

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2003

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chair), Gerst, Linsky, Salvucci, Stewart, Mansfield and Lappin

Absent: Ald. Yates

Also present: Ald. Coletti and Baker

City personnel: Barbara Stevens (Utilities Director), Sandy Pooler (Chief Budget Officer) and Robert Rooney (Commissioner of Public Works)

Re-appointment by the Board of Aldermen

#91-03 JOSEPH MICHELSON, 94 Park Avenue, Newton to be re-appointed as an Aldermanic appointee to the DESIGNER SELECTION COMMITTEE for a term of office to expire on December 31, 2003.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Mr. Michelson was present for discussion of his reappointment to the Designer Selection Committee. He is a general contractor and has served as chair of the committee since its inception. He also served as a member of the Design Review Committee until recently resigning.

Mr. Michelson explained that the committee's major concerns are the high school projects. The committee interviews respondents to the request for qualifications and ranks them on a one to three basis. The Mayor did not choose the committee's first choice for the high schools; however, the committee serves in an advisory capacity.

Several Committee members asked Mr. Michelson if he felt there was a correlation between the quality of design and the amount the City pays architects for design. Mr. Michelson responded that all cities and towns pay poorly. Members of the Designer Selection Committee speak to different architectural firms on an informal basis, if they feel that the firm should apply. Ald. Salvucci moved approval of the item, which was voted unanimously. The Committee thanked Mr. Michelson for all of his years of service to the City.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#66-03 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting discussion on a different water rate structure for condominium owners.

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0**

NOTE: Please see below for notes on this item as it was discussed in conjunction with #94-03.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#94-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting Board of Aldermen support of a RESOLUTION affirming a change in water and sewer billing policy that will result in individual condominium units being billed on par with single family homes.

ACTION: **HELD 7-0**

NOTE: Commissioner Rooney and Barbara Stevens were present for the discussion of these two items. The Commissioner explained to the Committee how most condominiums are currently billed. There are generally one or two meters per complex putting the water/sewer bill into the middle or high tier for billing. The proposal is to bill the individual units by dividing the meter reading for the complex by the number of units and using that number to determine which rate to use. The single unit bill will most likely fall into the lowest rate.

Sandy Pooler provided the Committee with handouts detailing the effect on the average condominium owner, the effect on the average user and the effect on rates of condominium rate (attached). Mr. Pooler reviewed the overall revenue impact on the average user, which is about a \$10 increase per year. The largest effect is on the large volume users. Mr. Pooler will provide the Committee with examples of the effect on some of the City's large volume users.

The Chair opened the meeting to public comment. Mr. Leo Tujak, 10 Hammond Pond Parkway, speaking for the Condo Association stated those condominium owners are asking for parity and equity. Condominium owners would like to be treated as homeowners, as they pay taxes like homeowners. The association has no problems with the proposal for billing the condominium owners. Mr. Tujak has researched how other communities handle water and sewer billing. He has found that other communities also bill condominiums as single units. Ald. Stewart requested that Mr. Tujak provide the information he had collected. Mr. Tujak agreed to bring the information to the Clerk's Office. Alan Sack, 250 Hammond Pond Parkway, feels that it will be an incentive for condominium owners to conserve water. It is the largest cost to his condominium complex. Edward Goldberg, 160 Pine Street, stated that the water and sewer bill is 30% of the condominium association's budget and if this proposal were to be accepted it would be an incentive to conserve water.

The public comment period was closed and the Committee began discussion of the items. Ald. Stewart felt that apartment complexes should be included. There

was some debate regarding this inclusion, as apartments are not owned individually. It is Ald. Stewart's belief that the owner of the complex would pass the savings on to renters. Mr. Pooler provided the Committee with the effect to the rates if apartments were to be included. The committee also questioned if this would include dormitories, hospitals and assisted living facilities. Ald. Coletti and Baker joined the discussion. Ald. Coletti had some problems with the proposal. It is his feeling that the proposal would create inequity for large volume users. He believes that if this proposal were accepted the condominium units would all need to have separate water meters.

The Committee would like a reading from the Law Department on the implications of accepting this proposal in regards to the carryover to apartments, dormitories, assisted living facilities, etc. In addition, does the law allow condominiums to be treated differently than apartments? The Committee would like to have a public hearing on the proposal. It was decided that it would be a joint meeting with the Finance Committee. Ald. Salvucci moved no action necessary on #66-03 as both items are similar and #66-03 is a request for discussion, which has occurred. The Committee voted unanimously on the motion. Ald. Linsky moved hold on #94-03, as further discussion required information from the Law Department. The motion was voted unanimously and the item will be discussed again at the next meeting.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#181-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend \$75,000 from Water Surplus for the purpose of employing the engineering firm Weston and Sampson to design the security infrastructure at the Waban Hill reservoir.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0-1 (Salvucci Abstaining)**

NOTE: Commissioner Rooney was present for discussion of this item. The request is for \$75,000 to hire Weston and Sampson to design a security infrastructure for the Waban Hill Reservoir. Weston and Sampson were used by the MWRA for its sites. The \$75,000 will be used to prepare the bid specifications, monitor the bid process and project management. The estimate for the system is \$300,000 and the work should begin during the summer. Ald. Stewart moved approval of the expenditure, which was passed by a vote of six in favor and one abstention.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman