FY2008 Budgetary Hearings

Appropriations Committee

Chairman Brodeur, Tramontozzi, Boisselle, Buonopane, Conn, Heavey, Infurna, Seaboyer, Wright, Mortimer
Absent: Forbes
In attendance: Planning Board Chairman Mike Cassavoy, City Planner Denise Gaffey; Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School Representative Henry S. Hooton, Superintendent Patricia K. Cronin; MEMA Director Ed Kelly; Parking Clerk Jack Higgins; Building Commissioner John Luther; Fire Chief John O'Brien; Police Chief Rick Morrissey; City Engineer Bob Beshara, Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Appropriations called to order by Chairman Brodeur at 7:34 p.m. Alderman Tramontozzi motions to open Public Participation, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. All in favor. No one comes forward. President Mortimer motions to close Public Participation, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

Planning Board	106,570.21	Planning Board Chair Mike Cassavoy City Planner Denise Gaffey

Ms. Gaffey says the Planning Board's budget is primarily salaries. It supports the Assistant City Planner and a portion of the City Planner's salary, which is on a three-year plan to bring it back into the operating budget. It has previously been funded from grant money. There are nominal amounts for advertising, printing, dues and membership and a small amount for education and seminars to support the newer members of the board. Funds for office supplies are decreased due to the new protocol of centralized purchasing.

Alderman Conn says the increase in this budget is relative to the City Planner's salary previously paid by a grant and which is now incorporated into the budget. Ms. Gaffey says that is correct. Alderman Conn says it is the same expense coming from a different source; Ms. Gaffey says yes.

Alderman Buonopane motions to move the bottom-line of $106,570.21, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Regional School	759,902.00	Representative Henry S. Hooton Superintendent Patricia K. Cronin

Alderman Boisselle says he notices in the documentation provided by Mr. Hooton that the bottom-line has changed to $759,570.00. Mr. Hooton says that is correct. President Mortimer motions to amend the bottom-line to the new number, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. 1 opposed (Conn). Mr. Hooton says he hopes the brochure he prepared was helpful. Twenty-one students applied to attend next year. That could mean 71 Melrose students. There are 17 shops at the school. The school's motto is walk in with a dream and come out with a career.

Alderman Conn says he wants to preface his comments by saying the Voke is a great school. The problem with the budget is that the formulas for each city and town differ from each community. He has been trying to figure it out since 1990. The Charter School has more students attending than the Voke, yet the assessment is $75,000 less. The increases in this budget have been staggering over the years. In 2003 the budget was $206,756; 2004 was $131,141; 2005 was $285,516; 2006 was $436,408; 2007 was $606,099; and 2008 is over $700,000. It has essentially tripled in the last five years. There has been some change in the amount of students but it has certainly not tripled. It seems that the formula doesn't have anything to do with the number of students and it seems that the City of Melrose ends up on the short end of these formulas. He appreciates the material that Mr. Hooton has provided. It contains all of the information the aldermen could possibly want. His discourse has nothing to do with the folks at the school; he just wishes someone would do something to rectify the formula.

Superintendent Cronin says every city and town paid the same amount per student when the district first organized. Now the state says that Melrose needs only 17.5% of Chapter 70 funds to send those students to the school. The Voke only provides the number of attending students to the DOE. Saugus added only one student last year and its assessment increased by $220,000.00. There are more students entering than are graduating, and enrollment will continue to increase. Melrose numbers are up there with Reading and North Reading. One would think that Winchester would be the highest rate per student but it isn't. The school was built for 1000 students. In the last five years there has been a marked increase in enrollment, and this year it is up to 1250. The need is there but there is not enough space to accept every student who applies.

President Mortimer asks which community has the highest contribution and which has the lowest. Superintendent Cronin says Woburn is the highest and Chelsea is the lowest. Melrose is the fifth highest.

Alderman Buonopane says the City doesn't have to like this; it just has to swallow it.

Alderman Infurna says that in the past the Aldermen had the option to not accept the budget and asks if that is still the case. Superintendent Cronin says all communities bring their individual budgets to a vote. If five communities vote it down, the School Committee then has 45 days to act on a new number. If no action is taken, it becomes a positive vote. Unfortunately it costs a town more money to call a town meeting to vote on it than it would save.

Chairman Brodeur asks how Melrose would get a no vote to the school if the aldermen decide to do that. Superintendent Cronin says through the City Clerk's office.

Alderman Boisselle asks how many other communities have voted no this year. Superintendent Cronin says they have not heard from any other community yet. Melrose is the first one they have met with. Alderman Boisselle says he will not support this.

Alderman Buonopane asks what happened last year. Superintendent Cronin says they received five no votes and the School Committee put another budget out. Melrose voted for it in the end.

Alderman Tramontozzi asks if a no vote would risk a higher assessment. Superintendent Cronin says no, but it could be a number not all that much smaller than this one. There may be a $5,000 savings. Alderman Tramontozzi asks the total amount of the budget. Superintendent Cronin says it is $18,347,926.00 and says there are other vocational schools with similar enrollments that have much higher budgets. Greater Lawrence has a budget that is $10 million higher and Shawsheen's is $3 million higher. Alderman Tramontozzi asks if the School Committee decides on the budget requests. Superintendent Cronin says the requests come through the Department Heads and by April the final budget has to be set. Alderman Tramontozzi asks if anyone from Melrose attends. Superintendent Cronin says that no one has attended for the last three years. Alderman Tramontozzi asks who is invited. Superintendent Cronin says the notice of the public hearing is sent to all cities and towns and that all government officials are invited.

Alderman Conn says the Board of Aldermen has rejected the budget in the past but all that does is cut a program or a teacher. He says Mr. Hooton and Superintendent Cronin have no way of addressing the Aldermen's concerns.

Mr. Hooton says that two years ago a representative from the DOE came to the school to explain the formula. All of the Aldermen were invited but only he and Alderman Seaboyer attended from Melrose. He says he was as confused as ever after 1½ hours. He says the formula is unrealistic. On another note he says the students at the school have done two community projects for Melrose. The HVAC program worked with Mr. Beckley at the Milano Senior Center, and the body shop painted a city vehicle. He says the school is giving back to the community

Chairman Brodeur asks if the adult classes are revenue neutral. Superintendent Cronin says a little money is made on them other than the swimming program. Those funds are used to pay the custodians or buy supplies for the school.

Alderman Wright says he agrees that the Aldermen don't want to shortchange the students by rejecting the budget that has been set up by the state legislature. The assessment is $3,000 over the agreed upon fee per student. The less affluent communities need to be subsidized, and Melrose is paying $213,000 to subsidize the needier communities. Superintendent Cronin says the people in western Massachusetts are benefiting the most from Chapter 70 funds.

Alderman Heavey asks who to contact regarding the adult classes. Superintendent Cronin says the Adult Education office, which is open until 4:00 p.m.

Chairman Brodeur says he would like to amplify a point regarding the unfairness of the Chapter 70 subsidy. The folks at the high end, like Winchester, where the average value of a home is $800,000 are paying a lower per capita cost. Chelsea gets a double subsidy in a sense with a more substantial share of traditional school assistance and a subsidy from the other cities and towns. The burden should be explained openly and honestly.

Alderman Buonopane motions to move the bottom-line as amended to $759,570.00, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. 1 opposed (Boisselle).

Order No. 07-161, Requesting that Henry S. Hooton, the City of Melrose's Representative to the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School Committee, and any other person he deems appropriate, appear before this Board to inform us of the vocational school's methodology for determining the vocational curriculum it offer students. (A-3)

Mr. Hooton says the Voke is a traditional vocational school. The most popular classes are carpentry, plumbing and cosmetology. It offers CAD but not robotics. He researched 26 vocational schools and the only one that offers robotics is Minuteman, which has difficulty meeting its quota because it draws from Weston, Wellesley and Carlisle. The curriculum is also based on need. The Northeast couldn't run a program for just two students. It would cost a half-million dollars to implement a robotics program and there is no space for it. Superintendent Cronin says that Minuteman's programs are native to the communities it serves. Students have the right by law to attend Minuteman in the ninth grade and go through the exploratory program. If a program offered by Northeast is chosen, he has to return to this school system. Superintendent Cronin says that in choosing programs they look at the demand. The sheet metal program is not doing well and they dental lab technician program was phased out. More programs could be offered if there was available space; however, she does not know if robotics would be one of them. To change a program or even change the name of a program requires a long and involved process. Five programs are currently in that process. The biggest piece to making a change is need.

Alderman Seaboyer says they have talked about the trade courses and asks how students are doing in the regular classes and SPED classes. Superintendent Cronin says that 99% of the students have passed the MCAS exams. There are special programs for students with learning disabilities. They are seeing more students going on to continue their education because they are feeling well prepared, but they also leave the school career-ready.

Alderman Buonopane motions to place the order on file, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Emergency Management	18,749.92	MEMA Director Ed Kelly

Mr. Kelly says this budget has not changed in five years.

Alderman Boisselle congratulates Mr. Kelly for that and asks if fire arm training requires re-certification every year. Mr. Kelly says yes, that anyone carrying a firearm is re-certified. He is a year behind because he is running out of practice ranges and may have to go for re-certification every other year. Alderman Boisselle asks if he is referring to public or private ranges. Mr. Kelly says public – private ranges are too expensive.

Mr. Kelly says the City received $500,000 in reimbursement from FEMA for evacuating over 300 residents during last year's Mothers Day storm. City Auditor Patrick Dello Russo says it is just shy of that amount. Mr. Kelly says there are state funds pending. FEMA reimburses 75% of the claims and the state is supposed to fund the remaining 25%. The state traditionally never funds that line-item but Governor Romney had extra funds – unspent Katrina funds. He funded it at 12.5% and the State Senate increased it to 25%, passing the bill on 11 December 2006. It was sent on to the House of Representatives on 12 December 2006 where it is still sitting. It would mean an additional $150 - $200 thousand for the City. He does not know why the House is sitting on it. There are two other outstanding work projects that FEMA funded for the engineering studies only. He has appealed and has passed all preliminary stages. The reimbursement amount is almost $250,000. The Hesseltine project was also only funded for the engineering study. That is also being appealed and he hopes to receive an additional $200 - $250 thousand.

Alderman Buonopane thanks Mr. Kelly for all of his work during the flood. He says he went without sleep for a week, and he doesn't know how he did it.

Alderman Tramontozzi also thanks Mr. Kelly on behalf of the Ward 1 residents in the Steele House. He says he did a great job and he appreciates his services.

Mr. Kelly says that the Public Safety departments in the City work very well together. It is a great team and it is a pleasure to work in Melrose.

Alderman Tramontozzi says it may be helpful to get the public to ask the state representative to pass the pending House bill.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of$18,749.92, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Parking	36,496.00	Parking Clerk Jack Higgins

Mr. Higgins says the budget is the same except for the salary increase.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if revenues have increased from the increase in ticketing. Mr. Higgins says revenues have gone from $500 to $1,000 monthly.

Alderman Infurna says she does not recall receiving any documentation about the salary increase from the Personnel Board. Mr. Dello Russo says it was included in the non-union reclassification.

Alderman Boisselle asks if the doubling of revenue is coming from overnight parking or if any is from commuter parking. Mr. Higgins says it is all from heavy ticketing.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $36,496.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Inspection Services	144,703.56	Building Commissioner John Luther

Mr. Luther says the budget hasn't changed much other than contractual obligations for salaries. Alderman Boisselle asks why the contractual line has increased by almost 200%. Mr. Luther says one inspector was out on family medical leave for three months and another was out for a month on sick leave. He needed money to cover those positions. Alderman Boisselle asks how the new technology has helped his office. Mr. Luther says three inspectors now carry PDAs. They are saving on paperwork and the inspections are done more effectively. He is usually the last one to inspect and with the PDA he can see if the electric and plumbing inspectors have signed off and if any comments were made. The PDA helps substantially and cuts out a lot of time and guesswork. Alderman Boisselle asks if contractors are able to apply for permits online. Mr. Luther says they can't apply online yet, but they can view their permits online.

Alderman Buonopane asks if the Education/Seminar line-item reflects training for the new inspector. Mr. Luther says yes.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $144,703.56, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

Wire/Fire Alarm Inspection	92,349.78	Building Commissioner John Luther

Mr. Luther says this bottom-line is lower this year. Alderman Boisselle says he is only looking for $7,000 in the alarm system line-item and asks if all of the alarms have been fixed throughout the City. Mr. Luther says no, but they have gotten a lot done. He wants to thank Verizon for all of their help on the Main Street project. Alderman Boisselle asks about the 900% increase in the tools line-item. Mr. Luther says the new employee requires safety equipment.

Alderman Infurna asks about the 12.1% decrease in Salary and Wages. Mr. Luther says he decreased the wire inspector's hours and responsibilities.

Alderman Conn asks if the time is ripe to discuss regionalization of the wire inspector position. He asks if the City could share the 20 hour per week position with another community to save money. Mr. Luther says it really doesn't save money. Wakefield does that. Alderman Conn asks if Stoneham and Wakefield have a full-time wire inspector. Mr. Luther says they share one. Alderman Conn asks if it is a benefit position. Mr. Luther says it is in Wakefield but not in Stoneham.

Alderman Buonopane motions to move the bottom-line of $92,349.78, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Fire Department	2,974,722.32	Fire Chief John O'Brien

Chief O'Brien says this is basically a level-funded budget. It has been a struggle but with the help of the City Auditor and the Mayor, everyone has agreed to having two engines, one ladder and three fire stations open. The City Auditor and the Mayor told him they'd get to this point and they were true to their word. They are committed to public safety.

Alderman Boisselle asks if the motor vehicle repair line-item is down due to the new vehicles. Chief O'Brien says repairs will decrease significantly and having the new vehicles will allow him to do preventive maintenance. Alderman Boisselle asks when the trucks are due. Chief O'Brien says the pumper is in Connecticut and will go into service on June 1. The Tremont Street station will have its new engine next week which will go into service in June. Alderman Boisselle asks the Chief if he is aware that there is $27 million in grants available for prevention supplies. Chief O'Brien says he has applied for an equipment grant but does not have an application for prevention supplies.

Alderman Conn asks if there is currently a staff of 32 firefighters. Chief O'Brien says there are 32 firefighters, 8 lieutenants, 6 captains and 1 chief. Alderman Conn asks if he foresees any change in staffing. Chief O'Brien says the Sullivan legislation will allow him to hire a new firefighter, making the total 33. With that position filled he will be able to move one firefighter up to lieutenant and reopen the Fire Prevention Bureau. Alderman Conn asks if there are no retirements in the offing. Chief O'Brien says there will be one coming up in the fall or early winter. He says the war is killing the department. He has one firefighter, a Marine, who will be shipped out this fall. Alderman Conn says he gains one and loses one. He says $2.6 million is for salaries and $150,000 for overtime and asks the Chief how he sees that working. Chief O'Brien says he is running a 12-man shift with a 10-man minimum. He is looking at $235,000 to $250,000 overtime costs. Alderman Conn says the Chief is anticipating exceeding the overtime budget by about $100,000 and asks if there is anything else that can be done. Chief O'Brien says with the union giving up the fourth man on the truck, it gave the opportunity to put three men on the ladder and the pumper. He says there is no other community around spending as little as Melrose is in overtime costs. Alderman Conn says that bringing the EMT training in-house was intended to save the City money and asks how it has worked out. Chief O'Brien says it has saved $50,000 annually.

Alderman Wright says that last year the Board of Aldermen accepted M.G.L. Chapter 148A, Section 2, non-criminal ticketing for fire prevention violations. He asks if there has been any revenue from it. Chief O'Brien says the department has had great luck in getting people in compliance and has not had to ticket.

Chairman Brodeur asks if the Sullivan special legislation passes will open up a spot for another firefighter. Chief O'Brien says that is correct.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of 2,974,722.32, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Police Department	3,168,817.11	Police Chief Rick Morrissey

Chief Morrissey says currently the police department is at 40 people, including himself, and next year's budget is budgeted for 43. He had one recruit come in and has two cadets going in next month who won't be in service until next November. He'll have to use overtime to cover shifts. An officer was terminated last week and the Mayor has indicated he will fill that position but again the officer will not be available for six months. The budget is level-funded. He wishes to address the overtime budget. He says that last year he asked the Mayor if he could realize new revenue by implementing a new program to fund the overtime budget. Office supplies line-item is zeroed out as part of the new program to purchase supplies city-wide. The City bought one motorcycle and the cycle lease is paid by parking receipts.

Alderman Conn asks if he anticipates other losses in staff due to retirement. Chief Morrissey says there is a very good possibility of it. Also the Boston PD is recruiting and he could lose two more officers. He is not sure if he will lose another to the war.

Alderman Heavey asks if his sergeants and lieutenants are allowed to do detail. Chief Morrissey says yes and says he is down one sergeant this year.

Alderman Buonopane asks if he has sent out letters recruiting people to come to Melrose. Chief Morrissey says he would review it but there is a price to be paid to take on people from outside of Melrose. He would prefer to have people come from Melrose.

Alderman Heavey asks if with the veteran preference if it would be fair to say that if a person is not a veteran that he or she would not be hired for a position. Chief Morrissey says it would be difficult.

Alderman Wright asks if the current list is ready to expire. Chief Morrissey says it will expire in October.

Alderman Buonopane motions to move the bottom-line of $3,168,817.11, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Police Traffic Supervisors	165,632.32	Police Chief Rick Morrissey

Chief Morrissey says he is currently back up to speed with 21 employees. The uniforms line-item has increased and the Salary and Wages line-item is increasing by $19,212 for the people that go out and tag cars.

Alderman Heavey asks how many hours they work. Chief Morrissey says 10 hours per week. Alderman Heavey asks if the 10 hours includes time spent ticketing. Chief Morrissey says it depends on who takes on the responsibility, but the total hours have to stay under 20 per week. Alderman Heavey asks if there is any possibility they will get their health benefits back. Chief Morrissey says he would entertain that option this evening or any other before this board.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to move the bottom-line of $165,632.32, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

9:15 p.m. Alderman Conn motions for a brief recess, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. All in favor.

9:24 p.m. Appropriations called to order by Chairman Brodeur.

Order No. 07-188, Amending Melrose Revised Ordinances, Chapter 56-2, Classification Schedule by: Adding the positions: “Assistant Construction Inspector” Grade Level: “L-14”

Mr. Beshara says that currently the only position he has is for an Assistant Engineer, which requires a degree and certification; this position does not. He can put this person on a construction project to work under the engineer.

Alderman Boisselle asks if the position is similar to a Clerk of the Works regarding experience. Mr. Beshara says yes; it requires three years experience and a 2-year degree.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if it is funded through the Public Works budget; Mr. Beshara says no, through the Capital Improvement budget.

Alderman Heavey asks if the position is being devised now for the new major construction projects. Mr. Beshara says it is for the road construction projects this year and next.

Alderman Conn asks if he anticipates this being a permanent position. Mr. Beshara says no; only as long as the Capital Improvement projects last.

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

DPW Administration	571,773.53	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says the administration budget is level-funded. It takes care of the office and street lights, and traffic signal maintenance.

Alderman Conn asks about the $10,500 line-item for clothing allowance. Mr. Beshara says it is for the MACE union members. Alderman Conn says there are no MACE union members in this Salary and Wages budget. Mr. Beshara says the Administration budget is a catch-all. Alderman Conn asks if this is a collective bargaining item; Mr. Beshara says yes. Alderman Conn asks who the overtime money goes to. Mr. Beshara says it goes to one of three clerks and to cover the Traffic Commission meetings. Alderman Conn says the City won't realize any savings on street lighting in this budget. Mr. Beshara says that's correct; that project did not move as fast as originally thought.

Alderman Boisselle says $27,000 was spent on traffic signals this year and there is only $15,000 budgeted for next year. Mr. Beshara says there was a problem with an Upham Street signal that was a significant cost. Alderman Boisselle asks if there are any upcoming traffic light repairs or replacements. Mr. Beshara says there is one at Emerson Street. Alderman Boisselle asks about the decrease in the postage line-item. Mr. Beshara says his department is working with the web quite a bit to get information to the public, and reverse 911 is also used when appropriate.

Chairman Brodeur asks if the clothing line could take a $2500 hit. Mr. Scenna says the actual expenditure to date is $9,000; the difference between that and the appropriation is a few vacancies. Chairman Brodeur asks if he expects to use the full $10,500; Mr. Scenna says yes.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $571,773.53, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

DPW City Hall	115,000.00	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says this budget is 11% less than last years' because he did not request additional money for building repair. He says the building is showing its age and he will be looking for CIP money.

Alderman Conn asks where the $1,500 in overtime goes. Mr. Beshara says that is for a MACE union member in the event a repair to the building is needed after hours. Alderman Conn asks how many other buildings in the City have contracted custodial service. Mr. Beshara says Memorial Hall and the Police Station.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $115,000.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

DPW Engineering	155,857.94	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says this budget is decreased by 12% by reducing the Professional Services line-item. The IT department is taking over the purchasing of office supplies and materials which is why that line-item has been cut back.

Alderman Boisselle asks what type of professional service was cut. Mr. Beshara says small design jobs.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $155,857.94, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

DPW Highway	430,744.15	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says the budget shows a 30% decrease but that figure is not accurate. There was a lot of money encumbered from the previous fiscal year. It is actually level-funded.

Alderman Boisselle says there are a lot of minuses in this budget. He asks about the 80% decrease in sidewalk repair. Mr. Beshara says it is the same amount budgeted as last year. Alderman Boisselle asks if any sidewalk repair work was done this year. Mr. Beshara says yes, about $50,000 to $60,000 was spent. Alderman Boisselle says the street patching line-item is way down. Mr. Beshara says a lot of roads will be paved this year.

Alderman Wright asks about the street sweeping decrease. Mr. Scenna says the City received a competitive bid and the same amount of work will be done.

Alderman Conn says the betterment budget is $30,000 but the 2007 actual spent is zero. He asks how $30,000 was arrived at. Mr. Beshara says it is level-funded; no betterments were approved by the Board of Aldermen this year. He will put that money into the sidewalk line-item. Alderman Conn says if this was cut by $5,000 no harm would be done.

Alderman Conn motions to cut line-item 524003 by $5,000.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. Four opposed; motion carries.

Alderman Buonopane says that Mr. Kelly spoke of getting money back from FEMA and the state, and asks if it will go into this account. Mr. Dello Russo says it will go into a special fund within the General Fund dedicated to the storm.

Alderman Infurna asks what the average sidewalk costs. Mr. Beshara says that the betterment on Youle Street cost $26,000. The average is between $25,000 and $30,000. He says this budget is under the fiscal constraints of the Aldermen; he could easily spend all sidewalk and street money given to him.

Alderman Buonopane asks Mr. Beshara if all this work can be done in addition to all the work coming on line this year. Mr. Beshara says it can be done with the expanded staff he has.

Alderman Conn says the Board of Aldermen just allocated $50,000 for sidewalk work. Betterments are for upgrading of sidewalks and installing them where they do not exist. A betterment is a process that takes several weeks if not months to be assessed.

Alderman Buonopane motions to move the amended bottom-line of $425,744.15, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Chairman Brodeur resigns the chair; Vice-Chairman Tramontozzi takes the gavel.

DPW Snow Removal	200,000.00	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says this snow budget is higher than in the past. It is his attempt to bring it more into line with reality.

Alderman Conn says it is a budget that is classically underfunded, not just in Melrose but in all communities. He is glad to see this item increased and would like to see it increased even more. The City will always spend more than $200,000. The City is still waiting to see the relief money promised by the state.

Alderman Brodeur says this budget is always allowed by the state to go into the red. Mr. Dello Russo says it doesn't fare well in the big picture. $90,000 won't hold and the intention is to progressively bring it up to what is real. He says he plans to lower the deficit before the tax rate is set next year.

Alderman Buonopane says the contractual hire line has the biggest increase and asks if they are paid whether it snows or not. Mr. Beshara says no, they are only paid for hours worked. Alderman Buonopane asks if the sand and salt line should be increased instead. Mr. Beshara says those items are bought as needed.

Alderman Wright asks if there is any sand and salt surplus this year. Mr. Scenna says no, that the April storm used it up.

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

DPW Sanitation	1,292,483.69	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says this budget is up about $300,000 from FY07 due to the trash disposal fee increase. Alderman Brodeur says the trash disposal fee is increased by a large number but he thinks it's a number that should be reduced to keep the budget on target by increasing recycling efforts and decreasing this fee.

Alderman Brodeur motions to decrease line-item 522700 by $10,000.

On discussion Alderman Wright says he understands the logic but does not know if it is realistic. If it isn't, they will face that deficit down the road. It is something the Board of Aldermen cannot control like the betterment vote just taken. Recycling cannot be controlled.

On the motion to cut, Alderman Infurna offers a second.

On discussion Alderman Boisselle says that looking at the 2006 and 2007 figures there was an increase of $25,000. This increase is almost $100,000. He would like to further decrease this line-item by $20,000. Mr. Beshara says in 2006, the tonnage disposed was $10,900 tons at $69 per ton. In 2007 tonnage is 10,400 at $72.15 per ton. The bill for this year is going to be well over $740,000. Alderman Boisselle asks the rate for 2008; Mr. Beshara says it is $75.16 per ton.

Alderman Seaboyer says recycling efforts have improved greatly but removing money from this line-item isn't the thing to do at this time.

Alderman Buonopane says the tonnage number decreased during the year of the flood when everyone threw out everything. Tonnage would have been much less without the storm and the flooding. He anticipates there will be less tonnage next year because recycling efforts are working. Mr. Beshara says the goal has to be that as the trash disposal fee increases the tonnage decreases and recycling increases to reach a level-funded budget.

Mr. Scenna says that the period between May and June of 2006 was 650 tons higher than in 2005.

Alderman Brodeur says that budgets set targets and by cutting this line-item the aldermen are telling folks that there are benefits to recycling. He thinks $10,000 is a reasonable cut.

On the motion to decrease line-item 522700 by $10,000, 3 opposed; motion carries.

Alderman Conn motions to move the amended bottom-line of $1,282,483.69, 2nd by Alderman Buonopane. All in favor.

DPW Trees	165,919.65	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says the tree budget is higher because he intends to transfer an employee from the Park Department to the Tree Department.

Alderman Conn asks what the $10,000 for hired equipment is used for. Mr. Beshara says it handles equipment for outside contractors and tree removals that cannot be handled by the crew. It also covers tree plantings.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $165,919.65, 2nd by Alderman Seaboyer. All in favor.

DPW Automotive	393,871.24	City Engineer Bob Beshara Deputy City Engineer John Scenna

Mr. Beshara says this budget is essentially level-funded but that Salary and Wages are up.

Alderman Seaboyer asks if the gas and oil line-item is for all departments. Mr. Scenna says all but the school department.

Alderman Boisselle asks the size of the fleet. Mr. Scenna says there are 68 pieces of equipment.

Alderman Brodeur says there was money allocated in the supplemental budget for a new roof at the City Yard and asks what the $5,000 in the building repair line-item will be used for. Mr. Scenna says it is for a hot water tank.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom-line of $165,919.65, 2nd by Alderman Brodeur. All in favor.

Alderman Brodeur motions to amend the bottom-line of the Operating Budget to $57,342,796.99, 2nd by President Mortimer.

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

Appropriations adjourns at 10:03 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees