



Zoning & Planning Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

Present: Councilors Hess-Mahan (Chair), Danberg, Leary, Yates and Albright

Absent: Councilors Baker, Sangiolo and Kalis

City Staff Present: John Lojek (Commissioner, Inspectional Services)

Referred to Zoning & Planning and Finance Committees

#44-16

Request to authorize transfer of \$100,000 to the Inspectional Services Department
HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from Free Cash to the Inspectional Services Department Full-time Salaries Account and to increase staffing levels in Inspectional Services Account by two full-time positions. [01/25/16 @ 4:06 PM]

Finance Approved 6-0 on 2/10/16

Action:

Programs & Services Approved 5-0

Note: Commissioner Lojek addressed the Committee. He explained that the Executive Department decided that it would be in the best interests of the Inspectional Services Department and residents to hire an additional full-time electrical inspector and an additional full-time gas/plumbing inspector. The Department is now issuing about 14,000 permits each year. In 2007, it was issuing half that amount with the same number of inspectors that they currently have. The Department was starting to become overwhelmed and their goal of issuing same day permits was being harder to achieve. It is expected that these will be permanent additions to the staff. New houses, commercial businesses and renovations are on the rise as well as solar installations. He also noted that things can run pretty smoothly with the current staff, but if someone is out sick or takes vacation, they quickly become backlogged. Commissioner Lojek believed the additional staff would meet the needs of the Department going forward.

A Committee member asked how they have been able to keep up with demand until now. The Commissioner explained that they have some part-time inspectors they call on when necessary but that gets expensive and when the full-time positions come on-line they hope to phase out the part-time inspectors as much as possible. If they find they are getting backlogged, they will call on those part-time personnel.

The Commissioner also noted that the department is hoping to get smartphones for the inspectors to use in the field. Currently, they are spending at least an hour a day listening to voicemail in the office. Having a smartphone will allow them to access their voicemail and email while they are on the road and hopefully save some time by being able to respond more efficiently. Councilor Danberg moved approval and the Committee voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted, Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair