

Appropriations Committee

Chairman Brodeur, Boisselle,  
Mortimer, Infurna, Tramontozzi,  
Forbes, Wright, McAteer-Margolis,  
Seaboyer, Medeiros, Conn  
In attendance: Human Resources  
Director Marianne Long, Mayor  
Dolan, City Auditor/CFO Patrick  
Dello Russo, Deputy City Engineer  
John Scenna, City Planner Denise  
Gaffey, IT Director Jorge Pazos,  
School Superintendent Joe Casey

Appropriations called to order by Chairman Brodeur at 7:35 p.m. Alderman Mortimer motions to open Public Participation, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor. No one comes forward. Alderman Mortimer motions to close Public Participation, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Order No. 08-130, Amending Melrose Revised Ordinances Chapter 56-2 – Classification Schedule, Salary Administration Plan as follows: Delete: “Chief Assessor L-18” and Insert in place thereof: “Chief Assessor L-20” Amendment to be retroactive to October 2, 2007.

Mayor Dolan says he wholeheartedly endorses increasing this position from Level 18 to Level 20. In hiring Don Dragt the City has been able to capitalize on his expertise. He will now perform various tasks that were privatized and done by Patriot Properties resulting in savings of \$60,000 per year.

Human Resources Director Marianne Long says the Personnel Board has approved this.

Chairman Brodeur asks if the Patriot Properties database will still be available on the City's website; Mayor Dolan says yes.

Alderman Forbes asks how many steps there are for each Level. Ms. Long says there are eight steps in each Level. Mr. Dragt will be Level 20 Step 4, a dollar increase of \$1252.00, and which will allow him growth opportunity.

Alderman Infurna says she has no problem with this increase and she is pleased that there will be a \$60,000 savings. The aldermen are anticipating a newly created position and while the City is stable right now, she is concerned about affording it in the future. Mayor Dolan says a good assessor is able to capture dollars for the City; a good assessor is hard to come by.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if there are other services offered by Patriot Properties that can be done in-house. Mayor Dolan says it is best to privatize some things. Alderman Seaboyer asks if passport service is now offered in the Assessor's office. Mayor Dolan says that office is progressive enough to take on the challenges the City has. All increases in staffing is taken care of by the fees generated by processing passports.

Alderman Wright asks what percentage of dollars taken in for passports the City keeps. Mr. Dello Russo says the City receives \$25.00 per passport. Alderman Wright asks

what type of volume has been realized. Mayor Dolan says 43 to date. Alderman Wright asks if the money goes to the General Fund; Mayor Dolan says yes.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if the new salary for the assessor is comparable to experienced assessors in other communities. Ms. Long says it is much closer; some assessors in other communities make additional dollars but Melrose is more competitive now.

Chairman Brodeur asks if the chief assessor receives a stipend for sitting on the Board of Assessors. Ms. Long says he receives \$4000. Chairman Brodeur asks if that helps to keep the position in the competitive range; Ms. Long says yes.

Alderman Tramontozzi moves to recommend, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Forbes. All in favor.

Order No. 08-137, TRANSFER Amount: \$2,574.00 From: A/C #014221-511000 - PW, Highway, Salaries To: A/C #011411-511000 - Assessor – Salaries. This transfer is necessary to fund the upgrade in the Assessor's position.

Chairman Brodeur says there is a letter from the Mayor requesting the funds and confirmation from Mr. Dello Russo that the funds are available.

Alderman Infurna moves to recommend, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Mortimer.

Alderman Seaboyer asks why the money from PW Highways is available. Mr. Dello Russo says it has to do with timing of seasonal work.

Alderman Forbes says money is being taken from Public Works but there is an order to create a new Public Works position. He asks if there will be enough money to fund both. Mr. Dello Russo says the new position will be paid by money from bonds.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

Order No. 08-131, Amending Melrose Revised Ordinances Chapter 56-2. Classification Schedule, Non-Union Positions by: Adding the position: "Budget Administrator" -Grade Level "L-12" as set forth herein.

Chairman Brodeur says there is a note from the Clerk of Committees indicating the title needs to be amended to "Budget and Project Administrator". So moved by Alderman Mortimer, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Deputy City Engineer John Scenna says this is a new position to oversee the budgets of the many projects and the enterprise budgets within the department as well as the I&I bond, Mass Highways bonds, FEMA bonds, and all other operating budgets outside of the city budget. This position will provide internal auditing for these projects. Some of this was performed by Mike Lindstrom but his responsibilities in the mayor's office have grown in other areas. This position has no managing responsibilities – it is strictly a budget and project administrator position.

Chairman Brodeur asks if Mr. Lindstrom will have any further association with Public Works. Mr. Scenna says he will continue to do community outreach and be involved in

the Parks projects. Chairman Brodeur asks if he will continue to be paid by bond money. Mr. Scenna says he will transition off the bond budget by July 1.

President Conn asks when he anticipates filling this position. Mr. Scenna says a current employee has been doing it since November. Ms. Long says it is a promotion for an existing member in the department – it's a win-win situation for the City. Alderman Conn asks if it is a permanent position; Ms. Long says yes. Alderman Conn asks if the funded position will be filled; Ms. Long says yes. Alderman Conn asks where the funding for the new position will come from. Mr. Scenna says it will be fully funded from bonds and the enterprise funds. Alderman Conn asks if this person will have a role in explaining the water and sewer enterprise funds. Mr. Scenna says yes, in trying to determine the rate.

Chairman Brodeur asks the salary range for Level 12. Ms. Long says step 1 is roughly \$40,000 per year and step 8 is roughly \$51,000. Chairman Brodeur says it seems like the low end of what the City can get for someone with a BA or BS and considerable experience.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks the details of the old position. Ms. Long says it is a union position, Level 9, and funded from the city's operating budget.

Alderman Mortimer moves to recommend as amended, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Alderman Mortimer motions to recess, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Appropriations recesses at 8:00 p.m.

Appropriations reconvenes at 8:50 p.m.

Order No. 08-162, Authorizing City Treasurer with the approval of the Mayor to issue bonds or notes in the aggregate amount of \$1,490,000.00 for the costs of remodeling and equipping the Melrose High School in support of the High School Education Technology Upgrade Project and to equip the Winthrop and Hoover Elementary Schools with new computer labs.

Mayor Dolan says this is phase one of three phases in modernizing the High School. With the success of the Middle School the City's challenge is for the eighth graders entering High School to be able to have the ability to remain competitive. SMART boards are a wonderful addition to the Middle School. This \$1.4 million bond is to upgrade electrical support in the entire High School building, providing options for future technology. In discussions with IT Director Jorge Pazos and Superintendent Joe Casey, the School Department would like computer labs upgraded in the elementary schools to keep them on par with the other elementary schools in the district and to give teachers tools to be successful.

Mr. Pazos says this is a great opportunity to address the needs at the High School that have been in existence for quite some time. Present conditions makes it difficult to deliver to students the type of content they're used to.

Mayor Dolan says the City's debt is very conservative. This bond places the City at its target debt burden goal and can be paid without hardship.

Ms. Gaffey says the technology consultant has completed its feasibility study and has issued a report with a detailed budget and schedule. The difference of the \$50,000 between the budget sheet and the bond is for the Hoover and Winthrop School computer labs.

Mr. Casey thanks Mayor Dolan, Ms. Gaffey, Mr. Pazos and the Board of Aldermen for the opportunity to bring technology in the schools to the fore. Everyone has seen the impact that the Middle School has had. Technology is going to be the bridge to language and allow students to construct meaning and knowledge; technology is the new vehicle to bring the schools into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a needful project and will allow the students of Melrose to be successful and competitive.

President Conn asks who participated in the proposed budget. Mayor Dolan says himself, Ms. Gaffey, Mr. Pazos, City Treasurer Art Flavin and Mr. Dello Russo. President Conn asks if the School Committee approved this. Mayor Dolan says no, they don't need to. President Conn says it appears that a lot of items are not providing new technology like \$140,000 for a telephone system. Mr. Pazos says the current phone system is like the one in people's homes – there are a lot of lines to be moved around. The one to be installed is a voice over IP system like the one at the Middle School. Mayor Dolan says it's important to use one single phone system at the school which is currently not the case. President Conn says the "new" High School was built when he was in Middle School and asks if there have been many updates over the years. Mr. Pazos says no, not in recent years. President Conn asks if no money is to be used to physically alter the school. Mr. Pazos says no, it will be used for network electronics and an audiovisual component. President Conn asks how prevalent the use of SMART boards is. Mr. Casey says Everett and Chelsea are adding them to their schools. Melrose is able to take this step through good fiscal management. Mayor Dolan says when students and teachers are asked, the first thing they say they like about the Middle School is the SMART boards. Today's students are different learners and Melrose schools need the tools to be competitive. President Conn says these upgrades are not state mandated. Mayor Dolan says no; the upgrades are being made to the High School to keep up with the Middle School. President Conn asks what the Winthrop School has for a computer lab. Mr. Pazos says there are 21 stations with computers that are 7 years old. The plan is to purchase the most computer he can get for the money. President Conn says he would like the auditor to provide the aldermen with the impact on the tax rate in terms of years of the bond and the interest rate. Chairman Brodeur says he would like a comparison of the life of the bond to the life of the product.

Alderman Boisselle says Section 8(C) of the proposed budget details data equipment to be purchased. He asks if there is a problem with going wireless. Mr. Pazos says the equipment is to support the telephone system as well as computers. Also, wireless has its place but can never completely replace wires. Alderman Boisselle asks what the proposed portable SMART boards are for. Mr. Pazos says some rooms at the High School have ceilings that are too high to mount a projector making it impossible to have permanently mounted projectors. Alderman Boisselle asks if they are portable enough to walk out of the building. Mr. Pazos says the portable units will be assigned to certain areas of the building with teacher supervision. Alderman Boisselle asks about SMART

boards training; Mr. Pazos says that training is included with the purchase. There will also be a mentoring program pairing up Middle School teachers with High School teachers. Alderman Boisselle says the SMART boards have been active for six months and asks if there has been an independent survey taken with the Middle School teachers for their opinions. Mr. Pazos says the survey is being completed. Alderman Boisselle asks if high tech is being used every day in every classroom. Mr. Casey says yes it is, but the schools can do better. This summer a team of Middle School and High School teachers will attend professional development to learn how to integrate technology into the curriculum. Alderman Boisselle asks if students are using high tech to do presentations. Mr. Casey says yes.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if this bond is the high-end estimate of the cost of the upgrade. Mayor Dolan says he will not be back for additional funds. This is a very conservative budget figure and he hopes not to use all of it. Alderman Seaboyer asks for information on the bond itself. Mr. Dello Russo says the bond anticipation note will be taken in FY2009 at 3% interest. The interest payment in FY 2009 will be \$44,700.00. He anticipates bonding in FY 2010 at 4.5%. The principal and interest payment will be \$237,050.00 in year one. He anticipates paying the note off in 10 years. Alderman Seaboyer asks if the bond will be insured. Mr. Dello Russo says at the time the City goes to bond it will be determined if it's prudent to be insured; it may not be advantageous to do so. Alderman Seaboyer asks if it will be a fixed or variable interest rate. Mr. Dello Russo says it has to be a fixed rate by statute.

Chairman Brodeur asks Mr. Dello Russo if this bond will throw the pension obligation bond out of whack. Mr. Dello Russo says that sits outside of the debt limit and will not corrupt this schedule.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis thanks the Mayor and his team for bringing this to the Board of Aldermen. She asks if the 8<sup>th</sup> grade open space is included in the bond. Ms. Gaffey says yes. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if the 5 small labs and 3 large labs listed in Section 8(A) will provide more computers for students or new cabling for the labs. Mr. Pazos says it is for data cabling to support the labs. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if equipment is currently being used in these spaces; Mr. Pazos says yes. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if there is cable access TV available. Mr. Pazos says it is limited at best right now. Alderman McAteer-Margolis asks if there is any way to leverage the amount being spent with state grants; Ms. Gaffey says no.

Alderman Forbes asks what SMART boards cost; Mr. Pazos says \$4000. Alderman Forbes asks what the life span is; Mr. Pazos says 20-25 years. Alderman Forbes asks if there is a warranty; Mr. Pazos says he isn't sure how long it is for.

Chairman Brodeur asks if having a 10 year note on technology that may not last 10 years is a problem. Mr. Dello Russo says no.

Alderman Forbes asks Mr. Pazos if he foresees SMART boards in the fifth grades in the future. Mr. Pazos says he can see one or two per building.

Alderman Wright asks how the SMART boards have been functioning and if there have been any malfunctions or downtime; Mr. Pazos says there have not been any issues. Alderman Wright asks about the warranty service contract; Mr. Pazos says he doesn't

remember how long it is for. Alderman Wright asks if he anticipates purchasing the same make for the High School that is currently in the Middle School; Mr. Pazos says yes.

Alderman Medeiros says the phone system in the High School is archaic. She asks if any savings are anticipated. Mr. Pazos says he's not sure about saving any money but every classroom will have a telephone for teachers to use when they need to call the nurse or a parent during their break. He'll buy bandwidth to provide service to as many phones as the school department wants. Alderman Medeiros says the School Committee anticipated an increase in utilities for the Middle School and asks about the everyday cost of electricity. Mayor Dolan says the increase has not been staggering.

Alderman Conn says that Alderman Seaboyer properly points out that this is a lot of money, and it is. The High School is a tired facility. The Middle School kids love their new school and they're concerned about going into the old, tired High School. He says he can't see how anyone wouldn't support anything in this order.

Alderman Conn moves for passage, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Medeiros. All in favor.

Alderman McAteer-Margolis motions to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Alderman Mortimer. All in favor.

Appropriations adjourns at 9:50 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington  
*Clerk of Committees*