

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2004

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

Other Aldermen Present: Ald. Mansfield, Gentile, Harney

Others: Mike Rourke, Sandy Pooler, Beverly Stachowicz, Ann Brown, Barbara Sullivan, Sandy Pooler, David Naparstek, David Wilkinson, Anne Larner, Dori Zaleznik, Kathy Glick-Weil, Ald-Elect Danberg, Audrey Cooper, Sandy Butzl, Fran Towle, Bob DeRubeis, Carol Stapleton, Doug Dickson, Mark Welch, Dan Funk

FY05 BUDGET REVIEW

HUMAN SERVICES

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Beverly Stachowics (Director of Human Services), Anne Brown (Child Care Commission) Barbara Sullivan (Child Care Commission) were all present for this discussion. Ms. Stachowics explained the major accomplishments included the outsourcing of the Youth Outreach Program, which has been very successful. Senior citizen programs including transportation have improved. The Senior Tax Work-Off Program has had 52 applicants, 42 seniors were able to be placed. The Newton Brookline Consumer Office has resulted in a 75-80% success rate. Social Services has received toys for 200 children and 215 families received assistance. Financial Child Care Needs Assessment has been done with the help of Lasell College. Half of the child-care providers in the City responded. The end result showed many families in need of financial assistance. (See Executive Summary on Needs Assessment)

Chairman Johnson would like to see what the city could do beyond child-care scholarships and the Commission would be able to expand its service offerings to reach young families who need assistance.

Ald. Parker moved to amend Page A2 Consumer Protection Donation Revolving Account under the Human Services Department from the Mayor's recommended FY 2005 spending request of \$3,000 to \$5,000 to better reflect spending in FY05.

The Committee voted to approve the Mayor's recommended allocation for the Human Services Department including resolution 6-0 (Merrill, Fischman, Baker, Coletti, Johnson, Hess-Mahan, Parker in favor)

HEALTH

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-2 (Parker, Johnson opposed)**

NOTE: Commissioner Naparstek discussed the accomplishments in FY2004 (Copy in packet) He discussed a program called "Activate Newton" to help reduce obesity. The group is comprised of School Department, Health Department, Whole Foods Market, Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, Newton Wellesley Hospital as well as state agencies. There has been \$19,000 allocated for emergency equipment funding, including digital cameras, personal protective equipment and emergency sampling and testing equipment.

Mr. Naparstek told the Committee that 187 students in school have life threatening food allergies, mostly peanuts but also soy products. 10% of the School population has asthma. Flu clinics have given over 3,000 doses of vaccine. A study has been done on air quality at Newton North High School.

Bob DeLuca of the Health Department attends construction monitoring at Newton South High School. Ald. Coletti asked for an analysis of the mold problem at the high school. Mr. Naparstek told the Committee that a new inspector of Animals has been recruited and that every school has a nurse. Ald. Parker felt that this department should not have had to cut a full time position and make it half time and abstained from this vote. There was a motion to approve 5-2 (Parker, Johnson opposed).

LIBRARY

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE: Kathy Glick-Weil, Audrey Cooper and Sandy Butzl were present for this discussion. The library continues to increase in circulation and might top two million. There have been deliveries to seniors who are house bound. A wireless network has been installed by IT throughout the library allowing the use of laptops. Goals and objectives for next year will be circulation, foreign language collections, (including Hebrew and Spanish, German, Italian) Children can now take out six books. On-line resources are also being developed. The library is getting a little run down and needs some attention. (Repair, maintenance and cleanliness are being focused on.) Ms. Glick-Weil has noted that there have been some very interesting, new automated check in and check out technology. The cost would be about \$250,000 to \$350,000 for this type of system and would pay for itself in about three years.

Chairman Johnson asked about the bridge and was told it will be in the CIP in 2005.

The Committee voted to approve the budget 8-0.

PARKS AND RECREATION

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-1** (Ald. Sangiolo, Baker, Fischman, Coletti, Johnson, Hess-Mahan, Parker in favor, Ald. Merrill abstaining)

NOTE: Fran Towle said the Parks and Recreation Department maintains the highest quality of programs and services. The department has economized and offered better management. (see attachment in packet) Accomplishments include development of playground apparatus, development of commemorative memorial policy, new park maintenance irrigation specialist, continued partnership with Newton Youth Soccer, inventory assessment of Parks and Recreation sites, hiring of Assistant Superintendent of Maintenance, hiring of a new open space coordinator. Goals include development and implementation of a master plan to provide quality facilities, website, more handicapped accessibility, open space coordinator, and improved customer services. Millenium Park should be completed by the end of June.

Cuts include \$25,000 in seasonal and this impact will be picked up by raising fees. Picnic permit fees will now be \$30.00 per hour. Sites that service smaller groups will be \$20.00 per hour and one small area for \$10.00 per hour. (See descriptions of other changes in attached packet)

Ald. Merrill questioned the fees imposed on children playing Little League. He felt the youngsters should be able to use the fields without fees and will find it difficult to approve these cuts. Ms. Towle responded that if fees are not instituted, programs will have to be cut. Ald. Parker questioned that there are cuts without justification.

Sandy Pooler addressed the Committee and noted that \$300,000 had been added to this department's budget, principally for snow, ice and tree emergency money. He noted that if you factor that out, then there really is no cut. There will be wage settlements and the budget will increase. Some of the fees go into a revolving fund, some become part of the general fund that support the general work of the Recreation Department. Principally they have been swim fees and tennis fees.(Crystal Lake, Gath Pool, Newton North and other recreation fees.) Mr. Pooler said it was known that expenses for the department would go up and wanted the department to continue to deliver a high level of services. With so many things going up, in order for the department to continue, we needed more funds in the general fund for maintaining current services. Chairman Johnson questioned if there were revolving accounts, would there be a problem paying salaries, etc. Mr. Pooler explained that would mostly be used to pay seasonal workers. Chairman Johnson questioned what assurance do we have if this goes through as recommended that the money raised from these fees actually goes back to Parks and Recreation. Mr. Pooler explained it was in the budget, a revenue estimate has been done and it was thought to be the best solution to try to continue to keep current services. There appears that the groups such as soccer and little league have invested in our parks and made a substantial investment in the city and Chairman Johnson wondered with all the hard work (selling brownies and candy bars) that there appears to be a disconnect. Ms. Towle responded that the soccer and little league groups have come forward to help with the maintenance

of their fields. This makes it better for them and easier for Parks and Recreation. Ms. Towle said the fee system has tried to show a discount rate for these groups. Ms. Towle noted that this is how their efforts are recognized. Ald. Parker asked about the cut in outdoor recreational activity. Mr. Pooler explained justifications are based on line items. He continued to say he felt the fees were fair and in line with other communities. Ald. Coletti asked about the authority to set these fees. Ms. Towle responded that she had spoken with the Law Department and found that Parks and Recreation did have the authority to set these fees. City Solicitor Funk added that state law grants Parks and Recreation that authority. Ald. Fischman noted that what seems to be a small amount would end up creating hardships.

Ald. Sangiolo asked if money could be taken from Budget Reserve. (See attachment from Dave Wilkinson (Subject City Field Use Fees). Mr. Pooler responded that it would be prudent fiscal planning to set aside a reserve in the event of losing a case. That money ends up as free cash at the end of the year and he felt it was a necessary reserve.

Karla Fidelman of 542 California Street noted that it was already difficult to live in Newton. She supported CPA and the override and understands pool fees but this is too much.

A resident 2247 Commonwealth Ave. stated he was concerned this money would not go to the right places. A number of residents spoke and strongly disagreed with any increase in fees.

There was a motion by Ald. Parker for a resolution to the Mayor to find money from other areas and not charge a fee. Ald. Baker abstained as he felt that the Recreation Commission made the decision and questioned who had jurisdiction. Ald. Coletti felt that parking meter receipt money could be earmarked for field maintenance. Comptroller David Wilkinson said he felt that the Mayor should be comfortable with the decision. The vote on the resolution was 5 in favor, 2 abstaining (In favor Merrill, Sangiolo, Coletti, Johnson, Hess-Mahan, abstaining President Baker and Ald. Fischman)

In Mr. Pooler's opinion, he would not recommend increasing the budget revenue estimate. Ald. Fischman agreed with Ald. Baker and refrained from the vote. Ald. Coletti reiterated that it is submitted by the Mayor but is the Board of Aldermen budget.

The vote on the Parks and Recreation Budget was Ald. Sangiolo, Baker, Fischman, Coletti, Johnson, Hess-Mahan, Parker in favor, Ald. Merrill abstaining

CITY SOLICITOR

ACTION: **APPROVED 8-0**

NOTE Dan Funk noted his budget was pretty consistent to last year. He explained that depending on the nature of cases, consultants may be needed. Mr. Funk does have work-study students from BC and will only be paying 25% of that. The Northeastern Co-op students give him three full months of a law clerk. The motion to approve was 8-0.

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0-1 (Sangiolo abstaining)**

(See note for revolving account vote)

NOTE: This budget was held over from last week to provide members of the Committee time to review some of the documentation that come in late. There was a motion to approve and the vote was 7-0-1 (Sangiolo abstaining) There was another motion to approve the revolving accounts 4-3-1(Merrill, Baker, Fischman, Coletti, opposed Ald. Parker, Hess-Mahan, Sangiolo, Ald. Johnson abstaining) (See attached backup from School Department.)

The Committee adjourned at 11:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair