

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2004

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

Present from Finance: Ald. Coletti (Chair) Parker, Schnipper

Also Present: Linsky, Gerst

Present from School Department: J. Young, (Superintendent) Sandy Guryan, Carol Bock, Anne Larner, Nancy Levine, Susie Heyman Dori Zeleznik, Patty Kellogg, Renee Murphy

The Committees met jointly to discuss the following issues as they relate to the FY05 School Department Budget:

**REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES**

#209-04 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR**, in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter, submitting the FY05 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$266,992,346, passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY05-FY09 Capital Improvement Program, submitted in November, 2003. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 4/20/04.

**ACTION:** **PROG/SERV HELD** 5-2 (Coletti, Johnson opposed)  
**FINANCE HELD 5 IN FAVOR, 0 OPPOSED, 3 ABSENT)**

There was a motion showing support for the School Budget but waiting for clarification on transportation, custodians and staffing. The vote for support was 7-0. The Finance Committee voted hold 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 absent.

**NOTE:** Chair Anne Larner of the School Committee presented the budget. She noted that despite continuing economic constraints for the state, the Newton Schools are able to attract and retain a superior staff and still maintain strong programs. The budget currently being presented does show that class size is inching up, selection of electives that are being presented to children in the secondary level is trimmed back and

technology, supplies, materials and text books are not able to be sustained at the levels that would be preferred.

Superintendent Young said the budget proposal suggests that the bulk of the School budget (84%) goes to salaries. He explained that the term "maintenance of effort" means to try to take the program in place during one school year and transporting it ahead to the next year. The factors involved in the ability to roughly provide the same type services in one year, both in the classroom and in extra-curricula activities, to be able move forward include contracts with three unions. Funds have been set aside and will hopefully be adequate for the school to settle contracts with the three unions as well as the non-aligned employees that would include central staff members, school principals, and a small group that are not part of any union.

A volatile account is the fund for special education. Major factors are contract settlements, preserving classroom instruction, fixed and mandated cost increases, and instructional efficiencies. Unfortunately, Supt. Young said this year there will have to be reductions in the teaching staff. Transportation costs will increase and one bus will be added. Three custodians are being added to the staff as presently they are understaffed. Dr. Young explained the circuit breaker legislation which called for the state to reimburse school systems for 75% of certain special education costs. This year the legislature supplied not 75% but 35%. If there is an increase, it would be able to offset teacher costs and the class size problem.

An area Dr. Young was not happy with was professional development. The teachers should be aware of the latest research and trends in education. This cut would constrain professional development opportunities for teachers next year. It had been noted in the past that Newton was lagging behind in the area of text books. Significant dollars have now have been invested in K through 12 and significant gains have been realized. Newton Public Schools, by state standards, are understaffed when it comes to administration. Dr. Young stated that with special ed consolidations, transportation fees and administration reorganization, there was only 2.1% increase in FY04. He concluded by saying we will continue with high quality education for students of this City and have met the goal of living within our means.

President Baker said there was concern about the maintenance of buildings. Dr. Young responded that he was open to reductions and adjustments in any area except charter maintenance. Ald. Coletti asked if there was enough money to handle current projects. Carol Boch said the

current level of maintenance is not any less than in past years. The level of communication has increased with the Public Buildings Department. There has been a web based maintenance program implemented which has improved the level of communication.

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked about the increase in the increase and overtime costs for custodians at the same time that teachers have to be decreased. He wondered if it was possible to use flex time to bring down overtime costs. Dr. Young said for the past five years, teachers have been hired and not custodians. With the extra square footage at Newton South, there is not enough person power to keep the school clean.

Ald. Lennon questioned an item on an outside audit cost. Dr. Young said it was an agreement with the Comptroller to share the cost. Ald. Merrill asked about school nurses and guidance counselors. Dr. Young said school nurses will be back and guidance counselor ratio will be constant.

Chairman Johnson asked how the new outreach program was working and the response was that it was working well and did not see a negative decrease in service. There was a substantive discussion on transportation and bus fees.

Ald. Sangiolo moved to hold this budget to have the opportunity to go through information received this evening (May 12<sup>th</sup>) from the School Department as well as the issue of staffing. The Programs and Services Committee voted to hold 5-2 (Coletti, Johnson opposed). There was a motion showing support for the School Budget but waiting for clarification on transportation, custodians and staffing. The vote for support was 7-0. The Finance Committee voted hold 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 absent.

**REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES**

#549-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY05-FY09 Capital Improvement Program pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter which requires Board of Aldermen approval of a plan to finance \$170,899,860 of new local projects over the next several years:

**SUMMARY**

PUBLIC WORKS (City-Funded).....	\$ 8,075,000
PUBLIC WORKS (Grant/Fee Funded).....	\$ 54,256,057
PUBLIC SAFETY.....	\$ 4,611,000
PUBLIC BUILDINGS.....	\$ 4,555,750
SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.....	\$ 89,293,029
PARKS AND RECREATION.....	\$ 8,143,500
OTHER.....	\$ 1,965,524

**TOTAL**.....\$170,899,860

ACTION: HELD 7-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia T. Johnson, Chair, Programs & Services Committee

Paul E. Coletti, Chair, Finance Committee