

CITY OF NEWTON

CHAIRMEN'S MEETING REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2011

Present: Ald. Lennon, Albright, Blazar, Crossley Danberg, Fuller, Hess-Mahan, Johnson, Lappin, Linsky, Merrill, Sangiolo, Schnipper, Swiston, and Yates

Tentative FY12 Budget Schedule & Mayor's Working Sessions

President Lennon presented a draft FY12 Budget Schedule for review and noted that it was based on the previous year's budget schedule. The budget would again be presented at the Board's second meeting in April, but that the meeting would take place on Wednesday, April 20, 2011 as Monday was the holiday and Tuesday was Passover. He noted that the presentations have been grouped at the beginning of the process to allow more time for deliberation as a Board. The School Department's budget will again be presented ahead of time.

A question was raised as to whether the budget could be presented a week earlier to avoid school vacation week. The President said he would ask the Executive Office if it were possible. Ald. Lennon noted that the schedule includes taking up four smaller budgets the day after the budget is presented and that he will try to get those four budgets the Friday before so that Programs and Services can be ready to discuss them. It was reiterated that it was school vacation week and could those four budgets be moved. Another concern was that it seemed that there was a lot of time at the end of the process where nothing was scheduled and it was asked if some of the Budget presentations could be more spread out to take advantage of the time at the end. Ald. Lennon noted that although there was nothing scheduled at this time, he felt it important to have time available at the end of the process in case more time is needed for deliberations. He did not want to get to the end of the process, find that the Board needed more time to deliberate, and did not have it.

Ald. Lennon noted that the Mayor has set up four Budget Working Sessions with the Board of Aldermen in March. These sessions will be an opportunity for Board members to have a dialogue with the Mayor before the budget is presented. The dates will be March 21 at 7:30 am, March 22 at 7:00 pm, March 24 at 7:30 am, and March 24 at 6:00 pm. The Mayor's Office wants to get feedback from the Board before the budget is presented. Concerns were raised that the times did not accommodate those Board members who work. It was noted that these were the dates that the Mayor had given, and the concern will be relayed back.

Concern was raised that DPW, Parks & Recreation, and Public Buildings are all scheduled on the same night. Last year the Committees could not get it done in one night. Ald. Lennon noted the problem and will work with the Clerk to revise the schedule.

It was asked how long the Mayor's Office needed to respond to Resolutions. Ald. Lennon noted that it depends on the budget and the amount of controversy. There was general consent that guidelines for the process on submitting resolutions must be distributed so that everyone is on the same page.

It was asked if the CIP and Water & Sewer Rate Hearings could be done before the budget discussions began. Ald. Lennon noted that he will ask the Mayor's Office to see if it could be done.

On-going Communication Between the BOA and School Committee

Ald. Lennon and Lappin have met with the leadership of the School Committee to discuss beginning an on-going dialogue between the School Committee and the Board. They would like to have regular discussions especially of the capital and the long range needs. The School Committee is open to the idea for this on-going dialogue.

Ald. Lennon and Lappin's thought was that the Board and School Committee sit down together at the Ed. Center and have the discussion, based on a mutually agreed upon agenda. The dialogue would help to eliminate surprises. Ald. Lennon asked if there is support to have these discussions at a variety of times throughout the year and at a variety of venues. It was asked if the dialogues could also be coordinated with the Executive Offices. There was general agreement that opening the dialogue is a good idea and perhaps include a social element to help to get to know the School Committee members better.

Cleaning Up Committee Agendas

Ald. Lennon noted that the end of the term will be here before you know it and asked that over the next few months, please look at the items that are sitting on your agendas and try to clear them.

Electronic Board Documentation

We have been doing work on electronic distribution of Board material and moving towards paperless. Boston has gone paperless and Ald. Lennon, Lappin, Albright and Mr. Olson will be going to a seminar at Boston City Hall to see the system in action. It was asked if when the electronic packet was completed, could the Clerk notify the Aldermen when it was ready. It was also asked if the City could do a bulk purchase of laptops so that the Board could get them at a reduced price.

Potential Upcoming Full Board Presentations

Ald. Lennon noted that several presentations to the Board were in the works including I-cubed and health care. It was also asked that presentations be done on creating affordable housing in Newton and OPEB. More information will be coming.

Communication Between Each Other

Communication amongst Board members has been great. If there are things that need improvement please let Aldermen Lennon or Lappin know.

Sunshine Fund

President Lennon put forward the request to increase the Sunshine Fund Contribution from the current \$2.00 per month to \$5.00 per month and to allow the fund to be used for Board of Aldermen entrance fees for events like Kidz in Jeopardy, the Spelling Bee, and the Relay for Life. A quarterly accounting would be provided on expenditures. There was consent that this would be appropriate.