

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2006

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chairman) President Baker, Ald. Sangiolo, Ald. Parker, Ald. Hess-Mahan

Absent: Ald. Lipof, Ald. Coletti, Ald. Merrill

Also Present: David Olson

THE FOLLOWING ITEM SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION

#369-05 ALD. JOHNSON on behalf of the Clerk of the Board/City Clerk Search Committee recommending David A. Olson for appointment by the Board of Aldermen to succeed Edward G. English as Clerk of the Board and Newton City Clerk.

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0

NOTE: Mr. Olson was present for this discussion and gave some background on his discussions with the staff of both City Clerk and Clerk of the Board's Office, Aldermen and other Department Heads regarding what they would like to see happen. He has had a very positive reception from the staff in the clerk's office and has spoken individually with almost everybody in the office. Discussions included hearing their ideas on the transition including some of the problems and what some of the solutions might be. He looks forward to continuing those discussions. Mr. Olson has also been working with the city museum to help them to transition in preparation of his departure.

Ald. Hess-Mahan noted that he has been talking to the Clerk's Office for the last two years to find ways to readily access docket items and be able to find out for every committee what the status is. He noted that Chairman Johnson's spreadsheet has been an excellent way of keeping track as this provides information concerning the status of all items. For purposes of accessibility and accountability to the aldermen as well as the public, Ald. Hess-Mahan would like to be able to follow docket items after they have been approved. Mr. Olson felt this was an area where he could bring some guidance and help. He has worked with the City's Information Technology (IT) Department in the collections management software and programs for the museum and is aware that department is very capable given the direction needed to create the programs by using Access or Excel. When he finds out what needs to happen and then working with IT, Mr. Olson feels that this can be done in fairly short order.

Ald. Parker added that there is a need for a better job of accessing documents. In his opinion if every committee did a spreadsheet similar to Ald. Johnson, accessibility would be much easier. He also felt the Board of Aldermen should have input regarding the web page.

Ald. Sangiolo suggested a scanner that links to backup material. She felt it would be helpful to have more information available to the public.

President Baker said presently there is some information on parking restrictions in certain areas but ultimately that should be available to anyone who is trying to figure out restrictions.

Chairman Johnson mentioned it would be helpful to look up a new technology called "portal" (google is a "portal") which is different technology and drastically more sophisticated than an internet site. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Olson what type of improvements the staff would like to see. Mr. Olson responded there does not seem to be any major problems and the staff appears to be receptive to change.

Ald. Parker felt the City Clerk's office should be involved with the implementation of a 311 phone system. He would like to see some staff time for research and policy work. Mr. Olson said there is a possibility of student help in these research projects.

Ald. Hess-Mahan focused on the need for a new copier and mentioned that a multi-function copier which can also be used as a printer and as a scanner should be looked at.

Ald. Sangiolo questioned if Mr. Olson would be able to go to the Clerk's School. Mr. Olson noted that there was a session in July and he has it on his calendar but registration has not opened, at this time. She further asked if he had made contacts with the Mass. Municipal Association. He noted that he had and in addition made contacts with the New England Town and City Clerks Association, the Mass City Clerks Association, Mass. Town Clerks Association, and the International Municipal Clerks Association. He has the paperwork in to join the Mass. City Clerks and the New England Clerks Association and will be going to the Mass. Municipal Conference on January 13th and 14th and attending the Mass. City Clerks conference in February to take place in Worcester.

Mr. Olson has had conversations with Dan Funk, Gayle Smalley, and Ouida Young of the Law Department. He also talked with Peter Karg, Election Commissioner and has scheduled meetings with Joe Mulvey and Ann Cornaro of Information Technology to talk about technology in the Clerk's office. He also has been reading the City Charter and the City Ordinances.

Chairman Johnson noted that she had docketed an item with Ald. Albright on emergency preparedness with health, police, etc. and did not hear anything. She found out that members of the City Committee had mailed out postcards saying that on January 12th, there would be a program for the City Committee, Mayor Cohen, Police Department, Police Department, Health Department, DPW, etc. to talk about emergency preparedness. This is one example of the Board finding out things after the fact. Things come to the Board that already have been done. Ald. Johnson hopes that the communications person from the Executive Department will communicate with Mr. Olson on a regular basis so the Board is not the last to know.

Ald. Parker moved approval. The Committee voted 5-0 in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair