

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

BUDGET MEETING

ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

THURSDAY APRIL 26, 2012

BUDGETS:

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

- #383-11 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY13-FY17 Capital Improvement Program pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter and the FY12 Supplemental Capital budget which require Board of Aldermen approval to finance new capital projects over the next several years. [10/31/11 @ 3:12 PM]
STRAW VOTE APPROVED 7-0 (ISD, PLANNING, CPA)

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

- #383-11(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter the FY13 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$312,979,964 passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY13-FY17 Capital Improvement Program (#383-11). [04-09-12 @ 2:48 PM]
EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION: 04/17/12; LAST DATE TO PASS THE BUDGET 06/01/12
STRAW VOTE APPROVED 7-0 (ISD, PLANNING, CPA)

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

John Lojek, Commissioner of Inspectional Services Department, presented his budget. He began by highlighting the major points in the budget:

- 1) The ADA coordinator will now be under the umbrella of ISD and the salary of this position is expected to be paid for through fines collected for handicapped parking violations. It makes the most sense for this position to be located in ISD since Commissioner Lojek sits on the Disabilities Commission.
- 2) The total change in the ISD budget is a \$19,000 increase
- 3) The position of Deputy Commissioner has been created. Commissioner Lojek is working hard to get someone in this role. His hope is that it is David Norton.
- 4) There are 19 full time positions in the department

Commissioner Lojek explained that the highest priority for the department is customer service. The department is also constantly monitoring enforcement issues and with two openings in the department (Building Inspector and Code Enforcer) he is hoping that they don't fall behind. The Commissioner also noted that his department is currently working on several large projects: Riverside, Chestnut Hill Square, and the Atrium.

Ald. Crossley asked Commissioner Lojek how the scanning of old records is progressing. Last year the need for this was a focus during the budget but not so much this year. The Commissioner responded by explaining that the completion of this project is a personnel issue more than anything and so right now the scanning is limited to mechanical permits. Commissioner Lojek also noted that all plans are now on CD, no paper plans are accepted, and so scanning plans from this point forward won't be a concern. Ald. Crossley asked what it would take to get the scanning under control. The Commissioner explained that that it would require hiring someone. Ald. Crossley followed up with a question about fees: she asked the Commissioner if the building permit fees are as high as they should be; Ald. Baker echoed this concern. The Commissioner does not believe that fees are at the appropriate level. He told the committee that right now building permit fees are \$18.60 per thousand. His personal philosophy is that fees should end on the dollar; he believes in simplification.

Ald. Yates asked Mr. Lojek about the ADA position. He wanted to know where the position for formerly held and how fines could fund a position as his understanding is that they need to go to a certain use. The Commissioner informed Mr. Yates that this position was previously a part of the Planning Department. Additionally, Ms. Lemieux corrected Mr. Yates, explaining that fines are put into a general fund for the city to expend as they wish. Fees, however, when collected must go to the service they are collected for. Ms. Lemieux also commented on a couple other issues that the Commissioner touched upon. First she noted that there will be a comprehensive look this summer at fees that all departments charge. The administration wants the fees to be appropriate and they intend to publish a fee schedule in the near future. Ms. Lemieux also commented on the topic of scanning. She stated that it is definitely a city-wide issue. The administration is looking to hire a CIO and they are hoping to perhaps have that person take over the responsibility of managing this digitization of documents and perhaps moving the print shop in time under the authority of the CIO.

Ald. Baker asked Commissioner Lojek about the Bradford Road decision and whether he is abiding by what the judge ordered. Commissioner Lojek responded by saying that though he may not agree with it, the court has spoken so of course he is making his decisions based on the court's order.

It was brought to the committee's attention that the organizational chart is incorrect. The Senior Inspectors report to the Deputy Commissioner, not the Code Enforcement Officer.

Ald. Lappin asked the Commissioner whether the department has caught up on multi-family inspections. He shared that they are almost 100% complete. Ald. Lappin also commented on ISD desired outcome to change the building permit application form to be clearer. Ald. Lappin would also like to see a review of their processes in the budget book. The Commissioner responded by stating that these are two separate issues. First, this city still has people fill out the long form for building permits even when it is a small

project, which is a waste. Providing a short form will make things faster and easier for people.

Regarding special permit follow-ups, the Commissioner explained that the city doesn't have a certificate of occupancy form, but have been using a form that is used for closing projects out. They have recently been working to create a new form for anything to do with a special permit; the first thing on the form is to fill out is special permit conditions before a permit or a certificate of occupancy is granted.

Ald. Johnson suggested that Ald. Lappin talk to Ms. Lemieux about adding or changing outcomes based on her comments about a review process for ISD. Ms. Lemieux explained that there is no formal process for amending the budget documents, but she is more than happy to work with the committee to come up with some edits.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Candace Havens, Director of Planning and Development, presented her budget to the committee. Ms. Havens walked the committee through a very detailed Powerpoint presentation which can be found attached to the end of this report. Upon the completion of her presentation she took questions from the committee.

Ald. Yates addressed Ms. Havens first. He asked what services are provided in the small business center. Ms. Havens explained that Amanda Stout is the key person that staffs this function. She is able to identify what people need to do and who they need to speak with. In the last year the Planning Department created a brochure checklist "so you want to start a business" which elucidates the process for patrons. Ald. Yates also asked if there is any training for people who may not have experience but are interested in starting a business. Candace explained that no, there isn't, but the Planning Department is aware of other resources that they can direct people to. Ald. Yates followed up with another question, asking Ms. Havens whether the Planning Department has come to any conclusions for whether the open space plan will be submitted as an element to the comprehensive plan. Ms. Havens explained that the Planning Department views these as different documents, but they will not rule out the possibility. Ald. Yates continued by asking where the consultant for the zoning reform is located in the budget documents. Ms. Havens directed the committee to page 3 of the Planning section of the budget which shows \$75,000 being allotted for this consultant. There is an additional part time position which is built into the personnel section of the budget. In addition, the Planning budget comes equip with an extra \$25,000 in economic development for other large projects (Needham street, Austin street, etc.). Ms. Candace also explained to Ald. Yates that the reason why Mayor Warren is not a member of the MAPC metro mayors group is because dues for the organization are \$10,000 a year. With the CDBG, Ald. Yates noted that the Planning Department pays the resident services coordinator of the NHA. He asked about what the outcomes of that project are. Ms. Havens will follow up with her staff about this and get back to the committee.

Ald. Baker noted his concern with the allotment for the conservation fund. He stated that \$25,000 is a meager amount for all the conservation land, and he would rather another \$25,000 be given to conservation instead of to the zoning consultant, making the allotment for the zoning consultant \$50,000.

Ald. Crossley expressed concern that only \$75,000 is allotted for consultants when it was initially decided that \$100,000 would be allotted. She asked where the extra \$25,000 has gone. Ms. Havens explained that much of the appropriation and spending depends on where the fiscal calendar begins and ends compared to when the project timeline begins and ends.

Ald. Albright commented on the incredible amount of work the Planning Department does with such little staff. She asked Ms. Havens how much income in new growth and taxes could be brought in for the city if we had one more full time planner to work on projects. Ms. Havens appreciated the point, and Ald. Albright proposed that the Board think about what adding another full time planner could do for the city.

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked whether the Planning Department has considered charging a fee for review of projects, since often times much staff time is used on special projects that are never actually filed and therefore never come to fruition. Ms. Havens said that she has thought about trying to figure how the city can be properly compensated for the time that's spent.

Ald. Johnson commented that a lot of the funding for projects and people comes from grants. She requested that in the future Ms. Lemieux provide that sort of information within the department's section of the budget rather than in the back since an incredible amount of work is paid for by these monies.

Ald. Sangiolo asked why the Planning Department doesn't have any CIP items. Ms. Havens explained that there are items listed in the CIP that are CPA/CDBG/ CPA funded but that are generally managed by DPW so the items are listed under their department, even though the funding source is Planning related.

Regarding revolving funds, Ald. Baker commented again on the inadequacy of the conservation fund and moved a resolution to seek additional funding of \$25,000 to be assigned to them. Ald. Kalis expressed some concern about the number \$25,000 and the lack of a funding source. Ald. Baker said this number isn't cast in stone; it's just a proposal to get the conversation started. The straw vote in support of this resolution was 5-0-1 (Johnson abstaining, Danberg not voting).

Ald. Sangiolo questioned the increase for the Emergency Shelter Grant. She stated that it appears in the budget that we have significantly more money for this use. It was explained to the committee that the Emergency Shelter Grant has changed to be geared more towards implementing permanent housing solutions and addressing homelessness. In FY 12 100k was allotted for an Emergency Shelter Grant which, with the program change, was increased that year with another \$57,000 increase. Now for FY 13 the amount will be \$175,000, making the increase from FY12-FY13 about \$20,000.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

Alice Ingerson, Community Preservation Program Manager, began by explaining the history and the purpose of the CPA. The CPA is a state law created in 2000 and adopted in 2001 by the city. There is a 1% local surcharge that funds the program, in conjunction with a percentage of the state's registry of deeds fees which are distributed to the 148 towns adopted around the state which have adopted the CPA. The funds can be spent each year, they can be retained for future years, or they can be used as collateral for bonding. The areas that these funds can be used for are affordable housing, historic

resources, open space, and recreation land. Ms. Ingerson then walked the committee through a detailed Powerpoint presentation about the CPA which include clearly laid-out financial charts. This presentation is attached to the end of this report.

Following Ms. Ingerson's presentation questions were taken from the Committee. Ald. Baker inquired about the proposal for a housing trust fund. Ms. Ingerson explained that there was discussion about the pre-proposal at the last CPC meeting. It would be a mechanism for funding any of the kinds of housing eligible under the CPA. We use the CIP to do long term planning for historic resources, and we use an open space plan for open spaces, so it only makes sense to have a more long term plan for housing projects.

Ald. Baker inquired about outstanding debt service. Ms. Ingerson explained that the Angino Farm bond is complete but that we are still paying on Kessler woods and Rogers Street. Kessler Wood's debt services ends in fiscal '14 and Rogers Street ends in '17. The schedule for these is included in the attached handout.

Ald. Sangiolo asked Ms. Ingerson about the house action at the state level to move forward with changes in the CPA. Ms. Ingerson explained that the document passed by the state this past Monday appears to remove footnote A, which would then allow people use funds to restore non-historic parks and playgrounds. It would also create a provision for counting other incomes towards the state match, so for example people could count hotel taxes. Additionally it provides for a \$25,000,000 appropriation to the fund from state surplus, if there is one. These changes are meant to entice the larger cities to adopt the CPA as few have.

Ald. Johnson asked Ms. Lemieux if there has been any talk about having a vote to increase the surcharge. Ms. Lemieux stated that at this time that is not something that the administration is thinking about.

Following these comments, Ald. Yates moved a straw vote of approval of the ISD, Planning, and CPA budgets and CIPs. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chairman