

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2002

Present: Ald. Yates (Chairman), Ald. Baker, Fischman, Lennon, and Gentile

Absent: Ald. Johnson, Mansfield, and Sangiolo

Planning Department Staff present: Michael Kruse (Direction of Planning & Development), Stephen Gartrell (Associate Director), and Amy Yuhasz (Community Development Program Manager)

**REFERRED TO ZONING & PLANNING & FINANCE COMMITTEES**

#112-02      ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT requesting authorization to submit to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the FY03 Annual Action Plan for the City of Newton Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) Programs and the Belmont-Brookline-Newton-Waltham-Watertown HOME Consortium Program.

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0

NOTE: Associate Director Steve Gartrell and Amy Yuhasz presented the application which includes funding for Community Development Block Grant, Emergency Shelter Grant, and HOME projects. They first distributed a revised Action Plan which differed from the one distributed with the agenda in that the money allocated under affordable housing development for capacity building for CAN-DO has been eliminated. Mr. Gartrell explained that capacity building for this community housing development organization was only given for a limited period and in the new year, CAN-DO will have to sustain itself from development fees and other types of revenues.

The Committee questioned the amount of Rehab & Finances (\$456,252) compared to the amount of Newton Housing Rehab Fund (NHRF) Loans and grants (\$600,171). Mr. Gartrell that the first amount went well beyond the routine administration of the Housing Rehabilitation funds but in fact included very intensive technical assistance provided to the applicants to enable them to carry out all the technical matters needed to apply for and implement rehabilitation loans. As for the Elder Home Small Repairs, even seniors who do not qualify or who not want to apply for the funding can ask for names of contractors who can perform small jobs.

The removal of the CAN-DO from the Housing Development amount was noted above.

In the ADA Compliance & Architectural Access section, the Burr Park Access item generated much discussion. It was not clear if the ramp was for access to the park or the building. Alderman Baker said that it made more sense to complete both. The five-year Work Plan showed additional work to be done to provide access to the building in Fiscal Year 2005. Alderman Baker urged the Department to reorder the priorities so that all the work could be done at once. After some review of other documentation, it was determined that the access to the site was currently in preparation and that the work in the new year would in fact be to provide access to the building.

Some questions were raised about some of the services provided under the Human Services 15% limit and how citizens in need of particular services would know how to obtain them. All Human Service agencies funded by the City are made aware of the others so that a person who contacts one agency will be referred to all others that might help her.

Alderman Yates questioned how broadly the Economic Development Loan Pool was known. At least two community-based businesses in Upper Falls, the Moon and Six Pence and the Depot Coffee Shop, were either gone or were about to go out of business. If the existence of the Loan Pool were better known, might not employees or even customers of such business try to buy them rather than see the unique stock sold off as was the case for Moon and Six Pence?

The Public Facilities this year are limited to Nonantum with West Newton and Newton Corner scheduled for other years.

The program administration doesn't include the Housing Development and Housing Rehabilitation staffs, which are paid for under separate accounts under their sections.

The Newton Emergency Shelter Grant Program includes funds for the Bristol Lodge agency in Waltham because its shelter and soup kitchen serves homeless people from Newton. There was concern that the homelessness prevention services might not reach the homeless.

Newton administers the HOME Consortium for Brookline, Waltham, Brookline, and new member Belmont for a fee from each of their allocations. In the next year, Needham, Lexington, and Lincoln will join the Consortium.

With urgings to the staff members to take the Committee members concerns into account, the Committee voted 5-0 to authorize the submission of the applications for the CDBG, ESG, and HOME funds.

#124-02      **REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES**  
**HIS HONOR THE MAYOR**, in accordance with Section 5-1 of the  
Newton City Charter, submitting FY2003 Municipal/School Operating  
Budget, including Water/Sewer for a total of \$240,154,465.

**ACTION:**      HELD

**NOTE:**      The Committee then held a preliminary discussion with Planning Director Kruse so that whichever version of the budget was before the Committee next time could be acted upon promptly. He pointed out that the reductions before the Committee included a complicated switch that resulted in the elimination of the Landscape Design Planner's position which had been done several weeks ago and the upgrading of the part-time Telecommunications/Economic Development Planner's position to full time. He distributed a work plan for the department that laid out the distribution of duties in greater detail, but left several questions for the Committee. Who is doing the review of signs? (The Urban Design and Beautification Commission with the administrative support of Associate Director Juris Alksnitis.) How will design review of special permit petitions, administrative site plan reviews, and ZBA applications be done? (Mr. Kruse said that he had included money for on-call landscape architects for this purpose.) The Committee was not satisfied with these solutions caused by the elimination of the Landscape Design Planner's position. The Grants Specialist's position is still vacant. Although there is not a hiring freeze, the filling of vacant positions must be approved by the Mayor. Mr. Kruse had prepared a rationale for filling the long vacant position. The Committee asked for a copy. He promised to provide one.

Mr. Kruse explained that the Allocation Budget had also led to the deletion of the special maintenance money appropriated last year for trails, markers, and benches in Conservation areas. Alderman Baker asked if there was any money for maintenance of the Conservation areas. He said that there was but was unable to find it in either the regular budget or the Revolving Accounts at the back. He said that he would provide a written explanation. Alderman Baker asked if the Department could handle one or two possible new Historic Districts. He responded that without more money he could not.

The Committee adjourned with the expectation that the budgets for this Department could be rapidly dealt with at the next Committee meeting before the Inspectional Services budget is discussed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brian Yates, Chairman

Attachments: CDBG, ESG., HOME "FY03 Annual Action Plan"  
"Five3 Year Plan of Projects—Newton Community Development Block  
Grant program"  
Department of Planning and Development Work Program/July1, 2002-  
June 30, 2003 Draft for discussion purposes"  
Planning and Development Department Phone Directory 552-71354

Organizational Chart To Be Provided

Rationale for Filling grants Specialist position –to be provided

Explanation of status of regular Conservation Maintenance funding.—to be provided