

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2004

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

Absent: Ald. Baker

Others: Edward English, (Clerk) Fred Guzzi (Veterans' Services) David Wilkinson (Comptroller) Mitch Baker (Sealer of Weights and Measures) David Olson (Director, Jackson Homestead) Peter Karg (Election Commissioner) Elaine DeFilippis (Elections)

#216-04      ALD. GERST submitting a RESOLUTION requesting His Honor the Mayor to include in any new operating agreement between the City of Newton and NewTV an updated community service clause directing NewTV to: a) broadcast Newton community-producer materials and other community-producer sponsored materials not otherwise available to Newton viewers of broadcast, cable, satellite, or Internet television; and b) restrict on-air fund raising to Newton organizations.

**ACTION:**      **HELD 4-0 (Parker not voting)**

**NOTE:**      Ald. Gerst was not able to be present and the Committee voted to hold #216-04 and #217-04.

#217-04      ALD. GERST submitting a RESOLUTION requesting His Honor the Mayor seek an advisory ruling from the US Department of Treasury on the Al-Manar (Hezbollah terrorist television) component of Mosaic, a satellite television program now broadcast by NewTV.

**ACTION:**      **HELD 4-0 (Parker not voting)**

**NOTE:**      Ald. Gerst was not able to be present and the Committee voted to hold #216-04 and #217-04.

**FY05 BUDGET REVIEW**

**CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD -**

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 6-0 (Coletti, Sangiolo not voting)**

**NOTE:**      Clerk Edward English told the Committee that one of his top goals was to have an Archivist in place. He stated that Susan Abele of the Jackson Homestead is working one day a week for the Clerk's office and is able to handle requests. The basement vault at City Hall is not conducive to long term storage and Mr. English is

looking into the possibility of some grants from the state as well as the possibility of Community Preservation funds to explore more appropriate space.

Ms. Sullivan of the Board staff explained that monies to fund new technology are coming from a surplus in the personal services account due to the vacancy of a secretarial position. New technology will include new computers for the Board of Aldermen staff, a projector for presentations, scanner, two lap top computers and digital recorders computer processing unit, projector, scanner, and two lap top computers. From Mr. English's viewpoint, the staff is entitled to upgrades and requests have been put in for these. In view of the changes in the scope of these positions, Mr. English stressed the need for increased salary. The administration has not put any upgrades in this budget. There is money in salary reserve in the event that the request is granted. He went on to say there was another request for the upgrading of two positions in the City Clerk's Division.

President Baker questioned what the effect has been on the change in the Notary Rules. Mr. English indicated that there has been an effort to accommodate citizens.

The Committee moved approval and the vote was 6-0 in favor.

**VETERANS/LICENSING BOARD/WEIGHTS & MEASURES -**

**ACTION:      APPROVED 7-0 (Coletti not voting)**

**NOTE:**      Fred Guzzi, Veterans' Agent, and Mitch Baker, Sealer of Weights and Measures, were present for this discussion. Mr. Guzzi noted that the accomplishments of his department included a wonderful Veteran's Day ceremony where approximately 75 Korean Veterans were honored. There has been an update on license regulation that will be available to the Board. Goals for the coming year include improving communications between Inspectional Services, Health, and Fire Prevention. A change this year will include benefits for indigent veterans. Ald. Johnson requested Mr. Guzzi provide a one page summary of the breakdown of number of licenses by category.

The Committee approved the budget 7-0.

Mitch Baker noted he has been certified in price verification. Price verification is a scanning procedure done in markets. Verification has been completed at all CVS stores. A list from Federal Express has been obtained all of their scales have been certified. He is hopeful that fees will be able to be increased. Ald. Parker suggested that a fine be used for super markets that don't mark their items. Mr. Baker is checking stores for price accuracy ratings. Ald. Parker suggested that the Attorney General's office be notified if mistakes are noted.

The Committee voted to approve the budget 7-0.

## **NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM**

### **ACTION:    APPROVED 8-0**

**NOTE:**        The Director of the Jackson Homestead, David Olson, explained that there have been significant accomplishments this past fiscal year including the development of a new strategic plan for the Newton History Museum that will be used as a guide from 2005 to 2110. Visitation was up 2% in 2003. Overall visitation is up 23% since 2000. \$5,000 was received from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities to develop an exhibit called "Seeking Freedom in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century." Two applications have been submitted for major grants. Another highlight has been educational programs. Ald. Parker asked what percentage of the budget is provided by the Newton Historical Society and what percentage is funded through the city. Mr. Olson responded that in FY04, it was pretty close to being fifty-fifty. The city takes care of the building and the collections and the Historical Society provides the funds for the programming. Mr. Olson noted that one of the largest problems at the Museum is the shortage of space. Ald. Parker suggested that since no number was placed in the budget for the Jackson Homestead Admission Revolving Account that the Board authorize a spending level of \$4,000 for FY05.

The Committee voted 8-0 in favor.

## **ELECTION COMMISSION**

Mr. Karg, Executive Secretary of the Election Commission and Elaine DeFilippis were present for this discussion. Mr. Karg reported that the federal reimbursement funds for new voting systems (approximately \$179,000) has been received by the City. The five-year warranty provides us with maintenance for the first five years. Chairman Johnson suggested a worthy goal would be a back-up system.

Ald. Parker suggested hand counting for one or two precincts to check on the accuracy of the electronic scanning. In Ald. Parker's opinion, purchasing new partitions would be helpful. President Baker suggested a format for the sample ballot be the same as what is actually going to be on the ballot. Ald. Sangiolo asked if there could be a way to access resident lists electronically. Mr. Karg has looked into this and finds that would be a very sensitive issue. Ald. Fischman noted that some of the sandwich boards for the election do not have large enough lettering. President Baker added that some places in the City do not receive the "TAB" and urged that other media be used to announce the elections. Chairman Johnson questioned the grant of \$25,000 for extended polling hours. Mr. Karg provided the committee with information that this grant will be for monies used to allow polling offices to be open for thirteen hours and this will provide assistance to pay poll workers.

Chairman Johnson suggested a worthy goal would be to have a back up system in case we are required to abandon our electronic voting system due to the fact of the security issues swirling around Diebold and its software. We would not want to find ourselves in

the position of having to store hardcopy ballots, as we had to do in a recent special election, and counting without the appropriate resources.

The Committee voted to approve Election Commission budget 8-0.

**REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND LAND USE**

#267-02 ALD. BASHAM requesting creation of rules for Board of Aldermen acting as Special Permit granting authority.

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 6-0-2 (Coletti, Johnson abstaining)**

**NOTE:** Please refer to the Land Use notes on this item.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair