

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE BUDGET

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2003

Present: Ald. Johnson (Ch) Ald. Sangiolo Parker, Fishman Lipsitt, Merrill

Absent: Ald. Gentile, Coletti

Also present: Edward English (City Clerk/Clerk of the Board) Fred Guzzi (Veteran's Agent) Mitchell Baker (Weights and Measures) David Olson (Jackson Homestead)

**CITY CLERK/CLERK OF THE BOARD**

Edward English reported that there were no changes in personal services. It is likely that at the end of this fiscal year, the archivist will not be with the City. At the moment there is a vacancy in the archivist's position which is budgeted for 50% time. It is hoped that an intern archivist will be hired on a short-term consultant basis to see us through this interim. The person being considered is well recommended by Terry French of the Commonwealth of Mass Archives and Susan Abele of the Jackson Homestead. Mr. English said in addition to the consultant, Susan Abele has agreed to work with this consultant during this period and oversee the archival function with the assistance of the City Clerk.

There is a net reduction of approximately 4% within the entire department element. This figure translates to an overall 6% cut in the City Clerk's division and a 4% increase in the Board's budget.

In order to meet the Mayor's recommended target figure, the Clerk stated that his department would still be adequately functioning through FY04 despite the following line item cutbacks:

**City Clerk's Division**

Professional & Technical	100% cut
Overtime	50% cut
Archivist	50% cut
Clerk of the Board division	
Overtime	27% cut
Advertising	14% cut
In-state Conf.	100% cut
Refreshments	20% cut
General Expense Acct.	27% cut

Chairman Johnson was concerned about the 14% cut in public hearing newspaper advertising and wondered if a public notice on the Internet could serve as a substitution. Mr. English responded that the Mass. General Laws in most cases dictates the necessity of advertising "in a newspaper of general circulation." Mr. English agreed to look further into this matter to test the severity of this cut. Chairman Johnson and Ald. Sangiolo questioned the proposed 100% cut in the Interstate Conferences account. Mr. English explained that the use of this account was exclusive to the Clerk and the Board's staff and these funds overtime have not been often used. It was pointed out that Board members conferences such as the MMA annual meeting reservations are paid from the Aldermanic General Expense account.

Mr. English also pointed out that the official Mayor/board portrait picture to be taken on May 19<sup>th</sup> would hopefully be paid for out of FY03 General Expense account funds.

The overall cut in the City Clerk's budget is 6%. There has been elimination for professional and technical services and Mr. English explained that would only have been needed if extra employees would have to handle the dog license renewal program that has now been computerized. There has also been a cut in office supplies. Chairman Johnson expressed concern over duplication of paper. She noted if information had been in aldermanic packet there was no need for the same paperwork to be on the table. In the City Clerk's Department, there is a 50% cut in overtime because staff members have been encouraged to use comp time when possible.

Mr. English noted that meetings were held once a month with President Lipsitt and Ald. Mansfield to go over many subjects including budgetary matters or any staff matters that might come up. He noted that these meetings have been very helpful in guiding him I the day to day operations of the department.

The Committee thanked Mr. English for his time and efforts.

#### VETERANS/LICENSING/INSPECTOR OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Mr. Guzzi and Mitchell Baker were present for this discussion. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Pooler why there were differences in health insurance costs. Mr. Pooler explained that all health insurance costs were level funded in the departments. The anticipated increase for this year was put into salary reserve. The idea is when collective bargaining is discussed, it was hoped to get changes in the health insurance to bring those costs down and give some money for wage increases. In any particular department, there could be ups and downs due to some employees that have changed their health insurance. Mr. Guzzi noted that with a newer vehicle there has been less maintenance for the Inspector of Weights and Measures. Chairman Johnson asked about the income generated from this department. Mr. Baker inspections are being done once a year as mandated by the state. Ald. Fischman questioned if fees could be raised. Mr. Baker said that some fees for taxis and gas stations will be increased by \$5.00. Mr. Guzzi noted that Licensing has had no changes. Licensing brings in about \$260,000 per year from licensing restaurants. This includes filing fees of \$25.00 which may go to \$50.00 next year to handle paperwork starting next year. Basically the Veterans Budget has very little change other

than \$200 cut in conferences.

#### JACKSON HOMESTEAD

Mr. Olson, Director of the Jackson Homestead, said reductions of 55% have been made in the postage, printing, and office supply accounts. The impact on postage and printing means less money for marketing. There is an increase in the revolving account from \$3500 to \$4000 due to increased visitation. Renovations will hopefully be done to improve archival storage. Mr. Olson explained a web page would be developed. The Committee approved 4-0 (Parker and Merrill not voting)

#### ELECTIONS

Peter Karg and Elaine Defilippis joined the Committee to discuss Elections budget. Here are currently two approved vendors for the optic scan voting systems in Massachusetts, one is Acuvue and the other is ESS Election Systems. Both are interested in responding in bidding. There will be preliminary election scheduled on September 16th, the regularly scheduled municipal election on November 4<sup>th</sup> and Presidential Preference Primary Election on March 2<sup>nd</sup> of next year. There have been adjustments in line item accounts to reflect cost efficiencies that hopefully will be achieved with the new optic scan system. These items include the 5120 account, which is a reduction in labor costs for Election Day workers. Mr. Karg feels that election workers will be finished by 8:30 PM which will be a few hours less in 31 locations saving labor costs. The 5273 covers the transportation of the voting equipment, should also save money. The DPW crews will assist Elections in actually transporting the equipment. Hopefully, the savings will be \$12,000. The other savings will be on maintenance. To meet a reduction of \$7,900, Mr. Karg has proposed to eliminate one census reader and reduce the hours on the other census reader from 16 to 14 weeks. Police details have been used in the past, which have cost approximately \$10,000. The police do the best they can but often no one is home. Mr. Karg has come up with a final notice that will be a bright colored card, which says, "IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUESTED". We will let residents know that under Mass General Laws, this information if required and please promptly call the Election Commission. There is a vigorous campaign by the Election Department to receive proper information for a City Residents List. Ald. Johnson questioned the section of the budget, work by other departments. Mr. Karg explained that police costs have gone up 25%. Mr. Karg has specified in his proposal for new voting equipment would be have three technical support people, on site, all day long until the voting results are tallied. Hopefully after two elections, there would be two people trained so problems would be solved within. Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Karg to explain the revolving account. He said that it is a state assistance grant and basically it is used to provide some financial support for poll workers. President Lipsitt questioned if this would be covered in next year's budget. The response was since this is a local mandate, it should be funded. Sandwich boards will be included in this budget. There will also be a slip included in the tax bill informing residents of the September preliminary election and the municipal election with a caption at the bottom explaining the web site can be checked for voting information. President Lipsitt asked what special efforts were being made to increase registration. Mr. Karg said both high schools were doing registration drives.

The Committee voted 5-0 (Parker not voting) to approve.