

Finance Committee

Chairman McAteer-Margolis,
Tramontozzi, Conn, Wright,
Mortimer
Attending: Brodeur, Forbes, Infurna,
Medeiros, Seaboyer, Boisselle
In attendance: City Clerk Mary-Rita
O'Shea

Finance Committee called to order by Chairman McAteer-Margolis at 7:48 p.m. Order No. 09-124, Fees and charges which may be set by local authority pursuant to MGL Chapter 262, Sec. 34

Alderman Mortimer motions to suspend the rules to allow the City Clerk to come forward, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Ms. O'Shea says the schedule before them is for projected revenues if the fees are increased. The fee proposal is to offset the cost of running the office.

Alderman Wright says he notices that the City currently charges the same amount for out of town birth certificates and Melrose birth certificates and asks if she is proposing an increase for out of town birth certificates. Ms. O'Shea says the increase would apply to someone who is not a resident of Melrose. Alderman Wright asks if someone residing in Malden would pay more than someone residing in Melrose. Ms. O'Shea says there were 1200 births and only 109 live in Melrose. Alderman Wright asks if Winchester charges different rates. Ms. O'Shea says she didn't survey them. Alderman Wright asks if there is more work involved for Malden births and if the City Solicitor has looked at this; Ms. O'Shea says only the Mayor and the City Auditor has reviewed it. Alderman Wright says she may want to talk with the City Solicitor about charging nonresidents more than residents.

Alderman Conn says he is not sure he supports this order and asks if it will generate \$23,000. Ms. O'Shea says that figure is conservative. Alderman Conn says that each year every fee is raised by small amounts. Every year the water bill increases and real estate taxes increase and soon the gasoline tax will be going up. He is very concerned about living in Melrose and in the Commonwealth. He is worried about the trend of raising fees every year. It doesn't seem like a good idea to raise fees of things that people need. Raising fees has a significant impact over time.

Alderman Wright asks when the fees were last raised. Ms. O'Shea says it was 2 or 3 years ago; she has to reduce her department's budget by 5% and the increases will make up the difference. She says her office generates \$200,000 per year. Alderman Wright says under the General Laws she may raise revenue to run her office; it would be helpful to know what her expenses are. Ms. O'Shea says one expense is the security paper used for official certificates costs \$1500 every 6 months.

Alderman Brodeur says he appreciates her approach but based on the chart she has provided the aldermen, Melrose will be significantly out in front of other communities if these increases are approved; he is not comfortable with that. Ms. O'Shea says all other communities are looking at their rates. Alderman Brodeur says he doesn't think a tiered system is a good one; it's hard to justify when there is not a lot of extra cost.

Alderman Forbes asks if birth, death and marriage certificates are purchased from a private company. Ms. O'Shea says they are recorded in her office and printed on security paper. Alderman Forbes asks how much the dog tags cost; Ms. O'Shea says it's minimal. She says the cost factor is the person serving the person at the counter.

Alderman Tramontozzi says the previous speakers made important comments for the Board to consider. These are dire times and to ask for an increase in fees is something the board has to be careful in justifying. He understands that the City Clerk has to do what she has to do, but the Board has to carefully scrutinize every request for an increase in fees to counteract budget cuts that are anticipated. He would rather see the FY10 budget and implement budget cuts before increasing fees. He is reluctant to support this at this time.

Alderman Medeiros says there is a common theme for the next few orders but she wants to compliment the City Clerk and her office for working hard and being very good at customer service.

Alderman Conn motions to place the order on hold, 2nd by Alderman Wright. All in favor.

Order No. 09-125, Amending Melrose Revised Ordinances, Chapter 152, Licenses & Permits, Article II, Sec. 152-12 Common Victuallers and Innholders as set forth herein. Proposed fee to become effective as of July 1, 2009. Chairman McAteer-Margolis says there is a letter from the Mayor and the City Clerk.

Alderman Wright motions to place the order on hold, 2nd by Alderman Conn.

Alderman Brodeur says a comparison with other communities for the next meeting would be helpful; this fee hasn't been raised in 20 years. Ms. O'Shea says in 2007 it was increased in the Massachusetts General Laws to \$75.00. Alderman Brodeur says the fee hasn't gone up in Melrose in 20 years and asks if the fee is reasonable.

On the motion to place on hold, All in favor.

Order No. 09-126, Amending Melrose Revised Ordinances, Chapter 93 (Animals), Article II, Dogs, Section 93-9 Registration and licensing, paragraph C be amended as set forth herein. Proposed fee to become effective as of July 1, 2009.

Alderman Wright motions to place the order on hold, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Alderman Mortimer motions to adjourn, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Finance Committee adjourns at 8:11 p.m.

There are no orders in the Public Service Committee or the Committee on Legal and Legislative Matters to be acted on.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees