

FY2010 Budgetary Hearings

Appropriations Committee

Vice-Chairman Infurna, Brodeur,
Tramontozzi, Forbes, Wright,
Seaboyer, Medeiros, Conn,
Boisselle
Absent: Mortimer, McAteer-Margolis
In attendance: Mayor Robert J.
Dolan; City Auditor/CFO Patrick
Dello Russo; Veterans Agent John
Dunne, Veterans Advisory Board
Chairman Bob Driscoll; City Clerk
Mary-Rita O'Shea; Elections
Administrator Linda-Lee Angiolillo;
City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin;
Police Chief Mike Lyle; Fire Chief
John O'Brien; City Solicitor Robert
Van Campen

Appropriations Committee called to order by Vice-Chairman Infurna at 7:30 p.m. Order No. 09-166, City of Melrose Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2010 in the amount of \$60,281,978.62

Alderman Forbes motions to open Public Participation, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

Ted Kenney, 1062 Main Street, expresses his concern about the budget and funding public safety. He hopes the police and fire departments will be fully funded.

Alderman Forbes motions to close Public Participation, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

Order No. 09-196, APPOINTMENT OF: John DaRos, 3 Ashland St. TO: Human Rights Commission Expiration: last day of February, 2012

Mayor Dolan says it's his pleasure to appoint Mr. DaRos and the City is fortunate to have him volunteer in this capacity.

Mr. DaRos says he and his husband Greg moved to Melrose two years ago. They were here about two weeks when Mayor Dolan arrived at the house with a book of Melrose. It was one of many ways he's felt welcomed in Melrose. He is interested in serving on the Human Rights Commission for several reasons. He wants everyone who moves here to be welcomed here. He works at a bank, and he has experience in banks and municipalities in becoming more inclusive.

Alderman Tramontozzi says he is very impressed with Mr. DaRos' resume. He thanks him for volunteering for this very important position.

Alderman Tramontozzi moves to recommend, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Order No. 09-182, APPOINTMENT Of: Maureen Buzby, 54 West Highland Ave. To: Human Rights Commission Term to expire on the last day of February, 2012

Mayor Dolan says Maureen Buzby doesn't need an introduction – she's been very active in the community for years. She is the community's biggest fan of the City's youth and she'll do a wonderful job on the Human Rights Commission. She epitomizes the quality of people living in Melrose. He thanks her for her time.

Ms. Buzby says she wants to publicly thank Mayor Dolan for opening the Middle School on inauguration day. She says one reason she is excited to serve on the Human Rights Commission is related to her work with MAAV's mentoring program. She hopes Melrosians continues to be as welcoming to her mentee as they were to her when she moved here 30 years ago.

Alderman Tramontozzi thanks Ms. Buzby for volunteering in so many capacities and particularly for the Human Rights Commission.

Alderman Tramontozzi moves to recommend, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

Alderman Conn motions to suspend the regular order of business to allow Mayor Dolan and Mr. Dello Russo to address the committee, 2nd by Alderman Brodeur. All in favor.

Mayor Dolan says last week he received dramatic news from the state house. The House and Senate worked hard for the last two years to commit to local aid but no one knows how it will end up this year. State revenues are down monthly, creating uncertainty. There's a \$1.8 million reduction in local aid to Melrose in the governor's FY10 budget; the House budget has an even larger reduction. It's a very long budget process and there could be changes to the City's budget by the end. He says he and Mr. Dello Russo have cut \$300,000 in Capital expenses from the budget. The budget before the Aldermen is strong and balanced and preserves services and jobs without touching the majority of fees like sports and trash. The unions have agreed to 1%-1%-1% COLA increases to 2012; reasonable reductions were made without losing jobs. He might have to make serious deductions to the budget when the state budget is finalized.

Mr. Dello Russo says the actions of the state will not diminish what Melrose does internally. This budget is extremely prudent yet Melrose remains flexible.

Alderman Conn asks if the gap will be narrowed by not spending \$239,000 in the Capital Stabilization Fund. Mr. Dello Russo says that's correct; the City will not be purchasing two vehicles. He says the Board of Aldermen took the prudent move to go slowly on expending those funds.

Alderman Brodeur says the House Ways and Means Committee generates the state budget and 1500 amendments have been filed. It's the beginning of a long haul. There's a lot of competition for funding.

Veterans	67,154.65	Veterans Agent John Dunne Veterans Advisory Board Chairman Bob Driscoll City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Mr. Dunne says this budget is bare bones. All money is expended and distributed locally. It's very important to local families. The funds are 75% reimbursable from the State. Mr. Dello Russo says the budget is very lean and additional funds for veterans benefits will be sought as needed.

Alderman Conn asks if this department is being reorganized. Mr. Dello Russo says yes. Alderman Conn asks if the position is going to go to a full 40-hour week. Mr. Dello Russo says it will be between 30-35 hours. Alderman Conn asks if Mr. Dunne is filling the position at this time. Mr. Dello Russo says that's correct. Alderman Conn asks if it's possible to give an analysis as far as where the City stands with State reimbursement; he'd like to see what the City is seeking and what the City is receiving. Mr. Dello Russo says he will provide that. Alderman Conn asks how many veterans are currently being served. Mr. Dunne says there are 21. Alderman Conn asks on what schedule the City receives reimbursement. Mr. Dunne says quarterly; the bank now lists the reimbursements separately.

Alderman Forbes asks if all the veterans being served are Gulf War veterans. Mr. Dunne says it runs the gamut – WWII, Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf. Alderman Forbes asks if the State is going to cut veteran reimbursement. Mr. Dunne says no – personnel have been cut over the past 10 years but the funding has increased.

President Boisselle says the veterans' benefits line-item for next year is \$25,000 and FY09 actual expenditures are over \$40,000. He asks if there is something the Aldermen should be aware of. Mr. Driscoll says the line-item is a guesstimate and \$25,000 is a starting point. They have lost WWII veterans but they're gaining Iraq veterans. He says the veteran population is increasing in Melrose.

Alderman Brodeur says the veterans' benefits aren't limited to combat veterans. Mr. Dunne says no; changes have taken place in the past 10 years to include widows and dependant children.

Alderman Conn motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Forbes. All in favor.

Memorial and Veterans	6,000.00	Veterans Agent John Dunne
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Mr. Dunne says these funds are used for Memorial Day, the Memorial Day parade, and Veterans Day expenses.

Alderman Conn motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

Beebe Estate	9,500.00	Trustees Betsy Friedberg and Jean Gorman
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Ms. Friedberg says the Beebe Estate is managing to get by just like everyone else. The trustees have done some patching on the heating system and installed a programmable thermostat. It was a very harsh winter and there was substantial damage done to the cupola. Repairs are planned to stabilize it for a few years but it will require more extensive work. A new paint job was funded by the Friends group and the wall in the double parlor was repaired, which should last for several generations. The Friends group is also funding a new driveway sign. Artists continue to have shows every month and rentals continue.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

City Clerk	213,748.05	City Clerk Mary-Rita O'Shea
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Ms. O'Shea says every department was asked to reduce their budget by 5%. She eliminated a part-time position and put together a proposed change of fees to support that position. It's still pending in committee.

Alderman Medeiros says that last year line-item 530500 – office supplies – was eliminated. Ms. O'Shea says all office supplies are now in the IT Department.

Alderman Tramontozzi asks if it's true that she could still work off the budget before them if the fee increase request fails. Ms. O'Shea says when the part-time position was created the goal was to cross train with the Elections office. Without the funding, cross training can't happen. Alderman Tramontozzi asks if the part-time position could be funded if the fee increase passes. Ms. O'Shea says the dog fee failed; she'll be short a few thousand dollars. Alderman Tramontozzi asks if at this point the part-time position is out; Ms. O'Shea says yes.

Alderman Forbes motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

Election/Registrar	43,616.12	Elections Administrator Linda-Lee Angiolillo City Clerk Mary-Rita O'Shea
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Alderman Conn asks about the increase in postage. Ms. Angiolillo says it's needed for census confirmations – the City pays for postage going out and coming back in. Alderman Conn asks about the small amount of money for dues and memberships. Ms. Angiolillo says she has to be a member of the City Clerk's Association. Alderman Conn asks if the conference is State mandated. Ms. O'Shea says it isn't mandated but attendees gain a wealth of knowledge. Alderman Conn asks if those funds haven't been expended. Ms. Angiolillo says the conference is held in June.

Alderman Forbes asks what the ballots cost the City. Ms. Angiolillo says it depends – the City pays for cost of local questions.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Forbes. All in favor.

Treasurer/Collector	367,320.01	City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin
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Mr. Flavin says this is his third year in the budget process. He was able to exceed the 5% budget cut request. His budget reflects a fairly substantial decrease from last year.

Alderman Conn asks how many tax title cases are pending. Mr. Flavin says there's a half dozen. Alderman Conn asks how many cases are being paid under line-item 528002. Mr. Flavin says a half dozen. Alderman Conn asks if they are all in court; Mr. Flavin says yes. Alderman Conn asks if he anticipates spending all \$12,500. Mr. Flavin says he thinks it's reasonable that it will be spent.

Alderman Wright asks about the 34% decrease in the Surety line-item. Mr. Flavin says he and the Assistant Treasurer are required to be bonded. He chose to take the

statutory minimum. Alderman Wright asks about the 22% reduction in printing and the 11.6% reduction in postage. Mr. Flavin says he is introducing a more efficient and green way of processing taxes. Households currently receive 4 bills per year; beginning FY10 only two mailings will be sent, each with two bills. The change represents over \$10,000 in postage. Alderman Wright asks if he will implement an email notification system. Mr. Flavin says he can't take custody of that library. Alderman Wright asks if there are statistics available from other cities and towns that show the collection rate remains the same. Mr. Flavin says he will deal with individual cases during the transition and will do his best to educate and broadcast the new system.

Alderman Medeiros asks if there is a way to get bills online if someone loses one. Mr. Flavin says they're available online at MCC.net and a printed copy may be requested at City Hall.

Alderman Brodeur motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Municipal Debt	3,348,034.00	City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin
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Mr. Flavin says this is the debt service due for next year. The number represents the General Fund principle and exempt principle for the school.

Alderman Conn asks if anything is rolling off. Mr. Flavin says on Tuesday he is issuing all authorized unissued debt into bonds. A little falls off over the next two years – about \$50-\$60 thousand. Alderman Conn asks if the bump this year is the Middle School. Mr. Flavin says it is on the exempt principal. The General Fund bump is the High School projects.

Alderman Brodeur asks about the market for municipal debt. Mr. Flavin says the City is in a good position now. Melrose's bond rating is AA-. He expects to realize low interest on Tuesday.

Alderman Medeiros motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Brodeur. All in favor.

Municipal Debt Interest	2,251,235.88	City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin
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Mr. Flavin says this represents the debt exclusion interest for the Middle School. A general obligation bond was issued for the school in 2007.

Alderman Brodeur motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Anticipation Interest	0.00	City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin
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Mr. Flavin says everything is out long term now and he doesn't anticipate any new borrowing.

Medicare City Portion	415,000.00	City Treasurer/Collector Art Flavin
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Mr. Flavin says this is another annual requirement for employees. The costs increase every year.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Medeiros. All

in favor.

Police	3,497,057.47	Police Chief Mike Lyle City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Chief Lyle says his department has taken a lot of initiative with the community last year, especially with traffic enforcement.

Alderman Wright asks if the 86% decrease in training creates potential exposure to an increase in risks. Chief Lyle says the department has received a grant that will supplement that line-item and there's a state initiative for online training. Alderman Wright asks about the 48% increase in uniforms. Chief Lyle says it's a contract-negotiated item. Mr. Dello Russo says this budget reflects the new contract.

Alderman Conn says this budget is \$67,000 less than the budget was 2 years ago. Chief Lyle continues to do innovative programming. The \$67,000 decrease in the budget is to his credit. He asks if the total manpower of the force is 43. Chief Lyle says yes, but a couple of officers are being deployed next Friday. Alderman Conn asks if there are any other personnel changes coming. Chief Lyle says he doesn't anticipate any retirements; he is gaining a person in July when he returns from Iraq, and another officer is due back next week from medical leave. Alderman Conn asks if there is no civil staff in his budget. Chief Lyle says there is a restructuring of the Police and Fire Departments. One person will do payrolls and accounts payables for both departments at a cost savings of \$37,000 per year; he will have a part-time Administrative Assistant.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Forbes. All in favor.

Fire	3,534,775.23	Fire Chief John O'Brien
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Chief O'Brien says there is a slight increase in this budget; he asks the Aldermen to look at the budget as a lump sum budget. Chief O'Brien says Mayor Dolan suggested the Public Safety Coordinator position as a way to look at how to save money. The Police department had 1¾ positions and the Fire department had one. The two departments will now share one full-time and one part-time position, both being cross-trained to do payroll. Interviews will take place in a couple of weeks. The Wire Technician was brought into the Fire Department from Inspection Services. Everything he does is through the Fire Department. The SAFER Grant will provide 4 new firefighters.

Alderman Conn says he is getting 4 firefighters pursuant to the SAFER Grant and asks how many are in his department. Chief O'Brien says there are 52 firefighters, 1 fire prevention officer and himself, totaling 54. Alderman Conn says the FY10 budget has \$100,000 less in overtime and asks if that figure will hold up over the year or if he'll be back for additional funds. Chief O'Brien says he feels very confident that his department will just about hold to this number. It will give him two spare bodies on every group. Alderman Conn says everyone is rooting for this to work and is certainly hopeful the four additional firefighters will end the overtime problems. Alderman Conn asks if there is one vacancy. Chief O'Brien says yes; a captain retired in February. Alderman Conn asks if the position needs to be filled. Chief O'Brien says yes, it's part of the grant request.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Forbes. All in

favor.

Order No. 09-172, TRANSFER Amount: \$3,000.00 From: A/C #012211-511000 – Fire, Salary and Wages To: A/C #011522-543000 – Human Resources, Physical Exams This money will be used to pay for pre-employment medical exams for six firefighter candidates.

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

Alderman Forbes asks if the testing includes drug testing; Chief O'Brien says yes.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

City Solicitor	492,096.96	City Solicitor Robert Van Campen
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In summary, Attorney Van Campen says that almost 70% of his budget is liability insurance. Labor Counsel and Special Counsel have been zeroed out; he'll have to come before the board for funds if needed in FY10. He was able to negotiate with WestLaw to reduce the Electronic MGL contract. He is grateful to the insurance carrier for lowering the premium.

Alderman Conn asks if there are any claims pending that will require special counsel. Attorney Van Campen says no.

Alderman Wright says he is concerned that the Education and Seminars line-item is decreased by 63%. Maintaining a knowledge base and Continuing Education is very important and membership in the City Solicitor and Town Counsel is invaluable.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Mayor	247,184.48	Mayor Robert J. Dolan
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Mayor Dolan says Mike Lindstrom's position is now fully funded in this budget. He has experience with state budgeting and is an invaluable addition to his office. Printing has decreased by 50% and Professional Services has decreased by 14%. He has one person helping in the office and one in the mailroom that are paid from this budget as well as summer intern support.

Alderman Brodeur asks if Community Events includes the welcoming event for kindergarten families. Mayor Dolan says yes.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Forbes. All in favor.

Auditor	312,167.21	City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Mr. Dello Russo says he has pruned this budget back. Overtime is reduced to \$50; auditing services is reduced by \$5,000; Professional Services is reduced from \$7,000 to \$1,200.

Alderman Conn asks how much is budgeted for unused sick time for non-union employees. Mr. Dello Russo asks if he is referring to the entire budget; Alderman Conn

says yes, in the event cuts must be made mid-year. Mr. Dello Russo says he will provide that information.

President Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Pension Weekly	4,750,907.72	City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Mr. Dello Russo says the budget is primarily made up of two individuals in the noncontributory system and funding for the contributory system. The FY10 contribution number the City has to pay comes from PERAC. The Retirement Board amended the funding schedule to 2024 from 2021, reducing the contributory amount. He says he is now the Chairman of the Retirement Board and will make administrative changes to the Retirement office by reducing office personnel from two positions to one and reduce expenses, particularly for travel.

Alderman Medeiros motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Aldermanic	122,223.29	Board of Aldermen
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Alderman Brodeur motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by President Boisselle. All in favor.

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

Appropriations adjourns at 9:26 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees