

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2002

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

Also: Karen Griffey (Mayor's Office) Peter Karg (Elections) Kathy Glick-Weil (Library) Sandy Pooler (Budget Officer) Fred Guzzi (Veterans Agent) David Olson (Jackson Homestead)

#70-02 ALISON GOULDER 73 Fairmont Avenue, West Newton 02465
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 4-3 (Ald. Coletti, Johnson and Fischman opposed)

NOTE: Ms. Goulder travels a great deal on business and has had scheduling conflicts that have not allowed her to be present for a confirmation interview. Chairman Johnson noted that Alison Goulder has been very, very active on the Child Care Commission. Ald. Parker expressed his opinion that all appointees and reappointees should be required to come in. The Committee voted to hold this item.

APPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#74-02 MAGDA K. SCHMALZ, 304 Central Street, Newton 02466 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 6-1 (Ald. Coletti)

NOTE: Ms. Schmalz was not present and the Committee voted to hold the item.

REAPPOINTMENT BY HIS HONOR THE MAYOR

#113-02 RUTH CONCANNON, 279 Linwood Avenue, Newtonville, reappointed by His Honor the Mayor on February 19, 2002 as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING for a term of office to expire on March 1, 2004 (60-day Board action date 5-31-02)

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Ms. Concannon is a reappointment to the Newton Council on Aging. She was pleased to talk to the Committee about the positive merger between

the Council on Aging and the Senior Center Board. The Committee voted 6-0 to approve Ruth Concannon's appointment

REFERRED TO PROG & SERV AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

- # 77-02(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the sum of \$1,396 be appropriated from Budget Reserve for the purpose of paying the fees of Mr. Peter Koutoujian, former Clerk of the City of Waltham for consulting performed in the Election Department. (NOTE: The balance of funds paid to Mr. Koutoujian will be paid using some of the money transferred from the Assessing Department through docket item #77-02)

ACTION: HELD

NOTE: Docket items #77-02 and #77-02(2) are scheduled for discussion by the Programs and Services Committee at their May 8th meeting.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

- #134-02 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$20,000 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the overtime account in the Library.

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: Library Director Kathy Glick-Weil reported to the Committee that the overtime account was approximately \$64,000 under in terms of what was currently needed. The Mayor's office had requested that Ms. Glick-Weil request half of it. Some money has been made up because of vacancies leaving the request for \$20,000 for the rest of the year. Ald. Lipsitt questioned if that amount would be sufficient to get her through the end of the year and Ms. Glick-Weil responded that it would. Ald. Parker pointed out that there had been poor initial funding in the past for this account and felt more realistic budgeting in the overtime account is needed. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of this request.

ELECTIONS BUDGET

Peter Karg, Executive Secretary of the Elections Department, said Elections was pretty much a level-funded budget with the exception of the census reader positions which includes two seasonal employees that process the census when the forms are returned to Elections starting at the beginning of January and continuing into April. There is also a position of a high school student who acts as a clerk assisting in everything that is involved in making sure that an election runs smoothly such as preparing the ballot boxes, getting the leatheroids that are sent to each polling location as well as assisting in the duplication of materials. Those are the three positions that have been basically eliminated at the present.

Ald. Lipsitt asked if the census readers are not added back into the budget, how would those functions be accomplished. Mr. Karg responded that existing staff would have to be used in the data processing unit to process the census. Ms. Griffey said that there hasn't been much cross training and if these positions need to be eliminated, the key would be cross training. Ald. Lipsitt said it was not clear to her what these two employees do for a portion of the year, how time sensitive it is and whether that task just can't be stretched out over an extra month and be accomplished with existing staff. Sandy Pooler felt there may be room to find economies for these positions and if we don't have an over-ride, they would have to be cut. If there is an over-ride and these positions can be kept, we would have Mr. Karg evaluate after one year how the census has run and make a final decision. One more year would give Mr. Karg a better opportunity to make that decision. Ms. Griffey said that after the end of February, there is a second wave of census information, but a mailing is not done and phone calls are made through the office and then if those don't produce results, the final step is police officers actually visiting homes. This does result in a fairly large expense. It is clearly more advantageous to get the information up front rather than to pay for police details. Ald. Parker said it was always his understanding that the people involved with the census process were well worth the expense. Ald. Parker said that with or without an override, we should not cut corners and make sure that this department runs well.

There were questions regarding Mr. Karg's salary and he explained that when he was hired, a salary was agreed upon and that is what is reflected in the budget. Ald. Gentile asked if Mr. Karg was able to develop resources from the Secretary of State's office. Mr. Karg said that next week two employees of the Secretary of State's office would be at City Hall on April 23rd to give training to the poll workers. He also said he was in touch with Dennis Kennedy who had been out to Newton in March to give an in-service training to the Election Commission staff on the issue of campaign finance reports as well as technical guidance. Ald. Parker asked if poll workers would get an increase with or without an override. Sandy Pooler said that at this point nothing was set in stone. Peter Karg had checked on what poll workers were paid in the town of Brookline. He reported that inspector's were paid \$125.00 per day, warden's pay is \$150.00. per day. Needham pays \$150.00 per day and inspectors are paid \$120.00 a day. Newton is paying \$9.25 an hour for a warden, \$8.60 an hour for a clerk and \$8.25 for an inspector. Mr. Karg said we have increased amounts of pay by \$1.00 an hour. That works out to be equivalent to what other communities are paying poll workers. In comparing Newton to Brookline and Needham, we are certainly competitive. The overriding issue is that we are competing to try to get people to do a community, civic minded endeavor and it is difficult as people are working and have other commitments. Mr. Karg said we could continue to try to develop a corps of workers. In planning for this upcoming April election, there has not been a difficulty in getting poll workers.

Ald. Sangiolo asked Mr. Pooler about last year's budget concerning a position for an Assistant Secretary. Mr. Pooler said that was part of the overall cuts in the budget. Ald. Lipsitt asked if it would be easier to pay poll workers by the day rather than by the hour.

Ald. Fischman asked if it would be helpful if we eliminated the optional portion of the questionnaire in order to reduce the workload for the staff. Karen Griffey responded that both Public Works and the School Department relied on this information. Ald. Sangiolo moved to hold the budget.

VETERANS/LICENSING/WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Mr. Guzzi reported that the largest part of the budget was Veteran's Benefits. This would be and most likely was the section that would require more money. This portion is to help people in need who qualify for Chap.115 benefits for which the city pays bi-weekly and are reimbursed by the state at 75%. There are certain criteria that must be met and if they are employable, they go on to a job search. Expenses include the Veteran's Parade and flags that are replaced twice a year on flagpoles throughout the city. There is reimbursement from the state for approximately 2500 Memorial Day grave flags. Ald. Merrill pointed out that service connected compensation and pension burial benefits also receive reimbursement from the state.

There was a question regarding the salary of a Secretary in the Department and the Committee asked Mr. Guzzi to look into this further and respond to the Committee. The Committee voted to hold this item.

LICENSING - Mr. Guzzi stated there was an increase in fees last year. The budget figure of \$1896.00 brings in about \$260,000 to the City. Ald. Coletti asked the typical fee for liquor licenses. Mr. Guzzi responded that the fee was \$2,000 to \$3,000 depending on a 6 or 7 day alcohol license.

Ald. Lipsitt questioned the low cost of the Common Victualler License. Mr. Guzzi explained there was a state cap on the cost of the license. Mr. Guzzi further explained that the cost of the newspaper notice is the responsibility of licensee. Ald. Lipsitt asked Mr. Guzzi to analyze what the current costs are and see if it would be possible to raise fees. Ald. Parker questioned if a community could request some changes in liquor sales on Sundays. Chairman Johnson requested that Ald. Parker check on further information on Sunday liquor sales. Ald. Sangiolo moved hold on the item.

SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

This budget is salary along with minor items. Sealer of Weights and Measures, Mitch Baker, is bringing in close to \$20,000 per year which has not been done before in this City. Ald. Lipsitt made a motion to hold this item.

JACKSON HOMESTEAD

Mr. Olson said the major changes in the Jackson Homestead fall into two categories. In order to level fund the budget, there has been a reduction in printing expense by \$790.00 and the other adjustment has been electricity and natural gas accounts. The Jackson Homestead is now open Saturdays and Sundays. This has proven to be a great benefit to the City. Attendance for the last few months has risen dramatically. The Gazebo is in

need of repair and the North Bennett Street School will be doing research and construction work will be done in the spring. The Historical Society provides money for programming. For the coming year, the Historical Society is planning to contribute \$92,000. The Massachusetts Cultural Council provides funding to the Historical Society who then turns it over to the Jackson Homestead for programs such as exhibit development, lectures, concerts, and special events. Mr. Olson said in September of 2000, 54 people visited the Homestead and in 2001, there were 159.

Ald. Lipsitt asked about the glazing on the windows. Mr. Olson explained that because of loan agreements with other institutions, light levels within the gallery space must meet certain criteria. Ald. Lipsitt went on to say the museum would be much more welcoming if some changes could be made allowing the windows to look as if the building were open. Ald. Sangiolo moved hold on the item.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman