

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

March 4, 2008

5:00 P.M.

Deputy Clerk Matt Normand stated a motion would be in order to elect a Chairman pro-tem in the absence of Alderman Sullivan.

Alderman M. Roy nominated Alderman Lopez. The motion was duly seconded by Alderman DeVries.

Chairman Lopez called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Lopez, DeVries, M. Roy, Ouellette
Alderman Sullivan arrived late.

Deputy Clerk Normand stated the Clerk would just note that I did pass out a correspondence from the Police Department regarding two exemptions from the travel policy that they were looking for that did not make the agenda.

Chairman Lopez asked in reference to?

Deputy Clerk Normand responded Deputy Leidemer is here and he can explain the two conferences that are in question.

Chairman Lopez asked is that a new item?

Deputy Clerk Normand stated it was not on the agenda; it was inadvertently sent to Finance.

Chairman Lopez stated why don't we take it up. Deputy Leidemer, why don't you, for public purpose since we know what's going on, just give us an overall view of this correspondence so that we can make a decision.

Mr. Glen Leidemer, Deputy Police Chief, stated before you, you should have two separate letters. In error I sent one to the Finance Director. What I am asking is for this Committee and the Board as a whole to waive the travel policy of the City that requires 65 miles paid travel to have compensation for meals. The distance has to be greater than 65 miles. The first conference before you was to send two investigators to the Internet Crimes Against Children conference in Boston. That conference is being sponsored by the United States Attorney General. All costs associated with it are being paid by the Internet Crimes Against Children initiative, which is a federally funded initiative. For whatever reason, I can't explain, they pay for lodging, registrations, and travel. They don't pay for meals so I am asking the Committee and the Board to waive the distance requirement that allows us to pay our two investigators to attend that conference. You also have a second document dated March 4th. I am asking for a similar waiver to send one of our School Resource Officer for West High School to a conference in Leominster which is 59 miles from Manchester. That too does not meet the criteria. That would be paid in full by our department. The cost is \$309 and the dollars are available in our budget.

On motion of Alderman DeVries, duly seconded by Alderman M. Roy, it was voted to approve this request for a waiver, the first one being a cost to the City of \$215 and the second conference being a cost to the City of \$309.

Alderman M. Roy stated the meals are pretty specific numbers. Are those at a hotel? A week in Boston on \$215 isn't a lot for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Mr. Leidemer stated the City doesn't dictate to their employees what they eat. What we tell them is how much they can spend in the course of a day. For travel purposes, using the conference in Boston, which is a full week, they are expected to have breakfast at their house Monday morning and dinner at their house Friday evening and we compensate them for the meals in-between. We don't tell them where to eat. We tell them what they have maximum and they have to provide receipts for their meals.

Alderman M. Roy stated I know your investigators are very prudent and are going to follow the letter of the waiver. It just seems very precise numbers. So it's based on per day and a number and multiply that out and that's what is put forward.

Deputy Leidemer stated we're creative but we stay within the guidelines of the City policy.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 3 of the agenda:

3. Department travel/conference summary report submitted as follows:

Tim Soucy, (Health) Northeastern Mosquito Control Association
(December 3 - 5, 2007)

On motion of Alderman DeVries, duly seconded by Alderman M. Roy, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman DeVries asked Tim, are there any highlights that you would like to advise us of the information before we take a vote?

Mr. Tim Soucy, Health Director, responded the conference is an annual conference of all the New England states and New York, the folks that are involved in Arboviral Surveillance. Really it's a recap of what we saw in the previous year. It won't change our strategy in any way for the upcoming year. We will still continue to have an active mosquito surveillance program. We are relying less on bird information as we've gained more information on the mosquito ecology and what we would expect from the epidemiology of the diseases that we are following. So it won't really change our strategy that we have implemented in the past couple of years.

Alderman DeVries stated I noticed also there was some coverage on bedbugs and that's a regional issue we have been fighting in this city. Is there any change of strategy with that?

Mr. Soucy responded no. We are still in a position to advise folks as to what to do. We are trying to be a little more pro-active with some of the larger property owners before issues get out of hand, working more with the private pest control operators in the community so that we have a more coordinated approach.

Alderman DeVries stated I've been trying to think of the name of the new officer at the Highway Department that's dealing with all of the solid waste curbside, the furniture and such. Have you had conversations with that individual to help educate them on any precautions or dealings that we should have?

Mr. Soucy replied probably a little over a year ago I met with all of the folks from the Refuse Division at the Highway Department and we had a discussion. They were concerned with picking up mattresses and everything else. They have gone more towards the cherry picker. If they have to pick things up by hand we have given them guidance on how to do that.

On motion of Alderman DeVries, duly seconded by Alderman M. Roy, it was voted to receive and file this item.

Chairman Lopez addressed item 4 of the agenda:

4. Communication from Kevin Buckley, Independent City Auditor, submitting a performance audit of the Environmental Protection Division and updating the Committee on the status of pending and future audits.

Alderman Lopez stated the Chairman has arrived and he will take over the meeting.

Mr. Kevin Buckley, Independent City Auditor, stated the audit you have today is of the Environmental Protection Division. It was a very good audit. You will notice there were three observations. Observation one has to do with the cash flows and their rate increase, how I felt they should have made the rate increase sooner. Observation two has to do with some untimely draw downs of state and federal funds, and observation number three has to do with payroll overtime and some excessive leave, some sick time that they had there. The department is addressing all three of the observations. Observation one and two both stem from a shortage of accounting staff in the business office. It has gotten to the point where at certain times of the year they are so overwhelmed by some very complicated work that the accounting staff does there that it has actually become an internal control problem. It probably led to the late drawdowns and to how long it took them to get their cash flows done. I think it is getting to be a critical need that they could use another higher level accounting person in their business office.

Alderman DeVries stated Kevin, I know that I had some conversation yesterday with the department in reference to the lack of the auditee response and I thought that might be forthcoming for this meeting. I am hoping there is something ready to distribute.

Mr. Buckley asked didn't they distribute something?

Alderman DeVries asked an auditee response to the audit?

Deputy Clerk Normand stated anything that is in the agenda is what we received. It looks like Mr. McNeill has it.

Chairman Sullivan stated I have a question. The audit itself occurred during calendar year 2006, correct?

Mr. Buckley relied yes.

Chairman Sullivan asked why are we just now getting a response from the department? I guess this would be directed to the auditee. Why wasn't it included in the report itself?

Mr. Fred McNeill, EPD, stated we were finalizing the report in December of 2007. That's when we met and finalized the report itself. Then, due to the workload that Mr. Buckley mentioned, which is throughout the staff, we just got to it this week and did our responses this week.

Chairman Sullivan asked Mr. Buckley, have you seen the responses?

Mr. Buckley responded yes I have. I received a draft of them a couple of days ago.

Alderman DeVries stated let me go back. I think it was under observation one in Mr. Buckley's audit there was some note made of expenditures due to additional projects. I guess I was looking for some clarity around what those additional projects were and I don't see that in the response. Maybe I just read it too quickly.

Mr. Kevin Sheppard, Highway Department, responded I actually asked that same question. I haven't had a chance to discuss this with Mr. Buckley but I discussed this with Fred. I think from what I understand we aggressively moved forward with our CSO program to complete those projects because we do need to start moving into our phase two CSO. We aggressively moved forward with our phase one program as part of that. So I think, and maybe Kevin will say something similar to that. It's in here; we moved forward with our phase one. I believe we had until 2009-2010 to complete that.

Alderman DeVries asked if I could follow up...because I realize there is a lapse of time between the actual audit and the report here and I think some of the phased increases may have occurred somewhere outside of or after the audit was initiated. I am wondering within the increases on the bonding, the approval, that came through, that there was some delineation for other projects. I want to say it was \$10 million but I could be way off on that number, to allow bonding for projects outside of the CSO. I am wondering if that is the kind of detail I am looking for, that prior to the audit in 2006, when we didn't have bonded money put aside for additional projects, if that was the issue that was picked up in audit.

Mr. Buckley stated that was part of it. They did many capital improvements. There was a lot done.

Mr. McNeil stated we did three emergency sewer rehabilitation projects within the City, but all of these were laid out within EPD's CIP plan, within their schedule. The only three unscheduled ones were three emergency sewer rehabilitation projects that total about a million dollars.

Alderman DeVries stated the additional projects that I was thinking of were more in the line of sewer line extension work that's outside the parameters of the CSO project and that is what I am referencing in the bonding. It was my understanding that we did bonds this time to allow some discretionary extension of sewerage coverage within the City of Manchester.

Mr. McNeill stated we do have a sewer expansion program that's ongoing. It's called the Cohas Brook project; it has been ongoing for about ten years. We are moving into phase three of that now. Within this FY2009 CIP we do have \$5 million for that. In FY2008 CIP I think we had \$1 million within that.

Mr. Sheppard replied also I am not too sure if this may be where you are going. We have as a part of the CIP or the budget process, put in some money for emergency sewer repairs, identifying that the system is getting old and there is a need that has come up. There is a need to identify money for emergency repairs.

Alderman DeVries asked on observation three talking about the payroll overtime and sick leave practices, are these non-affiliated so non-contractual?

Mr. Buckley responded these are all affiliated and all contractual obligations. What I was really trying to point out here is overtime has been brought up several times to me, controlling overtime and how does all this overtime happen. This was a good example of it the way the labor contracts are written. There is certain overtime that you are always going to get no matter how many people you hire, just because of the way the contracts are written. So I brought it up in this report because it happened to be in front of me when I was doing my audit work. It is pretty much a city-wide problem with a lot of the contracts.

Alderman DeVries asked does that observation get shared with the HR Department?

Mr. Buckley replied yes.

Alderman Ouellette asked back on observations one and two when you talk about staffing, how many more people do you think it would take to hire for that office to be adequately staffed? Did you make that observation?

Mr. Buckley responded no, I think they at least need one more high level accounting person to handle their federal funds projects. These construction projects have state money, revolving fund money and federal grants. All of them require them to report differently. An allowable cost under one is not allowed under another. It's a very complicated and time consuming way to have to draw down funds. It really ties up their BSO so that when she's doing that, she really can't do anything else. At the end of the year when she's also trying to close the books to start for the new-year and she's doing draws at the same time, the whole staff is under a lot of stress over there.

Alderman Ouellette asked if I am correct you mentioned that there are monies that the state owed the department and it was not collected because the paperwork wasn't done in a timely manner. Is that correct?

Mr. Buckley stated yes and eventually it was all drawn down. They were having problems reconciling one of the accounts. I can't remember if it was a revolving fund or the state grant and it was holding everything up while they were passing paperwork back and forth to the state.

Alderman Ouellette asked have you done a study on your staffing and what sort of things are you finding out?

Mr. McNeill responded we have a consulting firm under contract now that's performing a staffing optimization reorganization study. We recognize that we're understaffed now and EPD is just wrapping up phase one of our CSO program, which is about \$57 million. Phase two of the CSO program is anywhere between \$75 and \$200 million. We are currently anticipating about \$150 million so there is going to be a tremendous volume of work in the next 10 to 15 years on these CSO projects. What we are trying to do with the consulting firm is to look to optimize our present staffing, maybe change their roles a little bit and then give us an indication of what we need for additional staffing to help us. As Kevin mentioned, he saw an immediate need for additional office staff. We have budgeted this year a Financial Analyst II to act as our Grants Administrator.

Chairman Sullivan stated I guess that leads to the question I want to ask. Is this a problem that based on your experience requires additional staffing or is it something that could be address through internal restructuring, a reallocation of duties or is this something when push comes to shove is going to require more raw man power?

Mr. McNeill responded it's going to require additional staff.

Mr. Sheppard stated I can answer that too. This is a problem. Fred's been part Chief Sanitary Engineer for only two years now. It has become an issue now that we've gotten in to the CSO program; in the past we have had our interceptor program. I've been observing this. I've worked at the BSO down there and the work load down there between billing and as far as these additional projects the City is taking on, I don't think we are trying to complain. It's great to see that Kevin has identified that there is a need for that. That's the reason we are doing the staffing plan so that we can look at the staffing. Perhaps they come out and say maybe you do reorganize. My belief is we probably do need additional staff down there but I think that's what this plan will at least lay out for us so we can present that to you.

Chairman Sullivan asked when do you expect the consultant study to be ready?

Mr. McNeill responded we are hoping for a draft this month and it should be done in the spring of 2008.

Chairman Sullivan stated we respectfully ask that when that comes in you send a copy to this Committee.

Mr. McNeill stated I would be glad to.

Alderman Ouellette asked on the overtime, one thing that caught my eye, on observation number three I believe it says an employee worked four hours from 7 am to 11 am but he was paid for 4 1/2 hours. How does that happen?

Mr. Buckley replied that I believe has to do with their lunch half-hour and the two breaks. If they are doing one job then they don't get paid for it. If they are doing another job they do get paid for it. When this individual was on that shift he was on the job I believe where he would end up getting paid for the half-hour. It's just another quirk of the contract that they end up getting that.

Alderman Ouellette asked well my question then is how many hours must an employee work before a mandatory lunch is taken? I know most places it is six hours before you are mandated to take a half-hour off for lunch. Do we have that in the City? I thought that was a state law.

Mr. Sheppard added I can tell you a lot of employees, especially at the Highway department, work a straight eight hour day. We do allow them a break mid-day for lunch but it is a straight eight-hour day. We've determined many times in the

past it's not worth it to have our guys close up a job, come back into the yard, take their half hour unpaid lunch and then go back out to the job. What we've done is we have worked it out so that they take a break on the job so they get paid a straight eight hours.

Alderman Ouellette stated I understand that, Kevin, but those employees that are on the trucks work an eight-hour shift; that is their shift; it's allotted for eight hours. What time they take their lunch really doesn't concern me. If somebody is working four hours and they are getting time for a lunch or credit for not working that half hour, it kind of concerns me.

Mr. Sheppard stated that's again something that Kevin has identified at part of the contract. I plan on looking at that further along with the HR Department and Fred.

Alderman Lopez stated although we know the rate increase is where you get your money, and you keep talking about more staff. How many people are in the financial section now?

Mr. McNeill replied we have a staff of eight that takes care of about 25,000 billings per quarter. Those are broken into administration, accounts receivable and accounts payable.

Alderman Lopez asked are they the same type of financial people as the City-side?

Mr. McNeill responded they have the same job classifications similar throughout the City. It's the standard job classifications. Yes.

Alderman Lopez stated, as you are well aware, the rate increase comes from the taxpayers. So the more people you add on, even though you are an Enterprise system, that's what happens to the Enterprise system is they keep adding and adding and you are going to get your money from the taxpayers in the end anyway. So I think one comment was made...I don't know who made it. Maybe somebody could double up or maybe they are not doing the necessary level that they should be doing and maybe step increases and adding more responsibility might be the way to go. I think we ought to look at that, rather than just saying we need more staff. Did we look at that area or just say we need more staff?

Mr. Sheppard stated again what my comment was that's one of the reasons we are doing the staffing. It may be easier to say add staff. That's the easy solution. I think as part of the staffing review we are looking actually at the internal controls and how the staff actually works on a day to day basis. To say right now we need additional staff, my belief based on my observations in the past and my experience within that division, they probably do need a higher level person because of the state grants and the billing but

that's the reason we have a person or a group doing a staffing review for us, someone who understands and does this on a professional level. Perhaps they do come back and say maybe reorganize and do this or perhaps they do come back and say you need additional staffing. It's too early to say we need it. I feel we do need it but that's why we have any outside company doing the staffing review.

Alderman Lopez asked they are doing the review as a separate contract, looking at the staff as to what they do or is the City helping you?

Mr. McNeill stated they're doing it independently. What they are doing is a term we use called benchmarking, so they take in another dozen or 15 other similar size utilities and look at their staffing levels and compare them to ours to get a feel for where we stand within the industry.

Alderman Lopez asked who is the Chief Finance Officer over there, or Business Officer?

Mr. McNeill stated June George.

Alderman Lopez asked how long has she been there?

Mr. McNeill replied eight years maybe.

Mr. Sheppard stated yes, she's been there quite a while.

Alderman Lopez stated the only comment I can make is because I am familiar with the City-side debt. We looked at the City Finance Department and we run a great Finance Department now and we've lost, I think, three or four people. Step increases and reorganization in the Finance Department has been tremendous for the City. So I would look at a lot of those things as you move along and with the consultant that you are working with. Sometimes outside consultants don't see the picture as we see the picture. So I think that we have to look at those things and maybe reorganization is probably sometimes the best thing to do and do a desk audit on each of the people.

Mr. Sheppard stated by no means do we mean to work independent of the HR Department. The HR Department has to be part of this whole process because eventually a report would have to come to the HR Committee and we would be looking for the HR Department's approval or acceptance of that report. Like I say, I want to make it straight, by no means are we saying we need ten employees or five employees. We want to see what this report comes through with. I understand the taxes situation in the City. I am a taxpayer as are you. We are not going to be adding staff if we don't need it.

Alderman Lopez stated that's very good. I just wanted to comment that sometimes we look at the Enterprise and say it's Enterprise, so it's not taxpayers' money but it is taxpayers' money.

Mr. Sheppard stated that's never the case with our Enterprise.

Alderman DeVries stated I guess I would ask the question of Kevin Buckley but if others have a better shot at answering it, let me know. The background information did give a little bit of the scenario of how we accomplish some sewer functions for some of our surrounding communities. When you looked at the books, the grants, the Federal grants that have been written, have you been able to ascertain that 100% of the cost of providing those services outside the City of Manchester is paid from the fees or other dollars provided by those communities?

Mr. Buckley responded they have a very complicated formula of how they divide costs up amongst the surrounding communities and it does relate to the cost but it is also dependent on the strength of the communities. They do take their share of capital costs. If the City does a project that only benefits one of the towns, that town will pick up the capital costs. From everything I could see, the costs seem to be allocated pretty well.

Alderman DeVries asked did that cost include interest payments due on debt?

Mr. Buckley replied yes it does.

Alderman DeVries stated I don't know if anyone else wanted to weigh in on that, but if not I had an additional question. This goes to a phone conversation that we had yesterday which doesn't pertain directly to the audit but certainly does to the EPD functions and financial functions. I had received a phone call from a constituent in reference to some of the retroactive billing for the recent increase as well as a prior increase with some concerns and I understand that's been a concern of a few of our citizens in Manchester. I don't know that I've caught up with a response on how that can be explained to my constituent but I thought while we are here on record I'd like to get at least the beginning of that response.

Mr. Sheppard stated from what I understand, in the past with all the utilities here in the City, if an increase in the rate went into effect for example January 1st, but a resident in that quarter received their bill on January 30th even though that bill was for three months that new bill reflected that new rate for the complete three months even though the rate increase had only been for one month. From what I understand that has been past practice throughout the City. I think that was the concern that's been raised by your constituent. We have received a couple of calls on that. We have not received many. To break it out to make the rate effective January 1st and then to maybe do a reading on all of those homes within that quarter probably doesn't make sense. In the future perhaps what

we will do is look at making the rate increase effective on the beginning date of a billing cycle. For example, if we want the rate increase for March 15th so that increase is effective from January 1st first to March 15th and is reflected first in the March 15th bill not in the January 1st bill.

Alderman DeVries stated part of what I was trying to ascertain went to how other utilities in the state that would also have this kind of look-back billing handled rate increases.

Mr. McNeill stated Manchester Water Works handles them in the same manner as we do. We are governed by our sewer ordinance currently so we are kind of stuck with that. We are looking into some other utilities within the state. We haven't got any feedback yet. We will forward that information once we do.

Alderman DeVries stated it would be a worthwhile response and I did understand that several individuals on top of those that have reached out to you directly have been contacting the Mayor's office. I think there are more and more people that are concerned about this look-back, if you would, on their billing.

Mr. Sheppard stated I believe there may be a way to correct that in the future.

Alderman DeVries stated thank you. I don't know that that would improve the audit response that we have before us. That would jeopardize some of your financial situations.

Chairman Sullivan asked any further questions from the Committee? Is there a motion?

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to accept the audit.

Chairman Sullivan addressed item 5 of the agenda:

5. Communication from William Sanders, Finance Officer, submitting the City's Monthly Financial Report (unaudited) for the seven months ended January 31, 2008.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman Lopez stated Mr. Sanders, I know you are going to give us a briefing probably this evening at the full Board. I don't want to go over everything but are you prepared to do that this evening and give us the shortfalls and departments and all that?

Mr. Sanders responded that is correct. We will have an updated department head assessment of each of their budgets.

Alderman Lopez stated Mr. Chairman, if you want to proceed with that and wait for the full Board or get it here, that's up to you.

Chairman Sullivan stated if we are going to go down the same road twice I don't see any need to drag this out any longer, unless there's any objection from the members of the Committee.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to receive and file the communication from the Finance Officer.

Chairman Sullivan addressed item 6 of the agenda:

6. Communication from Sharon Wickens, Assistant Director of Treasury, submitting Finance Department reports as follows:
 - a) Department Legend;
 - b) Open invoice report - over 90 days by fund;
 - c) Open invoice report - all invoices for interdepartmental billings only;
 - d) Open invoice report - all invoices due from the School Department only;
 - e) Listing of invoices submitted to City Solicitor for Legal Determination;
 - and
 - g) Accounts Receivable summary.

On motion of Alderman DeVries, duly seconded by Alderman M. Roy, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman DeVries asked Sharon, in general are you noticing any trending of receivables being held open longer, anything that might be due to any economic shortcomings?

Ms. Sharon Wickens, Assistant Director of Treasury responded recently there appears to be a few more on the list than we normally have, but it's not significant. It seems that they are being paid, just maybe a little bit later. I haven't noticed anything big.

Alderman DeVries stated I have the same question regarding write-offs. Are you seeing a trend that write-offs are increasing?

Ms. Wickens responded I haven't seen a trend that write-offs are increasing. I think the Solicitor's office has been really pursuing some of the older accounts and having a little more difficulty with some of our older write-offs and they are just appearing now. I don't think it has anything to do with the economy now.

Alderman Lopez stated on the write-offs, one of the discussions we are going to have at the HR Committee, and I brought it up the last time, is workers compensation. We don't seem to get our money back. You have probably seen the communication that we sent out to all the departments in reference.

Ms. Wickens stated I have.

Alderman Lopez asked do you have any comments on that as to why we are not getting our money back?

Ms. Wickens responded after seeing what went out, it appears that it's the union contract language that is stopping us from getting us our money back. I really wasn't aware of that until recently and until you fix that I don't know that it's going to help.

Alderman Lopez stated it might be an unfair question. With the Finance Officer and Dave Hodgen, we are going to deal with that at the HR Committee meeting, but every time we write-off, there are eight or nine worker's compensation cases that we haven't been able to get our money back on. They are all from the Highway Department.

Ms. Wickens stated I am not sure that it's just the Highway Department. Those are the ones that you are seeing. Not everybody puts their workers compensation into Accounts Receivable so sometimes it's not reported to you.

Alderman Lopez stated last time it was seven from the Highway Department and it's eight this time. That's fifteen.

Ms. Wickens stated right, but I think there may be others that they are collecting on through HR and every once in a while HR will throw one in but it's not in Accounts Receivable, so you are not seeing it. They are in a different receivable system. Police uses a different receivable system for some of their billing.

Alderman Lopez stated it is a complicated issue and I don't want to bore the Committee on it. HR is going to take it up and we will just have to work through it. It's just one of those loopholes in the law and we are trying to close that loophole. Your report in reference to Accounts Receivable is a very good report

in comparison going back to 2003. There were 22,000 in 2003 and now in 2008 there are only 2,900. I know you are keeping track of it. Keep up the good work.

Alderman M. Roy stated Sharon, thank you very much for the report. It was educational to see who is on the list and what efforts had been put forward. One question that I have, referencing page 7-18, I am not sure what page it is in your report. It's the statement looking at the second quarter FY 2008. There is a company that has four of the five names listed there. In the note or explanation there is an account balance suit-worthy per client threshold. Is that per bill or company total bill? What is that threshold and how is that determined?

Ms. Wickens responded what I do is I put the collection agency's reason for sending it back to us. That appears to be a new one. We do not give our collection agency authorization to take these customers' reports or to file anything further because we have our own Solicitor's office. We are not going to keep it with them; we are going to get it to our guys to take care of it. They don't have a threshold; they can't send anything. It goes through our Solicitor's office. So that might be misleading, how it's worded there.

Alderman M. Roy asked so is this a report coming back from the collection agency? Are they a local company or national?

Ms. Wickens responded they have an office out of Portsmouth.

Alderman M. Roy stated my concern is people who abuse the system tend to do it on a monthly basis or year after year. That is what I would like to start looking at and seeing if we can protect ourselves. Could you forward the guidelines, whatever we request of them and send us that information so that we can educate ourselves as to the guidelines of what they are expected to do, if there is a brochure or what their responsibilities are? Is it a certain number of phone calls? When we see all attempts exhausted, what does that technically mean?

Ms. Wickens stated it can mean something different depending on the balance. If we are sending them \$30, their efforts probably aren't going to be real great because it's so low. Maybe they can give us a dollar amount threshold.

Alderman M. Roy stated I would like just a little bit of a guideline so that in my thought process I am not looking for things that can't be done or are already being done.

Ms. Wickens stated that's a reasonable request. Sure.

Chairman Sullivan stated I am going to entertain a motion to accept items 6 and 7 since they have fused together during the course of the discussion here.

7. Presentation by Sharon Wickens, Assistant Director of Treasury, providing a brief overview of the collection process as well as her communication identifying ordinances related to the collection of delinquent accounts and the list of approved accounts receivable write-offs over the past five years.

Alderman Lopez stated if we receive and file, the write-offs can't happen. Is that correct?

Ms. Wickens responded there are no write-offs this month. This is just for your information.

Chairman Sullivan stated in the interest of keeping it consistent month to month, we should accept the reports.

On motion of Alderman DeVries, duly seconded by Alderman M. Roy, it was voted to accept the reports of the Finance Department in items 6 and 7.

Chairman Sullivan asked are there any items to remove from the table?

Alderman DeVries stated it was my understanding that we were going to have a separate meeting to deal with item 8 on our agenda, which is tabled.

Chairman Sullivan stated we are. I have spoken to the City Clerk's office about that. I believe it is scheduled. We will be having that as promised.

Alderman DeVries asked you are giving us an hour?

Deputy Clerk Normand stated 5:30 to 7:00 pm on March 11th.

Alderman Lopez stated just for the record, everybody received the communication from myself in reference to the revenue stabilization special revenue account tax stabilization and risk retention. The Finance Officer was going to make some recommendations. I just wanted to put it on the record to receive the communication and table it until next month. He has had communication with me to get another month so he can continue to review this. We have plenty of time as long as we do something before June. Correct me if I am wrong Mr. Sanders, as long as we do something before June, we can change the ordinances but we have to remember the time element in getting something through so I would like to put this on the table until next month.

Deputy Clerk Normand stated we need to receive that communication from Alderman Lopez.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to receive and file the communication from Alderman Lopez regarding revenue stabilization.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to table the communication from Alderman Lopez regarding revenue stabilization.

TABLED ITEM

8. Communication from Kevin Buckley, Independent City Auditor, submitting an audit of the VISTA program and updating the committee on the status of pending and future audits.
(Note: Tabled 2/4/08; Updated communication between Kevin Buckley, City Auditor, and Janice Lopilato, State Program Specialist of the Corporation for National & Community Services attached.)

This item remained on the table.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman M. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman DeVries, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee