

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2006

Present: Ald. Coletti (Chair), Lennon, Linsky, Gentile, Parker and Schnipper

Absent: Ald. Lipof

Also Present: Ald. Danberg; David Wilkinson (Comptroller), Re Cappoli (Purchasing Agent), Dolores Hamilton (Director, Human Resources), Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Chief John J. O'Brien (Police), Lt. Hugh Downing (Executive Officer, Police Dept.), Dan Funk (City Solicitor), Angela Smugula (Assistant City Solicitor), Fran Towle (Commissioner of Parks and Recreation), Kathy Glick-Weil (Library Director)

BUDGET REVIEW NOTE: *From 7:00-9:30 p.m. this evening, the Committee reviewed the departmental budgets for Purchasing, Human Resources and Executive. All of these budgets were approved, as presented, without modifications, by a vote of 6-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting.*

#182-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation from free cash in the amount of \$75,000 for the purpose of settling a claim brought against the City as the result of an incident in which a City plow struck a pedestrian.

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Lennon not voting)**

NOTE: Dan Funk was present this evening, along with Angela Smugula, the newest Assistant City Solicitor. This claim resulted from an accident that occurred on March 10, 2003 at the intersection of Center and Walnut Streets. The pedestrian was seriously injured (traumatic head injury) and required a substantial amount of medical treatment. The City has brought this settlement down from the original requested \$100,000 to \$75,000.

The Committee reviewed the backup information received and the Committee's concern was that the plaintiff had not been hospitalized for a significant amount of time, yet the submitted medical bill exceeded \$35,000. The amount recommended for this settlement covers all aspects of this case, and is the amount that represents full and final settlement of all claims relative to this incident.

The Committee ultimately voted 6-0, with Ald. Lennon not voting, to approve this item.

#183-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$7,414.05 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of paying an (undisputed) outstanding electricity bill at the Crystal Lake bathhouse.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Fran Towle, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, was present this evening. She indicated that a meter in the bath house at Crystal Lake had been disconnected (in terms of readings), yet it was supplying electricity to the machine which purifies the water in Crystal Lake. This has gone on over a period of two years, therefore, it has been determined that the City does, in fact, owe the amount of \$7,414.05 to pay for the electricity used. Because this bill is from a previous fiscal year, it requires a special appropriation in order to pay this amount due.

Without debate, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this request.

#184-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting acceptance of and authorization to expend the sum of \$23,000, received from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative for the purpose of purchasing five solar-powered trash compactors in city squares (in place of regular trash barrels).

ACTION: **APPROVED 6-0 (Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: These grant funds will be used to purchase five solar-powered trash compactors which will be placed in village squares to compress trash and reduce the need for frequent emptying of regular trash receptacles. This pilot program and its success will be monitored for possible future implementation elsewhere in the City.

The Committee was in full support of this item and voted 6-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this grant acceptance and authorization to expend these funds for this purpose.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#185-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$74,750 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of supplementing the electricity and natural gas accounts for the Newton Free Library.

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 8-0 ON 4/19/06

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0**

NOTE: Kathy Glick-Weil, Library Director, was present this evening. The Committee has been aware over the past few years that, particularly the library (of all City buildings) is in high use, and with the increase in cost for electricity and heat, the fact that there is a shortfall in these accounts is not surprising.

Without debate, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve this item.

REFERRED TO PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#185-06(2) HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting the following transfers of funds within the FY06 Library Department operating budget for the purpose of supplementing the electricity account:

FROM: Main Library; Full Time Salaries
(016010351101).....\$22,000
Main Library; Overtime
(0160103513001).....\$ 3,000
TO: Library; Electricity
(01601025210).....\$25,000

PROG. & SERV. APPROVED 8-0 ON 4/19/06

ACTION: APPROVED 7-0

NOTE: This item was filed in order to further supplement the funds granted through item #185-06. Ms. Glick-Weil explained that these transfers are possible due to recruitment lag moneys and surplus funds due to unanticipated retirements within the Department. The Committee understood the need for these funds and, without debate, voted 7-0 to approve this request.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC SAFETY/TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#186-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting an appropriation in the amount of \$50,799 from Budget Reserve for the purpose of purchasing 65 bulletproof vests for police officers; these vests will replace the current equipment which has reached the end of their 5-year warrantee.

ACTION: APPROVED 6-0 (Gentile not voting)

NOTE: Chief O'Brien and Lt. Hugh Downing was present this evening. They indicated that this money sought is seed money for the purchase of these replacement vests (for which the City will receive reimbursement funds from the State). There is a requirement that officers who were hired after 1989 wear bullet-proof vests while on duty. The Kevlar vests used are lightweight and will protect an officer's chest in the event that they are shot there. The Committee was informed that the current vests (which are more than 5 years old) are donated to the US Military to be used for padding on vehicles in combat zones (as a means of recycling these materials).

The Committee was in full support of this item and voted 6-0, with Ald. Gentile not voting, to approve this request. The Public Safety/Transportation Committee will hold a very brief special meeting on Monday, May 1, 2006 at 7:15 p.m., prior to the Full Board meeting, in order to vote on this item which is not admitting of delay.

#139-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a transfer of funds in the amount of \$18,000 from the Human Resources Department training account to the Planning Department consultants account for the purpose of paying for the services of a consultant to work with the Newton Centre Task Force to facilitate a series of visioning workshops among task force members and the general public.

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED WITH FUNDING FROM BUDGET RESERVE 3-0-3 (Lennon, Salvucci and Schnipper opposed; Gentile not voting)**

NOTE: Sandy Pooler was present this evening. He explained that these funds are sought from Budget Reserve for the purpose of paying a consultant for facilitating workshops (among task force members and the general public).

It is anticipated that this item will be placed on Second Call for the May 1st Board meeting.

Ald. Danberg, who is also a member of the Newton Centre Task Force, was present this evening. She requested that the Committee vote in support of this item in order to increase the ability of that group to continue its progress towards a proposal for an “economic facelift” for the village center in Newton Centre.

Members of the Committee agreed that these funds are necessary to complete the work of the Task Force, while others felt that these funds need not be spent by the City to come up with a proposal that may end up to be well beyond the capability of the City for implementation.

Ultimately, the Committee voted 3-0-3, with Ald. Lennon, Salvucci and Schnipper opposed, to approve this item.

All other items were held. The Committee adjourned at approximately 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul E. Coletti, Chairman