

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2003

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chair) Ald. Coletti, Fischman Gentile, Sangiolo Lipsitt, Parker

Absent: Ald. Merrill

Also Present: Fran Towle (Commissioner of Parks and Rec.) Carol Stapleton (Recreation) Marc Welch (Recreation) Doug Dickson (Chairman, Tree Commission) Jay Berkson (Tree Commission) Michael Baseman (Law) David Olson (Jackson Homestead) Michael Rourke (Mayor's Office)

Re-appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#46-03 LILLIE B. JEFFERSON, 94 Adena Road, West Newton, re-appointed on January 2, 2003 as a Trustee of The JACKSON HOMESTEAD MUSEUM for a term of office expiring February 1, 2005 (60-day Board action date 3/22/03)

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Lillie Jefferson has lived in Newton for 74 years and reported that she has seen many positive changes. She feels the Jackson Homestead is a great place and the City should be very proud.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#63-03 THELMA FLEISHMAN 80B Seminary Avenue, Auburndale appointed on January 15, 2002 as a member of the JACKSON HOMESTEAD BOARD OF TRUSTEES for a term of office to expire February 1, 2004. (60-day Board action date 4-04-03)

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Ms. Fleishman has been associated with the Jackson Homestead since the early 1970's. Mr. Olson reported both Ms. Jefferson and Ms. Fleishman are very humble and are integral to the running of the Homestead. Both their commitment and love of the place helps to fuel the growth and new programming currently going on.

Ald. Sangiolo echoed Mr. Olson's comments that it was a great honor to have both Ms. Jefferson and Ms. Fleishman on the Board of Trustees. The Committee thanked them for their service. The item was approved with a vote of 6-0.

#62-03 ALD. LIPSITT on behalf of the Green Decade Coalition/Newton requesting the designation of March 2003 as ALTERNATIVE TO PESTICIDE MONTH.

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: President Lipsitt said for the past six years the Board of Aldermen has endorsed March as Alternative to Pesticides Month. Ellie Goldberg of GreenCAP addressed the Committee and reported March was the big kick-off educational outreach campaign that is part of the efforts to raise awareness. There is going to be a program called "Growing Green" that will showcase a new video that will demonstrate naturally great gardens and landscapes. There will also be a panel with expert horticulturists. A small article called "Pollution and People" calls attention to the latest CDC Report and Environmental Working Group Report that documented the residues of hundreds of chemicals in people, especially in children that give us more evidence that we are absorbing these from the environment. We do know there are increasing numbers of children with autism and learning disabilities, increasing numbers of brain cancer in children, infertility and all sorts of disorders in the wealthiest and healthiest population in the country.

Ald. Fischman questioned what the biggest issue in Newton was. Ms. Goldberg responded that the use of pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides on lawns and landscapes are an enormous problem.

Ald. Lipsitt congratulated GreenCAP on the influence it has had on the City's own behavior. The Committee approved March as Alternative to Pesticides Month 6-0.

#22-02 ALD. JOHNSON AND SANGIOLO requesting update from the Urban Tree Commission regarding city-side tree ordinance.

ACTION: NAN 4-0

#22-98(2) PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE requesting development of a policy for preservation and replacement of trees on city-owned property. PROGRAMS & SERVICES HELD; REFERRED TO URBAN TREE COMMISSION FOR REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

ACTION: HELD 4-0 (Gentile, Coletti, Johnson not voting) (Scheduled to be discussed in May)

NOTE: Fran Towle, Carol Stapleton, Marc Welch, Michael Baseman, Doug Dickson, Catherine Howard and Jay Berkson were all present for this discussion. Due to other commitments, Jack Jacobson could not attend.

The Urban Tree Commission has said the preservation, strengthening and expanding of the Newton urban forest is the real mission of the Commission and Parks & Recreation.. Ms. Towle explained that preservation of the trees throughout the City has been the number one priority (pruning and preservation – maintain assets we have) and the next item taking precedence would be expanding or planting of trees. Our trees are a valuable asset and the street trees alone are worth well over \$65M.

The open question has been what to do about city trees. Much of the work of the Commission has been devoted to just that question. One of the reasons to update the Tree Management Manual was to include how the City manages its trees located in parks and public grounds and on streets.

A Tree Management Manual is currently being worked on by Marc Welch. It will encompass a policy for maintenance of trees. The updated Tree Manual will enable us to bring our vision into practice. Marc Welch explained that an updated manual will layout a realistic strategy for managing trees. An idealistic approach would be to prune all trees on a cyclical basis. However our strategic and more realistic approach will be to look at systematically going from the worst area to the least in need. There are ongoing conversations with public utility companies to develop a partnership with them and DPW to protect our trees. There is a resurgence of interest of the utility companies as they realize protecting the trees is an important part of how they preserve their asset. Both cable companies and NSTAR have been working to coordinate their work with that of the City. The Forestry Manual will enable the Tree Warden to work better with DPW and the utilities.

Ald. Lipsitt cautioned that no matter how much preservation and emergency pruning is done, there is always going to be some dead tree removal. The only way one preserves the urban forest is to have some replacement of trees and was surprised not to see tree planting. She requested that in their plan the Commission and Department show a forecast line for each graph along with an additional box regarding new tree plantings. The tree preservation fund is helping to fund preservation pruning. It was explained that there was an inverse relationship between preservation pruning and both removal and emergency pruning. If a better job can be done with preservation pruning, fewer trees would be removed with less emergency pruning. For the foreseeable future, the concentration will be on the trees we already have.

Ald. Gentile asked about the allocation for tree replacement as he had concern for residents who are expecting they would get a tree replaced. Ms. Towle said some plantings will be replaced but there would be a shift to more preservation pruning, as determined by the Tree Commission and Commissioner Towle. Ald. Parker felt it was disturbing that there is not more money allocated for planting. Ald. Fischman suggested that a master plan for tree replacement would be very helpful.

Ald. Parker is concerned with the reduction, over the years, in the dollars allocated for tree plantings. On average, due to a combination of City, State Highway and where applicable CDBG funds, 300-400 trees are planted per year. This still leaves Newton with a “tree deficit” Mr. Dickson did state that we need to think ahead and create incentives to replace trees, e.g. matching funds for citizens, adopt a tree etc. It was agreed that we need a policy/plan to enable residents to plant their own trees. What our practice/policy is today is not commonly known. Ald. Sangiolo continued to urge the Commission to come up with a policy so that permission would be given to residents to plant their own trees. Members of the Commission agreed. Mr. Welch said he is happy to work with residents advising appropriate trees. President Lipsitt also feels we need to be much more explicit regarding tree replacement by individual homeowners and she would like to see a policy developed.

Ald. Sangiolo questioned why seemingly healthy trees have been taken down in the Commonwealth Ave. project and it was explained that often-healthy looking trees are diseased. Ald. Lipsitt asked that Mr. Welch work with Contractors, who are working on City streets, to coordinate the tree work and establish a defined process/plan to protect the trees. Too many people are doing overlapping work that effects our trees. Mr. Welch sees it as his job to coordinate all of the work relating to trees – he is committed to this.

#130-02

ALD. JOHNSON requesting discussion with the Executive Department regarding the establishment of a consistent process for the submission of appointments/reappointments to Boards and Commissions to Board of Aldermen for approval.

ACTION:

HELD 4-0 (Fischman, Johnson, Lipsitt, Sangiolo)

NOTE:

Michael Rourke addressed the Committee and explained he thought there was now a better grasp on issues regarding the appointment/reappointment process. A new defined set of documents will be given to new appointments/reappointments. Ms. Griffey informed the Committee that

the application has been made more concise. Informative packets will now be given out to appointments and reappointments as well as copies of the Conflict of Interest law.

Ms. Griffey said the total count on boards and commissions encompasses approximately 655 active and 122 inactive members. In 2002 there were 124 new appointments and 98 reappointments.

President Lipsitt suggested particular areas of interest or specific committees be listed on the application form. Ms. Griffey said it was hoped that in the future there would be an application on the City web site.

President Lipsitt addressed the importance of having both the Clerk's office and the Mayor's office establish a common database with an appointment date and expiration date. Ms. Griffey pointed out that there is a shared database with Ms. Sullivan of the Board's office.

Ald. Johnson suggested that the Committee have a chance to read the information provided by Ms. Griffey and return to discuss this item in March.

Ald. Johnson thanked Karen Griffey for her excellent work on this item.

#294-02 ALD. JOHNSON, SANGIOLO AND PARKER requesting discussion regarding public disclosure via the internet/newspaper, etc. regarding how each member of the Board votes on docketed items.

ACTION: HELD

NOTE: President Lipsitt said she would discuss this item with the Clerk's office.

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair