

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2006

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

Absent: Ald. Coletti, Sangiolo

Also: Ald. Weisbuch, Danberg

#197-06 DOUGLAS DICKSON, 17 Oxford Road, Newton Centre re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire June 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#198-06 ANN CORNARO, 75 Sheridan Street, West Newton re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire on June 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#199-06 POLLY BRYSON, 11 Acorn Drive, Auburndale re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire June 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#200-06 JAY BERKSON, 33 Old Farm Road, Newton Centre re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire June 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#202-06 ALAN GREEN, 403f Dedham Street, Newton Centre re-appointed as a member of the NEWTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION for a term to expire April 30, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#203-06 NANCY BROWN, 161 Highland Avenue, West Newton re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire March 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

#204-06 DAVID LESCOHIER, 93 Adena Road, West Newton re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire March 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06).

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

#205-06 SHIRLEY FARNHAM, 14 Brookside Avenue, Newtonville re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term to expire March 1, 2009 (60-days 06-29-06).

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE #197-06, 198-06,199-06,200-06, 202-06,203-06,204-06,205-06 were all reappointments with appropriate backup. The Committee voted to approve 6-0

#201-06 JULIA MALAKIE, 50 Murray Road, West Newton re-appointed as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term to expire June 1, 2009 (60 days 06-29-06)

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Ms. Malakie was present and told the Committee she has enjoyed her service, especially working with Marc Welch of the Recreation Department.

BUDGET MEETING

CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD

Mr. Olson presented his budget for City Clerk/Clerk of the Board and noted there have been no major changes. There have been some small decreases in inauguration expenses as they will not be needed in the current year. There are some salary differences between Mr. English's salary and Mr. Olson's salary. Everything else is status quo.

Mr. Olson pointed out that the City Archives is spread out over three locations. The archival material stored in City Hall dates back to the 1800's and many of the items are in serious disrepair and in need of re-binding. The city directories are used by the Clerk's Office, Assessing and Planning Departments for research into the age of homes in Newton, businesses that were in the city, and genealogical research. The basement of City Hall is not a good place to store historic records as some records are showing signs of mold. The legislature has made one change to the Community Preservation Act this year. It now allows the use of CPA funds for the preservation of historic records.

Ald. Hess-Mahan expressed his interest in putting into electronic format many records. He questioned how some of these very old books could be preserved and still use them on a day to day basis. He would like to see some of this information scanned and find a way to digitally store it so the originals, for historic and other reasons, could be preserved and not stored in the Clerk's office.

Ald. Johnson asked if the present budget allocation will allow him to work on these items. In response, he said money has been preserved for the City Archivist that will help in getting an application together for the CPA for this type of material.

Mr. Olson reported that he was now a Justice of the Peace, Notary Public and a Commissioner to Qualify Public Officials.

Chairman Johnson thanked Mr. Olson and reported that colleagues and others have told her what an outstanding job he has been doing.

The Committee took a straw vote on City Clerk and Clerk of the Board budget and the board voted to approve 4-0 (Johnson, Hess-Mahan, Merrill, Parker; Baker & Lipof not voting)

NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM

Susan Abele, Acting Museum Director, was present for this discussion. The museum budget for FY07 will be level funded with no change to staff or program. Susan talked about some of the new programs that were implemented in the past year including the new Hyphenated-Origins. With this exhibit the museum was able to engage a new audience for the museum's programs. The staff hired and worked with 7 High School students whose families had recently immigrated to the United States. The students shared their thoughts and feelings about coming to America and contributed their personal stories and material to the exhibit. Chairman Johnson asked what the status was for procuring other property. Susan pointed out that the museum is currently working with the Historical Society to acquire the Durant Kenrick Homestead on Waverley Avenue. This revolutionary era home would make a great addition to the museum and would provide a space to undertake programs centered on the American Revolution, a topic around which the Newton Public Schools are very interested in developing programs and curriculum materials. CPA funds have been received to do a study to see if that building will work as a museum and how to do the renovations to make it work.

Ald. Parker asked about storage space. Ms. Abele said that the Craft Street Stable project is something that could be a potential storage and exhibition space. Susan made it clear that the museum is still looking seriously at finding additional space for the collections and programs of the museum.

Ms. Abele thanked the Committee for their support.

The Committee voted to approve 6-0.

ELECTION COMMISSION

Mr. Karg pointed out the changes in this year's budget. A part-time employee position (\$14,259) has not been replaced. During busy election periods, the department will hire a temp person to help fill the gap and keep absentee ballots current and other critical issues. Another change is an \$8,000 reduction in postage on the census side. Next year the census return envelope will not be prepaid for the census when it comes back. Postal rates have gone up and there is an extra service fee which came out to an excess of \$10,000 to get the mail back. Talking with other communities, Mr. Karg found that communities are moving away from pre-paying the return. Mr. Karg is looking into drop off points in the City for people who don't want to pay the postage.

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked if the census could be done on-line. Mr. Karg had talked to the Secretary of State's office and found that it appears no community is doing that. Peter felt it was important to continue to look at this further.

Ald. Parker suggested using the touch screen voting system in a very limited way. Ald. Hess-Mahan wants to be sure that the right to vote be in no way infringed upon if we limit access to this new system which is targeted at those who are sight and hearing impaired. This is part of the Help America to Vote Act (HAVA). The committee's concern with the touch screen voting system is that there is no source documentation if and when a recount is required. Mr. Karg stated that the Secretary of State's office will select one statewide vendor. Accomplishments by the Election Department include trying to improve the quality of the poll workers with particular attention to having a good mix of people with strong wardens and clerks. There was a question on the 2004 city census that resulted in over 400 responses. A database was developed which has allowed gaps to be filled in. Mr. Karg said updating the training manual has been an important part of the Election Department. He noted that there is a move at the state level to have same day voting registration.

Ald. Sangiolo wanted to update the Committee to say that Wayland just voted to approve voting rights for permanent resident aliens.

There was a vote of 6-0 to approve the Election Commission budget.

VETERANS/LICENSING BOARD/WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Mr. Guzzi was present for this discussion and told the Committee that his department generates approximately \$260,000 a year in fees. There was a licensing seminar that involved working with ISD, Health and Fire Prevention to discuss all Rules and Regulations. Mr. Guzzi explained that he tries to visit all licensed businesses and be sure there is compliance. He further noted that our fee level was very competitive.

Ald. Merrill asked about the CPA funds for City Hall Diorama. Mr. Guzzi responded we are still in limbo. Chairman Johnson noted that there should be follow-up on CPA funds for the diorama which is in dire need of repair.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Mitch Baker, Sealer of Weights and Measures, told the Committee that his major goal would be to expand price verification to include more stores. His basic priorities include sealing and certification once a year. His major complaint from consumers involved gas prices. He has been trying to get all gas station owners to follow one program for advertising their special prices, e.g. "Wild Mondays.". Another goal is to make sure business owners understand the laws and to make sure everything is sealed.

Ald. Hess-Mahan moved that this budget be approved. The Committee voted 6-0 to approve Veterans, Licensing, Sealer of Weights and Measures.

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEES

#131-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to file a Home Rule Petition with the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for special legislation which will allow the City Treasurer to use the Prudent Man Rule for investing trust funds of the City.

Finance approved 8-0 on 3/13/06

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Comptroller David Wilkinson was present for this discussion. He stated that there are significant restrictions on how trust funds (temporarily idle) cash can be invested. It would seem that state laws would allow the trustees to invest the funds in their care and custody. Unfortunately in the case of trust funds in Massachusetts, it is not the case. There is old legislation that remains on the books to this day that restricts the judgment of trustees. The trust funds can invest in railroad bonds, fixed income of the US government, and fixed income obligations of other municipalities. Beth Smith said the Chaffin Fund Trustees did vote to make this change. Ms. Smith has been a trustee for 5 years and feels she cannot be responsible in a fiduciary way unless we have a broader ability to address these funds in a diversified way. She feels that the principles of a diversified portfolio should apply to this. Looking at our performance for the last several years has not been satisfactory. We are highly restricted on what we can invest in. The trustees felt they really needed to do something to change this. Chairman Johnson pointed out that Finance Committee has already approved this.

Ald. Hess-Mahan was interested in knowing who is going to make the investment decisions and how that is going to be approved. Ms. Smith said the trustees would come up with asset allocation policies that would be responsible and then a search would be done for an investment advisor in order to invest the money. Catherine Farrell of the Law Department said Brookline just did this. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Wilkinson provide a list of restrictions.

The Committee voted to approve 6-0.

#242-03 ALD. JOHNSON, SAMUELSON AND SANGIOLO requesting a discussion to determine times and places where dogs may be off leash on public grounds excluding schoolyards.

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: Chairman Johnson had ask Ald. Albright to come and provide the committee with an update on the work of the task force. From Ald. Albright's viewpoint, there have been some very good meetings regarding dog parks. Sites were visited where currently people are taking dogs off-leash to get an impression of what was going on. It appears that there was a positive reaction to what was seen. It was noted that the dogs were under control and things were going fairly well in these parks. After much discussion, it was decided to prepare a draft ordinance. At the last meeting, Assistant Solicitor Marie Lawlor prepared a draft ordinance which was distributed and discussion ensued. There would be certain areas specified and everything else would be off-limits. Fran Rice of the Recreation Commission that said this was not the right way

to go and what should be done is specify where you **can't take a dog** and let the rest of it be open. The task force may also recommend the creation of a Committee or a Commission comprised of Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission, citizens and aldermen similar to the Traffic Council. Their job would be to set regulations for how this would work, what parks would be in and what parks would be out and be the overseer of this off leash dog event that would happen throughout the City. Some of the standards would be in the draft ordinance. For example, no off leash dogs in tot lots, playgrounds, little league fields, etc. Regulations for behavior would be left up to this committee. There would also be a citizen group that would have to adopt the park. There would be citizen involvement in taking care of the park. The Norumbega Park is a good example of where a citizen group does take care of that park. There is a possible 18 month to 2 year sunset clause. There also was discussion regarding increases in dog license fees and fines for breaking the rules.

Ald. Hess-Mahan moved hold.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcia Johnson, Chairman