

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2003

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

Absent: Ald. Gentile

APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#135-03 DUSCHA SCOTT WEISSKOPE, 20 Bartlett Terrace, Newton Centre on March 6, 2003 as a member of the JACKSON HOMESTEAD BOARD OF TRUSTEES for a term of office to expire on 02-01-04 (60-day Board action date 05-16-03).

ACTION: HELD 5-0 (Lipsitt & Parker not voting)

APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#136-03 DAVID LESCOHIER, 93 Adena Road, West Newton appointed on March 6, 2003 as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term of office to expire on 03-01-06 (60-day Board action date 05-16-03).

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0 (Lipsitt & Parker not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Lescohier was present for this discussion and explained he has been serving in an advisory capacity for the past few years. He has been working around issues of property tax relief for the elderly and is the Chair of the Education Committee. In his opinion, the highest priorities include working on the prescription advantage program in Massachusetts and keeping the transportation system for the Senior Center going. A survey is presently being conducted of residents who are 85 or older to determine their needs and ways that the City can respond.

Ald. Merrill moved the appointment and the vote in favor was 5-0.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICE AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#159-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$25,000 be appropriated from Free Cash in order to fund field renovations at the Russell J. Halloran Complex.

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Fran Towle and Bob DeRubeis were present for this discussion. This money is for field renovation including a softball diamond. Ald. Coletti said this field is used primarily for tag football and asked if the turf used would be able to withstand aggressive field use. Commissioner Towle

said the turf would be a stronger strand and once there is a foundation, it will be easier to take care of. This high quality strand of seed was used at the football fields at North and South High. The Recreation Department is working with soccer and football groups to have them stay off the field. Efforts are being made to keep people off when conditions do not warrant use. Recently, an irrigation system has been installed. Ald. Lipsitt questioned if the field would be ready when school is back in session and Commissioner Towle responded that the work would be completed. Ald. Fischman asked if this maintenance program was done at other parks and what portion of the fields are irrigated. Ms. Towle responded that there is turf management program for all parks and there is irrigation on approximately 80 acres..

Ald. Lipsitt moved approval and the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#142-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$50,752 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of funding current and future snow and ice expenses in the Parks and Recreation Department.

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0-3 (Merrill, Coletti, Fischman, Johnson in favor, 0 against, 3 abstaining (Parker, Sangiolo, Lipsitt)

NOTE: Fran Towle said this request was for seed money for a four to seven inch storm. After the request, there was a six-inch storm, which will use part of this money. On Wednesday, January 22nd, Ald. Johnson said there had been a discussion of resolution (#57-03) Prog and Serv. submitting a resolution to His Honor the Mayor requesting that the Board of Aldermen request the Mayor to only spend Parks and Recreation Department snow, ice, and tree emergency funds that have been previously approved by the Board of Aldermen. In addition, the Board requests that all requests for additional funds be brought to the Board prior to depletion of any snow, ice, and tree emergency accounts. That item was approved 5-0 (Fischman, Parker, Johnson, Sangiolo, Lipsitt, in favor) This resolution was also passed by the full board. Ald. Parker suggests that since this has not been followed, perhaps there should be a more realistic appropriation number. Ald. Coletti feels the present approach allows better control.

The Committee voted 4 in favor (Merrill, Coletti, Fischman, Johnson in favor, 0 against, 3 abstaining (Parker, Sangiolo, Lipsitt)

RE-APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#102-03 DAVID J. MOFENSON, 6 Alban Road, Waban re-appointed on February 11, 2003 as an ELECTION COMMISSIONER for a term of office to expire on 04-01-07. (60-day Board action date 05-02-02)

ACTION: HELD 6-0

NOTE: Mr. Mofenson was ill and unable to attend. There was a motion to hold by Ald. Parker.

RE-APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#103-03 FRANCES E. SHAER, 280 Boylston Street, Chestnut Hill re-appointed on February 11, 2003 as an ELECTION COMMISSIONER for a term of office to expire on 04-01-07. (60-day Board action date 05-02-02)

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (Lipsitt not voting)

NOTE: Ms. Shaer has been a resident of Newton for 40 years. She is also on the Council on Aging and the Board of the Senior Center as well as the past Treasurer of the Newton Crime Commission. Ald. Fischman questioned if Ms. Shaer was asked to serve or it was something that she was interested in. Ms. Shaer said she had worked with Mayor Mann for many years and she was chosen as one of the two republicans chosen for the Commission. There are also two democrats. Ald. Sangiolo asked the Commission to consider expanding the Commission in order to get representation from the unenrolled electorate.

The reappointment was approved 6-0.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#143-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$285,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of replacing the City's mechanical voting machines with an optical scan voting machine system.

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (Ald. Lipsitt not voting, Ald. Gentile absent)

NOTE: Mr. Karg explained the present system was purchased in the spring of 1970 and it has served the city well, but it is now outdated. Within the past week, there was a letter sent to President Lipsitt and Chairman of the Finance Committee, Paul Coletti, from the Secretary of State, Bill Galvin, informing the City that under the Help American Vote Act, enacted by Congress in 2002, the City can no longer use the letter machines as of the 2004 presidential election forcing an upgrade in our equipment. Having new equipment in place a year before the election, we can expose the community to the new system and have a year to perfect it and work out

any possible kinks that could develop. (Attached is letter from Bill Galvin.)

The new system has the ability to instantaneously give us accurate, updated election results. Also, possible errors can be eliminated that occur on occasion by manual transcription. Mr. Karg feels that \$30,000 a year can be saved. Presently a moving company is needed and paid approximately \$12,000 yearly based upon two elections a year to move 700 lb. machines which necessitate the use of trucks with hydraulic lifts. Another cost is the maintenance required by the present voting machines. Maintenance has been held off this year in anticipation of an upgrade in machines. The voting machine company is presently being paid between \$10,000 and \$12,000 a year. The programmers are also paid approximately \$9500 a year based upon two elections to do all the programming. The poll workers for the most part should be done between 8:30 p.m. and 8:45 p.m. This calculates to a reduction of two hours per election. Roughly, the savings will be about \$3,100. in reduced hours per election. Mr. Karg feels there will be cost savings, as well as the opportunity to be able to upgrade equipment and make it more efficient. He went on to say that he would insist on the vendor including public information campaigns to re-educate the public on the new system.

The League of Women Voters was present and offered to work with Mr. Karg which is very helpful. There will also be work with cable television for public service announcements. Mr. Karg said demonstrations would be part of the content of the contract.

Ald. Fischman questioned how the vendor was chosen. Mr. Karg said he had discussions with our Purchasing Agent, Re Cappoli, and to legal counsel and the advice was to proceed with an RFP and include criteria, which will be used to score the vendors. The criteria will include ease of use, battery back-up, and on-site technical support for the first two elections. Additional personnel will be trained to trouble-shoot so that if a problem arises that the poll worker can't fix, someone can be immediately dispatched.

Ald. Parker feels the optical scan machines have the best precision and accuracy of the touch screen along with actual physical ballots that get fed into the machine. If there is a problem counting them, there are real ballots to go back and look at. There were questions regarding some type of recycling for the old machines.

Ald. Johnson suggested it would be a good idea to see some mockups to assess how these machines would operate for the visually impaired as well as being confident that the vendors approach the security issue to be sure there would be appropriate security to avoid any tampering.

Ald. Merrill moved to appropriate this money for voting machines. The Committee voted 6-0 in favor (Ald. Lipsitt not voting, Ald. Gentile absent)

#466-02(2) PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE requesting
Monthly progress reports from the NNHS Renovation Task Force.

ACTION: HELD

NOTE: President Lipsitt reported that in the last few weeks, there have been more presentations from Sandy Pooler who is working with several members of the Task Force on financing options and discussing the variables such as length of bonds, interest rates, and pay back schedules that might influence the amount of money we could borrow. There have been presentations from independent architects. Architects Anatol Zuckerman and Mark Sangiolo presented hybrid versions that were not dissimilar.

The Committee seems to be moving slightly away from building a new building and toward doing an addition of some size, possibly with demolition of the classroom portion of the existing building, although there are others who think that continuing to use the entire existing building as feasible.

At the last meeting there was an interesting presentation by an outside environmental engineering consultant hired who refuted Dick Amster's position that the building could not be worked on while occupied. His position was that you could remove 25% of the students at a time, possibly send them to Carr or somewhere else, and work on the building with an adequate level of safety. However, this does not come without cost. In his view, it would require a full time environmental safety person on site, plus some additional expenses incurred with isolating systems within the building and providing separation of systems. This could possibly add five million or more to the cost.

Ald. Coletti pointed out that one of the reasons for disagreement between the two experts is that it had been thought of as a vertical project and now there is discussion of a horizontal renovation as a possibility. Modular classrooms are an option; another possibility is adding 80,000 sq., ft to replicate the Newton South project. Ald. Coletti stated that he felt that Architect Mark Sangiolo did an excellent job on his proposed plans.

President Lipsitt explained that the financial information provided offered options that were being considered not recommendations. Ald. Lipsitt views the Committee heading toward eliminating some options as not tenable either as an educational or financial decision. She feels the options may be narrowed down to two to weigh pros and cons. Ald. Coletti told the Committee that there isn't an option on the floor presently that is less than 66 million dollars. Ald. Coletti pointed out that if one class was sent to Carr School or one class to a modular classroom, there would be the possibility of allowing a horizontal phased renovation over five years. A straw poll indicated they would favor a portion of students going off-site to the Carr School.

Ald. Sangiolo asked if the DRA was still being paid and the response was that they were coming to meetings, but not being paid. Ald. Sangiolo said she had a group of constituents over at the Williams School who would like to go back to North and hoped her aldermanic colleagues will bring that back to the Committee.

There was discussion questioning how many options would finally be brought forward. President Lipsitt said presently there are about half a dozen hybrid versions in front of the task force and feels they will have to be narrowed down.

The Committee adjourned at 11:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair