

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2002

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

Absent: Ald. Parker, Sangiolo, Gentile

Also Present: Edward English (Clerk of the Board) Fran Towle (Recreation) Mark Welsh (Director of Urban Forestry) Shawna Sullivan (Committee Clerk)

#290-02      HIS HONOR THE MAYOR re-appointing on July 23, 2002 RUTH FITZGERALD, 34 Harrison Ave. Newton as a member of the NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING, effective immediately. Term to expire on September 1, 2005. (Board action date October 11, 2002).

ACTION:      APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Coletti not voting)

NOTE:      Ms. Fitzgerald is very excited to be working with the Council on Aging and is Chair of the Legislative Committee. She is also a silver haired legislator appointed by Barney Frank. Ms. Fitzgerald has an extensive background as a nurse and health care consultant. (See attached resume) Ald. Lipsitt moved the appointment and the Committee approved the item 4-0.

#289-02      HIS HONOR THE MAYOR reappointing on July 24, 2002 JACOB L. JACOBSON, 91 Exeter Street, West Newton, as a member of the NEWTON URBAN TREE COMMISSION, effective August 1, 2002. Term to expire August 1, 2004 (Board action date October 11, 2002).

ACTION:      APPROVED 4-0 (Ald. Coletti not voting)

NOTE:      Mr. Jacobson has lived in Newton since 1968. He envisions the policy of the Urban Tree Commission as both the strengthening and the improvement of the Newton Urban Forest. Two of the basic priorities of the Commission are preservation and replacement. Mr. Jacobson would like to see the development of a 20-year plan. Another initiative is protecting the city's trees from abuse. Efforts are also being made in public education and gaining support for the preservation of trees.

Ald. Fischman asked about funding and plans for an open space plan. Once the land is protected, Mr. Jacobs feels the conservation of the trees

will also be a result. He further pointed out that as land is added into the public domain, there is an increase in the urgency of preserving trees on public land. Ald. Fischman asked if there was anything the aldermen could do in terms of obtaining additional funding sources. Mr. Jacobs said influence on the budget is clearly a major issue. The last ten years of budget allocation in this area has not changed. The cost of replacing or pruning a tree has doubled and the City has had no increase in spending. Trees are deteriorating and Mr. Jacobs explained that replacement costs are much higher than preservation costs.

Ald. Merrill moved approval and the Committee voted 4-0 to approve.

#22-02 ALD. JOHNSON AND SANGIOLO requesting update from the Urban Tree Commission regarding city-side tree ordinance.

ACTION: NAN 4-0 (Ald. Lipsitt not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Welch, Director of Urban Forestry, was present for this discussion. The Committee asked about his background and he explained that he had a Bachelor's Degree in Urban Forestry and Agriculture. He has spent time working for the U.S Forest Service helping small communities with urban forestry needs. (See attached resume)

Chairman Johnson noted that the reason this item was docketed was there had been a request for a policy for preservation and replacement of trees on city-owned property and the Committee wanted an update. Mr. Jacobs said that there have been a number of issues with private entities, utilities or individuals who inadvertently might abuse city trees. City trees are often put at risk due to improper interaction between city employees and city trees. The recommendation was to upgrade policies that city employees have in effect. Contracts with utility companies have constraints that allow preservation of trees as stated in the tree manual.

President Lipsitt pointed out that the docket item was for a development of policy and not an ordinance. She stated that it was not clear to her that we need an ordinance to control the City's own actions. President Lipsitt was happy to know that there presently is a policy that is currently being improved.

Chairman Johnson pointed out that she would like to review the policy that is already in place.

President Lipsitt pointed out that many residents are not aware that they do not own the trees planted on the berm in front of their home. She further

asked about cost replacement. Mr. Jacobs said the cost currently for replacement of a 2 1/2 inch tree is about \$350.00. Fran Towle said that pruning rates are about \$65.00 an hour.

President Lipsitt questioned tree replacement at the Terraces. Fran Towle responded that this issue was still under negotiation. President Lipsitt was interested in a timetable for maintenance. Fran Towle, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, will provide copies of the policy to all interested aldermen.

The original item (# 22-98(2)) will be scheduled for the second meeting in January of the Programs and Services Committee. The Committee agreed to vote no action necessary on docket item #22-02.

#294-02 ALD. JOHNSON, ANGIOLO AND PARKER requesting discussion regarding public disclosure via the internet/newspaper, etc. regarding how each member of the Board votes on docketed items.

ACTION: HELD 4-0 (Ald. Lipsitt not voting)

NOTE: City Clerk Edward English reported to the Committee that there had been discussions with the Chairman regarding this particular item. The internet now displays votes the following day after a Full Board meeting. Shawna Sullivan of the Clerk's office gave an update on what has been accomplished on this docket item. She further explained that there was an ongoing process of putting into place search engines for the aldermanic documents so a key word or number can search that section of our web page. A decision had been made not to include all first call items as that information is already generated on the Reports Docket. The attendance will also be included. Chairman Johnson asked how far back this information would go. Ms. Sullivan felt it should be for a full term. Chairman Johnson said the item had been originally docketed in response to citizen requests regarding how aldermen voted on various docket items.

Chairman Johnson moved hold until other members of the Board have had a chance to see what progress has been made.

#130-02 ALD. JOHNSON requesting discussion with the Executive Department regarding the establishment of a consistent process for the submission of appointments/reappointments to Boards and Commissions to Board of Aldermen for approval.

ACTION: HELD 5-0

NOTE:

Mr. Rourke and Ms. Griffin of the Mayor's office were both present for this discussion. The Chairman reported this item was brought forward due to the many problems with process for these appointments and reappointments. Ms. Griffey said she now can verify data with a particular database.

President Lipsitt brought up the selection of appointees. She was very aware that it can be difficult to make selections for boards and commissions. President Lipsitt said that a number of colleagues have informed her that names have been given to the Mayor's office of citizens that would like to serve and there are times there has not been a response. As an example she questioned how someone would be appointed to the Energy Commission. Mr. Rourke said his experience has been to take the name and address of a new person showing interest in serving and Ms. Griffey contacting them, giving them an opportunity to submit information. Ms. Griffey said she has received only about two phone calls from people making inquiry. She answered the calls and sent an application if there was an appointment available. She would then check with the Mayor to see if he is aware there is a vacancy. President Lipsitt said she was aware that a name had been given to the Mayor for a Traffic Council member replacement and there was no acknowledgment of any kind.

Ald. Coletti said he is not aware of the board denying any appointment made by the Executive Department. He suggested that if aldermen are interested in an appointment, they be given a list of current openings and be able to make referrals. In President Lipsitt's opinion, attendance at 75% of meetings should be expected of the appointees. Ms. Griffey explained the Mayor interviews all new appointments. President Lipsitt asked that a reappointment policy be developed that could be shared with new appointees as well as the Board. Chairman Johnson agreed that a complete packet with standard information would be very helpful.

President Lipsitt suggested that the Board should receive written reports or minutes that should come at a minimum once every six months from boards and commissions. The Committee decided to hold the item

#336-98      ALD. PARKER, MANSFIELD, SANGIOLO proposing an ordinance to  
limit light trespass across property lines.

ACTION:      HELD 3-0 (Ald. Fishman, Coletti not voting)

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman