

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2007

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chair), Ald. Hess-Mahan, Parker, Merrill, Lipof, Baker

Absent: Ald. Coletti, Sangiolo

Others Present: Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Susan Burstein (Chief Budget Officer), Dori Zaleznik (Chairman, School Committee), Jeffrey Young (Superintendent), Peter Koutoujian (Acting Elections Secretary), Dede Forgione (Deputy Elections Secretary), Cindy Stone (Director Newton History Museum), Fred Guzzi (Veterans Agent), Mitch Baker (Sealer of Weights and Measures), David Olson (City Clerk).

BUDGET

CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0 (Lipof, Baker not voting)

NOTE:

Overview

David Olson said the budget in the book is a level-funded budget. It is not the budget that he requested from the City. What he requested is based on conversations earlier in the year about an Assistant City Clerk and an Assistant Clerk of the Board of Aldermen. He was asked to look into those things and he asked the Board to wait until the budget process so that we could try to include funding for those positions. Expenses are level funded. The postage is level funded at this point

New Positions

The changes are in the personnel area. On the Board of Aldermen side he asked for an upgrade to Linda Finucane's position to make her the Assistant Clerk of the Board moving her from an H7 Step 10 to an H9 Step 8. That would move her salary from \$67,203 in '07 to \$72,572 in fiscal '08.

On the City Clerk side, he asked for an increase for Dawna Baccari to make her the Assistant City Clerk moving her from a union position, SO6 Step 8 to an H grade position H07 Step 5, and also Fayed Husseini who is the receipts clerk and does similar work to Janet Ferguson and Joanne Lacarie who are the vitals registrar and business clerk, to bring him from an SO3 Step 8 to an SO5 Step 8 to bring parity to those 3 positions. That would call for an increase.

Finally to take the 15-hour a week archivist position and increase that to a 25-hour a week position which would provide for more time for archival work but also to make that position one that would include benefits. That moves from \$22,700 to \$37,900 plus additional benefits that would be accrued with that. The bottom line total for the increases in these positions including the dental, health and basic life but not the retirement for the archivist, was an increase of \$29,982.

None of these changes are reflected in the budget that is in the budget book but the Mayor's office has earmarked a little bit more than \$29,000 and set that aside. The changes in positions: moving Donna Bicari out of the union and into an H grade position and Sayed's position from an SO3 to an SO4 must be negotiated with the unions. Once those negotiations are complete, those funds will be added to the budget and all the salary requests will be funded from salary reserve.

Ald. Parker said that it looks like there is a net decrease from '07 to '08. Mr. Olson said it's not one less person but Rosalie Myers who was at a high step level is being replaced by Karyn Dean who is at a lower level. Gino Lucchetti was brought in at a lower level than what his predecessor was being paid and Christine Owen and Rosalie Myers are sharing a position so they've moved to part-time. Christine will do 4 days a week and Rosalie will do 1.

Software Development for Board Paperwork

Ald. Hess-Mahan commented that he would love to get his Board papers in an electronic document instead of the bundle of papers. Mr. Olson said he is working with a software designer, the IT department and Gayle Smalley to create a software package that will allow us to do that. We have found a software designer who is willing to consider using Newton as a model for designing a software package for state and municipal governments. He will use us to help develop it and then sell it to other municipalities in the state. We are moving to get it online to make it available not only in the report and docket form but also to query specific docket items, to find where a particular docket item is, etc. He has talked to him about a feature that allows for someone to sign up to get an email notification of when an item goes before a committee and then the software would automatically sent it out. It sounds very promising and it's one of the goals for the coming year. Ald. Hess-Mahan voiced his support.

Ald. Merrill expressed his pleasure with the work of the Clerk's office and all improvements that have been made. Ald. Johnson agreed.

NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE:

History Museum Budget Overview

Cindy Stone gave an overview of the History Museum budget. The City budget supports 4 positions. One is full-time (Cindy Stone), the leader of manuscripts, a half-time

museum clerk, and the education programs person. It's really useful to have this central group be supported by the City. The Historical Society subsidizes what the City provides. The way the budget functions is that the City pays for the utilities and some supplies but as that sum diminishes the Historical Society contributes as well. The Historical Society provides a 15-hour-a-week curator for the 3 dimensional collection. Currently there is a grant with someone who does public programs. That will be over in a year and that is a concern because it's been great having that person. Somehow she has to figure out how to continue to fund this position as the more public programs, the more funds can be raised..

Upcoming Projects

There are some interesting projects coming up. The CPC voted to support \$2.7M toward the Durant Kenrick project. They are doing a fundraising feasibility study to look at raising the rest of the money for that project and also to raise some endowment money for the Historical Society to support program initiatives.

They are doing a space planning study that one of our board members are working on. They are trying to figure out within the space that exists how they can adjust it and make it work better.

They are trying to expand the space for the archives because they are on top of each other. Maybe they should follow David Olson's lead and get some support from the CPA for that.

Strategic Planning

They have been trying to collect information from departments about what it is they want to do. People want to see more exhibits and have them turn over more frequently. They have talked about the education program, and the public programs. They are trying to do more and reach a broader audience. They are trying to have more resources and there's point at which they have to say we can't do everything. So they need to line the priorities up so they are not trying to get to them at all once. The strategic planning effort is going to be about figuring out how best to do that.

Attendance

Ald. Parker was curious what the receipts were for attendance. Ms. Stone said the attendance is about 1,500, another 4,000 in public programs, and another 3,400 in groups. There are community weekends once a month as well. About 8,500-9,500 is the estimate and that's about the same from last year except the groups are down a little bit due to the really hot summer. Kids in camps couldn't travel because of the heat. The admissions donations are steady as well. There is a new exhibit that's going up about Norumbega and she thinks that will get a lot of attention.

Capital Improvements

There are two big capital improvements in the budget right now. The first is a new roof, which is really critical. It has been leaking and the leak continues to expand and it's leaking on the collections. The other item is getting the exterior painted. Some of the

wood is starting to rot. The anniversary of the Homestead is 2009 and we're trying to get it into shape in time for that.

Ald. Parker would like to move an amendment if the money for the roof repair is not in the current yea CIP because a leaky roof is the kind of thing that ought to be done in the current year. It was confirmed that it is in the FY '08 budget.

ELECTION COMMISSION BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0-1 (Parker abstaining)

NOTE:

Election Budget Overview

Mr. Koutoujian stated that ballot printing would be \$6,240 because they did not print ballots for the State elections and the State primary so they have to print for the local election. Ballot printing for the general election will be an additional \$6,240. The program memory cards for each one of these elections amounts to \$1,200 and will be needed for the Presidential primary as well. Additional overtime for the Presidential primary might be another \$1500. The Presidential primary is the 3rd election as opposed to the 2 that we generally have. The Presidential primary is going to cost another \$55,000 - \$70,000. For the last special election we proposed \$80,000 and we didn't quite run that but it might be up to \$70,000. Police costs have gone up and postage is going up 5%. The new Automark machines that they will be getting soon need ink cartridges every single election. That's \$1200 just for ink cartridges.

Ms. Burstein said that \$65,000 was added this year because of the special election but not quite all of it was spent. Because we really can't know what all the costs are that are going to be involved it was pretty much funded at the level we funded '07 after we added the money for the special election. There are still funds remaining in the biannual allotment.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said that the numbers that jump out at him are the health related numbers, the additional \$12,000. Also the numbers for the seasonal wages were up \$28,000. Ms. Forgione said that the seasonal line is a lot of the overtime related to this extra election. That goes to the police for staffing the polling locations. It's also the poll workers for staffing the additional election. Some staff will have to stay late. Mr. Koutoujian said that some of the money from the DeNucci fund that we get from the State as reimbursement, has always been used for overtime and additional or temporary help and most of it has been saved for furnishings. It would make sense to leave that money for refurbishment

Poll Worker Compensation

Ald. Parker expressed concern over the compensation of the poll workers. There has been no increase since 2000. We did a study last year and it's way below comparable communities. There's not a lot of money involved in giving them a \$1-\$2 increase per hour and it's hard to find good people and not fair to them. He hoped they could come up with the small amount that would be necessary to give them a fair rate. Ald. Johnson thought that it wasn't as long as 2000 – maybe it's 2002.

Ald. Johnson said that she learned through being on the search committee that Newton is not alone in trying to attract and retain poll workers. The thing that differentiated the individuals that are the finalists is their innovative approaches for increasing the number of poll workers. Sometimes it isn't just about money. Ald. Parker said that he was told that there was a change in State law recently that allows people who are not registered voters in one community to be poll workers in another community. As a result, we've lost some of our Newton people who are getting more money doing work in other communities on the same election day. Ald. Johnson reiterated that it's not always about the money and that she would like to table this discussion until there is a new Elections Secretary in place. Ald. Parker said he'd like to look at the study to determine whether the workers were receiving a fair wage.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said that under the Revolving Fund: Gifts and Grants, there is the extended polling hours grant. We spent \$4,228 last year out of the fund which was a little less than the previous 2 years. Mr. Koutoujian said this gets spent on temporary health, office equipment, etc. When they changed the polling hours from 8am to 7am, there are extra costs for poll workers, police, and office help for that extra hour. The State mandated it and agreed to pay for it so we were able to pick up some extra for that. It's tempting to say there is \$30,000 and the State gave it to us so why don't we spend it. The point is that we're going to need it. It's good to keep it for later use – painting, new desks, etc.

Elections Search Committee Update

Ald. Johnson said that they interviewed 8 or 9 candidates. Of those, 5 or 6 got put forward to the Mayor. The Mayor interviewed all of them and they all had a different set of strengths. After he interviewed all the finalists, he brought the search committee in and we went through them. A choice has been made and we have a back-up in case something happens and, hopefully, we will hear soon from the Mayor.

Summary

Mr. Koutoujian said that things are in good order with Dede's fabulous help. The packets are pretty much ready to go, the election is pretty much set, the census is going. Whoever is coming in here will have a good start. He expressed appreciation for the Committee's help. Ms. Forgione said that the printed census will be out mid-July. It will be available for all the candidates and they're going to be offering the disk. There will be an equal amount available for the book or the text data file. The disk is much more cost effective to produce. (the CD costs 25 cents, the book about \$20).

Ald. Parker abstained from the vote because he said he wants to be sure the poll workers are being compensated fairly.

VETERANS, LICENSING & SEALER BUDGETS

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0 (Lipof, Baker not voting)

NOTE:

Licensing Overview

Fred Guzzi presented an overview. There are 90 available alcohol licenses, 62 are out, and there are 28 available. For restaurants, wine and malt: there are 17 and none are available. Package store, all alcoholic: there are 17 and none are available. Package store, wine and malt: there are 17 with 8 available. We have 124 common victualers with the 113 all alcoholic for a total of 237 licensees.

Revenue

The revenue brought in through December last year was \$450,550. That includes 97 one-day temporary permits which brought in \$6,050 on a budget of \$1,896.

Challenges and Inspections

Mr. Guzzi said that challenges are ongoing with a new set of standards that have to be overseen. We have to be able to tell the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission that we only issued licenses that had new inspections from Inspectional Services and Fire Prevention. We have to oversee that and make sure that happens.

Mr. Guzzi said that every year he tries to go out and inspect the restaurants and look at seating and other things that sometimes fall out of compliance. He then tries to work through Inspectional Services who issue the number of seats based on square footage and the parking credits. Occasionally they will call the other departments, including Health, Inspectional Services and Fire Prevention so they are all on the same page. The new licensee does not get the license until those other departments inspections are signed off and then they receive their license.

Mr. Guzzi found that the biggest problem is licensees not paying attention to their renewals. For example, the outdoor seating licensees were sent the time, the notice and the instructions. Twenty-three were sent out, 13 came in. It's a constant problem with the restaurant people. If they put their seating out and they're not approved, nothing really happens unless he goes out and looks, but he does not come close to doing that because of the time it would take. Health and Building Inspectors are out there as well. They know that they are caught all the time. Then they get a letter and they have to come in. It's under the DPW as they have jurisdiction over the sidewalks. He sends DPW a list of people who have done it again and it gets straightened out. Then people are allowed to eat outside, no alcohol, just food.

We collect the taxes at the end of the year with renewals and we do have some control over that because we control the licenses. No payment, no license.

Licensing has a budget of \$1,896. Mr. Guzzi said that this is not enough money to execute all the mailings that are necessary for the year and that an additional \$500 would cover that. Every month copies of the agenda are sent, mailings to the ABCC to approve the alcohol, etc. There should be an adjustment for the 5% increase that is coming up in postage.

Veterans Budget Overview

The budget was at \$25,000 for needy Veteran's benefits. We were averaging a payout of about \$4,000 a month for those benefits and, therefore, the \$25,000 was not enough to cover those expenses. We came to the Finance Committee 2 months ago and requested an additional \$25,000. Other than that one account, everything else is the same.

The normal cost of the Memorial Day parade is covered by \$10,200 that we get from the City. Last year we raised \$5,000 which Mr. Guzzi felt confident could happen again this year. This extra money goes to pay for the Shriners as an added attraction in order to bring more people to the Parade. He said they're working hard to get more attendance at the Parade. It's an ongoing problem as interests are changing in this area.

Ald. Parker asked about the \$30,000 that had been added back into the budget and then removed in the fiscal year. Mr. Guzzi explained that expenses were \$47,506 and within 2007 there was a \$30,000 upward adjustment to \$77,000. For 2008, we took that \$30,000 back out because some Veterans left the rolls and we felt it wasn't necessary to keep the extra appropriation

Benefits Component

The office is as busy as it could be with veterans returning from Iraq with benefits for them. He will be asked to get involved with the paperwork. It's paid for by the Treasurer's office in the Commonwealth. There will be paperwork that will have to go the Election Commission where they verify the address of the veteran lived when he/she went in and he will assist them with that. There are people that are coming back with their problems and he is not a problem solver but he tries to refer them to the VA. There are problems and questions with discharges, percentage of disability, death benefits, military funerals, etc.

Mr. Guzzi said that although everyone is thinking about Walter Reed and the veteran's problems, he wants to say publicly, that he hardly has a problem with the VA system in this area. The problems here are not the problems that we read about in other areas so people here are happy.

Ald. Merrill said that the Governor has appointed a new council for Veteran's Affairs. He's going to work with Department of Veteran's Services and this committee will probably be populated with veteran's leaders and so forth. The members have not been appointed yet. There will probably be a new set of suggestions to various veteran agencies on additional services especially for those coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Veteran Population

Ald. Johnson asked how many Newton residents are veterans. Mr. Guzzi said that he has a list from the census and that showed about 3,500. Unofficially he thought it was probably 6,000 – 7,000. He pointed out that the population of WWII and Korean veterans is dying rapidly.

Flagpoles

Mr. Guzzi said that it is time again to paint the flagpoles. Just to put a flag up because the cord is ripped or something, he has to use the fire department, or parks and recreations and it becomes a problem for them with overtime, etc. There really is not a program, department or person to go to for the maintenance of these flagpoles. Veterans look at the flagpoles quite a bit because it is on their minds. Ald. Parker asked if there were any in particular Mr. Guzzi would like to see addressed. One major one is in Newtonville Square – it's an absolute disgrace. The last time that it was painted it was through a donation from the Newton Lodge of Elks, sometime in the '70s. It would need to be properly scraped and primed and painted. This should be under some department that can get the maintenance work done. Sandy Pooler said it's really just a matter of money because it costs about \$20,000 to get a contractor to do one of these poles. There have been times this has been done through CIP. There have been times where the public buildings department has been able to leverage the work of a contractor whose been here to do other things. Sometimes it's just a straight appropriation and sometimes it's a matter of Fred being it to the attention the department at just the right moment and maybe piggyback things. He has a list of the poles and from time to time he will make a CIP request and we've been able to figure it out.

Mr. Guzzi said that the new aluminum flagpoles don't need any painting. Ald. Johnson asked Mr. Guzzi to find out how much it would cost to replace the flagpole in Newtonville Square. Ald. Parker said there needs to be some rational way to lay these out in the plan so they don't just accumulate. If we had in our CIP, say \$20,000 every year to do a flagpole, that might make sense. Ald. Johnson said it's worth looking at the reasonableness of replacing poles as well. Mr. Guzzi said there are 12 flagpoles that he is responsible for in Newton and only 2 of those are aluminum poles. There are other problems that occur as well, such as ropes snapping, etc.

Ald. Parker said that he'd like suggest that they'd like to see a plan for these and if possible have the Newtonville Square flagpole be dealt with in this coming fiscal year. Ald. Johnson agreed.

Weights and Measures BudgetGas Stations

Mitch Baker said there are more complaints because of the price of gasoline. They are putting out the fires. Nothing has changed. The certification has to be done once a year and going back on the repair jobs. Absolutely, unequivocally everything is done. He has a monthly schedule and every gas station and every scale in this City has to be sealed, by law, once a year. When gas stations change the prices, they change the price inside the pump. If there is a problem with that meter, they have to break that seal to go in and calibrate it, which is what I do. They have to recalibrate it once they change the board. They have to call him when they change it and he has to go out, check it with his 5-gallon measure which is certified by the State. Then he reseals and pulls the tag off so they can reuse it. If he finds a problem, he immediately ties it up and they can't use it and they're very good about it. It's a federal offense if they don't do the right thing.

Oil Delivery Trucks

Six delivery trucks are checked in the City as well. Outside the city, if trucks want to come in and pay us, he'll do that. He also does outside taxicabs.

Grocery Stores

Grocery Store scales are inspected once a year. They're constantly being resealed because they constantly breakdown. Then they have to change the board and cut the seal and that equipment cannot be used until they call me.

Ald. Parker asked about the scanning of groceries. Once a year, Mr. Baker does the larger grocery stores and also Trader Joes, Marty Liquors, CVS, Walgreens, etc. He pulls a minimum of 125-150 items and it has to pass by 98% price accuracy. Otherwise, they don't pass. He scans them with the gun up and down the aisles, not at the register. If the store doesn't pass, they get about 7-10 days and he goes back. They always pass within 2 times. he constantly checks. His job is a consumer protection job and he stops any store that has any discrepancy. Item pricing law states that it has to scan at the lowest price. Ald. Parker said that most items don't have a price sticker on them and Mr. Baker said there should be a sticker on 85% of items.

There was a request for \$500 for gas.

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#95-07

KENNETH REISMAN, 34 Roosevelt Road, Newton Centre, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course Foundation for a term to expire December 31, 2009. [03-16-07 @1:57pm]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

NOTE:

This item and the following 3 items are all reappointments to the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course Foundation. They all had the necessary resumes and documentation

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#96-07 CONSTANCE KANTAR, 382 Kenrick Street, Newton, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course Foundation for a term to expire December 31, 2009. [03-21-07 @4:03pm]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#97-07 ALAN F. GREEN, 403F Dedham Street, Newton Centre, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course Foundation for a term to expire December 31, 2009. [03-21-07 @4:03pm]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#98-07 STEVE MEYER, 154 Woodchester Drive, Chestnut Hill, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course Foundation for a term to expire December 31, 2009. [03-22-07 @3:23pm]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#112-07 WALTER BERNHEIMER II, 75 Winslow Road, Waban, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Parks & Recreation Commission for a term to expire January 1, 2010 (60 days 6-16-07). [03-30-07 @9:51AM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

NOTE: Mr. Bernheimer is being reappointed to the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission. He has been a member of the Commission for many years and also now serves on the Community Preservation Committee.

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#113-07 THOMAS TURNER, 60 Wyoming Road, Newton, re-appointed as a member of the Newton Housing Authority Board for a term to expire on February 16, 2012 (60 days 6-16-07). [04-06-07 @4:07PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0 (Parker not voting)**

NOTE: Thomas Turner is a reappointment to the Newton Housing Authority

#93-07 INTERIM EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ELECTION COMMISSION requesting Board of Aldermen approval on the following: [3-14-07 @4:19 PM]

- Tuesday, July 31, 2007, 5:00 PM, last day and hour for submitting nomination papers and statement of candidacy with Election Commission
- Tuesday, September 18, 2007, City Preliminary Election Day. Polls open 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.
- Tuesday, November 6, 2007, Municipal Election Day. Polls open 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. [03-14-07 @ 4:40PM]

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0 (Johnson not voting)

NOTE:

The Committee was joined by Acting Elections Secretary Peter Koutoujian and Deputy Elections Secretary Dede Forgione for the discussion. Mr. Koutoujian stated that the election calendar is developed to take into account what surrounding towns are doing, the time needed to undertake each step, and to avoid holidays.

Alderman Hess-Mahan asked about the date for submitting nomination papers and wondered if there was a state law that required a specific amount of time that they are available? Mr. Koutoujian stated that there was and that the timeframe was tight. He consulted with the Law Department who consulted with the Secretary of State's Office about the dates. The calendar gives a lot of time for candidates to get their papers in, but not much time for withdrawal, setting position on ballot, and a week to get the ballot printed and absentee ballots into the mail. The calendar is pretty much cut and dried. There is not much discretion.

Ald. Parker asked by what date the Elections Department would need to know if the Board decides to put an advisory question on the November ballot. Mr. Koutoujian stated that Elections would need to know by September, but the sooner the better.

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEES

#119-06(2) **PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEE** requesting placement of an advisory question on the November 2007 municipal election ballot asking whether voters would like to see changes to the implementation of the Community Preservation Act in Newton, such as alteration of the percentage and/or inclusion of exemptions allowed by the statute.

ACTION: No Action Necessary 5-0-1 (Parker abstaining)

NOTE:

Overview of the Ballot Question

Ald. Parker said that we had a discussion of Ald. Salvucci's item to repeal the Community Preservation Act in Newton. Ald. Salvucci made clear that it wasn't his intent to advocate repeal so much as it was to get a sense of the voters of the City on where they stood on the CPA. In the course of this discussion before the Committee, we realized there were a wide range of choices that were available and we wanted the voters to be allowed to weigh in on repeal as well as other options including the possibility of increasing the percentage. What was compelling about the idea of increasing the percentage was that right now we enjoy a 100% State match for our local property tax surcharge for the 1%. The way the CPA is structured, as more communities adopt the act, the communities with the lower percentage locally will get less than 100% match. Some communities are 3%, some are 2%, and Newton at 1% would lose our match first as more communities pass the act. The State match is so compelling that we might consider increasing the percentage.

Proposed Questions

Ald. Parker said that the idea is to get a sense from voters whether they had continued support for the CPA and if so whether they would be interested in increasing the percentage and/or adding the exemptions. I am not prepared tonight with language for what that ballot item would be, but if we're ready to proceed conceptually, we can work with the Law Dept. and bring something to the next Committee meeting.

He said he would like to put a simple and clear question on the ballot.

- A. Do you support the CPA in Newton? And if a majority of people say no to that then you're going to be in a situation where you're not going to be likely to pass an increase and people might even want to repeal it. I think the majority of people would say yes to that.
- B. Would you support increases the percentage from the current 1%.
- C. Would you support adding exemptions for low-income seniors and deductions for the first \$200,000 of a house's value.

Discussion Against Advisory Question

Ald. Hess-Mahan suggested that we hold this item so that Ald. Parker can work with the Law Dept. to get some language so we don't have to discuss it in the abstract. The sooner we get the language the better as Mr. Koutoujian previously stated.

President Baker said that Ald. Parker was right in that they should think about the concept before we get to the language.

President Baker said that part of what we've done with CPA ultimately, is not changed with an advisory question. If we want to increase the Community Preservation amount, we have to ask the voters to authorize that. It seems that the better course, rather than going out and asking an advisory question, which he thinks is going to take time and effort, he would rather look at the question of whether over the long haul we should change the structure. He recalls that we went to 1% in part because it gave us the ability in part to avoid the exemptions to spread across all property tax classifications. We decided against putting this on the ballot before. We've got a successful program and he would feel uncomfortable about pushing forward. He does not think we should ask the Law Dept. for the drafting until we have a sense from the Committee about how we feel about going forward.

Ald. Johnson said that she would want to hear from the Committee on Community Preservation. From the time that Ald. Salvucci docketed this original item, she had not one call or one email on this at all. Until we have a better understanding of what the impact will be when these other communities come online and how that will impact us, we can then put the case to a vote. Then we let the voters know, our match was \$2M, now it will be \$600,000 and therefore we will not be able to do x, y,z. That seems a better way to position things. We would be asking for a survey and she does not believe our ballot box is a place for a survey. She thinks the survey would have been better on the census form or a stuffer in your tax bill. The information we are looking for will be helpful but she think it's the incorrect time. She would rather have our Committee on

Community Preservation and the Aldermen on that Committee, talk about it. She does not think we're ready to make a judgment call on putting this on the ballot. Ald. Johnson said her other concern is we have a survey and the result is that the voters don't want it. Her recommendation would be no action necessary. Ald. Merrill said that he agreed that this is not the right time.

Ald. Parker said that the legitimate question is how much less would the City receive and when it would happen. We need the answer so He'd like to not hold this or NAN it but to refer it to the Committee on Community Preservation to get that kind of information and build the case for what we need and when.

Ald. Baker reiterated that he thought this was a bad idea right now. He said if we decide on merits after some homework that it's worth recommending to the voters that we change the configuration, we should make that recommendation. But asking an advisory question on this is wasting the resources of the City. He was prepared to vote NAN.

Ald. Hess-Mahan said the thing he's really interested in is what the options are and what they would cost so however that could be accomplished was fine with him. Ald. Johnson agreed that an advisory question is not the way to go. Framing this item and docketing a new one, researching the impact of the existing funds, and making the recommendation to the Committee (P&S) as to whether we need to re-initiate a ballot question would be the correct item. Doing that research to determine whether a ballot item is necessary would be my direction.

Ald. Parker said that he feels that we promised Ald. Salvucci an opportunity to participate in this item. He wanted to have the people of the City weigh in on this issue. We said this is an alternative we're going to explore and without having his input on the Committee to do it, He was not ready to vote NAN. Nobody wants to run the risk of losing the CPA, but we also don't want to run the risk of losing the match either. Ald. Parker said he would abstain until he spoke to Ald. Salvucci.

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEES

35-06 ALD. JOHNSON AND HESS-MAHAN requesting discussion with the School Department and School Committee members regarding the results of the studies addressing compensation for management and executive personnel and organizational structure of central administrative salaries.

ACTION: **No Action Necessary 6-0**

NOTE:

Introduction

Superintendent Jeffrey Young said that the study had two big ideas. One was on Administrative structure. The second key recommendation was around long range planning. There are some smaller recommendations as well.

Administrative Recommendations

Supt. Young stated that the consultant from Gibson said that in all the years they've done studies on school systems, they've never left a school district without saying here's how you can save money administratively. In Newton, after coming to understand the culture and the organization as best they could, they concluded that we were actually understaffed administratively. They suggested a couple of different models. One model involved putting back a Chief Academic Officer. Also in that model was the recommendation to combine the operations and finance areas under a general business administration area.

Dori Zaleznik said they did a compensation classification study when they were concerned that the amount of money that Gibson had come up with to add all these people was below what was considered to be market rate in their area. They asked as an add-on to the classification study for the consultants to go back to the same communities that had been surveyed in the first study. They wanted to know what their view was of the amount that it would cost. It turned out to be considerably higher than \$300,000 that they had first said.

Supt. Young noted that as much as they know we could use that support, and the system would run more smoothly with that additional support, and as pleased as they are with the way this budget process has unfolded so far this year, there's no way for them to add the additional personnel. Supt. Young stated that the second problem with the structure, and this is a personal issue, is it would have removed him one more level from the stuff that goes in the schools. He would be organizationally removed another level and be further removed from what he thinks is the true essence of his job, and so they decided not to pursue that.

He went on to say that one recommendation that they have pursued is the technology strand that ties together various aspects of the school system. Gibson thought it was a deficit in our structure to have the Director of Technology not be a direct report. So they did change that. They hired a new technology coordinator over the summer. She is now a direct report and was hired on an interim basis and the intent is to keep her on. What's going to happen is, effective July 1 when she becomes permanent, she'll be added to the central staff. Next year's budget book is going to look like we added one more administrator but really what it's going to mean is that there is a person who is of that level in terms of responsibility, but not at that level in terms of access. As far as the org. chart and administrative re-organization goes, we think there are some promising ideas in there but really cannot see our way to spending the money to make them happen.

Supt. Young said he did believe that these are very challenging positions and there is the issue of burnout. People are extended too far and as a result sometimes things fall through the cracks. He said they'd like to do better. He sees the central office as a service entity rather than a control center. He thinks that their job is to enable the school to be agile. The real action takes place in the classrooms of the schools, not in the Superintendent's office or the School Committee room. So they try to think of themselves as helping the schools, providing service to the students and schools to

remove some of the clutter from their lives so they can work as educators. For those reasons, other than the technology change, we aren't able to take the recommendations.

Prospective Positions

Ms. Zaleznik said the School Committee recognized when they saw the report that they weren't going to be able to follow their model. But what they talked about with the Superintendent was whether there were a few key positions recommended that would be particularly helpful moving forward. There were 3 positions that the School Committee was most interested in. They all agreed that one person can not effectively supervise 21 persons. There used to be a position of Elementary Administrator that got eliminated and was never put back, and it really should be back. This year, the principals have taken on some self-management. Some roles that have been previously done by the Assistant Superintendent now fall to the collective group of the elementary principals in a patchwork way. Under the Chief Academic Officer, Gibson had Assistant Superintendent. Our goal would be to leave the Superintendent as the Chief Academic Officer but to add the Elementary Administrator position in sometime in the not too distant future.

The second position that they were intrigued with was to have somebody as whatever they called that Chief Administrative Officer. The Superintendent gets involved and embroiled in a lot of operational issues that we don't think rise to the level of his attention. They would like to be able to explore adding in that kind of position with perhaps even the incentive, as in the business world, to say come in, find some efficiencies and pay for yourself.

The third position that the Gibson people said they would add, if they could only add one position, would be a public information person. They discussed how they would envision such a person working. Gibson was stunned at the number of direct inquiries from the public that come right to the Superintendent's office. They said that office was too involved in transactional business. Their vision was not that this person would act as a spokesperson for the system, but could be a conduit for the questions that come in, farm them out to appropriate places and people. The other piece was that position could potentially communicate out some levels of information, but not necessarily talking to the press or the Aldermen, and doing things we've talked about doing but haven't been able to accomplish.

Usefulness of the Studies

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked if the management study and compensation study was worth the effort. There was some question about spending money and whether it was all worth it. Ms. Zaleznik said she felt it was worth it. The biggest thing accomplished was to dismiss the notion that we had too many administrators and that we were paying them too much. Both of these ideas were being bandied about pretty regularly. From the sense that it settled those issues, she thought it was extremely helpful. Some of the smaller things that Supt. Young didn't mention are some things we've done with purchasing, and there's been some more technology applied to human resources activity. In some of these smaller things we have actually improved the efficiency.

Ms. Zaleznik said that the other thing about the classification compensation study is it gave us a comparable community with which to measure ourselves – there are not communities in Massachusetts that are good comparables for Newton even though we try to compare ourselves to others. If we looked at just size, we'd be looking at Fall River and Cambridge and New Bedford. If we looked at median income we do OK with Wellesley and Lexington but they are so much smaller than we are. So when we talk about paying an Assistant Superintendent, it's a huge difference if you have 30 direct reports versus 5. Gibson was able to go out and find the community that was the best comparable for us in West Hartford. It is similar in size and pretty similar in median income. Having some places like that to compare ourselves to is very helpful. And what it allows us to do is when people are coming in to interview for an opening, it gives us a range that we can look to. The job descriptions are very detailed so it helps us determine whether someone could be placed at the lower or higher end of a pay range based on experience. It allows us to have a more standardized way of operating.

Questions about the Recommendations

Ald. Parker had comments on the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 states too many people report to the Superintendent. Ald. Parker didn't think this made much sense. He said when he asked Supt. Young if he wanted fewer people to report to him he said no.

- Recommendation 6 is to consolidate the school department purchasing functions with the City. Supt. Young said it has been considered periodically and there are challenges there but he didn't think they were structural. Ald. Parker noted that there is a recommendation that a purchasing secretary could be eliminated if those functions were consolidated with the City's with a savings of \$50,000. The Superintendent said it was not realistic.
- Recommendation 7, which is to review and revise the required approvals for purchase orders had been acted on according to the Superintendent.
- Recommendation 8 suggested that the City submit a monthly aging report for outstanding purchase orders over 45 days. The Superintendent replied that purchasing is improving as well as the training for purchasing.
- Ald. Parker asked about implementing the applicant tracking module and he was told that had been done.
- Ald. Parker said that there's a set of recommendations that relate to the maintenance of buildings. We hear the nightmare stories about the huge backlog of requests the School Department has put in for things to be fixed that Public Buildings hasn't gotten around to fixing. He does not know if any management study is going to fix that. For example, recommendation 11 requests that the City Public Building Department implement a swing shift to provide better maintenance support to school buildings. Ms. Zaleznik said that was sent to the

Mayor because they thought it was a good idea. As far as she knew, it hasn't happened.

The Superintendent said that there are structural problems with the way things are done certainly. But on the other hand, there are thousands of requests that get executed every year. There are still a significant number that don't get executed. How much of that is related to some structural defect, how much of it relates to personalities on both sides, and how much relates to funding. If the maintenance spending were up close to the 2%, the maintenance problems would go away.

- Recommendation 13 calls for the School Dept. to meet with the City to investigate the feasibility of assuming full responsibility for maintaining school buildings. The Superintendent said that it is an idea worth exploring.
- The recommendation of the standardizing of cleaning procedures. The Superintendent said that the problem is they've added square footage and cut custodians. There are 2.5 million square feet of schools and they have cut 6 custodians. What we have said to the custodians is clean more square footage but do it just as well. We've adopted environmentally sound green cleaning products which a number of the custodians say don't work as well.

Quality Control

President Baker said he was glad that there is a new direct report in the Technology person. On the other hand he was concerned that the Superintendent has another direct report. The scarcest resource seems to be the Superintendent's time and attention. He is concerned that the system itself is too big to not need a sufficient level of administrative talent to back up you and back up the other people. It seems that people look at the Newton schools as a unit. People are confident that when they move into Newton that they'll go to a school that will provide a high quality education virtually anywhere they go in the City. That is really one of the hallmarks of this system. The School Committee over the years has been very eager to maintain and enhance that concept of educational opportunity throughout the system. He does not know of another system around that has the scale, and at the same time, the level of quality we have.

President Baker said we need to think about how we multiply the Superintendent's time and the School Committees policy decisions and all of those things the principals need to do. If we're having principals take operational responsibility as a group, in some cases that's not cost effective. We have a situation in which we're acting in a service capacity which means we're responding to "fires" rather than "fire prevention". He said he just wants to get his own sense that the quality of the whole system is a joint effort. Not only in what goes on in the classroom and with the classroom teachers, but also in the quality of administration. Sometimes it seems that we take the view that administration is something that gets in the way of instruction as opposed to enabling instruction. He said he would add his voice to the School Committee's in urging you all to think collectively. He feels his function is just to say that good administration pays for itself as well as the quality of instruction and the cost effectiveness of the system.

Budget Satisfaction

Ald. Hess-Mahan commented that his wife is a teacher in a different town. The one thing that she finds the most difficult is the lack of curriculum coordinators to help make it possible for them to do the things in the classroom instead of having to write their own curriculum. He said he is also continually impressed with the curriculum here and the curriculum coordinators. If we were going to beef up any place, that would be a great place. The other thing she says every budget cycle is teachers need training. He knows that this is one place that we've had to cut in the past and he was so pleased that this year's budget reflects what it costs to have a first class quality school system. He applauded the efforts of the School Committee and the Superintendent's office for coming up with a budget that tells it like it is. Hats off to the Mayor for finding a way to pay for it.

Ms. Zaleznik said we are all very pleased because we took the position that we couldn't do more cuts and we didn't. It looks like things are close enough that we're going to be in reasonable shape. She does not think anyone should forget that what we're maintaining is what we're doing this year. There's a lot more that we should do but that goes toward the strategic planning part. We really would like to engage the community in conversation about what we all value, care about, and want to be best at. Then we can map out how we can get there incrementally over a number of years.

Salary

Ald. Merrill asked what the average increase in salary across the norm for the School Department employees was this year. Supt. Young said that in general it is a similar pattern to what the teachers get. They are at 2% this year. This year's settlement is actually 1%, then 1% because there is not enough money in the system to do more than that. Next year they get 3%. So the overall 3 year package is 8% which is considerably less than many of our surrounding communities.

Motion to Adjourn

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair