

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2005

Present from Programs and Services: Ald. Johnson (Chairman) Ald. Hess-Mahan, (Vice-Chair) Ald. Sangiolo, Merrill, Baker, Coletti, Parker and Fischman.

Also Present: Michael Rourke (Chief Administrative Officer) Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer) Kathy Glick-Weil (Library) David Olson (Jackson Homestead) Gayle Smalley (Associate City Solicitor)

Present from Public Safety: Ald. Samuelson (Chairman) Ald. Lennon, Harney, Gentile, Ald. Lipof, Danberg, Linsky

Absent from Public Safety: Ald. Vance

Public Safety/Transportation Committee and the Programs and Services Committee met jointly to discuss the following item.

REFERRED TO PS&T, FINANCE, & PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEES

#281-05 ALD. PARKER on behalf of NEAL FLEISHER et al requesting that the Board of Aldermen place a question on the November 8, 2005 municipal election ballot to override proposition 2 1/2 for the purpose of restoring firefighter positions to the City of Newton operating budget such that fire engine 6 can be made operational for a total of 7 engine companies.

ACTION: **PROG. & SERV. MOTION TO APPROVE FAILS TO CARRY 2-4 (Baker, Hess-Mahan, Fischman, Merrill opposed; Coletti, Sangiolo not voting)**
PS&T MOTION TO APPROVE FAILS TO CARRY 3-4 (Lennon, Gentile, Lipof, Samuelson opposed)

NOTE: Ald. Parker explained the item in question is a citizen's petition to place a question on the ballot to override Proposition 2 1/2 for purposes of reinstating fire engine 6. It has been asked what the legal consequences of passage of this ballot question would be. Ald. Parker explained that if the question had been worded to make the override effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year, it would be possible to pay existing firefighters with new funds, thereby raising taxes without restoring Engine 6. For this reason, Ald. Parker and the Law Department worked out proposed language that would go into effect during the current Fiscal Year. If this question passed, there would be two possibilities: the number of firefighters could be increased or the Mayor would have the option of ignoring the override, in which case taxes would be unaffected and the levy limit would not change. Of course, if the override did not pass, there would be no change in taxes and no change in fire department service. Another possible scenario is that it passes, and the Mayor honors it by raising the taxes up to but not all the way to the \$481,000 – which would require using the money to hire more firefighters.

Ald. Parker also pointed out that the time line is fairly tight as the Election Commission needs time to print the ballots. If it were delayed until October, it would not be possible to get it

on the municipal election ballot. The cost to the average taxpayer has been a question often asked. Ald. Parker explained that a house assessed at \$500,000 would have an added charge of \$12.00 per year. The only way to put a citizen's petition on the ballot is by the local legislative body which in this case would be the Board of Aldermen. Ald. Parker felt there would be support for this petition and urged the Board to place the question on the ballot.

Neal Fleisher of 58 Parker Street said that the Mayor has said that engine 6 was cut for budgetary reasons. During the budget process meetings, the vast majority of aldermen indicated that they felt that engine 6 should remain in service at least until independent information could be evaluated. During the public hearings, the Mayor heard from many people who voiced their opposition to the elimination of engine 6. The Mayor did not change his position. Individuals came forward and offered to help raise money to keep engine 6 in service. He went on to say that seconds make a big difference in a fire situation. Mr. Fleisher could think of no legitimate reason to not allow the voters to decide this critically important issue for themselves. He urged support to place this on the ballot.

Mark Lovelle, 25 Devonshire Road was in support of reinstatement of engine 6. In his opinion the safety of the citizens of Newton was all important. He felt taking a piece out of service will hamper response time and put people at risk. He strongly felt this should be put on the ballot.

Fran Capello, President of Newton Firefighters said he was present to say that the association of firefighters did not support the last override and probably never will take an official position in support of an override. However, they are in support of getting Engine 6 back. He reported that during the two months that the City has been without Engine 6, Newton firefighters have been getting by only by the skin of their teeth: they have been rushing from call to call and have had to divert trucks needed at one location to other calls. He said without this truck, public safety in his opinion is not the same. Engine 6 did so much helping us cover other stations. Stations are being left empty when they shouldn't be. Without this truck, the risk in this city has either doubled or tripled. He strongly stated that he felt we need Engine 6 back and asked members of the Board to do whatever was necessary to get it back.

Ald. Johnson noted that both she and Ald. Lennon put forth a resolution to have the fire facilities study that was written in 1996 to be re-commissioned and be ready for the calendar year 2005. She wanted to make sure there was input from both sides to be sure this would be a comprehensive report. There are eight chapters in this report: fire risk, fire operations, manpower requirements, number of companies, mutual aid, fire protection equipment, administration of the department, and future operations. She felt it would be helpful if we could better understand what parts of the study are being undertaken for the end of calendar year 2005, what will parts will remain outstanding, and when these parts will be completed. Starting in January 1, it will be ten years since the original report was written and Ald. Johnson felt these things should be re-examined. Fire technology has changed, requirements around smoke detectors and sprinkler systems have also changed. However we have many more homes, e.g. there are single family homes that now are two, three, four units along with large developments on Needham Street and Route 9.

Mr. Rourke noted that Ald. Johnson listed the sections of the study that were worked on by Chief LaCroix. These sections included technical information around manning. Mr. Rourke stated that it would be more helpful for him to be present to respond. There were eight areas of recommendation included in the study. When the redeployment, in preparation for the budget, was studied focus was on the areas of recommendations in the 1996 Study. The recommendations included were training, prevention, consolidation of communications and information technology within the department. One had to do with adequacy of the department's equipment, the goal of having four firefighters as a minimum on each piece of equipment, etc. Mr. Rourke said the focus was on the deployment as it related to engine 6 coming out of service and how that influenced the other engines and their responses within the city and how did it effect our overall ability to protect the city. He said the changes made will be presented in October.

The Chairman asked that Chief LaCroix please give guidance as to when the remaining parts of the study will be completed. Mr. Rourke agreed that he would speak with the Chief and get back to the Board on this.

#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: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: Commissioner Naparstek and Michael Rourke of the Mayor's office joined the Committee for this discussion. Mr. Naparstek said the past two months have been both busy and productive. A grant has been received to integrate mental health to the schools. The grant is being called "Interface" (integrating services, nourishing families, training teachers, enhancing supports, respecting cultures, facilitating linkages, addressing needs, and evaluating efficacy.) This was very opportune because the school nurses are under the former Health Department, the mental health youth outreach, and other mental health services were under the old Human Services Dept. This enables the facilitation of connecting mental health services to the school nurses and into the schools to work with the community. Mr. Naparstek explained we are in the process of doing a youth services survey which is in response to the concerns of young people. There are 30 agencies serving youth who are presently being surveyed and that report will be forthcoming. Ald. Parker asked the committee members receive a copy of the survey. Commissioner Naparstek agreed that this would be provided. Chairman Johnson questioned when the report would be ready. Mr. Naparstek said he was anticipating the end of the calendar year.

There is a weekly meeting with the community social worker Diana Patten and Mr. Naparstek reviewing programs, services and the resources Ms. Patten brings to the City. Some mechanisms have been set up to check the number of calls received. Mr. Naparstek reported that there is a Safe Script Grant Program which is coordinated with Senior Services and Springwell. He also explained there is an Interagency Youth Task Force gathering in September. A direct outcome of the merging of the two departments has an annual forum for their staff and now

school nurses as well as social workers and psychologists will be included. There will be a sizable city presence that would not have happened prior to this merger at this forum on psychiatric medication used in children.

Mr. Naparstek stressed that the final results of the survey will be very helpful.

There was consensus amongst committee members that the purpose of the docket item was for the Commissioner to share how youth services would receive a greater focus in-light of the reorganization. The Commissioner responded that he had not been aware, prior to the meeting, that this was what he was being asked to present. The committee requested that when he returns later this year that he come prepared to talk specifically to you services and how the department will be addressing.

The item was held.

#244-05 DEBORAH HOWARD, 43 Fairfax Street, West Newton, re-appointed as a member of the URBAN TREE COMMISSION for a term of office expiring July 30, 2008. (60-day Board action date 9/9/05)

ACTION: **NAN 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee has asked that the Mayor resubmit this reappointment.

#189-03(2) BOARD OF ALDERMEN proposing amendments to the Rules of the Board of Aldermen by consolidating Real Property Reuse into another Committee.
Rules Subcommittee voted NAN 3-0 ON 1-10-05

ACTION: **NAN 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee voted NAN

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#254-05 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of \$38,029 to staff the reference desk on Sundays and to purchase supplemental reference materials to enable the Newton Free Library to fulfill its duties as a Regional Reference Provider
FINANCE APPROVED 5-0 on 7/18/05

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0**

NOTE: Kathy Glick-Weil said this money will be reimbursed on the cherry sheet and is paid through the regional library systems. It is used for telephone reference on Sunday. The item was approved 6-0 (Coletti, Sangiolo not voting)

#243-05 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR proposing the Revised Ordinances, 2001, re the Jackson Homestead and the city's museum operation be amended to clarify the duties and roles of the Director and Trustees of the Jackson Homestead.

ACTION: HELD 6-0

NOTE: Both Gayle Smalley and David Olson were present for this discussion. It had been noted in reviewing the ordinance that deficiencies were noted in terms of providing for a Director for the Museum. Current ordinances do not mention there was a Director and do not reflect the way the museum is operating right now. Ms. Smalley and some of the trustees worked on language that would reflect the way that the museum is presently operating. Ms. Smalley has met with the trustees and the historical society and they are in agreement. There was not an attempt to change anything with the exception of authorizing a more formal arrangement between the two groups.

President Baker felt that Ms. Smalley and Mr. Olson reflect on what additional language might be appropriate that would reflect existing activity or any reasonably foreseeable activity that would be added.

Ald. Parker agreed with President Baker, suggesting that the ordinance look forward to a vision of what we would like the Newton History Museum to be. He would like to see the inclusion of language such as history, culture and education. Chairman Johnson did not agree. She looks at an ordinance as a standard operating procedure. She feels if something changes at the ground level, this ordinance would have to be changed. In her opinion, we are looking at responsibilities of the Director and adding more might add confusion. Ald. Hess-Mahan agreed with Chairman Johnson. President Baker felt we need guidance from the Committee as a whole. He does feel there is value in adding some language regarding the current activities. Ald. Parker agreed that he would work with the Law Department and the Director to revise the language.

The Committee voted to hold 6-0

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair