

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE BUDGET REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2003

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

Absent: Ald. Gentile, Parker

Also Present: Mike Rourke (Mayor's Office) Beverley Stachowics (Human Services) Sandy Pooler, (Mayor's Office) David Naparstek (Health) Carol Stapleton (Recreation) Jeff Young (School) Anne Larner (School) Dori Zaleznik (School) Marc Laredo (School) Susan Albright (School) Patti Kellogg (School) Fran Zilonis (School)

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#168-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City (#124-02(11)) of Newton Charter, submitting the FY04 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$256,208,165, passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY04-FY08 Capital Improvement Program, submitted in October, 2002. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 4/22/03.

PROGSERV APPROVED 4-0-1 (Sangiolo abstaining, Lipsitt not voting)

HUMAN SERVICES

Michael Rourke and Beverley Stachowics were present for this discussion. Mr. Rourke explained this budget has changed significantly in the way the expenditures have been structured. He reported the savings would be approximately \$100,000 while providing essentially the same services as we currently have. Counseling and Outreach Services will be the same as in the past. There will be a contract with a provider to do the counseling and outreach directly at the schools and Brigham House. He added that the format of the program would not be modified. Another significant change is the restructuring of the staff of the administrative department. In terms of the hours, Mr. Rourke feels the changes will still provide as good, if not better services.

Chairman Johnson referred to a memo that underlined the downside and recommended not contracting services out. She also brought a tape that discussed the impact of the over-ride if it didn't pass. One issue was this program and the importance of the Counselors. Chairman Johnson has concern about the type of services that can be provided on a continuing basis. Mr. Rourke agreed that there would be other things favored over this change, but the times require us to be more creative and make modifications. The providers hired would be qualified and competent. Chairman Johnson asked what was being done for the clients presently. Unfortunately many legal issues must be resolved when there is a layoff or separation of employment. The first

requirement of the layoff was a 21-day notice so employee rights could be exercised. After that period, there is outplacement service to give support as well as negotiation of severance agreements. Both counselors agreed to continue for some transitional period with the clients and will end on May 13th. Mr. Rourke feels that treatment has been fair as possible. Chairman Johnson questioned outsourcing a whole set of services rather than looking at how you could spread the reductions and look at other sections of the Human Services budget such as ChildCare Commission and Seniors. The response from Mr. Rourke was that the section chosen was the one more traditionally contracted out than not. It was felt this particular group of services could be handled easily. He stated other cities and towns have successfully done this.

President Lipsitt feels the role of government is to provide for those who cannot take care of themselves. She assumes the people who take advantage of this service are people who are unable to have access through the private sector. As a public servant, the thought of any of these young people falling through the cracks is dreadful. She also expressed concern regarding the economics of this. She questioned that in the absence of a contract in place, how is it possible to know the savings and why was it not planned to allow a time for the client to be transferred from one system to another. President Lipsitt raised concern regarding the provider and what the payment will be. Mr. Rourke stated that there would be availability of services, including counseling service. There is a line item for professional and technical services that estimates \$74,000 for providers. That sum is the net cost to the City and the actual cost for services is \$138,000. The net savings to the city will be \$121,000. Chairman Johnson asked the total cost of services for the planned out sourcing of services. Mr. Rourke explained that the savings would be approximately \$121,000, showing net savings of \$100,000.

Ald. Merrill expressed his concern regarding these cuts and is in strong disagreement. President Lipsitt said since this issue was of such a sensitive nature that, in her opinion, a contract should have been in place to allow for a transition period. She noted that she would much prefer to see this service restored until a time when this transition is in place. Discussion continued with strong opposition by Chairman Johnson, Ald. Sangiolo, and Ald. Fischman. Mr. Rourke felt appropriate service could still be maintained.

Ms. Stachowics feels there are advantages to contracting out and, from her viewpoint, feels better services can be provided. An area of weakness in the current program was the lack of medication backup. Often times a larger agency would have psychiatrists or psychologists on staff that would be readily available to the clinicians providing the service. She went on to say that she certainly would not jeopardize high-risk adolescents at all.

Ms. Kolakowski of 410 Newtonville Avenue, a clinician at the Youth Outreach Counseling Program, wanted to clarify that she was given notice on April 22nd that her position was being terminated. Ms. Kolakowski and Ms. Leman wrote a memo regarding concerns over the treatment of clients. They both decided to stay on to help. Ms. Leman,

also a clinician, explained that when they were first told, the letter said effective immediately. She said this has been very difficult with some of the clients that are quite ill.

Jana Sax, 83 Commonwealth Park West, was the Social Services Coordinator and worked for the City for over seventeen years. In her opinion, the fact this program was free made it very unique and important. This program allowed clients to be seen short term or long term, in crisis or not in crisis, as well as seeing the families. Ms. Saxe noted that she had been at Brigham House when parents would come in and receive help. From her viewpoint, these services will not be available when they are contracted out to another agency. She also said there are services at the Senior Center and feels this City both deserves and has an obligation to protect the most vulnerable clients in the City.

Robert Staulo, Chair of Brigham House, was present to express his dismay at this cut.

Mr. Rourke suggested that potential vendors explain how services, insurance, free care, or other services will be provided. Chairman Johnson felt the Committee should be informed of what services will not be provided, how was that conclusion reached, and what services will we get with the new plan to fill that gap. Mr. Rourke reiterated that \$100,000 would provide services, essentially the same number of hours per week.

President Lipsitt asked Mr. Rourke that he come back for further discussion before a resolution is sent to the Mayor.

Chairman Johnson asked the Committee hold the item and come back on Monday May 12th at 6:45 PM to continue discussion of this item. The Committee voted 6-0 to hold.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

David Naparstek presented and overview of his budget. He said fixed costs are about 5% of his budget. For personnel reductions, a \$5,000 item for one Environmental Health Intern will not be included next year. His department will lose one School Health Assistant and the department will try to use parent volunteers. One year-round position has been reduced to a school-year position. This budget reflects three additional nurses, which will allow a nurse in every school. There are no fee increases in this budget.

The Committee voted to approve the Health Department budget 5-0 (Lipsitt not voting).

PARKS AND RECREATION BUDGET

Present for this discussion were Fran Towle, Mark Kelly, Judy Dore, Jennie DeVito, Marc Welch, Channon Ames, and Carol Stapleton. Commissioner Towle said she is using more volunteers, increased existing fees as well as instituting new fees. There have also been economies with a merger with Public Works on trash pick-up in the squares. There was a cut was \$56,737. Revenue will be increased by \$50,000. (See attachment -

Parks and Recreation Department Proposed Budget cuts.) President Lipsitt said the message that was previously sent to Parks and Recreation is that there be enough money to pay for storms without going into deficit. Sandy Pooler suggested moving \$61,000 out of budget reserve and felt it would work for everybody. Chairman Johnson questioned the money from the Terraces. Commissioner Towle responded that a check for \$75,000 has been received and the Tree Commission will set guidelines before the money is spent. Two positions being advertised by the Recreation Department include an Assistant Superintendent, and a Working Foreman. Hopefully these will help augment programs throughout the City.

Ald. Sangiolo questioned Linda Plaut's job responsibilities. Commissioner Towle said Ms. Plaut receives about \$80.00 a week stipend for her work with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs in addition to her salary as Director of Arts in the Parks.

The Committee agreed to send a Resolution to the Mayor to increase the tree ordinance revolving account.

The Committee approved the budget 6-0.

CITY SOLICITOR BUDGET

City Solicitor Dan Funk explained the cuts in his budget. There will now be eight lawyers and two and a half secretaries. The half secretary will not be in the salary account but will be listed in permanent part-time. There won't be benefits for that person. One secretary will retire and come back and work the appropriate amount of hours. The savings will be between \$16,000 and \$20,000. There will be close to \$10,000 cut for Law Clerks'. The cut in expenses will be approximately \$15,000. \$5,000 has been taken off of the consultant's account, bringing it from \$15,000 down to \$10,000. The printing account, which is for depositions, trial transcripts, etc. has been reduced from \$20,000 to \$10,000. If there is heavy litigation year with expert witnesses and experts of various kinds, the consultant account may need some infusion. If there are many depositions and trials, the printing account may also need some infusions. Mr. Funk said the Legal Assistance account is the biggest expense account. The Labor Council, Morgan Brown and Joy are paid through this account. It is hard to know if this will cover things. Most years, a little more is needed. In the next month or so, Programs and Services & Finance Committee will receive a request from Mr. Funk for either a transfer or an appropriation to help pay the rest of the fiscal year for Morgan, Brown, and Joy. There will be another request in the next month or so to cover a small amount of transfer and appropriation to fill the gap of an attorney out on maternity leave. President Lipsitt questioned the impact of this being a contract negotiation year. Mr. Funk said it would probably have more of an impact but could not have an exact amount.

The Committee moved approval 6-0

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#198-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$230,101.64 for the purpose of making the first of three payments on a lease of technology equipment for Newton North High School. The source of funding will be \$69,840 from the E-rate account and \$160,261.64 from Free Cash. Future lease payments will be made from Free Cash.

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Jeff Young and Anne Larner joined the Committee for discussion of this item. Superintendent Young said a funding plan has now been secured for a three year lease. This docket item covers a short-term technology plan for Newton North High School where the staff will be able to use these laptops as well as the software. This will bring Internet resources as well as powerful software for teaching. The second main purpose is to give teachers a basic management tool, access to the Internet, email, and as a management tool for student attendance, grades, and record keeping. Installation plans have been discussed with architect, Carl Franceski, and Nick Parnell, Public Buildings Commissioner. In working with a representative from Apple, the pricing is the best available. Ms. Zilonis explained that going wireless does not mean **no** wiring. Access points must be installed in the building, which does mean wire installation as well as electrical access. It would be a prohibitive cost to provide wireless service.

Chairman Johnson asked if there was access for teachers at home. Ms. Zilonis said email could be accessed through the web. President Lipsitt asked how this three-year lease would meld with whatever the solution is for Newton North. Superintendent Young said it would be smooth and most of the program would be able to be moved. The Committee moved to approve this item 6-0.

The Committee adjourned at 11:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair