

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE

BUDGET REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 30, 2007

Present: Ald. Yates (Chairman), Ald. Lappin, Johnson, Danberg, Burg, Weisbuch, and Baker;

absent: Ald. Sangiolo

City staff: Steve Gartrell (Associate Director of Housing & Community Development), Michael Kruse (Director of Planning & Development), John Lojek (Commissioner of Inspectional Services)

**INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

Commissioner John Lojek presented his budget, which is very similar to the current year, and his accomplishments and goals (attached). The only point of interest was that the Code Enforcement Position, which the Committee had strongly advocated for, has been open for an extended period since the former Enforcement Agent John DeToma was promoted to Chief Inspector/Plans Examiner. The Committee wanted to know how the function was carried out with the position open. Mr. Lojek said that he and Mr. DeToma carry it out in addition to (or in place of) their other duties. The Committee wanted to know how long this unsatisfactory arrangement would remain in effect. Mr. Lojek said that the unusual combination of skills and temperament needed for this position has made it difficult to fill but that he is in the final stage of the hiring process for an excellent candidate.

The Committee voted 7-0 to accept the budget as submitted.

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Planning Director Michael Kruse presented his budget along with his accomplishments and goals (attached). Although the number of positions was at the levels sought in the past, the Committee was surprised to learn of the departure of two highly regarded staff. Long time Environmental Planner (and start up project manager of the Community Farm) Martha Horn is retiring and moving to Maine. Several Committee members expressed regret over her departure. Mr. Kruse is in the final stages of interviewing for her replacement. Community Preservation Act Manager Rob Ricci's departure for a more lucrative private sector job was also noted with regret.

Chairman Yates was pleased to note that the position has been filled by Newton History Museum Community Outreach Coordinator Alice Ingersoll, who also served as Chair of the Historic Preservation Subcommittee of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. Theresa Park's position as Telecommunications/Economic Development Planner was vacated by her acceptance of a similar position in the Lowell Division of Planning and Development, a five-minute walk from her home in downtown Lowell.

Members did not see any items they wished to strike, but several, particularly Aldermen Burg and Johnson, felt that the budget is too small by at least one Junior Planner. The quality of life in the city had declined in many ways in the city over the past several years and the Planning Department had been unable to do anything proactive to prevent or mitigate these changes.

Alderman Burg and other Committee members decided to hold off offering a resolution seeking more staff for the Planning Department until the budget is before the full Board.

(Chairman's note: One rationale for seeking more planning staff would be complete work on the many items before the Committee intended to prevent or mitigate adverse developments.)

The Committee voted 5-0-2, with Aldermen Johnson and Weisbuch abstaining, to accept the budget as submitted.

The Committee then reviewed the Conservation portion, which totals \$20,00 for FY09 and FY11 and various projects funded from Community Development Block Grant monies, which are budgeted \$335,000, \$242,500, \$150,000, \$150,000 and \$150,000 for FY08, FY09, FY10, FY11, respectively.

Brian Yates