

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COMMITTEE  
AND POST AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT REPORT

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2007

Present from Programs & Services: Ald. Johnson, Hess-Mahan, Baker, Parker, Merrill

Present from Post Audit & Oversight: Ald. Merrill, Albright, Burg, Mansfield

Also Present: Ald. Vance, and David Olson, Peter Koutoujian, Dede Forgione

**REFERRED TO PROGRAMS & SERVICES AND POST AUDIT COMMITTEES**

#371-06(2) ALD. HESS-MAHAN requesting a Resolution to His Honor the Mayor to direct the Interim Executive Secretary of the Election Commission to provide the Board of Aldermen and the citizens of Newton with all policies and procedures which have been or are being developed to assure that when a petition is submitted to the Election Commission for verification that the signatures are of registered voters, that all valid signatures on the petition will be counted. [1-19-07@2:02PM]

**ACTION:** **PROGRAMS & SERVICES APPROVED 5-0**  
**POST AUDIT & OVERSIGHT APPROVED 4-0**

**NOTE:** This is a special joint meeting of the program and services committee and the post audit and oversight committee.

Ald. Hess-Mahan docketed this item from the discussions of counting of petition signatures in the last special election as well as the procedures for a referendum. The purpose of this resolution was really to give the public, as well as the board, some idea of measures that are going to be taken in order to prevent miscounts from occurring in the future and also to shed a little light on what the procedures are particularly in respect to the Voter Registration Information System (VRIS).

After much discussion regarding how signatures are verified, entered into the VRIS during municipal and state regulations, it was agreed that there were many questions remaining for the aldermen. Therefore Ald. Johnson asked Ald. Hess-Mahan how he wanted to proceed with his resolution. Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that he would like to move the resolution tonight and not NAN it.

Ald. Johnson stated that since the resolution asks the Mayor to direct the Interim Executive Secretary of the Election Commission to provide the Board of Aldermen and the citizens of Newton with all policies and procedures, we should proceed with this request.

Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that there were some items that he wanted to have addressed in writing and wanted to discuss with Elections what a reasonable time frame would be. Ald. Hess-Mahan stated that he wanted to get this information and get it out to the public. Mr. Koutoujian stated that these are procedures for internal control and not public consumption.

Ald. Johnson stated that the committees should pass the resolution and that Ald. Hess-Mahan should work with Elections to develop the time frame for coming back to the committees in order that the residents of Newton feel comfortable with Elections process.

Ald. Hess-Mahan asked to make a wording change in the second line where it should say of the Programs and Services and Post Audit Committees rather than just the Committees.

Ald. Parker, coming very late in the meeting, proposed two amendments that he would like to see. The first one was technical. In the fifth line down it says when and if, take out "and if" and make it say just "when signatures are submitted." He distributed the text of a proposed amendment that would make sure that the process did not have any influence from elected officials. Members of the committee and Mr. Koutoujian, did not think that his request was appropriate based on the fact that he was requesting a change in policy or process which is not something in which the Board should be involved. Policies are the responsibility of the departments. Ald. Parker withdrew his amendment and indicated he might re-file as a separate docket item.

A motion to approve the resolution with the wording changes offered by Ald. Hess-Mahan and the first one offered by Ald. Parker was approved unanimously by both committees. A revised copy is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Programs & Services Chair

Carleton P. Merrill, Post Audit & Oversight Chair

WHEREAS, the Election Commission has determined that the Election Department initially miscounted the number of valid signatures on the petition relative to the Newton North High School site plan referendum;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Interim Executive Secretary of the Election Commission be requested to advise the Chairmen of the Post Audit and Programs & Services Committees, and through them the Board of Aldermen and the citizens of Newton, of any and all policies and procedures which have been or are anticipated to be developed and/or implemented to assure that, when citizens submit signatures to the Commission or the City Clerk for verification as registered voters of the City of Newton, the Election Department will assure that all valid signatures are accounted for. Such policies and procedures may include, without limitation, safeguards to ensure accurate and proper verification of registration status of signers and certification of valid signatures, adequate supervision and oversight of the verification and certification process, proper use of the computerized voter registration information system (VRIS) to verify registration status and certify valid signatures on local petitions, requisite training of Election Department personnel and supervisors, and adequate control procedures for tracking custody, possession, control and review of petition papers as well as the identity of reviewers.