

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

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

Also Present: Ald. Albright and Linsky

Others Present: Linda Plaut (Director, Arts in the Parks and Cultural Affairs), Dori Zaleznik (Chair, School Committee), Sandy Guryan (Asst. Superintendent, Budget and Finance) Fran Towle (Commissioner, Parks & Recreation Dept.) Carol Stapleton (Parks & Recreation Dept.), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Ruthanne Fuller (Member, Citizens Advisory Group), Robert Gilliman ("Sidewalk Sam", Street Artist), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#205-08(2) BARBARA SMILEY, 1073 Walnut St., Newton Highlands, appointed as a member of the NEWTON URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire on May 30, 2011. (60 days: 10-10-08) [07-02-08 @ 1:54 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Ald. Baker, Brandel, Merrill not voting)**

NOTE: Ms. Smiley said she enrolled in the Landscape Institute at the Arnold Arboretum when she retired and got very interested in trees. She started attending the monthly meetings of the Urban Tree Commission and felt their work was very worthy. Ald. Sangiolo added her support for Ms. Smiley and said she has been instrumental in working on the public tree ordinance. Ald. Parker moved approval and the committee voted in favor.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#325-08 THOMAS SHOEMAKER, 36 Joseph Road., Newtonville, appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on September 23, 2011. [09-08-08 @ 10:04 AM] (60 days: 11-14-08)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Baker, Brandel, Merrill, Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Mr. Shoemaker said he served with the Veterans and the American Legion and served up to State Commander two years ago. He said he has always been active in community service and had particular interest in the welfare of aging veterans. Mr. Shoemaker has been on the Board of the Senior Center and enjoyed the programs with

the veterans and the seniors in general. Ald. Freedman moved approval and the committee voted in favor.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#324-08 REV. HOWARD HAYWOOD, 69 Walker Street, Newtonville, appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on September 23, 2011. [09-08-08 @ 10:04 AM] (60 days: 11-14-08)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Ald Baker, Brandel, Merrill, Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Rev. Haywood said he was on the Advisory Board of the Senior Center in the past. He felt the Senior Center was a wonderful organization and felt privileged to work with them. He was impressed at the services they offered especially considering their modest resources. Ald. Hess-Mahan moved approval and the committee voted in favor.

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#326-08 MARY CLAFLIN, 247 Linwood Ave., Newtonville, re-appointed as a member and Chairperson of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on September 1, 2011. [09-08-08 @ 10:04 AM] (60 days: 11-14-08)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Baker, Brandel, Merrill, Sangiolo not voting)**

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#327-08 JOAN ROME, 280 Hartman Road, Newton Centre, re-appointed as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire on June 1, 2011. [09-08-08 @ 10:04 AM] (60 days: 11-14-08)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Baker, Brandel, Merrill, Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Freedman said he knew Ms. Rome as a very active member of the community and endorsed this reappointment. Ald. Johnson agreed and the committee approved this appointment.

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#328-08 LINDA KATZ, 81 Park Avenue, Newton, re-appointed as a member of the HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL for a term to expire on February 1, 2011. [09-08-08 @ 10:04 AM] (60 days: 11-14-08)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Baker, Brandel, Merrill, Sangiolo not voting)**

#111-08(2) ALD. JOHNSON and PARKER requesting regularly scheduled updates and discussion each month in regard to the offering of a RESOLUTION to the Mayor, President of the Board of Aldermen, and Chair of the School Committee that they, during the budget development and review process, identify short term tactics to improve the City's operational efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, they establish a citizen advisory group to assist in planning for additional tactics and strategies to improve the City's operational efficiency and effectiveness in future fiscal years, and report

Report Discussions

Ald. Parker suggested having a discussion after each subcommittee report was made available. He asked that the chair of each subcommittee attend the next available Programs & Services Committee meeting to discuss the report and answer some questions. Ms. Fuller said that would certainly be possible. Ald. Baker suggested that they might schedule a date for these post report meetings on nights when other aldermen might be able to attend. Ms. Fuller also suggested inviting School Committee members. Ald. Johnson felt this provided a good opportunity to start budget discussions earlier than has happened in the past.

Input

Ald. Baker said that the CAG was scheduling their ongoing meetings on evenings that Aldermen would generally be free to attend. Ms. Fuller said they have met with individual aldermen and were always happy to speak with any who had any questions. They very much appreciated input on areas where an alderman felt they had expertise and knowledge.

Related Agenda Items

Ald. Johnson pointed out that there were several agenda items targeted at finding efficiencies in the city and school systems. (#270-08 through #274-08). Ms. Fuller said that all of those areas were on the CAG's radar. In some instances, the CAG will give specific opinions on how to move forward. In other instances, they may not have the particular expertise necessary to recommend a specific option, but will instead recommend next steps in thinking about the issue. Ms. Fuller said they would endeavor to make their thinking very clear.

Short Term vs. Long Term Solutions

Ald. Parker asked if the CAG found any areas in which action should be taken right away. Ms. Fuller said there were two categories: efficiencies/effectiveness, and choices. The efficiencies and effectiveness category addressed what was being done now in the City, but doing it in a more cost effective or effective way. The choices category were things that involved values. They were finding more things that were choices that would need to be debated by elected officials. Ms. Fuller said that there were a wide variety of ways to increase revenues a bit, or decrease costs a bit, and those could be implemented quickly. The bigger things would take longer or involve values or choices. The Revenue Structure report will suggest many ways to increase revenues immediately. The School and Municipal reports will suggest some efficiencies and choices. The Capital Structure report will show how the decisions could be made and were policy driven but will take longer to implement.

Additions to the Operating Budget

Ald. Parker asked if the CAG has any opinion about putting money back into the operating budget as the revenue picture has been changing for FY09. A Committee of the Whole has been called for October 1st to discuss this. Ms. Fuller said the answer to that was extremely nuanced as every line item had to be analyzed. Ald. Parker asked Ms. Fuller if the Comptroller's estimate of \$750,000 in additional FY09 recurring revenue

was a reasonable number to work from. She said she would have to research that and could have some insight by the October 1st meeting.

Ald. Parker moved to hold this item and the committee voted in favor. The committee thanked Ruthanne Fuller for her time.

#114-07 ALD. LINSKY requesting to evaluate whether the present location of the Johnny Kelley statue represents the best possible location for achieving the established purpose when it was erected. [04-10-07 @ 7:39 PM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Ald. Baker not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Linksy felt that the statue was placed in a location that was not very prominent. He would like to accentuate the legacy of Johnny Kelley and Newton's role in the Boston Marathon. He wondered if there could be a projection of the statue on a screen during the marathon for the runners to see. The statue is facing east as if running with the others and is at the start of heartbreak hill. The statue had originally been placed on the opposite corner in a spot that was more visible. However, it was hit by a car and knocked over so it was moved to a more protected area after it was repaired.

Carol Stapleton said that the Parks & Recreation Dept. has done some landscaping work around the statue to make it more open and visible and could do more. She said it was a very expensive piece of art and important to have in a protected area. The committee felt that the cost and risk of moving the statue were prohibitive. Ald. Parker suggested having a dusk to dawn light on the statue and Ms. Stapleton said she would look into that. Ald. Linsky moved no action necessary for this item and the committee voted in favor.

#7-08 ALD. ALBRIGHT requesting to create a task force whose members will be jointly appointed by the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen to investigate the creation of a Commission on Public Art. The job of the Commission would be to raise funds, solicit commissions, and select public art for villages and/or parks. [12-18-07 @ 12:48 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-1-2 (Ald. Sangiolo opposed; Ald. Brandel, Parker abstaining; Ald. Freedman not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Albright presented this item. She wanted to explore the idea of sustaining a program of providing public art for the city. She has seen wonderful examples of this around the country and around the world. Ald. Albright's idea was to create a task force to study whether there was interest in a Commission of Public Art. This would be a group that was sanctioned by the Mayor's office and supported by the Board of Aldermen. She mentioned that the Newton Arts Center was enthusiastic about this idea.

Robert Gilliman, 83 Church St., Newton, a street artist also known as "Sidewalk Sam" addressed the committee. He spoke of the important role of public art. He felt that systems did not back up individuals and allow the enthusiasm that people feel to be expressed in art programs. He was convinced that the citizens of Newton were very

interested in having the arts advanced in their community. Public art was a way for people to express their enthusiasm.

Ald. Baker said there was a state program that gave funds to communities. Right now Newton gets approximately \$8,000 from this grant and it is administered by the local arts council. Those funds generally go for operating expenses and not for public art. Some communities have a 1% allocation in that 1% of the cost of a public construction project goes to public art. Ald. Parker noted that there was not currently an ordinance that instructed the city on how to acquire or place a piece of public art. He suggested that an ordinance would be needed to accomplish this and would need to include a funding mechanism, probably a revolving account.

Ald. Johnson felt that the committee generally wanted to move this forward. Ald. Baker moved to approve the motion. He and Ald. Albright would work on a draft resolution that would articulate how the task force would be set up. The draft is attached to this report. The task force would ultimately come back with a recommendation for an ordinance and a commission, if they felt there was interest. Ald. Baker felt if any member of the board did not like the draft resolution, they could recommit the item. He thought it was better to move this forward rather than keeping it in committee. He moved approval and the committee voted in favor.

#130-07 ALD. LENNON proposing amendments to Section 20-56, **Musical performers; regulations; license.**
ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-1-0 (Ald. Sangiolo opposed; Ald. Baker not voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Lennon was unable to attend the meeting, but sent a message to Ald. Johnson that he would like this item voted No Action Necessary. He felt, for the time being, his concerns had been addressed by the noise ordinance.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#315-08 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting the establishment of a revolving fund to be used for receiving and expending up to \$150,000 annually for the purpose of collecting fees and supporting the cost for the elementary music program. [08-26-08 @ 3:48 PM]
ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Ald. Freedman not voting)**

NOTE: Dori Zaleznik, Chairman of the School Committee, presented this item. She said looking at the various cuts that were being made to supplementary programs this year, they established a fee subcommittee to review what their options might be. In particular, the School Committee asked the subcommittee to look into a general activity fee. It had been researched about 4 years ago (charging each family in the system \$25 which would generate much more revenue than any other fee) and they found that a general activity fee was not legal. The legal opinion was that a city/town was allowed to charge for the least expensive activity that was run in the system. That would generate only pennies when divided among all families in the system.

Other Fees

The bus fee was raised from \$200 to \$220 per child with a \$440 cap for a family. The athletic fee was increased from \$180 to \$210 in both middle and high schools. This allowed them to keep last year's level of sports available this year. Hockey went up from \$230 to \$260 as it is a very expensive sport. The high school family limit was raised to \$630 (3 sports), the middle school limit was raised to \$360. There were also generous waiver programs for both bus and athletic fees to allow all students to take part. There was also a "super cap" for families who used both bus services and took part in athletics of up to \$1000 which was an increase from \$700. The parking fee (\$440) was double the bus fee and was not included in the super cap amount. The music fee would not be included in the super cap. Compared to surrounding communities, Newton's fees were at the lower end.

Explanation of Instrument Fees

Ms. Zaleznik looked at moving the music lessons out of the school day. Currently, students are taken out of class for ½ hour during school. This possible change received a very negative reaction. The instrument fee would help defray some of the salary costs of the teachers. They were hoping to charge \$75 per term for the lessons. If they freed up some of the money in the budget, there were other art related activities they could put back in as well as replacing some older instruments. They made it very clear that there would be a waiver for anyone who could not afford the fee. The legal opinion on charging the instrument fee was that it was legal because it was optional and the required number of structured learning hours was well provided for. A revolving account is necessary to collect these fees. David Wilkinson advised them that this account would have to include some costs for benefits since it would be used for salaries.

Ald. Hess-Mahan was concerned that the cost may deter people from participating regardless of the waiver. He felt that music education was extremely important in public schools and supported this item in order to keep the music lessons available. Ms. Zaleznik noted that very, very little has been cut from the music, art and wellness programs in the schools in spite of budget cuts over the past 5 years. Ms. Zaleznik said they have very good data on how many students took music lessons last year. They will be able to determine by the end of the first semester whether there has been a decrease in participation due to the new fees. Ald. Parker suggested looking into instrument donations from families who no longer used them. Ms. Zaleznik said there won't be any changes to the basic program. She noted that the instruments that were offered can change due to interest from the students.

Ald. Sangiolo moved to approve the item and the committee voted in favor.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#259-08 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting discussion with the Executive Department regarding moving the salaries of the Parks & Recreation Commissioner and the Recreation Programs Director to the revolving accounts for

various programs. [07-08-08 @ 1:28 PM] (**Note: amended to exclude the Parks & Recreation Commissioner's salary from this item.**)

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

NOTE: See note below.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#261-08 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting discussion with the Executive Department regarding moving the Director of Arts in the Parks' salary to the Arts in the Parks revolving account. [07-08-08 @ 1:29 PM]

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

NOTE: Ald. Sangiolo noted that she did not want the Commissioner's salary moved to the revolving account and asked that it be removed from the item.

Ald. Sangiolo felt that if fees were being charged for certain programs, the salaries for the people running the programs should be provided for by those fees. She said the Newton Community Ed program was self-sustaining in that way. All of the employees were paid out of revolving accounts that were funded by the fees for the programs. She wanted to use that model for more salaries in other areas of the City.

History of Revolving Accounts

Fran Towle, Commissioner of Parks & Recreation, said that when Proposition 2 ½ started budget cuts became the norm. They had to then find alternate sources of funding within their programs or the programs could not continue. The Department was forced to institute a fee to initiate new programs and that the existing programs were provided for in the operating budget. To charge for the new programs, such as clamps, clinics and cultural activities, they opened revolving accounts. The fees covered direct costs like seasonal staff, program supplies and equipment, and services. They needed to get enough participants in order to sustain a program or it would not happen. The philosophy of the department for charging fees has always been to provide an activity at a minimal fee so that it could be available to all people. Their primary users are youths and seniors and so they have kept their fees minimal. There is also a philosophy that recreation is a basic need that adds value to people's lives. Over 20 years, most revolving costs break even and some have minimal surpluses. Ms. Towle said that if there were any surpluses, they used that money to offset other unexpected needs in the program. She noted that they sometimes waived fees if a resident could not afford the fee. Ms. Towle said that putting salaries into the revolving accounts would require that fees be increased substantially.

Arts in the Parks

Linda Plaut noted that she had to actually lower her fees because she had ½ empty classes last year. Families were not able to afford the fee for the programs. She lowered the cost by \$25 (from \$250 to \$225) and her enrollment went back up. She said these programs provided a better quality of life for people in the community. She was down to \$14,000 in the Arts in the Park's revolving account. There was no surplus. Ms. Plaut's assistant's

salary was already paid out of the revolving account. She said she can not raise fees any more. The limit has been reached.

Information Requests

Ald. Parker was interested to know what the public subsidy was for the programs. He wanted to know from the CAG how that compared to other communities. Sandy Pooler said that Bob DeRubeis would be a good resource for information. Ald. Hess-Mahan suggested that the fee structure needed to be looked at in a more sophisticated way to find the right balance between costs to the residents, costs to the city, and keeping good programming. Ald. Johnson wanted to know how the programs were funded in regard to fees, general fund, and any other sources. Sandy Pooler said it would be difficult to get down to the finest points of staff time for each program but would provide as detailed a breakdown as they could. Ms. Towle said this information would take some time to gather. She would have it available in time for the next discussion of this item. Ald. Johnson asked to see the balances of the revolving accounts. Ms. Towle provided this information which is attached to this report.

Summary

Ald. Sangiolo understood that they did not want to lose programs but it was not possible to expand programs and not raise fees. She suggested that there be some sort of sliding scale for fees and/or choices needed to be made about expanding or eliminating some programs. She felt that Community Ed and Parks and Recreation should collaborate on offerings of programs so there were not redundancies. Her goal was to try to move towards a more self-sustaining model considering the possibility of further budget cuts in the future. Sandy Pooler said they were open to looking at different possibilities.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman

Whereas many cities and towns throughout the country and indeed the world allocate funds for the creation and installation of art in public places;

Whereas the City of Newton has a number of nonprofit arts organizations, such as the Newton Arts Center, as well as re-granting of state funds made available to cities and towns by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, but no formal program for public art;

Now therefore the Board requests the Mayor and the Board President appoint a task force composed of a member of the Board appointed by the Board President, a representative of the Executive Department appointed by the Mayor, and three citizens appointed by them jointly who are knowledgeable in the areas of arts and the arts community, funding and business models, and community organizations, to investigate the creation of a commission on public art, including investigating funding, commissioning and selecting public art for villages, parks, or other public spaces, and then report its findings or recommendations to the Mayor and the Board when the task force's investigation is complete.

NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT



70 Crescent Street, Newton, MA 02466

Office: 617 796-1500

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NEWTON
Parks & Recreation

FRAN L. TOWLE
COMMISSIONER

DAVID B. COHEN
MAYOR

October 2, 2008

Honorable Board of Aldermen
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Honorable Board:

In response to your inquiry on revolving accounts, I have listed the individual revolving accounts that are currently included within the Parks & Recreation budget. Within each account, there are line items for expenditures specific to that program. The revolving accounts are totally self-sustaining. Within these accounts, the department defines self-sustaining as covering costs such as seasonal wages, consultants, cleaning and custodial costs, recreation supplies, program equipment, transportation services, postage, printing, recording fees and other miscellaneous costs.

REVOLVING FUND

Recreation Activity **Classes: \$ 925,896 (Balance as of 10/01/08)**

Carr Center	Arts In The Hut	Kind Program
South Indoor Program	Singers Program	Field Hockey Program
NNHS Indoor Programs	Snack Bar Activities	Youth Programs
Aerobics Program	Special Needs Programs	Swim Classes
Farmers Market	Skiing Program	Aerodance
Tennis Lessons	Archery Program	Golf Classes
Outdoor Adventure	Building Leadership	3r's Program
Summer Funtastics	Tree Plantings	Vacation Programs
Garden Plot Program	Tumble Babies	NC Tennis
		Sports Clinic

Camps: \$ 248,593 (Balance as of 10/01/08)

Kids Corner Camp	Basketball Clinic Camp	Acres In The Fall Camp
Soccer Camp	Auburndale Station	Kids World Camp
Albemarle Acres Camp	T-Ville Trails	A Step Ahead Camp
Echo Bridge Camp	Full Court Program Camp	4Ever Sports Camp
Camp Scholarships	Centre Acres Camp	Pro Tot Camp
	Kids World II Camp	A Step Ahead Basketball
		Camp
		Fastbreak Basketball
		Camp

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WARD 2 - ARTHUR MAGNI
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WARD 4 - FRANCIS J. RICE, CHAIRMAN
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WARD 6 - LEE MOTTARD

WARD 7 - VACANT
WARD 8 - MYRA TATTENBAUM
FAYE HAYS - COMM. SECRETARY

ALTERNATES: MICHAEL CLARKE, PETER KASTNER, JACK NEVILLE

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19 OCT -3 AM 10: 27
CITY CLERK
NEWTON, MA. 02459

Arts In The Park: \$ 41,734 (Balance as of 10/01/08)

Arts in the Park Admin
Childrens Classes

Adult Classes
Family Events

Festivals
Newton Open Studio's

Senior Recreation Program: \$ 64,289 (Balance as of 10/01/08)

Senior Recreation Admin
Senior Trips
Senior Aerobics

Senior Tap Dance
Senior Tennis Program
Senior Crafts Programs

Senior Special Events

Misc: \$ 181,751 (Balance as of 10/01/08)

Park Land Maintenance-
NCF

Landscape Maintenance
Tree Ordinance Admin

Tree Replacement

OPERATING BUDGET

In the Operating Budget, we have had to utilize revolving funds to subsidize the shortfall in seasonal wages. In recent years, there has been a need to subsidize the Outdoor Swim Account, Outdoor Activities, Indoor Activities, Special Needs and the Hamilton Community Center. These subsidies can range from 0 to 30% of the seasonal wage operating budget line item. With budget constraints forecast into the future, I believe this trend of utilizing revolving funds to offset operating costs will continue.

The balances that have built up in some of the revolving funds creates a funding source for the department to deal with seasonal pay increases, increased staffing based on weather and other issues that can create budget shortfalls.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Fran Towle
Commissioner