

Appropriations Committee

Chairman Mortimer, Infurna, Brodeur,
Tramontozzi, Forbes, Wright, McAteer-
Margolis, Seaboyer, Medeiros, Conn,
Boisselle

In attendance: Mayor Robert J. Dolan, City
Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo, City
Solicitor Robert Van Campen, Human
Resources Director Marianne Long, Health
Director Ruth Clay

Appropriations Committee called to order by Chairman Mortimer at 7:52 p.m. Order No. 09-166A, Amending Something Previously Adopted Order No. 09-166 – City of Melrose Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2010 be amended by striking the sum of “\$60,199,583.62” and inserting in place thereof: “\$59,389,006.78” as set forth in the attached document.

Alderman Medeiros moves to recommend, 2nd by President Boisselle.

President Boisselle motions to suspend the rules to hear from the Administration, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. All in favor.

Mayor Dolan says the Senate will release its final budget by Monday, June 22 and he will be prepared to present any amendments necessary on June 25. Each department has been asked to reduce its budget by 1%. There is a total of \$809,345.60 in cuts being made in this order. A couple of positions are being looked at to reinstate if the City receives additional funds.

Mr. Dello Russo says they haven't had to cut into the Stabilization Fund.

Alderman Conn says he wants to compliment the Administration in how finances have been handled over the last couple of years. Melrose doesn't have chaos and Melrose doesn't have large-scale layoffs this year. That's due to good financial management in the City.

Alderman Brodeur says in terms of the Planning Board budget, the Washington Street project is pretty far along. Mayor Dolan says the Washington Street project is complete. Alderman Brodeur asks if there is anything big on the horizon. Mayor Dolan says the Grove Street corner lot is ready to submit plans. Alderman Brodeur asks if municipal debt and health insurance are hard numbers. Mayor Dolan says they are hard numbers; health insurance will work on a premium basis – it's no longer self-funded. These are the numbers that are needed. Alderman Brodeur says in regards to potentially restoring things, a 2-3 year view has to be taken. Some money is stimulus dollars and the plan is it will go away. Mayor Dolan says one of the biggest cuts is SPED circuit breaker dollars. It has been reduced to under 40% reimbursement; that's a \$300,000 loss to the City.

Alderman Infurna echoes Alderman Conn's view regarding the Administration's handling of the City's finances. She asks Mayor Dolan about his recent comment regarding reducing the hours of a position in the City Clerk's office. Mayor Dolan says he misspoke when he said the Assistant City Clerk's hours were being cut; the position is

an assistant to the City Clerk.

Alderman Wright asks about the \$5,000 cut in the premium line-item of the City Solicitor's budget; he doesn't want to be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Attorney Van Campen says he was able to negotiate with the City's agent. There is no reduction in coverage, no increases in deductibles. It is just a reduction in the premium cost.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if the vacancy in the tree department will be left unfilled at this time. Mayor Dolan says trees are being planted with in-house employees; DPW is going to be tight this year. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if the department will be able to handle trees in an emergency; Mayor Dolan says yes. Alderman McAteer-Margolis thanks Mayor Dolan for his work on Beacon Hill as an advocate for restoring local aid.

Alderman Medeiros echoes the sentiments of Aldermen Conn and Infurna. She says in a different city these cuts may not have been handled so well. The creativity that went into it resulted in smart solutions.

Mayor Dolan says the economy will eventually turn around but revenues will lag an additional year. The State House has to make fundamental structural changes. Next year may be as bad as this year and it's time to do something; people can't take it any more.

Alderman Conn motions to amend the bottom-line to \$59,390,229.02, 2nd by Alderman Brodeur. All in favor.

Alderman Medeiros moves to recommend as amended, 2nd by Alderman Brodeur. All in favor.

Order No. 09-242, Authorizing the Mayor, in accordance with M.G.L., Chapter 40, Sec. 4A, to execute an agreement between the City of Melrose and the Town of Wakefield in order to allow both communities to share the services and costs associated with a common health department as set forth herein.

Alderman Infurna moves to recommend, 2nd by Alderman McAteer-Margolis.

Mayor Dolan says this is a revolutionary vote. He knows this will be successful. This is the first community to regionalize a department. It's been discussed for a long time. Through the efforts of Ruth Clay over the past 13 years, she has built her department into one of the most progressive Health Departments in the state. Wakefield's Health Department needs improving. Melrose has the expertise to give and Wakefield has a need. He says this move will break down barriers and will evolve as a model that will be replicated in the state. Melrose will save over \$30,000 next fiscal year. It will be a heavy burden on Ruth Clay but he believes she will do a great job.

Alderman Brodeur says this is the innovation that the City has talked about; he hopes it creates an incentive in the legislature that will allow more opportunities like this. He asks if Ms. Clay will retain the right to hire and fire in both municipalities. Ms. Clay says yes; she has done some advertising and is getting good results. Alderman Brodeur asks who will provide legal services to the Department. Attorney Van Campen says presently he

works in conjunction with Ms. Clay for Melrose. Wakefield's Town Counsel would work with Ms. Clay on a Wakefield matter. Ms. Clay says both communities use the Malden District Court, where they are well established. Alderman Brodeur asks in terms of liability of negligence if Melrose's carrier would have to step in. Attorney Van Campen says that given the indemnity clause in the contract, Wakefield's insurance company would step in on a Wakefield matter. There is a clear division and both insurance companies understand that division. Alderman Brodeur asks about the school nurses. Ms. Clay says the Wakefield school nurses work for the Wakefield School Department. Alderman Brodeur says the City has thought this through and has dotted the Is and crossed the Ts. It's a big deal in changing the way the City does business.

Alderman Tramontozzi says the idea of regionalization is a terrific way to go especially in these areas. He praises all of them for their efforts. The indemnity language is important to have. He asks if the contract also covers Ms. Clay's travel to Wakefield. Attorney Van Campen says yes; the agreement was drafted with Wakefield Town Counsel, MAPC and himself. Alderman Tramontozzi asks if it is supported by the state as well. Attorney Van Campen says by statute the agreement may only be authorized by the Board of Aldermen. Ms. Clay says she is pretty sure Melrose is the first community to take advantage of the statute.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if the two vacancies are strictly for Wakefield. Ms. Clay says she isn't sure; she hasn't been able to go to Wakefield yet. Alderman Seaboyer asks if there are any pending problems in Wakefield. Ms. Clay says she has seen the Board of Health minutes for the last year and there is one ongoing beaver issue.

Alderman Wright asks if there are no statutory issues; Ms. Clay says no. Alderman Wright asks what issues might arise concerning collective bargaining. Ms. Clay says the incumbent sanitary inspector is in the ACHE union. She has notified the union that the sanitary inspector will work in a wider area, not necessarily increase the workload with two other part-time inspectors. The mileage stipend change is to the employee's benefit. Alderman Wright compliments Ms. Clay in her innovation.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis says she is concerned that this will be a lot of work and asks if Ms. Clay is being compensated. Mayor Dolan says her compensation has been increased both in moving up and moving forward. He'd like Ms. Clay to stay in Melrose for a long time. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if grants will be pursued in Wakefield. Mayor Dolan says there are many regionalized grants that may be applied for. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks about the administrative costs. Attorney Van Campen says that Wakefield will pay its incumbent Health Department secretary's salary.

President Boisselle asks where the two part-time inspectors will be based. Ms. Clay says she has to evaluate the situation since there is not much physical space in Wakefield. President Boisselle asks if the records will be kept in Melrose or electronically. Ms. Clay says the paper files will remain where they are. She purchased a new software program for inspections fieldwork and hopes to incorporate Wakefield into it. President Boisselle asks if the software will be accessed by both Wakefield and Melrose. Ms. Clay says she'll have to negotiate with the software company to add Wakefield at no added cost. President Boisselle asks about the incumbent inspector. Ms. Clay says the Health Agent position is being reorganized and is being replaced by two part-time sanitation inspectors. President Boisselle asks if the incumbent has

applied for one of the positions; Ms. Clay says not yet.

Alderman Seaboyer asks what happens if this doesn't work out. Attorney Van Campen says there is a termination clause which is pretty straightforward.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks about the service delivery portion and if someone will continue to be in the Melrose office. Ms. Clay says yes; other staff in the office includes the Substance Abuse Coordinator and Animal Control Officer.

Alderman Medeiros asks about flu shot service. Ms. Clay says that theoretically there will be more options but Wakefield doesn't charge for flu shots. Wakefield doesn't bill Medicare like Melrose does, which pays for staff. That is something that will be discussed with Wakefield's Town Administrator. Alderman Medeiros says in the chain of command, everyone understands they answer to her. She asks Ms. Clay if she answers to the Mayor or the Town Administrator. Ms. Clay says she answers to the Mayor. Alderman Medeiros asks about the secretary in Wakefield. Attorney Van Campen says she'll remain in Wakefield and paid 100% by Wakefield. Alderman Medeiros asks if there is a contingency plan in the event a personnel issue arises. Attorney Van Campen says if a Wakefield employee files a complaint, that protocol will follow Wakefield policy. Alderman Medeiros says she thinks it will be a nice partnership. She is happy to see this opportunity for Ms. Clay to grow and she hopes it's an opportunity to keep her in Melrose.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

Order No. 09-243, Establish a Donation Account Name: Celebrate Melrose
Acct. No. 2867

Alderman Medeiros motions for a 1-minute recess, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. All in favor.

Appropriations reconvenes.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to suspend the rules, 2nd by Alderman Medeiros.

Mayor Dolan says he has had discussions with the Chamber of Commerce about the Victorian Fair becoming a full weekend of events, not just one day. The idea is to create a stage at the Middle School, perhaps shutting down the Fellsway, and having a festival or concert and possibly fireworks. Mayor Lyons has taken on this project and has really embraced it. It will help local businesses and create more free activities to celebrate the community. The account will be run out of the Mayor's office.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

Alderman Brodeur motions to adjourn, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. All in favor.

Appropriations adjourns at 9:10 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees