

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2002

Present: Ald. Sangiolo, Vice Chair, Merrill, Lipsitt, Johnson, Fischman, Parker, Gentile
Absent: Ald. Coletti

Other Aldermen Present: Schnipper, Salvucci, Stewart, Linsky, Gerst, Mansfield

Officials Present: Gayle Smalley (Assistant City Solicitor), Nick Parnell (Buildings Commissioner), Dave Tannozzini (Public Buildings)

APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

48-02 JOSEPH DEVITO, 457 Wolcott Street, Apt. 2 Newton 02466 appointed by His Honor the Mayor as a member of the Youth Commission effective April 2002; said term to expire on April 4, 2005. (60-day Board action date April 5, 2002)

ACTION: Approved 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Devito introduced himself as a life-long Newton resident and graduate of Class of '85. He has two young children with another on the way. He is employed at Newton South Cooperative Bank. As a child, he was involved in after school activities and the Boys and Girls Club. He has attended several meetings since last October and is familiar with the commission and its activities. He is currently interested in starting a Youth Day – an informational session about available youth services within the community. Alderman Lipsitt moved approval.

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR*

72-02 BEVERLY STACHOWICS, Dept. of Human Services, Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Ave., Newton Centre reappointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Newton Child Care Commission, effective January 1, 2002; said term of office to expire on January 2, 2004. (60-day Board action date April 20, 2002)

ACTION: Approved 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR*

71-02 BARBARA SULLIVAN, 89 Arlington Street, Newton Corner reappointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Newton Child Care Commission, effective January 1, 2002; said term of office to expire on January 1, 2004 (60-day Board action date April 20, 2002)

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR*

69-02 PATRICIA DAVIDSON, 257 Webster Street, Auburndale reappointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Newton Child Care Commission, effective January 1, 2002; said term of office to expire on January 1, 2004. (60-day Board action date April 20, 2002)

ACTION: Approved 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR*

68-02 KENNETH BRENNAN, Auburndale Cooperative Bank, 307 Auburn Street, Auburndale reappointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Newton Child Care Commission, effective January 1, 2002; said term of office to expire on January 1, 2004 (60-day Board action date April 5, 2002)

ACTION: Approved 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR*

43-02 AUDREY COOPER, 114 Berkeley Street, West Newton, reappointed on January 9, 2002 as a member of the Newton Council on Aging for a term of office to expire on January 31, 2005 (60-day Board action date April 5, 2002)

ACTION: Approved 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

*These items were moved by Alderman Johnson for approval. The Committee felt that because we knew the people up for reappointment and because we were familiar with their service on the respective committees, we could approve their reappointments with confidence.

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

73-02 JACOB JACOBSON, 91 Exeter Street, Newton reappointed on January 29, 2002 as a member of the Urban Tree Commission, effective January 1, 2002 (60-day Board action date April 5, 2002)

ACTION: Held 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

70-02 ALISON GOULDER, 73 Fairmont Avenue, West Newton reappointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Newton Child Care Commission, effective January 1, 2002; said term of office to expire on January 1, 2004. (60-day Board action date April 20, 2002)

ACTION: Held 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

74-02 MAGDA K. SCHMALZ, 304 Central Street, Auburndale appointed on January 31, 2002 as a member of the Youth Commission, effective April 5, 2002. (60-day Board action date April 20, 2002)

ACTION: Held 5-0 (Parker, Gentile not voting)

105-02 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, requesting acceptance of and authorization to expend the sum of \$115,200, received as grant funds from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. This grant will provide funding for the design assistance program of the Green Schools Program. It will fund the design of the installation of high performance energy equipment at Newton South High School and to investigate other energy-efficient technologies. (NOTE: The MTC has also set aside \$500,000 in reserve for the purchase and installation of this equipment which will be made available to the City pending review of the design plans)

ACTION: Programs and Services Committee Approved 6-0 (Johnson, not voting)
Public Facilities Committee Approved 6-0.

There was an early discussion of this item by the Committee prior to being joined by Nick Parnell and Dave Tannozzini of the Building Department and the Public Facilities Committee. Alderman Lipsitt presented the item but Committee members had numerous questions so the item was put on the table until later in the evening.

Nick Parnell introduced the item as being a parallel to the Newton South High School Project. He explained that this is a grant for energy design. He believes it's a wonderful opportunity to further our own initiative. David Tannozzini also from the Buildings Department further explained the item. He said the grant is for design by a renewable energy trust that is funded by the surcharge in everybody's electric bill from deregulation. He said the trust set aside \$500K for hardware. Once the design is complete, we will apply for the \$500K in hardware to install green technologies focusing on renewables such as solar electric, fuel cells, solar domestic hot water and solar thermal air. He said the support of the representatives and

senators and letters from teachers helped in receiving the grant adding that we were one of 9 recipients.

Alderman Fischman questioned whether there is a chance we could lose the \$500K if we are not successful in meeting the timeline for the design work. Mr. Tannozzini replied that the Trust has been flexible in the past and if there is a problem, the hardware could be funded through change orders. Alderman Salvucci questioned whether we would continue if the \$500K is not available and was also concerned about structural support on the roof for the solar panels. Mr. Parnell replied that up to \$300K was earmarked for solar panels. We have the money in the High School Renovation budget for the trellis and a limited number of panels – but not as many as could be funded by the \$500K grant.

Alderman Parker had a number of questions concerning future expansion and the percentage of roof area using the panels. Mr. Parnell explained that approximately 3200 square feet of roof would be taken up by these panels and that they would be installed on the field house. Alderman Parker was also concerned about solar water heating and how it would be monitored. Mr. Tannozzini explained that the solar water heating was demonstration only and that it would be tied into regular hot water loop with meter readings to monitor the amount generated from solar. He also stated that the data acquisition would be from the main science classroom for student access and even possibly the internet. Alderman Parker also asked if students could access the actual panels and Mr. Parnell assured him the answer was no.

Both Mr. Parnell and Mr. Tannozzini suggested that the project will also look at wind generation and windmills. Alderman Gerst raised several questions regarding noise generated from use of windmills and vulnerability to vandalism and maintenance cost. Mr. Tannozzini explained the; "windmill" will be 4 feet high on a monopole adjacent to the school. He added that they are concerned about whether people will object to seeing the solar panels on the side of the building. Mr. Parnell explained that the outer layer protection was very good. The remaining panels should be fine but will need to look at impact resistance. Alderman Schnipper asked if anyone had thought to review the proximity to the playing fields prior to making the decision to locate the panels on the field house. Mr. Parnell explained that the field closest to the field house was lacrosse and that it would be very difficult for a baseball coming from the baseball field to go the distance and actually hit the panels at an angle sufficient to damage the panels.

Alderman Salvucci asked if a storage capacity system was needed. Mr. Tannozzini replied that the renewable energy system would be

coordinated with the electric utility so there is no need for storage capacity. Alderman Salvucci also asked what happens if the sun doesn't generate enough energy, do we then need to rely on Nstar? Mr. Tannozzini replied yes.

Alderman Lipsitt asked if we were guaranteed the \$500K. Mr. Tannozzini again replied that we have to resubmit an application but reminded the Committee that the Trust has reserved the money. Alderman Parker moved approval in Programs and Services Committee. Alderman Mansfield asked if there would be any savings in the overall High School Renovation Project if we complete the design and receive the \$500K grant or would the grant replace any existing budgeted cost. Mr. Parnell answered no and said the grant was in addition to the overall cost of the HS project. Alderman Fischman asked if the equipment was guaranteed if it didn't perform well or didn't function at all. Mr. Tannozzini replied that the products are essentially off the shelf and come with a standard 1-year warranty and the panels were prorated for about 20 years. On Alderman Parker's motion to approve in Programs and Services, the Committee voted to approve 6-0 (Johnson not voting). Alderman Linsky moved approval in Public Facilities. The Public Facilities Committee voted to approve unanimously 6-0.

158-01(2) PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE requesting ordinance to implement increase in eligibility threshold for Clause 41A Senior Citizen Tax Deferral program.

ACTION: Held (5-0 Gentile, Johnson not voting)

NOTE: Gayle Smalley and Steve Gartrell joined the Committee for this discussion. Ms. Smalley began by reminding the committee about a draft ordinance which was provided by the law department initially when Alderman Gerst had suggested raising the qualifying income to \$70K. She stated that the same draft also gave the Assessors the ability to raise the income level on a regular basis based on the CPI. She said that we could do the same or come up with a two or three part analysis (example if income is greater than \$40K but lower than \$45K, one could defer X% of taxes or if income is between \$45 - \$50K could defer Y% of taxes or could look at the total amount of taxes and treat a person with a big tax bill the same as one with a low tax bill). The current law is based on income and age. \$40K is the standard but not sure if Social Security is included.

Steve Gartrell referred to the table passed out last time which shows the Boston Median Income. The Table breaks out percentages and income level. He stated that if we are looking at a floating rate, then he

recommends no using the CPI but instead using the Boston Area Median Income as the basis.

Alderman Fischman questioned whether use the family of one figure? He also questioned whether the figures were accurate for Newton since the Boston area income level tends to be lower. According to Mr. Gartrell, we only receive the decennial figures and the number in the charts are as close as we are going to get.

Alderman Parker was concerned about the timing of figuring out what the ordinance should be could be problematic in getting the home rule legislation passed. He also questioned whether there was a legal ceiling or cap for the income level. Ms. Smalley responded that there is a ceiling on how much taxes one can defer, but assuming passage of the home rule petition, there was no ceiling on the income level. Alderman Parker also questioned whether we should use average family size. He suggested instead of using 80% median we should use 100% with a phase out between 100 – 120% since the Boston area income level are lower than Newton. He recommends taking the 80% of 2 person family income in Newton and between that and 100% of median have up to 50% of taxes deferred and then index that for future increases in the median income.

Alderman Lipsitt questioned Mr. Gartrell's comment that 100% of MFI Boston is about 60% of Newton. She doesn't think we need to protect every elderly family to median income level and that it would be an unrealistic stance. Before we make a judgement, she recommends waiting to see what the financial impact on current income to the City would be. She surmised that most families would be single person families participating rather than two or more person households. She added that we could find ourselves in a situation that because we are protecting the status of a small percentage of citizens that we would have to go to the totality of citizens for an operating override. She went on by saying the concept of making the qualifying income level higher than \$40K she supports as well as the concept of a declining scale. But she is not prepared to accept any arbitrary figure until we get more facts. She asks that the Committee request Mr. Gartrell and the Planning Dept. to analyze various combinations of formulas or sliding scales and the impacts on the City. Alderman Parker asked for clarification. Alderman Lipsitt said she wants to know what the loss in taxes would be. Alderman Johnson stated she supports Alderman Lipsitt's suggestion. Very few people take advantage of the program now – but she recognizes that if we raise the eligibility level, more people have an opportunity to participate and we need to know how that would impact the City.

Alderman Fischman asked about the total amount that could be deferred. Ms. Smalley responded that up to 50% of the value of the home. Alderman Parker disagreed saying that it was 50% of the equity in the home. Ms. Smalley reviewed the law and cited that 50% of owner's proportional share of full and fair cash value of such real property.

Mr. Gartrell stated that he had a problem with Alderman Lipsitt's request because the only figures that are available are based on the 1990 census and that we may have to rely on the Assessing Dept. for more recent information.

Alderman Merrill stated that we need more recent figures. He said that his experience was this was not a popular program. He asked how many people participate. Alderman Johnson responded that her recollection of the Assessing Dept's previous report was only 10% of those eligible actually participate in the program. Alderman Merrill suggested that the Committee hold the item until more accurate figures could be obtained. Alderman Parker questioned Alderman Merrill's motion. Alderman Parker advised not to wait until the Federal Government provides the 2000 census data. He offered an amendment to the motion that we hold the item until we have action by the State legislature on the home rule legislation. He suggests we ask the Law Dept. for a blank draft ordinance leaving out exact numbers until we take the item up again. Alderman Merrill accepted the amendment as a friendly amendment. The Committee voted to hold (5-0 Johnson, Gentile not voting).

440-01 ALD. GENTILE & MEMBERS OF THE JOHN M. BARRY BOYS & GIRLS CLUB requesting the establishment of a smoke free zone around and within the perimeter of the Horace Mann School and the Boys & Girls Club.

ACTION: Approved (7-0)

Respectfully submitted

Amy Sangiolo, Vice Chair