE LIBRARY for a term to expire on June 30, 2012. (60 days: 05/15/09) [02/27/09 @ 1:56 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Ald. Freedman not voting)**

NOTE: Mr. Klivans joined the Committee and explained that he has been a Library user since he moved to Newton in 1981. He was also on the Board of the Friends of the Library for 6 years. Since he is retired, he has the interest and enthusiasm to join the Trustees. He felt that his experience as a lawyer might be helpful as well, even though his license is not currently active. Ald. Brandel thanked Mr. Klivans for volunteering and asked his view on the re-opening of the branch libraries if funds became available. He said he didn't have enough information about the budget at this point and wanted what would be best for the library system as a whole. Ald. Sangiolo explained that the Wellesley Library Trustees actively raised money with the community with the promise that if they raised 5 years worth of funding, they would re-open the branches. She hoped that as new Trustees came on board, they would be interested in re-opening the branches. He said he was open to the whole issue going forward as he becomes more privy to the finances and budget. Ald. Merrill moved approval and the Committee voted in favor of this appointment.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#78-09 LOUISE HAUSER, 47 Windermere Road, Auburndale, appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on March 1, 2012. (60 days: 05/15/09) [02/27/09 @ 1:56 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Ms. Hauser joined the Committee and said it was her understanding that she was being appointed as a Commissioner, not a member. Ms. Hauser said that she would be able to have voting power as a Commissioner. The Committee Clerk checked with Jayne

Colino, Director of Senior Services, and she explained that the members of the Council on Aging are all Commissioners. Ms. Hauser explained that she has been very actively involved in the Library and is currently working on their big fundraiser. She has been on the Newton Community Service Center Board for 40 years. As a member of the Council on Aging Advisory Board, she has always been impressed with the variety of programs that are offered at the Senior Center. She encouraged the Board to expand the Senior Center at any opportunity that might be available. The programs are oversubscribed and it's a very active and positive environment. Ald. Sangiolo moved Ms. Hauser's appointment and the Committee voted in favor.

Re-Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#79-09 ANDREW DIBNER, 51 Beaumont Avenue, Newtonville, re-appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on March 1, 2012. (60 days: 05/15/09) [02/27/09 @ 1:56 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: The Committee reviewed the resume of Mr. Dibner and approved his appointment.

Re-Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#80-09 AUDREY COOPER, 114 Berkeley Street, West Newton, re-appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on March 1, 2012. (60 days: 05/15/09) [02/27/09 @ 1:56 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: The Committee reviewed the resume of Ms. Cooper and approved her appointment.

#64-09 TOM SHEFF et al. filing on February 17, 2009, a group petition pursuant to Section 10-2 of the City Charter for a public hearing to discuss appointing a group of volunteers to: analyze the functions of the Board of Aldermen; analyze the functions of employees at City Hall; and to lay the groundwork for any Charter Commission that is elected by the citizens of Newton in the near future. ***NB: Board action shall be taken not later than three months from the date the petition was filed with the City Clerk.***
[02/17/09 @ 12:09 pm]

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

NOTE: Mr. Sheff joined the Committee to discuss this petition. Ald. Johnson noted that the public hearing for the item will be held on April 15, 2009. She wanted to know, more specifically, what Mr. Sheff had in mind for this discussion item. Mr. Sheff said he wanted the Board to set up a committee of people to explore what the Board of Aldermen do, as well as employees at City Hall. He would like to see where there might be redundancies. He said he assumed that people on the Charter Commission would have to do this work too and this could help them in the future. Ald. Johnson pointed out that this item asked for a discussion, not for an action, from the Board.

Ald. Brandel asked what Mr. Sheff wanted to be done that wasn't already done by the Citizen's Advisory Group. Ald. Brandel noted that the CAG did an analysis of departments and has made some recommendations. He then provided Mr. Sheff with a partial list of recommendations from the CAG. Ald. Brandel pointed out that the CAG did not analyze the functions of the Board, however. Mr. Sheff asked if the discussion could be narrowed down to just that and Ald. Baker explained that the item had to be heard, as required by the Charter, and that he could address this in any way he would like. Mr. Sheff agreed that they could discuss what had not been covered by the CAG.

Ald. Johnson explained that once the public hearing is held, the Committee has fulfilled its obligations to this item. If the Board or the Committee sees merit in docketing an item from the discussion, that would be a different item asking for an action. Ald. Sangiolo told Mr. Sheff that any citizen can docket an item before the Board of Aldermen, so he could docket an item to ask the Board to create a committee to analyze the functions of the Board. He was told that the deadline for the next docket is March 31st and he could go to the Clerk's office for a docket form. Ald. Freedman said he would work with Mr. Sheff. Ald. Freedman pointed out that filing a petition required that the Board have a public hearing within 90 days. Filing a docket item didn't necessarily mean the Board would accept the item or discuss it within a certain timeframe. That was the advantage of filing the petition.

The Committee voted to hold this item pending the public hearing.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#86-09 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend one hundred two thousand one hundred twenty-one dollars (\$102,121) from Free Cash for the purpose of supplementing the snow and ice budget in the Parks and Recreation Department. [03-10-09 @ 4:58 PM]

APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Fran Towle, Commissioner of the Parks & Recreation Dept., said this request would cover the few bills that were left from the winter storms. It also provides funds for one additional 4-7 inch snowstorm, just in case.

Ald. Hess-Mahan received a complaint from a constituent that lives near the Education Center. There were three trucks scraping ice off the parking lot at night and causing noise. Ms. Towle said that their goal is to keep the parking lot safe and clear. They face deadlines overnight and try to get things as safe as possible to get schools and buildings open.

The Committee voted to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#85-09 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend twenty-six thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$26,750) from

Cable receipts for the purpose of purchasing equipment for the TV studio at Newton North High School. [03-10-09 @ 4:59 PM]

APPROVED 6-0-1 (Ald. Brandel abstaining)

NOTE: Funding

Jennifer Price, Principal of Newton North High School, and Maurya Sullivan of the Planning Department presented this item. Ms. Sullivan explained that the City receives 1% of the gross revenue from 3 cable providers in the City: RCN, Comcast and Verizon. That money goes into a receipts reserve account that can only be spent for the limited purpose of cable related projects.

Immediate Needs

The Newton North program is in desperate need for equipment for their TV studio to get them through the rest of this year, and to keep the program going forward. Ms. Price noted that they have been working closely with Bob Kelly, the Director of NewTV, to try to provide some programming for the educational channel by filming games, plays, etc. They have been frustrated in their efforts due to the lack of equipment. They want to be major contributors to the educational channel over time. Currently, they don't have the equipment to be even minor contributors. They are planning on buying a "studio in a box" which can be disassembled and re-set in the new high school. Ms. Price explained that the current studio is one of the few alarmed, secured areas in the building so the new equipment would be protected. Ald. Hess-Mahan asked if the studio in a box was mobile. Ms. Sullivan said it was a transportable studio that did not need permanent infrastructure in order to operate it. It would allow students to use it across the City.

Pricing vs. Quality of Equipment

Ald. Brandel asked if these cameras were considered the top end of the price range. Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Price explained that they were in fact mid-range in price. He was concerned that students might break the equipment and that would be a very costly loss. He suggested buying 4 cameras for the same amount of money to hedge their losses. Ms. Price noted that they needed equipment that could meet the standards for broadcasting to TV. The teacher that runs the program is very frugal and made a judgment on price and quality. The decision on equipment is also significantly informed by the engineer and Director at NewTV. They have to reach a certain level of quality for transmission. She also said that it was part of the learning process to work with equipment and learn how to handle it. They have rarely had a problem with students breaking equipment and usually have students fixing equipment as it ages. Breakage has not been a major problem.

Chapter 74

Ms. Price said that, ultimately, it was the school's goal to seek Chapter 74 status for the program so it would actually be a career and technical educational program, accessible by both Newton North and Newton South students. Chapter 74 is a state-level process and it takes some time. Waltham High School is an excellent example of a Chapter 74 production program. Bob Kelly comes to Newton from Waltham and has the experience to help. Newton South students are permitted to come to Newton North for the career

and technical educational program. Logistically, that can be challenging but they have true access to it and transportation is provided.

Newton South

Ald. Baker asked if it made sense for Newton South to have the same equipment. Ms. Sullivan said that historically, North has had a program and faculty from the English Department running it. South had a studio constructed 15 years ago and really hasn't used it. There is no active studio or curriculum there right now. These same funds could be accessed if they wanted to purchase equipment. Ms. Price said she explained to Brian Salzer, the Principal at Newton South, that North is going in this direction and he was supportive of their plans. Ms. Price said that South might have an easier time accessing funds if they wanted to in the future, as North has done a lot of the legwork already. Ald. Sangiolo said that if North is able to create the Chapter 74 program, it may be a higher priority than starting something at Newton South. Ms. Sullivan pointed out that the vocational and technical students are taken from the City as a whole, and not just from North or South. Also, NewTV is located on Needham Street which is more accessible to the South side of the City. They have been very cooperative in allowing them to use their space and have been wonderful partners with the school.

Long Term Budget

Ald. Freedman asked why this request was a lower amount than the overall budget that was provided. Ms. Price explained that Neil Giordano, head of the studio program, has put out a budget to outfit a studio over a period of time. They are unable to deliver many new programs to NewTV now because of their equipment limitations. They asked Mr. Giordano to come up with a list of immediate needs to get through the end of the year, to provide some programming to NewTV, and to be able to manage next year and get into the new space. Long term, the budget is a larger number to build a studio that could become a Chapter 74 program.

Cable Fund

Ms. Sullivan said that there is approximately \$438,000 currently in the fund. The City has a contract with NewTV that obliges them to provide funding for educational programming. At this point in the fiscal year, NewTV doesn't have the money available in their capital budget to help with these purchases right now. In the future, they will be providing funds, but the amount is unknown at this point. Ald. Freedman asked if any of the money in the fund was committed. Ms. Sullivan said that approximately \$150,000 is planned for running conduit for the City's fiber network on Commonwealth Ave. between Grant Ave. and Boston College as part of the Phase III road project. That has not come before the Board yet.

Ald. Hess-Mahan moved approval of this item and the Committee voted in favor with Ald. Brandel abstaining.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman