

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2006

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

Absent: Ald. Lipof, Coletti

Also Present: Ald. Harney, Ald. Linsky, Ald. Samuelson, Ald. Burg, Jeff Young (Superintendent of Schools), Anne Larner (School Committee), Dori Zaleznik (Chair, School Committee), Reenie Murphy (School Committee), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer)

#243-06 DR. ROBERT STAULO, 1157 Walnut Street, Newton Highlands, re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the NEWTON YOUTH COMMISSION for a term to expire on March 31, 2009 (60 days 8-7-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Ald. Parker told the Committee that Dr. Staulo spends a great deal of time volunteering on various boards, including the Brigham House, and youth groups. The Committee approved his appointment 6-0.

#244-06 JACK NEVILLE, 68 High Street, Newton Upper Falls, re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as an Alternate member of the NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (60 days 8-7-06).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Jack Neville was present for this discussion. The Committee questioned what, in his opinion, was the biggest Commission accomplishment. In his view, it was having all the parks evaluated. He said that CPA funds have been very helpful. Ald. Sangiolo moved approval and the Committee voted 6-0 to approve.

#221-06 PETER JOHNSON, 121 Fairway Drive, West Newton re-appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the NEWTON PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION for a term to expire 01-01-09 (60 days 8-07-06)

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Mr. Johnson told the Committee that public/private partnerships are being looked into. Raising money from the private sector is also being explored. The Committee voted 6-0 to approve.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#259-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, in accordance with Sections 3-3 and 3-4 of the City Charter, seeking confirmation of the appointment of Ms. Cynthia Stone as the Director of the Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 [This was reported out on 26-June]**

NOTE: Cynthia Stone, new Director of the Newton History Museum, joined the Committee for confirmation of her appointment. It was a unanimous decision to recommend her appointment to the Mayor.

The committee members commented that the strength of her background, the variety of her experiences both in the museum and educational world as well as work in fund raising was really impressive.

David Olson said Cynthia's reputation as a director is well-known. Ms. Stone said that her goal at every institution she has worked at has been to make the cultural institutions more accessible.

Ms. Stone thanked the Committee for their support. The Committee voted approval 6-0.

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: **HELD 5-0 (Baker not voting)**

NOTE:

Introduction The item was introduced by Ald. Hess-Mahan and Johnson. This is the second part of the study that was undertaken by the School Committee. The study by Human Resources Services Inc.(HRS) was focused on the compensation and classification of central administration staff positions (non-union). In the Spring, the committee discussed the Gibson Study, which focused on the management structure. HRS conducted a comprehensive compensation and classification study of its non-union central administration staff positions. This study was commissioned to re-examine the responsibilities, work performed, and market pay rates for each position included in the study.

Chairman Johnson wanted to position the study. Compensation studies for particular jobs or job segments are a very common practice. There are surveys that compensation people fill out every year so jobs can be benchmarked. The results demonstrate that people were pretty fairly paid. Chairman Johnson does not believe that raises should be based on being on the job for a certain period of time. She feels that the Consultant has come up with some wonderful issues around competency. If a raise is given, we will be assured that it was deserved because there is both quantitative as well as qualitative information by which that decision was made.

Comparable Communities There really are no communities that are directly comparable to Newton. If communities are looked at with the same number of students, they would tend to be areas like Fall River, New Bedford, and Lawrence. If you look at places that might have demographics similar to Newton, you are looking at Lexington and Wellesley where many of the people with a similar title would be in charge of half the number of people. West Hartford, Connecticut was the area that was the most comparable. It is similar in size as well as demographics. Consultants did a great deal of work looking at comparable communities. There have been some findings that have come out of this study that should help to move the process forward.

One is job descriptions which accurately reflect what people are doing now. Salary ranges that are based on an evaluation of the job, not the person in it and a market view. It was noted that some job descriptions may actually change.

Aldermanic Responses

Ald. Johnson said she was very pleased but would be disappointed if some of these recommendations, especially around performance reviews, structure, promotions, and advancement were not put in place.

Ald. Merrill asked if this is a first attempt at job descriptions. The response was that this was an update and reclassification of previous job descriptions that were not as full, complete and systematic as this one.

Ald. Harney has concern that the report will become the justification of across the board raises for everybody and has trouble with the fact that 35 raises have been given out to senior level management people in Executive Session behind closed doors. He also noted six more raises were put in with very little discussion. He has continued concern regarding giving consistent raises. He asked if there would ever be a time when it was stated that raises could not be given. The response was that the raises given to administrators and the principal were the same percentage raise that was given to teachers. The only reason for not doing this in September was because the compensation study was not yet in place. It took a far longer time to get the RFP through than was ever anticipated. It was really work that should have been done in September and had absolutely nothing to do with the FY07 budget. It was FY06 money and that is when it was given. Ald. Harney added that there would be a time when it will be said that we really can't give raises.

President Baker said he understood Ald. Harney's concerns but we have to have high quality people with experience in the Newton system and they should be fairly compensated or otherwise they will be hired away from us. He thinks it is important that a signal is given to the public at large that we think administrators are expendable because, in fact, it is a system we have. We also have to recognize that the School Department has fiscal autonomy inside their own budget.

Ald. Hess-Mahan was impressed with the quality and presentation of these studies. He wanted to make the point that there was no waste and mismanagement of school funding found in these studies. He noted that the Gibson people were very surprised that they could **not** find any cost savings.

Ald. Sangiolo asked what has been done in the past few years on the city side in terms of the H-grade employees. The response was that steps have been frozen. Ald. Sangiolo noted that it was really hard when we have people on the city side (H-grade staff) and we have had to tell them that we do not have the money.

There was a motion to hold and the Committee voted 5-0. (Baker not voting)

#438-05 ALD. YATES requesting that the maintenance, care, and management of the city's historic burial grounds be transferred from the Parks and Recreation Department to the Newton History Museum.

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: Ald. Yates has talked to Susan Abele and Fran Towle on this issue. He was told the museum does not have the ability to do any of this maintenance on their own. Ald. Yates filed an amended version of this item which basically said that Parks and Recreation shall carry out these three items with the participation and advice of the Director of the Newton History Museum. He wants the responsibility of the History Museum to participate spelled out by statute because as it is now, it is just Parks and Recreation.

The History Museum, under Mr. Olson, did play a major role in seizing the opportunity the CPA represented and made a great deal of progress, but there is still a phase and a half of the restoration yet to be completed. The expertise that is involved is clearly the museum's and not of Parks and Recreation so he would like like the statutes to reflect the positive developments that were made in the previous Museum Director's term. (See attached email from Ald. Yates dated April 4, 2006). It was held so that Ald. Yates could return with recommended wording changes for the ordinance.

The Committee voted to hold 6-0

#225-05 ALD. JOHNSON, DANBERG, FISCHMAN, HESS-MAHAN, PARKER AND SANGIOLO requesting a 3 month, 6 month, and 12 month update regarding the reorganization of the Health and Human Services organization in light of the Board's concern that there was an insufficient focus on youth services.

ACTION: **NAN 5-0 (Baker not voting)**

NOTE: This docket item was scheduled to be discussed after a 12 month period. Since that time period has elapsed, the Committee voted to NAN this item 5-0 (Baker not voting)

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#263-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to expend the sum of \$30,000 from the Marathon Receipts reserve fund for the purpose of funding park improvements and repairs for city playgrounds.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 [This was reported out on 26-June without a written report under a suspension of the Rules.]**

NOTE: Bob DeRubeis was present for this discussion. He indicated that this money was needed for purchasing Fibar which is the material that the Parks and Recreation Department spreads at the base of playground equipment as well as for other playground equipment that is defective and worn.

The Committee voted to approve 6-0.

REFERRED TO PS&T, PUB. FAC., FINANCE AND PROG. & SERV. COMMITTEES

#246-06 ALD. LINSKY, PARKER AND DANBERG requesting discussion of placement of debt exclusion questions on the November 2006 state election ballot in Newton that would ask voters whether they wish to finance repairs, renovations and improvements to Newton Fire Stations as well as other high-priority capital and infrastructure needs through debt exclusions. Said questions would be written as binding debt exclusion in accordance with the provisions of Proposition 2 ½.

REFERRED TO PUB. FAC., FINANCE AND PROG. & SERV. COMMITTEES

#247-06 ALD. PARKER, LINSKY, SANGIOLO, VANCE, MANSFIELD, DANBERG, & HARNEY proposing placement of a question on the November 2006 state election ballot in Newton that would ask voters whether they wish to finance the construction of the proposed new Newton North High School project through debt exclusion. Said question would be written as a binding debt exclusion in accordance with the provision of Proposition 2 ½.

ACTION: **APPROVED 2 in favor (Sangiolo & Parker) 1 opposed, (Baker) 3 abstaining (Merrill, Johnson, Hess-Mahan)**

NOTE:

Introduction The primary focus of the evening was a lively discussion amongst committee members. Both items #246-06 and #247-06 were discussed together. Discussion ensued regarding memo from the Comptroller. (see attached) Ald. Parker said this is an approach that addresses the structural deficit that would result from financing Newton North without a dedicated revenue stream.

Ald. Baker said some of these figures were a forecast and not a prediction. Ald. Baker was also troubled that the Comptroller was not present for this discussion.

In Ald. Linsky's view, it would be important to put before the voters that there is a need for a dedicated revenue source. Ald. Sangiolo said if there is an alternative, we would like to hear it. As things are, it looks like we will have to have more cuts. It would be important to have a dedicated source of revenue to pay for it.

Ald. Baker pointed out that these are discussion items. He stated further that there is a very limited window of opportunity to get this on the November ballot at all. The City has gone out to the public twice for actual increases in taxes.

Ald. Sangiolo said a reason that a debt exclusion is attractive is you know what you are going to pay for. Ald. Hess-Mahan feels he is not ready to support this docket item. He wants a new high school built but with a plan that will work. He indicated that he would like to see an additional revenue stream available. He noted that because of the way that the debt exclusion is worded, voters will not know in advance the dollar amount that will actually be levied to fund the high school under a debt exclusion. Ald. Merrill feels overrides are over and will not pass.

Chairman Johnson said she had David Olson do some research for her and it was noted that 70% of debt exclusion overrides pass; 20% of operational overrides pass. In a statistical analysis, you have a higher probability of a debt exclusion because people know where the money is going.

In Ald. Parker's opinion, if this were put on the ballot, it would pass.

Sandy Pooler said there are too many different, well-meaning people who are not in agreement. As Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Newton, Mr. Pooler explained that he could talk to some of the "numbers points" and the budget impacts. There are a number of political things that he cannot talk about. Mr. Pooler thinks there is a fundamental conflict in the comments and the whole concept of a debt exclusion as to whether the City has a capital problem or an operating problem. In Mr. Pooler's view, the biggest challenge is on the operating side. He does not believe that passing a debt exclusion over-ride will solve the problems. Presently we spend 3% of our revenue on debt. Part of that 3% goes to North High and part to fire houses, DPW equipment, etc. The question to ask is if you have a debt exclusion over-ride, would you spend less than the 3% of the operating budget on capital? Mr. Pooler's concern is that would be a big mistake. We do have a known cost for dealing with the fire houses but still do not know the best way to solve the problem. He said he will continue to involve members of the Board to find the most appropriate way to go forward. He does think it would be premature to ask voters to fund projects until we know the best thing to do.

Ald. Harney had asked that if we have all this money in the capital stabilization fund, why do we have capital problems in the City? Mr. Pooler reported that in FY06 we would start to borrow money for other things and this has been done. We knew that North High and South High would take up a big part of our capital capacity. Mr. Pooler stated that it has been his privilege to work with David Cohen for the last 15 or 20 years and indicated that he has shown a good deal of leadership; he is the only Mayor in the City that has gotten an over-ride passed. The value to a

long term forecast gives some direction and if steps are not taken this year to fix things, where would we go?

In conclusion he said he would welcome coming back to talk more about some of the specifics. It is his opinion the debt exclusion override does not solve our operating problems. In his opinion, we need to have an open debate. While this discussion is important, but in order to conclude it in any meaningful way, we are months away from having that happen.

Chairman Johnson noted that we have to get a construction manager on board as well as having a price. She had concern about being committed to doing something that could not be paid for. She is looking for assurance that when the time comes, we will have the money. Ald. Johnson has strong concern about facing problems if we find we don't have the money and an over-ride does not pass.

Mr. Pooler said, from his point of view, he feels it is pretty clear that the best thing to do at Newton North is to build a new high school. He feels we need to take the small steps to do the design work to get us to the point where we have more solid numbers and know what we are doing. He still does not know about state aid. Before we go forward with big decisions, we will have to have those answers.

Ald. Sangiolo asked if there was a number that we would finally say, "This is what we can afford." Mr. Pooler did not think that anything would be decided in June regarding ultimate funding that will mean anything until we get past where we are in the site plan, next phase design, and construction manager.

President Baker concluded by saying he can't support this unless it has everyone's support and he does not see that being successful.

Ald. Parker felt the discussion was really productive and would like to see the item move forward. Ald. Parker moved approval. The Committee voted 2 in favor (Sangiolo & Parker) 1 opposed, (Baker) 3 abstaining (Merrill, Johnson, Hess-Mahan)

#267-06 ALD. PARKER, BURG, LINSKY, FISCHMAN, HESS-MAHAN. Vance, HARNEY, JOHNSON & DANBERG proposing a Resolution urging Congress and the President to put pressure on the Sudanese government to end the genocide and asking the Massachusetts legislature to pass S2166 requiring the divestiture of Massachusetts funds from companies that are aiding and abetting the Sudanese government in its genocide.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee was joined for discussion of this item by Maggie Tiernan of the Save Darfur Coalition. Ms. Tiernan provided some background on the ongoing genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan. She outlined the effectiveness of past efforts to draw international attention to the Sudanese government's actions and urged the committee to pass the resolution as

a timely statement that would be helpful in both state and national efforts to end the Darfur genocide.

The resolution calls on the President and Congress to take immediate action to pressure the government of Sudan to end the Darfur genocide and asks the legislature and governor to support Massachusetts Senate Bill 2166, which would divest the Commonwealth's investment funds from companies doing business with the government of Sudan in such a way as to support or passively enable the Darfur genocide.

Alderman Parker, the lead sponsor of the resolution, informed the committee that Representative Ruth Balsler would have liked to attend in support, since she is a sponsor of the bill, but could not because the legislature was in session that evening.

The resolution passed the committee by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair