

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2005

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

Others: Fred Guzzi (Veteran's Agent) Mitch Baker (Inspector Weights & Measures). Peter Karg, (Executive Secretary, Elections) Elaine DeFilipis (Elections) David Olson (Jackson Homestead) Ed English (Clerk) Christine Owen (Committee Clerk) Sandy Pooler (Budget Director)

BUDGET

7:00 p.m. VETERANS/LICENSING BOARD/WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Fred Guzzi and Mitch Baker were both present for this discussion. Mr. Guzzi noted that the largest expenditure is for services provided for needy veterans. Accomplishments include painting of City Hall flagpoles, increased attendance at Veteran's functions. Mr. Guzzi would like to have an Iraq display in the diorama area. Ald. Hess-Mahan asked about the change to the date of the Memorial Day Parade. Mr. Guzzi explained that in the last four to five years, the attendance has dwindled rapidly. The old route often had no attendance on certain sections and after much discussion; there was a change in the parade route. The new route has been positive. The city becomes almost a ghost town during the long weekend. The Veterans Council felt that was adding to the poor attendance problem. After two or three years of discussion, the change of date was decided on. This change will allow the Newton North Marching Band to perform, (50-60 students); State Championship Basketball as well as Boys and Girls Track teams will also be in attendance. Ald. Parker was looking for how many people actually come in for services. Mr. Guzzi said the questions are constant but could not give a figure. Chairman Johnson asked how many Newton people were serving in Iraq an Afghanistan. Ald. Johnson would like to see as an objective for Mr. Guzzi to have some type of outreach with a **brochure** that would be proactive in welcoming veterans back to the community after completing military service. Ald. Hess-Mahan moved approval.

Chairman Johnson questioned what the \$1900 in Licensing was used for and Mr. Guzzi explained it was needed for postage and printing. Mr. Guzzi could use a larger budget to deal with mailings to get out information to licensees. Ald. Parker mentioned that information could be handled by both email and the internet and felt it could be very helpful. Ald. Fischman asked if the neighboring towns charge for any other licenses that we don't currently have. Ald. Merrill moved approval.

The Inspector of Weights and Measures began his discussion by saying that up to date he has sealed more than 1000 various devices in the City. Ald. Parker asked if there is any check to see if prices in super markets ring up as they should. Mr. Baker said once a year he does price

verification in all the major markets as well as any location with three scanners or more, it is being done.

Ald. Merrill moved approval and the Committee voted on a straw voted 7-0 (Sangiolo not voting)

7:30 p.m. ELECTION COMMISSION

Peter Karg and Elaine DeFilippis were both present for this budget discussion. Mr. Karg said this past election was very busy and considerable time had been spent in preparation. There was an 89% turnout in Newton, 42,718 votes cast on Election Day. There were approximately of 4500 absentee ballots. Mr. Karg and his staff were working seven days a week from approximately the end of September to almost Thanksgiving. He emphasized that it was an incredible effort. It was a very successful election in Newton. Approximately 225 elections workers were trained in new procedures and operations. New people were recruited through the census which resulted in strengthening polling locations and bring some new people in. Mr. Karg indicated it had been a good effort by all the staff with few complaints. Improving the census has been a top priority. An innovative post card was sent out about the first of April to those who did not respond to the first mailer to elicit a response with a successful return. Within a few weeks, a final vote of confirmation card will be sent out for those people who have not responded and are on the voter list and have not voted in the last two federal elections. After that, the residents' book will be printed. A real effort has been made to keep information updated.

There has been positive feedback on the new one residents' book. This information is also available on disc. The Election Commission has also worked hard at keeping the web page up-to-date. He also noted that an updated training manual has been worked on. Ald. Parker suggested using more on-line information from residents. Improving customer service has been a goal as well as increased web page information. An ongoing role is keeping the staff up-to-date on all new provisions of the "Help America Vote Act" which we in turn train election workers. Customer Service is improving. A brochure has been developed which explains to the public and elected officials some of the data information that is available for order on disc. Within the next year Mr. Karg's hopes there will be some federal assistance that mandates that municipalities buy for each precinct a system that will assist visually impaired people with a voice activated system. Information is updated online every other week.

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked what the special election cost and Mr. Karg said approximately \$55,000 to \$60,000. Mr. Hess-Mahan asked if there was any type of quality control on the voting machines. Mr. Karg noted that the Newton system does have a great deal of backup. Our machines have a paper trail and we have a very responsive local vendor.

Chairman Johnson questioned modum transfers that are done over phone lines causing security possible security problems. Since there is a secure system of transporting information accompanied by a police officer, Chairman Johnson questioned why the modum was being used in view of the lack of security around packing. Mr. Karg said in his discussions with the Information Technology Department, it was felt this was secure. In talking to other communities who use the Accu-vote System, many of them have moved to sending them over the phone line back to City Hall. There is a printout of the actual returns that goes back to City Hall

accompanied by a Police Officer. That printout can be matched to the card allowing an extra level of security . Ald. Johnson requested a copy of policies and procedures process for dealing with modum transfer process. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Karg to have a plan available if it became necessary to count a paper ballot election. Chairman Johnson wants to be sure that Newton voters are as protected as humanly possible.

Mr. Karg said inserts are put in tax bills to help get voters out, sandwich boards go up 4 weeks before election in all the villages in the City, information is put on the City web site and both The Tab and NewTV. It is a challenge to try to increase voter participation.

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8:00 p.m. CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD

8:30 p.m. NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM