

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

BUDGET

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2008

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

Others Present: David Olson (City Clerk/Clerk of the Board), Craig Manseau (Executive Secretary, Elections), Fred Guzzi (Veteran's Agent), Mitch Baker (Inspector, Weights & Measure), Anne Larner (Newton Historical Society), David Oliver (Development Director, Newton History Museum), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

BUDGET

CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0-2 (Ald. Johnson, Sangiolo abstaining)

NOTE: David Olson, City Clerk/Clerk of the Board presented this budget.

Accomplishments

Conservation Projects: Phase I of Clerk's Vault Project has been completed. This project doubled the storage space in the vault with new compact mobile shelving. Twenty-one of the indexes most urgently in need of repair were conserved. Phase II of the project has been approved and has begun. Vital records prior to 1900 have been scanned to limit the use of the books.

Website Enhancements: A new search engine has been installed on the Aldermanic website which aids users in finding material and tracks usage. The on-line versions of the Ordinances are now updated monthly. Room/Meeting scheduling calendar is up and running and the scanned vital records are available via the internet.

Customer Service Enhancements/Workflow Improvements: The archives utilization has been increased through increased hours of the archivist. However, that position was just lost due to budget cuts. This will make it harder to meet customer needs and departmental needs for historic information. All City Clerk forms are being changed so that they may be generated electronically rather than typed by hand. A computer station was added to service counter to facilitate processing time of licenses. A new software package has been purchased to track Commission and Committee appointments. This will automatically email the clerk when appointments are ending so that steps may be taken. The development of a handbook of Commissions and Committee member is being undertaken to better support citizen volunteers. Ald. Johnson noted that Karen Griffey and Mike Rourke had worked on a handbook of this nature several years ago. Mr. Olson said he would check with Ms. Griffey on this.

Inauguration: Mr. Olson said that they executed a very successful Board of Aldermen and School Committee Inaugural.

Staffing: Mr. Olson hired an Administrative Assistant who has since been promoted to the Committee Clerk position. The archivist's time had been increased from under 20 hours to over 20 hours but that position has now been eliminated from the FY09 budget.

Goals for FY2009

- Complete Phase II of archives project.
- Continue to expand information available via the web and work with IT to improve design and layout.
- Develop a genealogical resources website with the Library and Museum.
- Begin development of Policy and Procedure Manuals for operations on both Clerk and Board side.
- Accept on-line payments for Vital Records requests.
- Implement Laserfiche Software for improved document sharing. This will be piloted between Assessing and Inspectional Services. The cost for the new server and site licenses was about \$55,000. They both have money in their budgets to do this. Mr. Olson has been talking with those departments, HR and the Comptrollers office to implement document sharing and hopes that there will be funds in the near future to allow the Board's and City Clerk's documents to be shared among the departments.
- Improve office layout to improve archives storage and workflow.
- Complete a reorganization of office staffing for better customer service and the Board's needs.

Attached is a sheet with statistics for the City Clerk/Clerk of the Board's Departments.

The big change for the department is the loss of the archivist's position. It was the only position he could eliminate without truly affecting service. This position was \$41,000. Mr. Olson said that the Administrative Assistant/Secretary position was open because the person he hired for it was promoted to the Committee Clerk's position. He noted that he needed to fill the Secretary position as it was essential.

CIP

These two items have been on the CIP for several years:

Multi-media carts for the conference rooms so that they could have projection screens to roll into each room ready for use.

A new sound and project system for the Chamber. The acoustics in the Chamber are very bad and it's very difficult to pick up voices even with the use of microphones. There are loose wires under the floor that cause interference. He would like to get a high powered projector that would be permanently mounted in the balcony and out of the way.

The prices on the CIP (\$7,000 and \$17,000) are two years olds.

ELECTIONS COMMISSION BUDGET**ACTION: APPROVED 4-0-2 (Ald. Johnson, Sangiolo abstaining)**

NOTE: Elections Secretary, Craig Manseau, presented this budget. He noted that he was approaching his first anniversary in this position.

Accomplishments

- Three elections have taken place in that time including a general municipal, a presidential primary, and an override vote. They collected signatures for the offices of Governor's Council, Clerk of Probate, State Representative, State Senate, US Representative and US Senate. He reported that 5,436 signatures that were certified by his office. There was also a referendum that did not meet the required number of signatures, but they certified an additional 1,346 signatures for that.
- The Census this year was unusual because it came out a little later than usual because the Secretary of the Commonwealth moved up the presidential primary from March to February. The Census has been completed and they were in the process of doing the annual street listing book. It was in the vendor's hands and should be ready in the next two weeks.
- The modems were being integrated. They tried to have all the election results modemed in at the end of the night. There were areas that needed to be addressed as 6 of the 29 that were being used did not work properly. Mr. Manseau was in communication with Mr. Knight from the Fire Department to get that corrected. His goal was to have all 31 modems working this current year and hoped to have that accomplished by September's state primary.
- A financial audit went very well. Training was done every year and Mr. Manseau felt there were some things that needed to be addressed with the Wardens and Clerks. Most clerks were proficient in using the Automark machines but some did have some difficulties.
- High School students' involvement in the process was brought to the Elections Commission by The League of Women Voters. Mr. Manseau felt it was a wonderful idea and the only problem was that the students lost interest as time went on. They started with 11 students and were down to 6. The students have been posted at the Community Center, the Zervas School, Newton North, and Oak Hill. They tried to keep the students in their neighborhoods so they knew the families.
- Accessibility at the Hyde Community Center has improved as Mr. Manseau has worked with the Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities. The doorways in particular can be difficult in some locations.

He felt the office has been doing a great job in meeting the needs of the public and requests from the Board of Aldermen. They work with the state and their extracts and Ms. Forgione was quite expert at getting that information. He said he was happy to be working with his staff and was a very hands-on supervisor. He was always happy to address any situation that might be problematic with the citizens, his staff or departments.

Ald. Johnson asked what work has been done around documenting the processes in the Elections Commission. Mr. Manseau said he used the state system which helped keep things organized and controlled. He does not allow nomination sheets to go in and out of his office. At no time do the papers leave the office. He has careful checks that he performs each day and a book to track the activity.

Department Cuts

The position that has been cut was Anne Kelley's position. She passed away this past year. The position will not be filled. He was trying to supplement the work load with volunteers but for none of the critical tasks.

VETERAN'S BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED 3-0-3 (Ald. Johnson, Freedman, Sangiolo abstaining)

Weights and Measures

Mitch Baker, Inspector of Weights and Measures, reported that not much has changed in his area. There have been more complaints due to the rising costs of fuel and food, etc. People were much more aware now and checking in more with complaints. He has found that most problems are mistakes or human error and they were corrected. He was expanding the price verification program as he tries to do every year.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said he had a constituent complaint who said that when he fills up his car with gas, before the pump started pumping, it would register twenty cents. Mr. Baker said that can happen and that a person should call him with the station name and the pump number and he will investigate. He explained that during the colder months the gas is in a below ground tank below the frost line. It can come up and when it hits the meter it might jump. He'd never heard of twenty cents before – usually a few cents. It shouldn't happen but it does and it can be remedied. If he found a problem, he would tie up the pump for use. The service person would be called by the station owner and it can not be put back into service until Mr. Baker goes back out there and inspects it and approves its use.

Ald. Johnson asked about the impact of gas prices on his budget. They have had to do some juggling because it has had an impact. Last year they asked for an extra \$500 but they did not get it.

Veterans

Fred Guzzi, Veterans Agent, reported that the Memorial Day parade went very well but it was getting more difficult with veteran's functions. There were approximately 1,000 people along the 1.5 mile route which looked fairly sparse. He has had suggestions about moving it back to Memorial Day. They moved it away from Memorial Day starting in 2005 because they found that many people were out of town over the weekend. They also had other events on that day and it was a very tiresome. The largest budget item is the \$30,000 that gets reimbursed 75% from the state, for needy veteran's benefits in the City. The number fluctuates each year from 2 or 3 to 8 or 10. The reimbursement goes

back into the city's General Fund. Each year, however, the Veteran's department gets their lump sum of \$30,000 and they draw from that. Because of the tougher times lately, they were getting more requests for aid. The veteran population was aided through many programs and the veteran's agent constantly helps them navigate those programs. People could go directly to the Veteran's Administration, but the city's agent makes the process much easier for them.

Ald. Johnson asked how the parade was funded. Mr. Guzzi said in the last 3 years, they've done a very aggressive fundraising of about \$4,000 each year. Donations come into the Newton Veteran's Council and it goes into their account. The treasurer of the Veteran's Council let's them know how much money they have and pays it out as necessary, for example, to bolster the parade via the Shriners.

Flagpoles needs some work but they do not have any money to do it. Last year, they presented a resolution for money for this but it was not approved by the Mayor.

Licensing

Mr. Guzzi reported that they bring in about \$275,000 and they have about \$1,900 to spend. The state recently allowed Newton to raise the Common Victualler fee to \$100 from \$50. It should raise an additional \$10,000/year.

NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM BUDGET

ACTION: **APPROVED 2-0-2 (Ald. Johnson, Sangiolo abstaining; Ald. Freedman, Hess-Mahan, not voting)**

NOTE: Cindy Stone, Director of the Museum, was out of the country and unable to be present. Anne Larner, Newton Historical Society, presented this budget.

Ms. Larner explained that the Organization chart had an error in that the Assistant to the Director was funded by the Newton Historical Society and not by the City. The goals and accomplishments were pushed forward from last year. She supplied the new document containing the goals for and accomplishments for FY08.

Goals/Accomplishments

They have hired a new position of Curator of Exhibitions with Historical Society Funds. This was to try to address expanding exhibits, turning them over more quickly, and putting out more satellite exhibits. All of this was in order to better access the community. Ms. Larner said that they have finished their capital campaign feasibility study. The three elements they tested to measure their ability to conduct a capital campaign were endowment of the salary of the public program manager and some program costs; restoration and endowment of the operations and programming of the Durant-Kenrick Homestead; and improvements to the Jackson Homestead. The most compelling areas for funding were last 2 areas and the consultant testing these ideas said they would be more successful in the range of \$2M rather than then \$3M they first

proposed. The consultant also provided some good input for internal housekeeping prior to fundraising.

Going Forward

They are beginning their fundraising for Durant Kenrick and they expect to meet the first deadline goal of \$635,000 next June. They will be working with the Durant-Kenrick family for fundraising as well. They are continuing to offer diverse programs and partner with other organizations around the city to meet those goals. They were trying to cultivate their donor base. Events have been organized to increase visibility and engage new donors and that has been met with success. Going forward they're focusing on the capital campaign. The archives in the museum need to be better preserved and stored. There is an item in the Public Facilities and Finance Committees which has already been approved by the Committee on Community Preservation.

Department Cuts

The major cut was reducing the hours worked by the Senior Curator and Manuscript person. This would put it below the eligibility for benefits as well. Ald. Freedman wondered why the decrease in hours didn't match the dollar amount. He said it was a higher rate of pay for the hours worked. Susan Burstein is getting that answer but was unable to have by the time of this report. She will report that to the Committee Clerk in the next day or so.

Visitor Information

The report from the Museum was that the numbers were very similar to last year in terms of attendance and last year's numbers were: 1,500 general visitors, another 4,000 in public programs, and another 3,400 in groups. About 8,500-9,500 is the overall estimate.

Revolving Accounts

The revolving accounts show what has been expended year to date. Ald. Johnson said she would like to have the current balance of revolving accounts. The current balance for the Museum is \$17,527.37. Ms. Larner said that money was from admissions. The money is typically used to fund some programs. David Wilkinson said that the money is designated for programs and it could be used for things like a projector or computer but not for maintenance costs. That was the only restriction Mr. Wilkinson was aware of. David Oliver said that they used it to buy some needed software as well.

Newton Historical Society

The total personnel budget for FY09 is \$125,145. The total budget is \$227,995. They did two budgets. One was for ongoing costs and they did a separate capital campaign budget which was dependent on getting money in. If things go well, they will have \$141,000 for that.

The benefits for the Historical Society employees are paid for through the Historical Society. There is no pension as they are not city employees. This is a public/private partnership agreement between the Historical Society and the Jackson Homestead for the

employees but it is quite broad. Ald. Sangiolo asked if they could use their money to expand their program at their own will. Ms. Larner said they have conversations with the city but they don't need their approval if they're using their own funds, and they have done that. Ald. Sangiolo was very interested in this model. She wondered if this would be allowable in other city departments. Sandy Pooler said that it would be but this model has been around for awhile and has structure and stability. Ald. Johnson and Sangiolo asked for a copy of the agreement. The agreement was requested from the Law Department and the Newton History Museum. At the time of this report, the Law Dept had not responded and the History Museum said they could likely produce it in the next day or so. David Oliver said it was a wonderful relationship because it provided a great deal of flexibility but was carefully overseen by the city as well to produce the best result.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman