

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AGENDA

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2011

7:45 pm
Room 222

ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION:

#377-09 ALD. JOHNSON requesting discussion with the Executive Secretary of the Elections Commission on the access to and quality of the Newton Voter Files. [10/26/09 @ 9:02 PM]
HELD 5-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting) on 10/26/10

It is the Chairman's intention to entertain a motion to vote No Action Necessary on the following two items:

#178-04(3) ALD. LAPPIN requesting a report from the Commissioner of Public Buildings regarding why no progress has been made on the implementation of the construction project database approved by the Board of Aldermen on April 20, 2004. [01/03/06 @ 1:34 PM]

#375-09(2) COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION requesting explanations from the Inspectional Services and Fire Department regarding requests for changes in the Brigham House Rehabilitation Project from the Project Plan that they had previously approved that resulted in increased project costs. [11/30/09 @ 10:33 AM]
HELD 5-0 (Ald. Shapiro not voting) on 05/25/10

ITEMS NOT SCHEDULED FOR DISCUSSION:

#323-10 ALD. YATES requesting a report from the Newton Housing Authority (NHA) on the posting of names and contact information of members of the Board of the NHA on bulletin boards in the community centers of NHA developments and on the website of the NHA. [11/01/10 @ 9:44 PM]
HELD 4-0 on 01/25/11

The location of this meeting is handicap accessible, and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons requiring assistance. If you have a special accommodation need, please contact the Newton ADA Coordinator Kathleen Cahill, 617-796-1125, via email at KCahill@newtonma.gov or via TDD/TTY at (617) 796-1089 at least two days in advance of the meeting date.

#375-08 ALD. PARKER, JOHNSON, LINSKY AND SWISTON requesting follow-up discussion on the Payments-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) budget resolution passed by the Board of Aldermen as part of the Fiscal year 2009 operating budget discussion. [10/14/08 @ 3:35 PM]

HELD 5-0 on 03/23/10

#300-08(2) ALD. JOHNSON, SWISTON AND SHAPIRO requesting discussion with the Executive Department and School Department as to the procedures that are in place to ensure accountability of their staff in respect to adherence to the authorization of purchasing and expenditures policy and procedures. [03/23/10]

Respectfully submitted,

Greer Tan Swiston, Chairman

#377-09

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2010

Present: Ald. Swiston (Chair), Lennon, Johnson, Sangiolo, Shapiro and Freedman

Absent: Ald. Rice and Schnipper

Also Present: Ald. Ciccone

City Staff: Clint Schuckel, Traffic Engineer; Chief Joseph LaCroix, Newton Fire Department; Craig Manseau, Executive Secretary Election Commission and Stephanie Gillman, Commissioner Public Buildings

#377-09 ALD. JOHNSON requesting discussion with the Executive Secretary of the Elections Commission on the access to and quality of the Newton Voter Files.
[10/26/09 @ 9:02 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 5-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

NOTE: Craig Manseau joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Ald. Johnson provided for her husband, Howard Johnson the Newton Census Data, dated August 2010, attached to this report. Ald. Johnson said Mr. Johnson was concerned with potential discrepancies in the voter files, sharing his concerns with Mr. Manseau. Today, Mr. Manseau informed Mr. Johnson of “any questions regarding the validity of data provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts voter information registration system can only be addressed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.” Ald. Johnson said in March 2010, Mr. Manseau referred Mr. Johnson to the state as the database is kept by the state and these were state issues. Mr. Johnson spoke with the state; the state referred him back to Mr. Manseau because the City enters their data. She asked what the Committee can do if there are in-fact discrepancies in the file.

Mr. Manseau said during his fourteen years’ experience, no one has ever presented any issues with the extracts and data. If this particular issue were factual, it would affect all the cities and towns. The 351 cities and towns use voter Registration Information System (VRIS) that is a very accurate tool. Each office is responsible for entering their own data including party changes, address changes, absentee voters, new registered voters, etc. Mr. Manseau said the Secretary of State is responsible for analyzing the data and that he cannot intercede.

Ald. Sangiolo asked what the exact discrepancy was. Ald. Johnson said there was a significant discrepancy of numbers over the past years. Chairman Swiston said Committee members were hoping to find where the discrepancy is. Ald. Shapiro asked if Mr. Johnson received the requested information from the March 2010 meeting. Ald. Johnson was unsure. Mr. Manseau

Post Audit & Oversight Committee Report
Tuesday, October 26, 2010

said he provided the data files to Mr. Johnson in July. Ald. Johnson said the City has a lot of work to complete to make the records valid and a citizen should not have to complete them. Chairman Swiston said the statewide average for churn is a 10% rate that everyone expects; there is a 25% churn rate in the City of Newton, allowing a lot of assumptions and speculations. Mr. Johnson's current data proves the percent change from 2010 to 2009 is 0.36% in the total number of residents. Data difference proves 4.7% to 12%.

Ald. Lennon said there are many legitimate reasons that could make this happen, including deaths, students leaving for college, people moving, etc. He asked Mr. Manseau to conduct a small sample study to analyze the different scenarios of City individuals perhaps finding errors in the data. This study may also help Committee members to gain an understanding on some of the reasons why there is so much change. Mr. Manseau agreed to conduct this sample study using the extract. Ald. Lennon then offered to assist Mr. Manseau and suggested he work with Mr. Johnson on this project. Ald. Freedman agreed there could be a problem due to errors, deaths, moving, etc. He agreed with Ald. Lennon to collect data samples and to compare a study with abutting towns. Ald. Shapiro asked if specific data should be considered. Ald. Lennon said it appears the issue is "in-active" or "un-registered" people on the voter list. Chairman Swiston asked Ald. Lennon if the Committee could request this study to be completed. Ald. Lennon answered yes; this exercise would allow researching the quality of the Newton voter files. Ald. Freedman suggested that Mr. Manseau work with area college students for assistance to complete the survey. Mr. Manseau agreed.

Ald. Johnson said when Mr. Manseau reports his findings; if there are no questions, she encourages a vote of no action necessary. If discrepancies are found in the study, she recommends an ongoing study be conducted every few years to maintain the quality of voter files by docketing an item recommending to the Program & Services Committee for further review. Chairman Swiston said it would be beneficial to complete periodic reviews of "known churn" but the specifics of what to request would need some more information that Committee members hope to gain with this sample study. Committee members are hopeful they will understand what specifics may be appropriate to request of what might be considered either "acceptable" or what are actual "errors".

Ald. Lennon made the motion to hold this item allowing Mr. Manseau to conduct a sample study with the opportunity to report to the Committee with his findings perhaps in January. Committee members agreed 5-0, Ald. Sangiolo not voting.