

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT INCLUDING BUDGET

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2001

Present: Ald. Parker (Chair), Merrill, Johnson, Sangiolo, Baker, and Tattenbaum

Absent: Ald. Gentile and Coletti

City Officials Present: David Naparstek (Health Commissioner), David Olson (Director of the Jackson Homestead), Frederick Guzzi (Veterans Agent and Administrative Director of the Licensing Board)

**Chairman's Note:** In all cases, except where otherwise noted, the Committee also took up the related Capital Improvement Plan items and Revolving Accounts. The votes relating to budget are straw votes as the Committee will vote the budget item as a whole once all the departments, which fall under the Committee's jurisdiction, have been discussed.

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#113-01 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, in accordance with Section 5-1 of the Newton City Charter, submitting the FY2002 Municipal/School Operating Budget, including Water/Sewer for a total of \$232,421,103.  
EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION: APRIL 17, 2001  
LAST DAY TO PASS BUDGET: JUNE 1, 2001

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#118-00(5) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY02-FY06 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, pursuant to Section 5-3 of the NEWTON CITY CHARTER, which requires Board of Aldermen approval of a plan to finance new local capital projects totaling 173,907,870 over the next several years:

SUMMARY

PUBLIC WORKS (GRANT/FEE FUNDED)	\$46,394,228
APPROVAL RECOMMENDED 3-0 (McGrath & Mansfield Not Voting	
PUBLIC WORKS (CITY FUNDED)	\$2,710,000
APPROVAL RECOMMENDED 3-0 (McGrath & Mansfield Not Voting	
PUBLIC SAFETY	\$2,911,000
PUBLIC BUILDINGS	\$351,575
PUBLIC EDUCATION	\$111,782,167
PARKS & RECREATION	\$2,215,000
OTHER	\$5,543,900
TOTAL	\$173,907,870

Health Department - BUDGET

ACTION: APPROVED AS AMENDED 6-0

NOTE: Health Commissioner David Naparstek joined the Committee for discussion. Commissioner Naparstek reviewed his budget with the Committee, which as with most budgets was mostly level funded. There was one transfer from a Personnel Services Account, where a temporary employee had been paid in the current fiscal year but the temporary employee has been hired and the funds will now be out of a salary account in FY'02.

The Commissioner also provided the Committee with an update on work on indoor air quality and the implementation of the ordinance setting up an advisory committee on indoor air quality. The Commissioner promised to get the Committee further information on the implementation during the course of the budget process.

The Commissioner said that there had been great many changes in environmental regulations within the past year. Due to these changes, he has added funds in his budget for environmental conferences and retraining programs. The funds were drawn out of training programs, which are all in-state conferences. The old regulations said that restaurants should be inspected twice a year. Now, the category of the restaurant determines the frequency of inspection. For example, A low risk victualler's license, such as a video store that sells chips and popcorn may only be inspected once a year. While a restaurant that prepares food on the premises might be inspected as many as four times in a year but certainly more than twice a year.

Ald. Merrill asked if the City's Health Department inspected nursing homes. The Commissioner replied that the State Department of Public Health now inspects nursing homes except for the kitchens, which his department inspects.

The School Health Services Grant has been increased by \$12,000, which was not reflected in the revolving accounts appearing in back of the budget book. Ald. Johnson moved to amend the revolving account for the School Health Grant for FY'02 to an appropriation authorization of \$317,889, increasing from the current appropriation \$305,889 to accommodate this grant, which is expected to be expended next year.

Commissioner Naparstek pointed out that over the past ten years his budget has seen a reduction in the number of public health nurses from four to just over two. This budget attempts to bring the number up to about 2 ½ by eliminating a nutrition consultant and using those funds combined with a very small amount from the public health nurses salary account to create the half-time nursing position. The budget does not make any progress towards the goal of having a nurse in every school. Two elementary schools this year have shared a nurse and an assistant and they will continue to do so in the new budget. Although, there is additional grant funds for school health services but part of the problem is finding qualified candidates for these nursing positions is difficult due to the tight nursing market. Ald. Johnson asked if there was enough money in the budget

could the Commissioner fill the positions so there was a nurse in every elementary school. The Commissioner was not sure if he could fill the positions.

Ald. Merrill asked how many vehicles the Health Department had. The Commissioner replied that there are four vehicles and a fifth that is shared. The Commissioner has one vehicle, three vehicles are used for the health inspectors, and one is shared with the Public Buildings Department, which they use during the summer when the student intern uses it. Ald. Merrill asked if the cars are taken home. He was told that one of the inspectors, who is a Newton resident, takes the car home and each of the vehicles is driven five to six thousand miles per year. The Health Commissioner said that while his vehicles were getting old and may be in need of replacement soon. He would be very interested in low emissions or electric vehicles as replacements from both a health perspective and the pattern of usage of the cars. The vehicles are not driven many miles and there would be enough time to charge them overnight, if they were electric.

The amendment to the revolving account was approved 5-0 (Ald. Baker Not Voting). The FY'01 authorization was \$379,419 but the FY'02 authorization request was only \$209,537 reflecting the Governor/Acting Governor's budget, which has that substantial cut. There may be an increase in the House Budget, in which case this could be amended to a larger amount. Ald. Merrill then moved a straw vote approval of the Health Department's budget including the C.I.P. and Revolving Accounts, although the C.I.P. will be reviewed further. The motion was approved unanimously.

#42-01            ALD. PARKER & LIPSITT requesting discussion of resolution endorsing state legislation to create universal system of quality health care for all Mass. residents.

ACTION:        APPROVED AS AMENDED 6-0

NOTE:           State Senator Cynthia Creem, who is a sponsor of legislation for single payer health care, joined The Committee for this discussion. She stated that the Massachusetts Medical Association now endorses that legislation. Senator Creem thinks that the Co-Chairmen of the House and Senate Health Care Committee are not supportive of the legislation. Senator Moore is the Senate Chair of the Health Care Committee and he is not supportive of the bill due to the expense. Senator Creem feels that due to the financial tight times this bill, which she supports, is not likely to pass this year.

She raised a several problems with the current system. Doctor's reimbursements are often delayed for quite sometime and sometimes physicians do not receive full reimbursement. Patients often are not referred to the specialist they need in a timely manner. When an asthma patient is not referred to an allergist in time because they must go to their primary care physicians first under managed care they can die. This is a very serious issue with the current system, which would not be a problem under the single payer system. There are also a high number of uninsured people residing in Massachusetts. The biggest crisis in Massachusetts right now may be medical error and Senator Creem would like an appropriation from the legislature to pay for a center for patient safety.

Ald. Johnson asked how the British system works as compared to proposals for the United States and proposed legislation for Massachusetts under the British system the doctors work for the government and that is complete socialized medicine as opposed to the Canadian system, which uses a single payer aggregator method as is proposed under this legislation for Massachusetts. This is similar to Medicare, where there are private doctors being paid from a single fund.

Ald. Merrill said that he is bothered by the creation of a new statewide agency under this legislation: the Statewide Advisory Council. Marvin Miller one of the advocates of the legislation, who joined the Committee for the discussion, said that the people of Massachusetts already pay \$6,000 per capita for health care. This is the highest of any state in the country and the United States is the highest of any country in the world and under a single payer system we would actually pay less per capita. This means more money would not be needed to make this legislation effective. Senator Creem said that we are taking incremental steps toward universal coverage and that support for legislation like this is an important part of that overall strategy.

Ald. Tattenbaum asked if passage of a resolution like this would make a difference at the State House. Senator Creem responded that yes the more communities that pass things like this more momentum is built for universal health care and major reform. Ald. Parker stated that he senses that there is not complete unanimity on the Committee about the issue of single payer health care and this particular bill. However, there does seem to be unanimous support for the idea of universal health care and better quality care for all Massachusetts residents.

Ald. Parker hopes that the Committee can pass a resolution, which supports these goals. Ald. Johnson said if the resolution is specific relating to this bill she does not have enough information and will abstain. Ald. Merrill said he does not like some of the Boards that are inscribed on the bill and if the Committee votes on the specific Senate Bill 531, he will not support it.

Health Commissioner David Naparstek said that part of the Enhanced School Health Grant that the City is receiving covers families with children who do not have health coverage. He also stated that there is a problem with families in Newton not having health insurance at all. There have been times when a child at school will need transportation by ambulance to the hospital and when the parents are reached they will not agree to an ambulance and explain that they will drive the child because they do not have health insurance. He also said that universal coverage is a laudable goal and any effort to support would be a good thing, although he does not know the details of any bill.

Ald. Tattenbaum moved approval of a resolution supporting efforts to expand health coverage to all Massachusetts residents without referencing any specific bill. There was some discussion about how to clarify the motion, which was basically as follows: Whereas, access to quality health care is important to the well-being of Massachusetts residents and whereas many Massachusetts residents currently have inadequate health

coverage or none at all, now therefore be it resolved that the Newton Board of Aldermen endorses and supports efforts at the State level to expand quality health care to all Massachusetts residents and urges the Governor and our legislative delegation to work towards the goal of quality universal health care in Massachusetts. The resolution was approved with six in favor and none opposed.

#527-00        HIS HONOR THE MAYOR re-appointing on December 6, 2000 HELEN MELTZER, 22 Westminster Road, Newton Centre, to the Health Advisory Council; for a term of office to expire on September 1, 2002 (Board action date: February 16, 2001)

ACTION:        APPROVED

NOTE:         Helen Meltzer and Commissioner Naparstek joined The Committee for the discussion of this item. Ms. Meltzer has served on the council for many years, even before it was an advisory council officially. She has already been interested in the area of public health. In fact, she served as Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association for twenty-five years.

Ms. Meltzer said that the City has a wonderful Health Department and a wonderful Commissioner of Health. The most recent issue the council has worked on is the West Nile Virus. They had a meeting last week and it is the position of the Health Advisory Council and the Commissioner only to spray if it is an emergency and absolutely required. She is also concerned about the health of students in the Newton Public Schools and that is another issue the Health Advisory Council working on.

Ald. Johnson would like to make sure that the Health Department is in communication with the Child Care Commission about West Nile Virus insecticide spraying because of the proximity of child care facilities to spraying as it was a problem last time. Commissioner Naparstek said that he is developing a communication plan to inform everybody who would be affected by spraying. He is hoping that it will not be necessary because this year they are taken many preventive measures and are more knowledgeable than last year.

Ald. Baker moved the approval of Ms. Meltzer stating that he has known her a long time and she does a wonderful job. The motion prevailed unanimously.

**Jackson Homestead - BUDGET**

ACTION:        APPROVED 6-0

NOTE:         The Director of the Homestead, David Olson, joined The Committee for the discussion of this department's budget. Mr. Olson said that his budget is fairly level but there are two components, which increase it. The two components are the salary adjustments and health care costs and \$1,500 for cleaning and custodial services, so that the bathrooms are cleaned every two weeks instead of every three weeks.

Ald. Tattenbaum asked how many people constituted the 1.3 full-time equivalent curators and Mr. Olson replied that it is two people who are less than full-time. Ald. Johnson said that it looks like a pretty slim budget and wondered how much was privately raised to supplement it. Mr. Olsen said that programs are funded through the Historical Society, only the basic operation and maintenance of the Jackson Homestead through the City budget. The Historical Society consistently over the last few years has contributed \$95,000. The \$95,000 is necessary to hire five part-time staff people to run the programs.

Ald. Sangiolo asked about the Capital Improvement issues that have been raised in previous years including the need for a new roof and electrical work. Mr. Olsen responded that the Capital Improvement requests made by his predecessor, Margaret Latimer, would be adequate for addressing those concerns. He did not know whether the Mayor had included full funding of those requests in the Capital Improvement Plan. If the Mayor has, it will be adequate and if the items were not funded as requested, than it would not be adequate. The Committee decided to check the Capital Improvement Plan after the meeting. He also said that in 2002 they are putting together a strategic capital plan, which requires an initial capital appropriation but after that they would have more detailed items.

Ald. Sangiolo moved approval and the Committee decided to review the Capital Improvement Plan at a future time to make sure that the items requested are included. Mr. Olsen added that visitation is up across all categories including Newton residents, non-Newton residents, school trips. The Committee reviewed the revolving account, which had very little expended this year. The Committee members were confused by this because it had so little in the way of receipts at the door; only approximately \$112. The Committee voted to approve the motion on a straw vote unanimously. There is an attachment outlining the goals and strategies for the Jackson Homestead over the next three years.

#### **Veterans/Licensing/Sealer of Weights & Measures - BUDGET**

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0

NOTE: Most of the Licensing Commission's actual functional budget is part of Veterans because the staff of the Licensing Commission are the same people that work for the Veterans Department. The two departments are not accounted for separately. The Licensing filing fees for permits were raised substantially this year. Mr. Guzzi, who joined the Committee for discussion of his budgets, said that in the 2000 calendar year \$260,000 in revenue came into the Licensing Commission and that he estimates that in 2001 it will be closer to \$275,000. There are about 100 to 105 common victualer licenses, 100 - 105 all beverage licenses, and this year granted about 200 temporary permits, the majority of which were granted to Boston College.

Ald. Baker asked how closely Mr. Guzzi worked with the Health Department and other departments. Mr. Guzzi said that Health, Inspectional Services and the Fire Department all work very closely with the Licensing Commission and that they have regular meetings of the four departments to discuss common issues.

Ald. Merrill mentioned that it is now necessary for a restaurant to notify the Health Department in the event of an electrical failure and that comment is related to the discussion the Committee had of the inter-relationship of these various departments to the Health Department and Licensing. Mr. Merrill pointed out that the Licensing Commission recently had a case in which they are considering suspending or not renewing a victualer's license because as allowed under ordinance they are allowed to suspend or not re new three or more violations of the tobacco control ordinance. This is a case where there have been multiple violations of the smoking ordinance and, therefore, may be at risk of losing their victualer's license. Ald. Baker said that it would be useful to have the licensing data on a supplemental sheet showing the revenues from each of the types of licensees and the licensing budget was then approved 6 in favor, 0 opposed on a straw vote.

The Sealer of Weights and Measures Department was taken up next. The Committee was joined for this discussion by Fred Guzzi in his capacity of Sealer of Weights and Measures. He said that they may well need a new van in the near future. They cannot predict the performance of a thirteen year old vehicle but other than that, there wasn't a lot that wasn't level funded in the Sealer of Weights and Measures Department so the discussion moved on to Veterans Services. Mr. Guzzi said there was an increase of \$6,000 in Veterans benefits, which includes burials for indigent veterans. He said the city kicks in \$2,000 of the \$3,000 cost of the burial but does get a 75% reimbursement from the state, but is required by law to provide burial services to Veterans and also have other Veterans Services expenses that are similarly reimbursed at 75% rate by the state. He said that he also helps younger veterans to find work who come in for Veterans assistance. Ald. Baker moved approval. Ald. Sangiolo said it would also be useful to have documentation on revenue from the sealer function in addition to having documentation on revenue from the licensing function. Ald. Baker said that perhaps we could more revenue from the Sealer's function if the sealer were empowered to ticket for violations that would also protect the public against fraudulent scales by giving another enforcement tool to the sealer in a similar manner to the ticketing capacity that is now being discussed by the Inspectional Services Department. Mr. Guzzi said that he would talk to the Deputy Sealer, Mitch Baker, about whether it would be useful to have a ticketing capacity.

Ald. Merrill asked how much federal assistance is provided to the Veterans of the City. Mr. Guzzi reported that 6.9 million dollars of federal assistance comes through the City to Veterans. Ald. Merrill pointed out that if Veterans register at a VA Hospital, they could count it in the federal formula, which directs more money to the region. The other thing that Mr. Guzzi mentioned is the biggest topic that veterans ask about is prescription drugs and he has been signing a lot of them up for the Senior Advantage Program for low-income senior citizens.

Ald. Johnson moved to add \$18,500 in FY2002 for a new van for the sealer and Ald. Merrill moved to add \$50,000 in the CIP for 2002 for burial plot acquisitions at the Newton Cemetery and both of those motions were approved unanimously 6-0 as was the

overall department's budget for the Veterans and Sealer functions on a 6-0 straw vote.

Chairman's Note: The Chair thanks the Vice-Chair, Ald. Sangiolo, for bringing her delicious home-made chicken wings to the meeting – a wonderful addition to the evening as everyone has to make so many trips to City Hall during the budget process.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ken Parker, Chairman



