

FY2009 Budgetary Hearings

Appropriations Committee

Chairman Brodeur, Boisselle,
Mortimer, Tramontozzi, Forbes,
Wright, Seaboyer, Medeiros, Conn
Absent: Infurna, McAteer-Margolis
In attendance: Emergency
Management Director Ed Kelly,
Parking Clerk Jack Higgins, Building
Commissioner Paul Johnson, City
Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo,
Fire Chief John O'Brien, Police Chief
Mike Lyle

Appropriations called to order by Chairman Brodeur at 7:37 p.m.

Order No. 08-201, City of Melrose Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2009 in the amount of \$60,553,844.79.

President Conn motions to open Public Participation, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor. No one comes forward. Alderman Mortimer motions to close Public Participation, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Emergency Management	18,749.92	Director Ed Kelly
Mr. Kelly says this budget has been level-funded since 1998.		

Alderman Boisselle motions to move the bottom-line, 2nd by Alderman Mortimer.

On discussion Alderman Forbes asks if the radio line-item is sufficient. Mr. Kelly says yes and no. He doesn't have the consoles; they still work but it would be nice to have the consoles to mount them on.

Alderman Medeiros says his salary looks too low for his hard work and asks if there is any salary off-budget. Mr. Kelly says no, that he receives a stipend.

Mr. Kelly invites the aldermen to a full function drill to be held on May 6 at 8 a.m. at the Sheraton Colonial.

On the motion to recommend the bottom-line, All in favor.

Parking	36,463.00	Parking Clerk Jack Higgins
Mr. Higgins says this budget is pretty close to what it was last year; there is a small reduction.		

Alderman Seaboyer asks what the Professional Services line-item pays for. Mr. Higgins says Kelly and Ryan receives \$2 per ticket for processing and for services by Loomis and Fargo.

Alderman Forbes asks about the Salary and Wages line-item. Mr. Higgins says that originally the job was 2 days per week but there wasn't enough business and now he only works one day per week.

President Conn says it looks as though he doesn't fully spend the printing line-item. Mr. Higgins says he uses it for placards, stationery and stickers. Alderman Conn asks if he needs \$1,600; Mr. Higgins says he will use \$700 for parking permits and can probably use it all.

Chairman Brodeur asks who Kelley and Ryan are. Mr. Higgins says they are the biggest municipal collection agency in the state.

Alderman Wright asks about the Traffic Code line-item for \$2,000; Mr. Higgins says he isn't sure what it is. Mr. Dello Russo says if the traffic code needs updating there would need to be resources; it hasn't been updated in a while.

President Conn motions to cut line-item 529303, Traffic Code, by \$1,000 to \$1,000, 2nd by Alderman Medeiros. All in favor.

Alderman Boisselle motions to move the amended bottom-line of \$35,463.00, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Inspection Services	163,295.23	Building Commissioner Paul Johnson City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Chairman Brodeur asks Mr. Dello Russo about the projection of the Salary and Wages line-item, saying it appears that it is incorrect as it was with the Treasurer/Collector's budget. Mr. Dello Russo says there are a handful of budgets that he believes may have been input twice due to name changes. He says MUNIS is looking into it to change it but it doesn't affect the actual in FY08 or the Mayor's proposals in FY09.

President Conn says line-item 521000, printing, was budgeted for \$1,000 and only \$500 has been expended. Mr. Johnson says there will be upgrades in the building permit application and code changes requiring additional sign-off sheets. President Conn says it looks like less than the \$1,000 in education and seminars has been spent. Mr. Johnson says those funds are needed for continuing education for himself, the wire inspector and the plumbing inspector; class costs keep increasing. President Conn asks if he expects to spend all \$2,000; Mr. Johnson says yes.

Alderman Boisselle asks if he is using technology upgrades in his department. Mr. Johnson says yes; permits and applications are available on-line. Alderman Boisselle asks how technology is interrelating with other departments. Mr. Johnson says he hasn't gotten that deep into it. He will speak with other departments about tapping into it.

Alderman Seaboyer says contractual inspections is \$690 and asks if that is an actual number. Mr. Dello Russo says to date, yes. Alderman Seaboyer asks if that could be reduced to \$1,000. Mr. Johnson says that line-item is to be used when he goes on vacation or as needed. He may ask to leave it alone this year to see if it's needed. Things are picking up on the construction end and he may need it.

Alderman Medeiros says no mileage funds have been spent to date and asks what it is allocated for; Mr. Johnson says he doesn't know. Mr. Dello Russo says that typically a contractor is due reimbursement if not using a city vehicle; it is unknown if any more contractors will be used this year. City employees are also reimbursed when using their own vehicles for city related work. Alderman Medeiros says that only between \$165 and \$200 has been used for dues and membership this year. Mr. Johnson says a few of his memberships are due by the end of the fiscal year and he expects to use it all.

Alderman Forbes asks how many vehicles are assigned to his Department. Mr. Johnson says there is one for him and the second one is in the other budget. Alderman Forbes asks if they are being fueled on the DPW side of the budget; Mr. Johnson says that is correct. Alderman Forbes asks if an inspector was out on Worker's Comp if the \$1,500 Inspector line-item would be used to pay him. Mr. Dello Russo says in the event of a Worker's Comp claim, the Worker's Comp budget would be used. Alderman Forbes asks how the replacement guy would be paid. Mr. Johnson says Worker's Comp would cover the City employee and the Inspector line-item would cover the replacement.

President Conn asks the Mr. Dello Russo for updated city-owned vehicle information for the Board of Aldermen.

President Conn moves to delete \$500, Mileage line-item to \$0.00, 2nd by Alderman Medeiros. One opposed.

Alderman Wright asks when the new Building Code will be coming out. Mr. Johnson says it is in effect. Alderman Wright asks if training is necessary and if there is enough money to cover it; Mr. Johnson answers yes to both.

President Conn motions to move the amended bottom-line of \$162,795.23, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Wire/Fire Alarm Inspection	93,017.71	Building Commissioner Paul Johnson
		City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
		Fire Chief John O'Brien

Mr. Johnson says the overtime line-item is used if the fire alarm technician gets called out. He can't predict how often that will happen and he may need to come back for a transfer.

Alderman Medeiros says the Tools line-item is budgeted for \$1,000 but less than \$100 has been used the past two years. Mr. Johnson says he anticipates the transfer of fire alarms from double poles will go into full swing this year which generates a great deal of wear and tear on the tools. He anticipates having to buy new tools to make the transfers.

Alderman Seaboyer says that in 2007 the Alarm System line-item was \$29,795.00 and it's now down to \$8,000. Mr. Johnson says he thinks there wasn't anyone to do that kind of work before Kevin Walsh came on full-time. Alderman Seaboyer asks how many people have to be on the bucket truck. Mr. Johnson says that according to OSHA, 2 men are needed. He uses Captain Ed Collina when needed but for the most part Kevin Walsh is on it by himself. Alderman Seaboyer asks if the School Department has an electrician; Mr. Dello Russo says yes.

Alderman Boisselle asks if he bills the insurance company and is reimbursed for overtime if Mr. Walsh is called out in the event of an automobile accident. Mr. Johnson says he bills the company but can only send half the amount. Alderman Boisselle asks if the reimbursement goes to the General Fund or to his department. Mr. Dello Russo says the proceeds from insurance reimbursement go to a special account designated by department. Alderman Boisselle asks if that money is listed in this budget. Mr. Dello Russo says no; figures above \$20,000 need a vote of the Board of Aldermen.

Alderman Forbes asks if all alarm systems are working. Chief O'Brien says that Kevin Walsh has done an excellent job and all systems are working well. When a fire alarm box is damaged Mr. Walsh fixes it himself. The City used to have to send out to have the repairs done and it cost a fortune.

Chairman Brodeur says he is curious about the cost to move to wireless call boxes and is also curious about the claims by the utility companies that they're waiting for the City to transfer its wires from the double poles.

Alderman Wright asks if he bills the insurance company to replace a pole taken down as a result of a motor vehicle accident. Mr. Johnson says yes. Alderman Wright asks if he is receiving less money from the insurance company than cost. Mr. Johnson says it takes four to six months to get a response from the insurance company; it would cost more to take them to court than to accept a 50% offer. Alderman Wright says there is a company that will take over the job of replacing the pole and billing the insurance company. Mr. Johnson says the City doesn't own the pole; he is billing for the fire alarm boxes.

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

Fire	3,358,234.19	Fire Chief John O'Brien
Fire Chief John O'Brien says he is adamantly opposed to changing to wireless fire alarm boxes.		

Mr. Dello Russo says he is extremely pleased to have reached an agreement with the Fire union for fiscal years 08, 09 and 10. He says Chief O'Brien has done an outstanding job to monitor overtime expenses in a very difficult environment.

Chairman Brodeur says there is a dramatic decline in vehicle repair. Chief O'Brien says that's due to the addition of new vehicles. Previously he didn't have back-up apparatus and was unable to do preventive maintenance; he now has a preventive maintenance program, allowing him to get ahead of major repairs.

Alderman Boisselle says the heating fuel line-item has a 50% decrease. Chief O'Brien says he looks at the 52 and 53 line-items as lump sums. Alderman Boisselle asks if he shifts accounts as needed; Chief O'Brien says yes. Alderman Boisselle asks if that applies to uniforms as well. Chief O'Brien says that figure doubled due to the new contract and new dress uniforms.

Alderman Seaboyer says \$4,000 is appropriated to water and sewer and that zero has been spent to date; he'd like to cut that to zero. Chief O'Brien says anything that comes out will impact the budget somewhere else. He says he looks at the bottom-line; that cut would severely impact the department.

President Conn says the Aldermen can't cut anything in this budget because there is a \$150,000 overtime line-item. He asks the final figure for FY08 overtime; Chief O'Brien says it is right around \$296,000 to \$300,000. President Conn asks why a real number isn't used for Fire overtime; it seems silly to put \$150,000 when everyone knows it isn't a good number. Mr. Dello Russo says it is the administration's first attempt to budget overtime to allow the manager of the department to know what he needs for manpower. It could be moved to a higher number but the manager needs to control it and show that there are limited resources. It would be an accomplishment if the final number is cut back to \$250,000 next year. President Conn says that it seems the number used is a place holder. Mr. Dello Russo says he does not disagree. President Conn asks how many firefighters and officers are on staff. Chief O'Brien says there are 49 including him. President Conn asks if there is any staff out; Chief O'Brien says one veteran is due back in June and one due back at the first of the year. He may be losing a medic for 12 months at the beginning of the year. One captain is retiring from an injury and one firefighter is currently out with an injury. President Conn asks if there are any out on a 111F injury; Chief O'Brien says there is only one and he expects him to retire. There are no mandatory retirements forthcoming. He says he tracked overtime costs to FY2000 and about \$300,000 was spent; he's very pleased with the overtime amount. President Conn says he is not attacking the management of overtime but the budget document should reflect a real number.

Alderman Forbes asks if the mutual aid crisis from a few years ago has subsided; Chief O'Brien says yes. Alderman Forbes says there is \$4,000 for hoses and asks if the new trucks came with a new hose and how often they need replacing. Chief O'Brien says the hoses are tested every April; that money could get eaten up tomorrow. Alderman Forbes asks if the station at the Commons should stay open; Chief O'Brien says yes.

Alderman Medeiros motions to transfer the \$4,000 from line-item 522400, Water and Sewer to line-item 530800, Heat Fuel. Chairman Brodeur says the Aldermen can't do that; they can cut a budget and make a request to the Mayor that funds go to a specific line-item.

Chairman Brodeur asks if transfers are made before or after overtime funds are expended. Mr. Dello Russo says the transfer is done before the expense is incurred; it has to be done that way under Massachusetts General Law. Chairman Brodeur asks what it costs to have men serving in the military. Chief O'Brien says the biggest cost is overtime; the City only picks up a little bit in salary. Chairman Brodeur asks how many will possibly serve. Chief O'Brien says there are two serving now plus one more. Chairman Brodeur asks if the federal government covers any of the City's costs; Chief O'Brien says no.

Alderman Seaboyer asks how much the City pays per employee when activated. Chief O'Brien says it depends on his rank in the military; the City paid $\frac{1}{4}$ of one employee's salary for six months but paid nothing for an Air Force captain. Alderman Seaboyer asks the average length of deployment; Chief O'Brien says 12 months.

Alderman Forbes asks if they lose seniority; Chief O'Brien says they don't lose a thing.

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

Police	3,300,323.30	Police Chief Mike Lyle
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Chief Lyle says he feels that the Melrose Police Department made great strides in 2008 including hiring 5 new officers and one new canine officer. He says the fleet is stabilized as well.

Chairman Brodeur asks how many officers are out; Chief Lyle says 2 reservists.

Alderman Boisselle says there are some line-items in the budget that he's interested in. Electricity cost \$12,000 and only \$10,000 was appropriated. \$11,000 has been spent on building maintenance this year and only \$1,000 has been appropriated for FY09. Chief Lyle says the cost of electricity has risen. The building maintenance costs were due to the 9-1-1 construction costs; the room is a controlled environment. Alderman Boisselle says building repairs averaged \$5,000 over the past years and asks if he'll be able to stay within \$1,000. Chief Lyle says he'll try to. Alderman Boisselle says the Training line-item was \$3,000 in FY08, \$6,000 in FY07, and FY09 is only \$1,000; he asks if that's enough money for his training needs. Chief Lyle says much of the training will be done through a grant. Alderman Boisselle asks about fuel costs; Chief Lyle says they are doing everything they can to save money.

Alderman Medeiros says she doesn't see funds for surveillance cameras. Chief Lyle says they were paid for by a grant.

Alderman Forbes says his department needed some vests earlier in the year and asks if he's all set. Chief Lyle says he has applied for a \$14,000 grant which he's hoping he receives. He'll need 37 vests over the next 3 years; he's planning to get 14 this year. Alderman Forbes asks about the communication system. Chief Lyle says it is antiquated but he hopes it lasts 5 years. Alderman Forbes says \$500 was appropriated for radar guns and only \$200 has been spent; Chief Lyle says he just received a bill.

President Conn asks how many sworn police officers there are; Chief Lyle says there are 43 including him. President Conn asks if there are any out; Chief Lyle says two are serving in the military, one sergeant is suspended, and there is pending litigation on an officer that was fired two years ago. President Conn asks if there are any pending retirements. Chief Lyle says there are no retirements; three officers can retire, one of whom is currently eligible, but there is no indication that any of them are leaving. President Conn asks if there is one new position available. Chief Lyle says yes; he hopes to fill it July 1 by taking a lateral move and saving 7 months by not having to send him to academy. President Conn asks if \$170,000 is enough for overtime. Chief Lyle says he will do his best to support it. Last year there were injuries and the overtime was out of his control. Two men were activated and that cost two overtime shifts per week. If he had all his staff and no injuries, this would be a good number.

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

Traffic Supervisors 4,080.00

Police Chief Mike Lyle
City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo

Mr. Dello Russo says the Traffic Supervisors and costs have been transferred to the School Department effective July 1. He says this is a more prudent approach going forward.

Alderman Forbes asks how many hours per week will this one employee work ticketing vehicles. Chief Lyle says he'll work 10 hours per week.

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

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

Appropriations adjourns at 9:02 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees