

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

Present: Ald. Linsky (Chair), Danberg, Coletti, Fischman, Swiston, Harney and Vance

Absent: Ald. Ciccone

Also Present: Ald. Sangiolo and Freedman

City Staff: Sandy Pooler (Chief Administrative Officer), Lt. Hugh Downing (Newton Police Department) and David Naparstek (Commissioner of Health and Human Services)

#272-04 ALD. SANGIOLO AND HARNEY proposing amendment to Sec.19-201, *Resident sticker and visitor permit parking program*, to include streets that are not 100% residential. (Public hearing held on 11/17/04)
HELD 6-0 (Ald. Swiston and Coletti not present and voting) on 6-18-08

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 6-0-1** (Ald. Fischman abstaining, Ciccone not present and voting)

NOTE: This item was previously discussed at public hearings on November 17, 2004 and on March 19, 2008.

Ald. Linsky provided a brief history of the item. When the item was first docketed in 2004, Cheswick Road in Auburndale was a particular concern due to the increase parking from students at Lasell College. The residents living in the neighborhood suggested parking restrictions to prevent commuters and college students from parking in the area.

Ald. Sangiolo also joined the committee this evening. Ald. Sangiolo stated she has not had an opportunity to meet with the Law Department to develop draft language concerning the issues discussed previously.

Ald. Linsky spoke of the number of streets involved. The map provided from the Traffic Engineer on June 18, 2008 showed that there are approximately seven hundred ninety streets involved that are not 100% residential. The existing ordinance requires streets must be 100% residential, which Cheswick Road is not as Lasell College owns two properties at the end of the street.

Ald. Harney stated there are currently four conditions in the ordinances required in order to be considered for resident sticker parking. First, signatures from 50% residents on the street. Second, the distance had to be at least one street block in length. Third, the street has to be boarded by only residential properties. Fourth, alternative restrictions have to have been in effect for at least one year.

Ald. Harney commented on the residents concerns. Calling the police, student behavior, litter and noise is a complete burden to them. He stated the residents want the parking problem solved. The parking permit only allows students to park in the lot designated. The problem is that students are parking where they choose because they know the work force is not

there to enforce the regulations. The residents want to know why they cannot have resident parking only. Another concern is that the college is expanding and during construction, Lasell will continue to lose parking lots meaning the numbers of cars will increase on the street and that the enforcement of restrictions will be even more difficult.

Public Comment:

Dr. Neil Epstein, 44 Cheswick Road stated the City has tried to enforce no parking on one side of the street from 9 am–5 pm and the other side from 8 am-10 am over the past four years but the problem still exists. Dr. Epstein stated the City is being negligent and how much further can they push these residents. Dr. Epstein also added he is “fed-up” with no available parking, litter, daily calls to the police and traffic departments. Dr. Epstein asked the committee for residents to have the opportunity to apply for resident only parking.

Ernie Zupancic, 37 Cheswick Road stated that Lasell College is very different from Boston College in regards to parking because the vast majority of Lasell students are resident students and a significant number of Boston College students are commuters. He also agreed with Dr. Epstein stating that the enforcement hours of 8 am-10 am is not solving the parking problem.

Committee members stated their concerns and offered many solutions to this issue. Ald. Coletti offered a friendly amendment to change the item to:

At the discretion of the Traffic Commission and the Board of Aldermen, they may entertain streets with less than 100% at their discretion.

Associate Solicitor Marie Lawlor would be contacted to prepare a draft Board order to this effect.

Ald. Danberg moved to approve this item as amended, the committee voted in favor with Ald. Fischman abstaining.

#307-08 ALD. FREEDMAN, SCHNIPPER, CICCONE, LENNON, LINSKY, DANBERG, SALVUCCI, HESS-MAHAN, COLETTI, ALBRIGHT, GENTILE, PARKER, JOHNSON, MANSFIELD, SWISTON, LAPPIN, FISCHMAN, HARNEY, BAKER & YATES requesting discussion with the Police Chief and the Executive Department of options for restoring positions recently cut from the Newton Police Department. [08-13-08 @ 8:50 AM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 7-0 (Ald. Ciccone not present and voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Freedman joined the committee for discussion on this item. Ald. Freedman stated this item was docketed because the vacant positions were part of the budget deliberation. The concerns raised were the recent cuts in the Police Department. Ald. Freedman asked what are the implications to public safety as it must be a top priority in the City. What options financially and otherwise must be done to restore the cuts to make sure citizens’ safety is assured.

Lt. Hugh Downing, Newton Police Department and Sandy Pooler, Chief Administrative Officer also joined the committee for discussion on this item. Lt. Downing told the committee there are currently two vacancies in the Newton Police Department.

Lt. Downing stated one position was created as a result of one police officers lateral transfer to Boston in July 2008. The other position was restored to the budget. Last fiscal year there were one hundred fifty one officers, currently this fiscal year there are one hundred thirty seven.

The Police Department is currently interviewing four candidates from four communities for these two vacant positions. The youth officer position was restored on September 16, 2008 by Officer Mace who has over twenty years experience. An elder affairs officer is the next position the Police Department hopes to fill.

The committee understood these positions are lateral transfers, which employees are already trained in another community who are prepared to step in to accept these positions after the interviews are completed which will automatically allow employing staff. The employee will not have to go to an academy for field training; the City will not have to pay for the six-month trial period allowing these employees an immediate start.

Ald. Freedman also noted, he understands that staffing ratio is measured by position per-capita and the City of Newton is very low compared to other cities and towns in Massachusetts. He asked Lt. Downing if that was correct and second is there a bench mark and what adjustments does Newton make? Ald. Freedman also asked what is an appropriate staffing ratio and is Newton appropriately staffed.

Lt. Downing stated based upon the table provided by the Federal Government Newton is not correctly staffed, in fact it is low. The Federal Government guidelines take into consideration different items when putting together the table but the biggest item considered is the community policing aspects of large cities and towns. In the City of Newton community policing has been structured back considerably with the recent cutbacks. Lt. Downing commented that Newton is fortunate with a low crime rate compared to other cities and towns.

Sandy Pooler stated the City intends to restore another Police Department position once the money is received from the retirement office, which is approximately \$50,000.

Lt Downing asked the committee as a concern to Chief O'Brien if the City were to restore a position please make sure this position is sustainable.

The committee asked Lt. Downing for a Police Department overtime report (attached to this report).

Committee members stated their concerns regarding public safety and the security for residents and offered different solutions to this issue. Ald. Coletti offered a Resolution to change the item to:

Resolution for restoration of four to five police officer positions determined and recommended by John O'Brien, Police Chief of Newton Police Department. Committee recommending two patrol, one drug, one elder affairs, and one traffic officers.

Ald. Swiston moved to approve this item as a resolution. The Committee then voted to create a new item and to vote no action necessary on the main item.

#307-08(2) PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE proposing a RESOLUTION to His Honor the Mayor for the restoration of four to five police officer positions to be determined and recommended by the Police Chief of the Newton Police Department.

ACTION: **APPROVED 7-0 (Ald. Ciccone not present and voting)**

NOTE: Committee members were satisfied with this Resolution. Ald. Swiston moved to approve this item, the committee voted in favor.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANS. AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#30-08 ALD. COLETTI requesting a list of current vacancies in the Police, Fire and Public Works Departments, with specific discussion in Committee relative to Police Department vacancies. [01-15-08 @ 11:15 AM]
HELD 5-0-1 (Ald. Harney abstaining, Ald. Swiston and Coletti not present and voting) on 6-18-08
FINANCE HELD 8-0 on 9-08-08

ACTION: **HELD 7-0 (Ald. Ciccone not present and voting)**

NOTE: Ald. Coletti stated Post Audit and Oversight Committees would also hear this item to ensure these departments are being monitored for their overtime accounts, when vacancies occur, when positions are filled and when the overtime expenses are paid.

Ald. Coletti made the motion to hold.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANS. AND PROG. & SERV COMMITTEES

#346-05 ALD. JOHNSON AND ALBRIGHT requesting discussion with the Mayor, Police and Fire Chiefs and Health Commissioner regarding the City of Newton's city-wide emergency preparedness.
PROGRAM & SERVICES NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0 on 9-6-06

ACTION: **HELD 6-0 (Ald. Vance and Ciccone not present and voting)**

NOTE: David Naparstek, Commissioner of Health and Human Services and Lt. Hugh Downing, Newton Police Department joined the committee for discussion on this item.

Mr. Naparstek provided an overview of this item stating the City of Newton is very well prepared for an emergency if one shall arise. Local, State and Regional preparedness by Police, Fire, Health, and other City Departments participate.

Mr. Naparstek explained the way emergency preparedness is structured. It is structured by using Federal Government framework titled Emergency Support Functions (ESF) which the Federal, State and City of Newton use. There are seventeen different functions and seventeen chairpersons who have their own responsibilities to make sure the capacity is current and have the understanding and capability with the City that they can provide emergency services.

Mr. Naparstek met with all the chair people and participants of the ESF in June 2008 to update standards and to discuss coordination of services. Field exercises are regularly being practiced where evaluations are made and improvement plans are recommended. The City of Newton share their resources with twenty-six other communities in the area. Newton also has six emergency dispensing sites.

Lt. Downing stated that the Fire Department has a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). LEPC is the Hazmat Response Committee, which includes private industries, Fire, Police, Health, School, and Executive Departments. Field exercises are also held by the LEPC.

According to National Incident Management System (NIMS) Citywide Newton is eighty-one percent compliant. Newton is not one-hundred percent because not all elected officials are NIMS trained. Lt. Downing is working on the City becoming one-hundred percent compliant again.

Lt. Downing has worked over the past month determining seven sites for the distribution of ice, food and water. The seven sites identified include four sites on the south side and three on north side of the City.

Lt. Downing stated the biggest obstacle in the City for the past five years is losing this year Connect CTY. Connect CTY or Reverse 911 is one of the biggest weaknesses the City has. He asked the committee if they have the opportunity to re-instate a program to please do.

The committee asked Lt. Downing and Mr. Naparstek for an Emergency Support Function (ESF) Overview Chart, ESF Chairpersons Chart, and Emergency Preparedness Fact Sheet for residents (all attached to this report).

Ald. Linsky made a recommendation to hold this item to invite Chief LaCroix (Newton Police Department) and Jeremy Solomon (Policy & Communications Director) to join the committee for discussion.

Ald. Swiston made the motion to hold.

At approximately, 10:45 pm Ald. Danberg moved for adjournment, which was approved 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen M. Linsky, Chairman