

FY2008 Budgetary Hearings

Appropriations Committee

Chairman Brodeur, Tramontozzi,
Boisselle, Conn, Infurna, Seaboyer,
Wright, Mortimer
Absent: Buonopane, Forbes,
Heavey
In attendance: Cemetery Director
Mike Hughes; City Solicitor David
Lucas, Mayor Robert J. Dolan; City
Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo;
Library Director Dennis Kelley; Chief
Assessor Don Dragt; IT Director
Jorge Pazos; Health Director Ruth
Clay; City Clerk Mary-Rita O'Shea;
Chuck Person, Cultural & Recreation
Manager; Nick Gove,
Superintendent of Mt Hood and
Melrose Public Open Spaces

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

Cemetery	210,166.94	Cemetery Director Mike Hughes
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Mr. Hughes says this represents a level-funded budget going into next year. The Cemetery Commissioners are very supportive. With the DPW's assistance the working foreman, Jack Rossi, is able to do work that was once outsourced. \$35,000 was reinvested in the cemetery repairing and building walls, stairs, and renovating the cannon. He is proud of the effort put forth by the Commissioners. The department is self-funded and he hopes to continue reinvesting in it.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$ 210,166.94, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

City Solicitor	458,000.00	City Solicitor David Lucas Mayor Robert J. Dolan
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Mayor Dolan says at the budget presentation he spoke of the need to change the structure of the Legal Department. It has cost the City \$300,000.00 plus per year. He is very satisfied with the level of service received but this budget must be stabilized. He says that City Solicitor David Lucas expressed a real need for additional help with the City Solicitor's responsibilities. Of the \$300,000 for legal counsel, \$250,000 was spent for labor and employment law. He plans to keep David Lucas on as a part-time City Solicitor and hire a full-time Deputy City Solicitor who will act as the Assistant City Solicitor. There will no longer be any outside counsel which will stabilize this budget. In addition to labor and employment counsel, the City doesn't have a procurement plan. This will allow all contracts to be reviewed. He expects to save \$80,000 in the first year and he thinks it is the right time to make this move.

Attorney Lucas says he is thrilled about the restructure as it will allow him to reply to department heads' inquiries within 48 hours. It will cut this budget in half. He has an attorney that wants to do this in-house full-time.

Mayor Dolan says the person interested in the position is someone the City has worked with together with Mark Ventola as labor counsel. The position has to go before the Personnel Board and the Board of Aldermen. The candidate has been part of this discussion as well as Mark Ventola. He hopes to have him in place by July 1.

Mr. Dello Russo says it is the right time in his mind to make this move. In the long term the City will benefit from having in-house counsel to deal with grievances and HR issues in a timely manner and possibly avoid litigation.

Alderman Boisselle asks if the \$70,000 Legal Counsel line-item is for the person filling the new position. Mayor Dolan says yes.

Alderman Conn says the Mayor is not increasing this budget at all. Mayor Dolan says that is correct. Also, he has had to come to the Board of Aldermen every year requesting an additional \$100,000.00 for supplemental funds. Alderman Conn asks if the Deputy City Solicitor will have a staff person. Mayor Dolan says yes. He will transfer \$25,000 from the Auditor's department for a part-time salary for a secretary for both the City Solicitor and the Deputy City Solicitor.

Chairman Brodeur asks if as this matter goes forward the Board of Aldermen will have the opportunity to meet the candidate and ask questions. Mayor Dolan says yes, but first the Personnel Board has to create the job description.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$458,000.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Order No. 07-175, Requesting that the City Solicitor appear before this Board to discuss the Cedar Park MBTA Billboard decision. (A-3)

Alderman Wright recuses himself.

Attorney Lucas says that last Thursday the Superior Court entered a judgment against the cities of Melrose and Somerville. The MBTA is exempt from local legislation and because it is engaged in something reasonably related to the legislatively mandated function to sell, lease or otherwise contract for advertising in or on the facilities of the MBTA, it is exempt from the City's zoning ordinances. The City has 30 days to appeal; he believes Somerville is going to do that.

Alderman Tramontozzi asks Attorney Lucas who this matter is being handled by. Attorney Lucas says he is handling it. Alderman Tramontozzi says that if the City chooses to appeal, it will cost additional money. Attorney Lucas says no actual dollars will be spent. Alderman Tramontozzi says it will leave him with less time to handle other City matters. Attorney Lucas says yes, that it will be more burdensome that he will have to have department heads wait for answers to their inquiries. Alderman Tramontozzi asks how realistic the appeal is. Attorney Lucas says if the committee wishes to discuss this further he will do so in Executive Session.

Chairman Brodeur asks the will of the Committee. Alderman Infurna motions to go into Executive Session, 2nd by Alderman Tramontozzi. Roll Call vote, 7 Ayes: Brodeur, Tramontozzi, Boisselle, Conn, Infurna, Seaboyer, Mortimer; 0 Nays.

The Appropriations Committee enters Executive Session at 7:59 p.m.

The Appropriations Committee reconvenes its regular order of business at 8:08 p.m. Chairman Brodeur says the City Solicitor is still before the committee. Attorney Lucas says he must file notice of appeal if this Board decides to do so. Chairman Brodeur says it is legislatively mandated that the MBTA seek funds to be self-sufficient. Attorney Lucas says it must seek non-fare related revenues before increasing fares; commercial advertising is a piece of that non-fare revenue.

Alderman Conn says in order to preserve the City's rights the Aldermen must request the City Solicitor to file notice of appeal.

Alderman Conn motions to request the City Solicitor to file notice of appeal, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. All in favor.

Chairman Brodeur says the order will be sent to the full board with the recommendation further appellate action.

Library	820,291.20	Library Director Dennis Kelley
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Mr. Kelley says he delivered copies of the book for each of the Aldermen to participate in the reading program that begins on May 1. The book was chosen to appeal to a cross section of the community and it was extremely well reviewed. The budget is level-funded except for Salary and Wages and thanks to Mayor Dolan the book line-item has been increased by \$25,000. Mr. Dello Russo says the City had the good fortune to fund an additional \$25,000 to that line-item, and he is grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Alderman Infurna asks the committee to allow Mr. Kelley to explain how residents may make donations to the library. Mr. Kelley says there is a Wish List link on the library's website by which a donation may be made to honor a loved one or friend. The library recommends books, the donor receives a bill, and the honoree is notified by the library.

Alderman Conn asks if there are 13 full-time employees, and how adequate that staffing level is. Mr. Kelley says he could use more staff but the staff does a fantastic job.

Alderman Wright says he knows the community misses the hours of operation that have been reduced and asks Mr. Kelley for his best guess on what it would cost to reopen the library on Wednesday nights or Sunday afternoons. Mr. Kelley says his best guess for Wednesday evening is \$20,000 and likely \$25,000 for Sunday, due to overtime pay.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$820,291.20, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Assessor	285,694.57	Chief Assessor Don Dragt
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Mr. Dragt says that 2008 is a revaluation year, resulting in the REVAL line-item increasing by \$9,000. During a reval year it is required to conduct a total review of all personal property as well.

Alderman Conn says people should know that \$130,000+ of the budget goes to the revaluation line-item in accordance with state guidelines.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$ 285,694.57, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Info Tech	312,699.28	IT Director Jorge Pazos
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Mr. Pazos says this budget is level-funded except for Salary and Wages. Municipal software has a slight increase this year but otherwise there is not a lot going on.

Alderman Boisselle says the 2007 actual in Net Services is \$8.6k, and it is projected at \$11k. He asks if the \$6,000 budgeted for 2008 is enough. Mr. Pazos says funds were encumbered in that line-item last year, but that \$6,000 is typically budgeted every year.

President Mortimer motions to join the two budgets that Mr. Pazos is addressing, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Department Equipment	100,055.00	IT Director Jorge Pazos
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Alderman Boisselle asks for an overview of this budget. Mr. Pazos says he has responsibility for only some of these line-items. The copier lease expires in January and the City will continue to pay for support. IT Computer Purchases is PC replacement for Public Safety and replacing laptops in the police cruisers. The office supply line-item was reviewed and looked at as to what the City as a whole buys for office supplies. There are more than 30 departmental budgets. He looked at the vendors used and the amount the City spends with them. He then built a realistic mock budget and compared it with competitive pricing and the actual amount spent. He says this will give the City the chance to save up to \$10,000 per year, but he may have to come back and say this line-item was not funded enough.

Alderman Boisselle asks about the \$25,000 for GEOTMS. Mr. Pazos says that figure was based upon receipts from the Building Department. Alderman Boisselle asks if other departments will use them. Mr. Pazos says there is some interest but they are learning about them through the Building Department. Alderman Boisselle asks if there will be additional costs for licenses as more departments are added on. Mr. Pazos says no. Alderman Boisselle asks which departments have online access. Mr. Pazos says the Health Department and Inspection Services.

Chairman Brodeur asks about the line-item IT COM NOT in last year's budget. Mr. Pazos says it is the Community Notification system.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$312,699.28 for the IT Department, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$100,055.00 for Department Equipment, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Health	443,341.08	Health Director Ruth Clay Health Board Member Maurine Garipay
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Ms. Clay says she would like to remind the Aldermen and the audience that Wednesday (2 May 2007) is the first meeting of the volunteer medical reserve corps. The Health Department will be offering a training program to prepare for potential public health emergencies. In case of an emergency Melrose will have a trained group of people who have been CORI checked to call on. Ms. Garipay says all kinds of volunteers are needed, not just people in the medical field. Ms. Clay says 8 support persons are needed for each medical person.

Chairman Brodeur asks if there are significant changes to the budget. Ms. Clay says the increase in the nurses' salary line-item will allow the last elementary school to have a full-time nurse. After 11 years, the City is able to have a full-time nurse at each school.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$443,341.08, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle.

Alderman Infurna says the Professional Services line-item is decreased and asks Ms. Clay if she will get through the year. Ms. Clay says it is not likely.

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

Chairman Brodeur says the Aldermen received a memo from Ms. Clay regarding the need to increase the total expenditure allowed to the department's revolving account.

Alderman Infurna asks what the \$500 stipend was used for. Ms. Clay says she worked with a junior from Tufts University devising a survey for older citizens. The purpose was to see if immunization rates in Melrose were comparable with the rest of the state and to find out why people don't get a flu shot i.e. access to the clinics or something else the Health Department could fix. They also looked at why only 50% of the residents of the elderly housing facilities where flu shot clinics are held receive them i.e. their primary care physician provided them. The department created written surveys for the residents of elderly housing and telephone surveys for others. They learned that people weren't getting flu shots because they don't believe in them. The surveys were also used to introduce the public to the idea of regionalization; if they missed a clinic in Melrose they may get a flu shot in another community.

Chairman Brodeur says he will offer an amendment to the Revolving Account order at the full board meeting.

City Clerk	195,993.31	City Clerk Mary-Rita O'Shea
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Ms. O'Shea says this is a level-funded budget except for salaries.

Alderman Conn asks if there is a vacancy at the present time. Ms. O'Shea says no, it was filled March 1. Alderman Conn asks if the position was filled by someone from another department in City Hall. Ms. O'Shea says she volunteered in City Hall for many years. After advertising the position and holding interviews, she was the most qualified.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$195,993.31, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Election/Registrar	63,556.00	City Clerk Mary-Rita O'Shea
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Ms. O'Shea says that this budget is also level-funded. Last year there were two elections and there will be two elections again this year. There is the question of holding a preliminary election under the new charter. It depends on how many candidates run for mayor. There is a local election in November and a Presidential Primary in March.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$63,556.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle.

Alderman Conn asks how the new elections clerk is doing. Ms. O'Shea says she is doing very well.

On the motion to move the bottom line, All in favor.

Memorial Building	67,100.00	Chuck Person Cultural & Recreation Manager
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Mr. Person says the \$5,000 in part-time Salary and Wages is additional money for additional clean-ups. Water and sewer rates have increased; electricity rates have increased; gas heat rates have increased; elevator inspection fees have increased. There is a part-time person in Customer Service now doing clean up and other small jobs.

Mr. Dello Russo says they are making a transition from how this was budgeted in the past to reflect an increase in the number of events and the increase in the use of utilities. If the hall is going to be kept open the budget should reflect the cost of doing so. Revenues should cover 88% of this budget. He is quite pleased with this approach.

Alderman Infurna asks if there are any other employees at Memorial Hall. Mr. Person says that Customer Service is for the custodian.

Alderman Boisselle says Memorial Hall received two large grants and asks how they affect this budget. Mr. Person says that Denise Gaffey will discuss it at the next meeting. The Hall will close after the 2008 May Pops concert and remain closed for 4 to 4½ months. It will reopen for the October concert. Alderman Boisselle asks if his salary or any other staff is paid from this budget. Mr. Person says his is paid from the Recreation budget. Alderman Boisselle asks about maintenance of the building. Mr. Person says the heating and AC will be done. Alderman Boisselle asks if there are any other repairs to be done. Mr. Person says a sound system is on his wish list. Alderman Boisselle asks if there are other interior projects to be done. Mr. Person says he has to deal with the Historic Society regarding repairs. The pillars need work due to mold.

Alder Wright says there are a lot of artifacts and artwork in the GAR room and asks if that room will be sealed during construction and if the artwork will possibly be cleaned during the four months the hall is closed. Mr. Person says it never came up but he will raise the question with the Trustees and Ms. Gaffey.

Alderman Seaboyer asks about the revenues. Mr. Person says they are currently at \$48,358.00, up \$6,000 from last year. He anticipates \$53,000 this year.

Chairman Brodeur says when the bid goes out for the HVAC, it has to capture future maintenance costs.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$67,100.00, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Recreation	62,055.67	Chuck Person Cultural & Recreation Manager
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Mr. Person says this budget reflects his salary and EMARC.

Alderman Wright asks how the basketball, summer programs and park instructors are funded. Mr. Person says that is covered by the revolving account. Alderman Wright asks if the programs are self-sufficient. Mr. Person says yes.

Alderman Boisselle says the Rec Department Supplies line-item is zeroed out. He asks if those costs are also covered by the revolving account. Mr. Person says yes. Alderman Boisselle asks about the hired help for the July 4th celebration. Mr. Person says they are also covered by the revolving account.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$62,055.67, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Parks	256,156.99	Nick Gove, Superintendent of Mt Hood and Melrose Public Open Spaces
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Mr. Gove says the budget is level-funded from last fiscal year. Spring cleanup is under way and it is going to be a busy year for the department. A new field will be constructed at the Middle School, and Gooch Park and Hesseltine Park will undergo renovations.

Alderman Boisselle asks about the increase in the advertising line-item. Mr. Gove says Chapter 30B requires advertising in local papers for Capital Improvement projects. Alderman Boisselle says there is a busy schedule but there is a decrease in the contractor's line-item; he asks if more of the work will be done in-house. Mr. Gove says the money in last year's budget was carried over from FY06.

Alderman Conn asks if the \$167,000 for mowing is the actual contracted number. Mr. Gove says this line-item reflects the difference of the current contract from previous contracts which were lump sum service contracts. This contract stipulates payment as services are rendered. He believes this amount will be appropriate. Having a unit price allows the City to decide what and where service is needed. Alderman Conn asks who will make the determination on where work will be done. Mr. Gove says it will be himself, the Park Commissioners and the Superintendent of Public Works.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$256,156.99, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle.

Chairman Brodeur asks about the decrease in the backflow line-item. Mr. Gove says it is a program designed to bring all of the City's irrigation systems up to code. That line-item was decreased this year because all primary systems have been completed and the project is moving on to traffic islands and passive areas.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

Mount Hood Enterprise	1,478,925.60	Nick Gove, Superintendent of Mt Hood and Melrose Public Open Spaces
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Mr. Gove says Mount Hood had another banner year last year. They are nearing the limit of what the course can handle. The commissioners approved a Capital Improvement project to install air conditioning in the club house. Later this summer they will be putting an RFP out for management. The current company is in its fifth year of the contract.

Alderman Conn asks Mr. Dello Russo if all revenue other than a \$106,000.00 contribution to the City stays with the Enterprise Fund. Mr. Dello Russo says there is also a \$45,000.00 payment to the General Fund at the end of the year. Alderman Conn says he is interested in knowing what else is in the Enterprise Fund.

Alderman Wright asks if there is any chance that the field up behind Mount Hood will come on line as a practice field. Mr. Gove says the field is not formally used at this time but it is utilized as a practice facility in the summer months. It is not being maximized because of the logistical access of the site. It is accessible by going through the 11th fairway or via the back road off of Route 99. The commissioners recognize it has potential and will do a study this year. Alderman Wright asks who uses it in the summer. Mr. Gove says the management company uses it for golf lessons and youth clinics.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$1,478,925.60, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Council on Aging	134,595.22	City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Chairman Brodeur says as everyone knows, the director of the Council on Aging is out on extended sick leave and he wishes him all the best. Mr. Dello Russo says this budget is level-funded throughout with the added service of a dispatch coordinator for increased afternoon ridership.

Alderman Infurna asks if the seniors are making good use of the increased hours. Mr. Dello Russo says it is his understanding that they are. He says for the record Mr. Beckley does a great job working with the budget every year.

Chairman Brodeur says that Mr. Beckley has had students come in from the Vocational School to work on the HVAC.

Alderman Seaboyer says that last year there was a question about the senior vehicle. Mr. Dello Russo says he spoke with Mr. Beckley and this is not the time to put in for another vehicle. They will wait one more year.

Alderman Infurna motions to move the bottom line of \$134,595.22, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Beebe Estate	12,791.00	
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Chairman Brodeur says there is no one present to address the budget. Alderman Conn motions to place the budget on hold, 2nd by Alderman Infurna. One opposed.

Mayor	188,778.22	Mayor Dolan City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Mayor Dolan says the only change is a 1% increase in Salary and Wages. The Metro Mayors coalition dues is \$5,000 and he has joined the National League of Cities, a worthy group whose purpose meets the needs of Melrose. In terms of staff he has not replaced the Executive Assistant position. Mike Lindstrom is helping out but when the construction projects begin his time will be spent on them.

President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$188,778.22, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle.

Alderman Conn asks the Mayor about the vacant position. Mayor Dolan says he doesn't see filling that position in the first half of the fiscal year. He may instead bring in a college student to do cleanup and painting around the City. He will try to do without an Executive Assistant.

On the motion to recommend, All in favor.

Auditor	335,341.88	City Auditor/CFO Patrick Dello Russo
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Mr. Dello Russo says the primary change besides the increase in contracted salaries is line-item 529999, Reserves for Future Obligations for \$25,000.00. He believes the City had that line in the past but it was eliminated. He hopes to bring it back this year. Once the budget is passed, it is very difficult to find funds for extraordinary circumstances between July 1 and January 1. He believes this should be in place so there is a resource to address unanticipated costs, for any and all departments city-wide. He believes the City needs to consider establishing this again. Everything else in the budget is level funded.

Alderman Conn says Mr. Dello Russo has done an excellent job with the budget. He does not think reinstating an unclassified line-item is a good idea, especially when the Board of Aldermen will be talking about increasing water and sewer rates again.

Alderman Wright reluctantly agrees with Alderman Conn. The library is still not open on Wednesday evening. Perhaps they could find out if the additional cost of \$20,000 would be for the full year or the season. He thinks a better use of this money would be to get a department back up and running.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to cut \$25,000 from line-item 529999, 2nd by Alderman Conn. All in favor.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to move the bottom line as amended to \$310,341.88, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. All in favor.

Aldermanic	118,069.36	Board of Aldermen
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President Mortimer motions to move the bottom line of \$118,069.36, 2nd by Alderman Boisselle. 1 opposed.

Alderman Tramontozzi motions to move the amended bottom line of the operating budget to \$57,317,796.99, 2nd by President Mortimer. All in favor.

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

Appropriations adjourns at 9:38 p.m.

Maribeth Harrington
Clerk of Committees