

**COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTS, ENROLLMENT,
& REVENUE ADMINISTRATION**

November 25, 1997

6:00 PM

Chairman Elise called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Elise, Soucy, Shea, Pariseau, Hirschmann

Messrs.: Joanne Shaffer, Chief Kane, Steve Tellier, Tom Nichols

Chairman Elise addressed item 3 of the agenda:

Alderman moved for discussion. Alderman Hirschmann duly seconded the motion.

Communication from Gino Alibrio, New Horizons for NH, Inc. seeking an exemption from the annual \$500.00 inspection charge conducted by the Fire Department for their building located on Manchester Street.

Alderman Pariseau moved to deny Mr. Alibrio's request stating maybe it's selfish reasons on my part trying to get away with not contributing to the City and if we start with New Horizons we're going to open the door for all other non-profit entities and I can imagine you have the Housing Authority, Optima Health with all of their 29 entities, and the \$161 million in property the Housing Authority has. So, I think if we were to allow this we would be opening a can of worms.

Chairman Elise stated we all know of the position that we feel we are in and there's no doubt that New Horizons has a wonderful mission and we're all in support of it, so maybe in terms of denying it we may want to reframe that motion and sending a letter of information to New Horizons regarding the number of non-profits that are in the same situation.

Alderman Hirschmann stated I just have a few questions. It's \$500 for their inspection...

Chief Kane stated let me clarify what it is. This is not an inspection fee but rather the annual monitoring fee that the City of Manchester has. Currently, we are monitoring systems in some 344 buildings within the City and this is an annual fee that has been in place since 1985, so it's not an inspectional fee.

Alderman Hirschmann stated this is a Gamewell box.

Chief Kane replied yes, exactly. We do this or they could go to a private monitor, the City has offered the service, and we have been charging for the service since '85. There has been other requests over the years to waive the fee by non-profit or other government agencies but at this point in time the only people we waive the fee for are other City buildings. The Federal building is charged, the County, the State, all the health care organizations, all non-profits and schools, churches, etc. all pay the fee and they currently have paid the fee this year, so I would think that they would be talking about next year's fees.

Alderman Hirschmann asked do they own that building, does somebody else own that building.

Chief Kane replied I believe they own that building.

Alderman Elise duly seconded the motion to deny Mr. Alibrio's request and requested that Chief Kane forward a letter of explanation to him.

Alderman Soucy asked what is the basis for the \$500 charge. Is that something that has gone through the Finance Department, is it a reflection of the actual cost that it is or is that just a rounded off figure for an approximation of City-wide because obviously providing the service for different facilities is...

Chief Kane replied where we came up with the cost for that is because the system that they are on supplies more than just those buildings, it's a City-wide system, so it's only a percentage of that. We did a cost-analysis in regard to what other people were paid and what the market was bearing and in 1985 we were charging nothing and we started a nominal fee at that point in time and that was way below market for that service and we increased in that in 1989 and we felt that we were still below market in that but the cost of operating the entire system goes way beyond what we take in for that service. But, that cost expands to other areas too, so it's kind of hard to break out that cost fee.

Alderman Soucy stated the current \$500 charge then you're saying is below the market rate.

Chief Kane replied I believe it's just below the market rate. Actually, it's \$480 is the correct fee. I could point out too that there is another option for them that we have an Alarm Review Board that they could go to and that that Board has reviewed these items in the past, but I think if we take this action tonight I'd be more than happy to send them a letter and address them with a letter and personally follow that up with a personal conversation with them.

Chairman Elise called for a vote on the motion. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

Chairman Elise addressed item 4 of the agenda:

Review of reports from the Board of Assessors.

Mr. Tellier stated this is the result of the last reporting period which was in August, this is the next time we've been able to meet and put together this report. As you know the Board of Assessors was busy assembling the Tax Warrant for the December bills. The Mayor and board of Aldermen did receive a letter as far as the tax base and this has been further elaborated upon on a tax base summary which also recognizes the differences in value from the Board of Land & Tax Appeals, Superior Court, and local appeal filings which is on page one. The balance as of 10/27/97 for the Warrant was \$3,724,589,500; that was very close to what was anticipated earlier during the budget process. On the next page is the Overlay summary. The Board of Assessors have been busy knocking down on all of our appeals.

Alderman Pariseau stated I would like a clarification on page one on the BTLA filing \$1,715 million, is that taken out of the tax base.

Mr. Tellier replied yes; that results in the assessed valuation change; that is just the difference in value.

Alderman Pariseau stated until that agency reviews it we'll continue to show that million.

Mr. Tellier stated this is an on-going figure, it changes from reporting period to reporting period. As far as the status of appeals that are undergoing settlement. From August of '97 until November this reporting period here that has been the

gross amount with respect to Board of Tax & Land Appeal filings. The below figure with respect to Superior Court and underneath that the local municipal filings. They all stem from municipal filings but further courses of appeal would be Board of Tax & Land Appeals or Superior Court.

Mr. Tellier continued by stating that on page two there is a little bit more elaboration on that Overlay summary. What is done upon recommendation from the City auditors was to fully fund the separate years which is why the Overlay amounts are put into separate years to take care of those separate filings with year-end financial transfers to bring that up-to-date. As we speak, we started out earlier in the pay period of \$1,880,801.65 as a result of those filings and the monies paid out, the balance at the end of this reporting period is \$1,578,876.85 as we speak. On the third page is a valuation summary and that's a short synopsis of where we stand for the amount of cases that we have pending appeal, the amount total that we started with and the amount settled for the year's in question - in '94 we don't have anything left those are taken care of, in '95 we only have one left as you can see in the far right column, in '96 as you can clearly see we've done a tremendous amount of working in chipping those down and as you may or may not know the '97 filing period for the Board of Tax & Land Appeals or Superior Court has not come. The municipal filing period does not end until March 1, 1998. So, we won't have a report for you on the '97 appeals till after that time. Following those pages is a list of the '95 cases and the next couple of pages would be the '96 Board of Tax & Land Appeal filling and after that would be the Superior Court '96 with the following being the '96 local appeals where they all stem from. As you noticed the shaded areas represent the cases that have been settled and we keep them in that format so that we are able to format or give information as needed.

Alderman Pariseau commended the Board of Assessors for their efforts for bringing this Committee up to snuff on abatements and whatever. I know there was some discussion recently about calling in the Board of Assessors to the Board for an accounting such as this and they're doing a good job and moved to have the Board of Assessors come to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and explain this to the full Board and maybe it would help those of us on the Board who have questions of the Assessors, but everything is open as far as I know and I'm sure the rest of the Committee is aware of the hard work that the Assessors have done over the last two years and I just want them to get recognition from the full Board.

Chairman Elise stated I think that's a good suggestion to have the Assessors explain it to the full Board because I know that there is a majority of us who do feel that the Assessors have made a good effort to make the process public and there are some people that still question that and I would support that.

Alderman Hirschmann duly seconded the motion to invite the Board of Assessors to appear before the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Alderman Shea stated that the City Clerk suggested that the Assessors appear before the new Board of Mayor and Aldermen after the first of the year.

Clerk Bernier suggested the Board of Assessors appear before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on the third Tuesday in January, 1998.

The motion carried as amended.

Alderman Hirschmann stated with respect to the darkened items, there are some which say current assessment "zero", how come that is like that.

Mr. Tellier replied there are quite a few cases that there was no change, they withdrew upon defense and the Board of Assessors bringing forth documentation that proved that their assessment was appropriate. Quite often some of those cases are withdrawn from appeal.

Alderman Hirschmann stated the other numbers represent gains and losses.

Mr. Nichols replied no, that's their actual assessment.

Alderman Hirschmann asked how can they have a zero, that's what I don't understand.

Mr. Nichols replied like Steve just said, the ones that have "zero" right now, if we dealt with them and there was no change at all, I can see your point there should have been an assessment there even though if it was an up or down.

Mr. Nichols stated the other ones are outstanding and they should have an amount there whether it's up or down.

Mr. Tellier stated we can correct that in the next reporting period.

Alderman Soucy asked what's the approximate time that cases are going through the Board of Land & Tax Appeal, I can remember at one time we had done legislation because they were four or five years behind in some instances and tried to give them additional help, how are they running at this point.

Mr. Tellier replied it's deceiving because legislatively through recent legislation in SB 116 that conform the filing period across the State to March 1st of that following tax period. Now, they have from that time and also they have two months after that to file with the Superior Court or Board of Tax & Land Appeals, so as a result of that it's almost a year in arrears already. As to the result of that filing period there is usually most of another year before they're scheduled or heard, so you're talking usually within two years or less. It's probably a year from the close of the filing period, but they are recently up-to-date with the economy being what it is appeals generally have been going down across the State.

On motion of Alderman Soucy, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted to accept the reports from the Board of Assessors as presented.

TABLED ITEMS

Chairman Elise stated there was some concern with the following tabled items.

Clerk Bernier stated because of the new Board, I'd like to have the following tabled items removed and receive and file and if necessary, could come back in January. I did speak to the Finance Department regarding item 6 who indicated he had no problems with that item being received and filed.

On motion of Alderman Soucy, duly seconded by Alderman Pariseau, it was voted to remove items 5 & 6 from the table for discussion.

Review of policies and procedures relative to enactment of zoning ordinance amendments.

(Tabled 9/17/96)

On motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman Soucy, it was voted to receive and file item 5.

Alderman Hirschmann stated everything that comes to this Committee comes from the full Board, so do we have to send this back to the full Board, are they expecting an answer from this Committee.

Clerk Bernier replied some items do go back to the full Board and some don't.

Communication from the Deputy Finance Officer requesting the Board

consider establishing a threshold on the amount of inventory a department can carry from one year to the next such as setting an upper limit of 1% of the department's operating budget, exclusive of restricted items or 5% of a department's non-salary line items.

(Tabled 6/10/97)

Chairman Elise stated I'd like to hear from the Finance Department because I know this was part of policy-making during the budget process.

Ms. Shaffer stated this was one of the items Randy Sherman had suggested in regards to carrying over items that year and this is because at year-end a lot of the departments do a lot of spending dependent on how much is left over in their budget at that particular time and we didn't think there should be an amount carried over as it says here that was in excess of a certain percentage of that department's limit.

Chairman Elise asked is that something you might bring forward again during the next budget cycle.

Ms. Shaffer replied yes. In a constant quest to upgrade all of the policies and procedures regarding these things, seeing that we're getting into assets and inventory on a more regular basis it's become an integral part of what we're doing in the Finance Department. These are items that we would like to address in the periods coming forward.

Chairman Elise stated at this particular time for timeliness of advocacy, you feel that if we receive and file this now that you would bring it up at another time.

Ms. Shaffer replied yes, probably again at year-end because we would like consideration on these types of items.

On motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman Pariseau, it was voted to receive and file item 6.

Chairman Elise asked wasn't there another tabled item regarding policy-making on the fire inspection fees.

Alderman Soucy stated we did deal with that finally. Clerk Bernier stated if I recall it was sent to the Building Department who was suppose to work with the Finance and Fire Departments and come back to the Committee when such review was completed.

Alderman Hirschmann stated I want to thank the Chairwoman for two years of her Committee service and indicating his pleasure on having served on the Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Shaffer stated I just wanted to let you know that we have a new Revenue Administrator in the Finance Department who has been recently hired and her name is Dawna Rooks and she's replacing Tina Parsons who has gone on to head up the Aggregation Program that is part of the Finance Department currently in relation to one of the programs you instituted or heavily favored at one point in time, the electricity deregulation. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend this evening but she will be at the next meeting and as far as the comment about costing out all of the services because of Tina's attention to the deregulation program, we hadn't been able to complete any of those directives that we had planned to do. But, now that we have another full-time individual that's primarily one of her job functions to cost out all of the services for the City. So, hopefully, we'll have something on that in the days coming forward.

Chairman Elise stated from what I understand the City's Aggregation Program is being utilized as a model nationwide and it's something that we can be really proud of.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion of Alderman Soucy, duly seconded by Alderman Hirschmann, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee