

## JOINT MEETING

### COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS and COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES/INSURANCE

**March 16, 2010**

**6:00 PM**

Chairman Lopez called the meeting to order

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Alderman Lopez, DeVries, O'Neil, Osborne, Corriveau, Shea,  
Ludwig, Ouellette, Arnold, Craig

Messrs: T. Clark

Chairman Lopez addressed item 3 of the agenda:

3. Review of proposals from the Efficiencies and Consolidation Task Force.

Chairman Lopez stated the Mayor has asked to address the Committee.

Mayor Gatsas stated thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be here and speak to both Committees. I make this recommendation after sitting in your seat as an Alderman and then looking at it from the perspective of the Mayor. This is not a recommendation that I make without careful and thoughtful consideration. When you talk about consolidations it is never easy. I believe this is about efficiencies and figuring out synergies. Consolidating Parks, Recreation and Cemetery as a division under the Highway Department gives us and opportunity to give us an overall look at where we have equipment, how we use it and what we are doing with it. I think in the past, Parks has been the department that was always shortchanged. I think this gives us an opportunity to utilize all of the City assets to make sure that the parks that we have in the City are enjoyed by everybody. I know that we put the burden of consolidation on departments. I have great faith in Kevin Sheppard and the Highway Department and the Business Service Officers who are there who are going to oversee this transition in a very timely way. I presented you with a letter and also the Ordinances that are before us. I will have the Clerk pass those out so you have opportunity to take a look at them. This would take Parks and put them on equal footing with Facilities and

EPD. To complete the consolidation, there is the elimination of three positions and those positions are the Director of Parks, the Deputy Director of Parks, and the Business Service Officer. We would then create a Chief of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery. In the package before you, you also have an organizational chart that shows you that Kevin Sheppard would oversee the Chief of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery and then the organization chart would flow through. I'm not looking to eliminate funding out of this budget. I'm looking to leave the funding in for the new Chief of Parks to have an opportunity to come in and hire the laborers that he needs to make sure that the Parks and Recreation Department operates at its fullest capacity. I think we have made great strides in taking McIntyre and moving it into a public-private partnership, which I think is going to flourish in years to come. Right now I think the Parks Department is working on how we make sure that golf courses in Manchester that are utilized by an awful lot of people are available so it is used after all storms and not having to wait two or three weeks after we have a few days of rain. I think we have the opportunity to look at the West Side Arena to see whether we can get into another public-private partnership because as some of you folks noticed, we will have the opportunity to have discussions with the auditors. There is about \$3 million that the Enterprise Fund has lost in the past. Not through anybody's fault, but certainly we have given them the pools, Gill's Stadium at one time, McIntyre, the golf course and we have asked them to run those, but never let them charge the rates that should have been charged to make sure that they would be able to be maintained. I think that that certainly changes the focus of where we are. Consolidation also requires Ordinance changes which I have submitted and copies are in your packet. As I said, this is not something that I didn't take long, careful and thoughtful consideration about doing. I think it is something that as we talked in the past it has come before this Board on a number of occasions. I thought it was proper that I bring it forward again and have an opportunity to have this discussion. With that, Mr. Chairman, I would open it up to any questions the Board would like to ask.

Alderman Osborne stated I think I discussed this with the Mayor in his office when he called me in the other evening. I've always been against this and I always will be. I would rather deal with five department heads than one. I don't think a department head can take on much more than what he is doing now at the Highway Department. It is pretty tough, even if he puts someone under him. Not only that, but to take employees who have been faithful to the City for quite a while...this isn't construction, this is the City and it is different ballgame. They put their life into the City and they tried as hard as they could working for the City and I don't think it is fair to them at all. I think they should be keep on board, even if they have a drop in grades. I'm sure that they would be happy to stay here and not put them up against competition for their job, which they have tried to keep for so many years. I think consolidation...I think eventually the Highway Department will be in a new building. I don't see anything wrong in combining the two departments in that particular building and saving lease money at

Derryfield Park, but I think they should stay separate. It is different expertise between the two. That is the way I feel about the whole thing. I'm opposed to it.

Chairman Lopez stated I know that the HR Director is on emergency leave. Do you know how they came up with the difference between the Chief of Parks versus the Director?

Mayor Gatsas replied I don't know if the City Solicitor is able to chime in on that or not. I think there was discussion.

Mr. Tom Clark, City Solicitor, stated I believe there was discussion between the HR Director and Kevin Sheppard. She did her analysis and came up with it. What she put into it, I don't know.

Mayor Gatsas stated I think the job classification is something that she worked on to come forward with after discussions that we had based on comparable experience and understanding where Facilities and EPD are. I think they are all on the same level of a class 25.

Chairman Lopez stated I'm just wondering about the title. If this goes forward, are the other divisions in the Highway Department going to be called chiefs?

Mayor Gatsas replied I can't give you that answer, but certainly it is something that I can look at.

Chairman Lopez stated the other question that sticks out that me is the division commission. Can you explain that?

Mayor Gatsas replied the Highway Commission will stay looking at the functions of the Highway Department. The Parks and Recreation Commission will still be looking at the functions of Parks. Neither one of those will change their positions. There is no elimination of those positions; they would stay in place.

Chairman Lopez asked City Solicitor, is that in compliance with the City Charter?

Mr. Clark replied the City Charter allows the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen to establish boards and commissions. It doesn't say that they have to be departmental commissions.

Alderman Shea stated although I voted to keep the Parks and Recreation Department as one unit about two years ago, over the course of time I realize that the synergies and the workings together were not blending well. I think that the Parks and Recreation Department, because of the fact that there is a downgrading as far as their workmanship is concerned—they no longer handle McIntyre Ski

Area, there is a proposal for the West Side Arena to be leased or sold and there is progress being made on the country club—I think it is time that we combine the Parks and Recreation Department with the Highway Department. I believe that many of the services that I have required, particularly concerning problems in my ward have been addressed by the Highway Department. In an incident yesterday, I had to call upon them simply because the Parks and Recreation Department, without demeaning them because they do work hard and try to meet their obligations...but it has been an ongoing problem for about five years. I think that is enough time for them to come to some sort of resolution whether it be financial type of obligation to meet or a plan. Basically, I think there are a lot of duplication of services and in my judgment, that would be better handled by one department and I truly believe that the fact that in the economy that we live in today, unfortunately, there are going to be situations that are unpleasant, but we have an obligation as a community and as a representative of a particular ward to do what I think is in the best interest of all the people in my particular ward and unfortunately that may impact individuals to a very serious degree. I think it is time that we move on and see what we can do and hope that the people who have been negatively affected may find resolution in other situations. I am definitely in favor of this.

Alderman O'Neil stated Your Honor, I just want to touch base on something in your comments that I tried to write down. You said something to the effect regarding the Enterprise that fees should have been increased. I wrote should because I thought that is what you said for some of the facilities. They were never allowed to do that. Correct me if those were not your comments.

Mayor Gatsas stated those were my comments. I can remember, I don't know if Alderman Ludwig was the director at the time, but there was discussion about increasing the golfing fee for people participating. We were looking to help the Enterprise Fund and as Aldermen, I think were inundated with phone calls from the golfers about not raising the fees so we left the fees the way they were. I think that was the day that I brought attention to people that we had golfers up there who were playing a round of golf for \$7 because they were playing so many rounds. There were some people who participated at that level. I think that when we start talking about how we do things, we change the complexion of the Enterprise Fund and there probably are some things that we should be looking at. We should be allowing the department to come in and make recommendations to this Board and we should be listening to them.

Alderman O'Neil stated with all due respect, Your Honor, I think whether we are talking about Gill Stadium which is now out, the pools were included at one point and in my opinion, but not directed at you, the Enterprise Fund was a failure from day one. We heard the auditor talk about it last night in the Accounts Committee and I believe he is going to be making a presentation tonight to the full Board and

the Chair of the Committee may recall that he commented about having to make a decision in the next year with some changes and some federal rules that will force us to change. Whether Parks remains as it is today or if it becomes part of Public Works, the challenges to the Enterprise Fund are not going to go away. I'm curious, was your goal when you set out with the proposal and you thought about it, better operation and delivery of services or financial?

Mayor Gatsas replied as I said to you, I'm not looking to pull dollars out of the budget. I am looking to leave those dollars in there to have the new Chief of Parks and Recreation decide if they need more people to offer the quality of services in the parks that we need. I know that a gentleman had called and had \$1,000 contribution that he wanted to make to put two by eight planks on the concrete slabs at Livingston so people had an opportunity to sit on them. I made that phone call and they have the ability to do that. They are going over and talking about how they can do it. It is not about saving money; it is about making sure that we have enough people on the ground to offer these parks as much recreational use to the people and the taxpayers to the City as we can.

Alderman O'Neil stated just for clarification, Your Honor, you're talking about if this happens to pass, the new position would be called the Chief of Parks and Recreation. It ultimately, if this passes, is going to be the responsibility of the Director of Public Works.

Mayor Gatsas stated correct and that is in the organizational chart that also was given to you.

Alderman O'Neil stated as everything does, whether it is EPD or Facilities, it ultimately falls to Kevin Sheppard's responsibility.

Mayor Gatsas stated correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated you and I have not had a chance to talk about this. Am I right to say that based on the organization chart as presented, one position is vacant so two employees would lose their jobs?

Mayor Gatsas replied one position is vacant. One employee has the opportunity to also go in and apply for the job as Chief of Parks and Rec and the other position is eliminated because there are two BSOs at the Highway Department.

Alderman O'Neil asked would you be open, and I don't know if this can happen or if there was a way, not in their specific current jobs, to find some other opportunities in the City? Would you be open to that?

Mayor Gatsas replied I have no problem if there are other opportunities in the City for those employees to make application to.

Alderman O'Neil stated I would stand corrected if I am wrong, but I believe that during some of the past consolidations, I don't necessarily remember are any losing their jobs.

Chairman Lopez stated I want to comment on one thing that my colleague said. I was there when the Enterprise System started. Early on, the Enterprise System was working. It was very successful. I think that because of the previous finance people, they put so much on Parks, it put them in the debt service that they have today. We have an obligation as the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to find some mechanism to put that debt service off of us. I just wanted to clarify that. Had the previous people in the Finance Department not put so much on the Enterprise System they would have been fine today.

Alderman O'Neil stated I agree with what you said, but unfortunately, they pushed on Parks from day one. I think that the leadership at Parks, when the Enterprise was created, was handed a very poor stack of cards to work with. It was almost impossible for them to make it work.

Chairman Lopez stated the other note is that previously, Parks and Recreation could never do anything because the Aldermen would not give them any money from the general fund. I want the record to show that. When we became successful in the Enterprise we were able to do a lot, a lot meaning a lot to a lot of people at that time about 20 years ago. We were able to do a lot of bonding and a lot of things that were let go for about 20 years because there weren't enough funds in the City budget.

Alderman Shea stated I just wanted to clarify. The former dean of the Board is in the audience and he would recall that this was done in 1994 or 1996. I believe that the problem with the Enterprise is that there really is no funding source for them to stay viable. In other words, when you have the Water Works you have an Enterprise Fund which receives funding so that they can sustain themselves. You have an Airport where they charge rates and they get federal funds for Enterprise types of things, whereas, Parks and Recreation was given a mandate to operate it, but they had no funding. Initially they may have had a little money that they were able to carry through, but I think you are referring to the fact that you were on the Parks and Recreation Commission at the time and not an Alderman. Basically, the system was doomed to fail because they had no source of getting any kind of funding in order to sustain themselves. At this stage, the obligation of the City is \$3.6 million and if we don't do something to curtail that then the taxpayers are going to have to pay that amount.

Chairman Lopez stated I just want to clarify, but I don't want to debate all night in reference to the past and the move forward.

Mayor Gatsas stated Mr. Chairman, for clarification, I think that the last year we just did it at McIntyre. I believe the numbers, as best I can recollect, we were losing about \$137,000 a year in that fund. There was also \$787,000 of indebtedness that the public private partnership took over. I'm not too sure, and maybe the clarity is that the \$3 million includes the \$787,000 that they are absorbing to pay back on the indebtedness. I think that his number was at the end of June which would have shown the \$3 million. I think the separation of the \$787,000 may bring that down to \$2 million. They may do the same things when they do the West Side Ice Arena and that will relieve some of the pressure that has been on the Enterprise Fund for indebtedness.

Chairman Lopez stated I know, Your Honor. I really don't want to go backwards, but I can tell you for an absolute fact that it was Alderman Cashin and Alderman Wihby who gave the Parks and Recreation general fund money in order for the Enterprise to succeed. There is documentation on that. Then the Aldermen took away that money from the general fund and stopped giving them what was \$500,000 and it went to \$300,000 and then down to zero. Those are the facts and I just want to put that out there for some of the new Aldermen so they understand what I am speaking about. Along with that, I'll take other questions.

Alderman Ouellette stated Your Honor, first I want to thank you for coming forward. I have probably stated that I appreciate working with you and your administration in the couple of months that we have worked together with you as Mayor. I think that you are really scratching at the surface to make government more efficient and also more economical for our taxpayers. However, I'm not really convinced right now that we need to go this route. The reason I say that is because I think the past administration grossly mismanaged the department. Having an interim director for 28 months is inappropriate. I understand that you feel that there is a problem here. This has been brought up in the past to fold this over. I'm not convinced that we are there yet. I am really struggling with the fact that if we approve this tonight that there is going to be some bloodshed. I think Alderman O'Neil alluded to the past when the Board of Mayor and Aldermen have folded different departments but every employee was protected. I am really struggling with the fact that there may be some bloodshed with this.

Alderman Ludwig stated I want to thank you, Your Honor, for at least taking the initiative as Alderman Ouellette eloquently said to at least do something. For that you should be applauded. I think that every comment that every person has made here from Alderman O'Neil to Osborne to Lopez to Shea and around the Board hit the nail on the head. In 1993, Parks was merged with Cemetery. I just want to give you a brief history of where the Parks has been and how they have been

kicked to the curb several hundred times in the past. It really needs to stop. They were kicked to the curb in 1993 when we put Cemetery over there because that was a good synergy. I have to tell you that it is working because I believe in some consolidations. They can work. I am not against consolidations; I could be for them. When they make sense they make sense. The public perspective out there thinks that Parks and Recreation has all these synergies with Highway. Parks, Recreation and Cemetery, whether they are dead or alive, is about people, not about streets, curbing and other things. They are about people. Everyone thinks about cutting grass and digging holes and that kind of thing. There are swimming pools and other things that people recreate that are used in the department. I think everyone forgets about the recreation side. I can totally understand how the public believes that this is a no brainer, as I think it was put by Attorney Cook when I watched one of his meetings. I think former Mayor Baines put it eloquently when he said that they were afraid to lose their identity. I think that he is right. I think you do lose identity. The cemetery is not the same place that we know today at Pine Grove. When you go there you do not get and you cannot get the same level of services that we gave prior to 1993. If you don't believe me ask a funeral director to go there. We live with it because we are forced to live with it and we'll make it work and we will always make it work because that is what the people in Manchester do. I read a lot of national magazines about Parks and Recreation and this is a statement that I can confirm with several magazines. Your more progressive cities of 100,000 or more do not have merged departments. It doesn't happen and that is a know fact and a written statement that I can show to you. In 1995, the Recreation Department was established. The Enterprise Fund was established. Was it set up to fail? We spoke against it at the time, but at the time, we didn't know that we were getting the \$500,000 subsidy that Alderman Lopez spoke to. The secret behind the \$500,000 subsidy was that the Parks Department was suppose to be weaned off of the \$500,000 as they attracted new million dollar people who would donate money to the department, which we could never find. It struggled with trying to keep fees at a level that it could and finding people who were willing to pay whatever money they could afford in economic times to advertise and fund. It just didn't seem to be able to make it. The \$3.2 million that you are in the hole today is not the operational expenses and the fact that the Parks Departments didn't operate efficiently, it is from the hand the Parks was dealt in terms of its infrastructure. We had beams at the JFK that were falling apart that if we didn't put \$500,000 into you didn't need ice because you wouldn't have a roof. It would have made us look a lot better to put new dasher board or new glass and all those things that the people saw publicly, but we had to put money into things that people had no clue that we put money into because the building would have fallen down. This goes on at McIntyre. If the parking lot at McIntyre wasn't expanded, if the snow making wasn't repaired at a huge capital expense, there would be no snow making to be able to rent or lease that facility out to those people today. The list of capital improvements goes on and on. They are all in the \$3.2 million range. We can go around and show you that the facilities are still in

pretty good shape. In 1996, we had a complete administrative reorganized. In 1993 we merged with Cemetery, in 1995 we got the Enterprise, in 1996 we reorganized the whole department and in 1999 Yarger Decker approved the whole thing with the director. The director was a misnomer because that was really a parks planner who was managing up to 15 CIP projects at a time. A director was a title that we probably never should have given because it misled more people than I had ever seen before. It wasn't a deputy director as there was in Highway. It was someone who would take over when the director left for a week if he ever did, which he really didn't. Here we are in 2010 and talking about consolidation again. I don't want to go on and belabor the point, but the fact of the matter is that the Parks Department has been depressed over the years and today they work with a 25% reduction in their workforce and their labor people and I know, Mr. Mayor, that you are willing to help them. I know you said that you were very willing to give back to those people, but you have to have some upper level staff administering. I think there are things that can be shared. The Highway could certainly use a landscape architect on their side because many times they do projects on an island and there are never talks about trees or grass. It is always paved and painted green. They could certainly share in terms of what Parks has. They can also share the BSO. The BSO in Parks has experience and I think he is a useful person to the City. He has given a lot of time and that is just my feeling. The other thing is that as time has gone on, in my experience, Frank Thomas never wanted this. He would not tell the Board that he didn't want it, but he didn't want it. I told Kevin Sheppard that. He doesn't want it. Why are we forcing it on them? I asked why we are doing it. The synergies are something that the departments share including equipment as well as anybody. Five or ten years ago I was asked why the Parks needs a backhoe. Ask me last week why the Parks needed a backhoe. If it didn't have them, no one would have been getting out of their driveways. There are a lot of things that have gone on here and I'm sorry I'm going on like this, but I have to get it off my chest. It didn't just start three years ago; it started five, six, or seven years ago. That is when this all started. I can't say enough that I have had discussions with you and you know that I am passionate about it. Thank you for at least letting me vent this to some degree because I have been sitting at home for three years thinking about what this Board and the administration was doing to a department where we have invested millions of dollars in infrastructure yet we have cut the legs out from the people who are suppose to maintain it. It is a travesty and it didn't need to happen, but it has. Why? I'm not really sure. I'll wrap up that only the golf course really pays for itself. McIntyre, built with recreation money, was never built to make money. I doubt the ice arenas were either. If we think ice arenas make money, we only have to check up the road to Hooksett and see how many times they go out of business. It happens about every six months. If we want to charge what we want to charge for ice, we are going to be charging kids \$325 an hour for ice and they won't skate. If we want to charge people what we have to to make money at Gill, they won't use Gill. It will go on and on. I'm glad, and this is not at you, Your

Honor, so please don't think that. I have supported you all along and I will continue to do that, but this is something I needed to get off my chest. I won't vote for a plan, not necessarily to consolidate, but that eliminates people during that process.

Mayor Gatsas asked do I hear that you are suggestion maybe to add people? I know I'm not supposed to ask questions.

Chairman Lopez stated I'll allow you to ask the question because you are the Mayor.

Alderman Ludwig replied the only people I would be suggesting to add would be, and we could discuss this at a later date...they are losing another employee on Friday and that puts them down to 26% or 27%. I don't know where they stand now, but they don't have enough people to even operate and get ball fields ready right now. I would suggest that we could do a lot more with proper funding. You just signed EIS forms for all of the employees who are coming home from college. Last year, I think it was you that I had to ask to go do something because we had one week before Memorial Day and we hadn't cut the grass at the cemetery with our employees who don't get benefits. I don't understand why that never happened. It is not happening with you because I have already had that conversation with you and I appreciate the efforts in that regard because how can you go wrong with \$11 per hour college employee. I am suggesting that we add a little on the bottom end, but I think that you agree with that anyway.

Chairman Lopez stated I want it for the record that it was the Chief of Facilities that is used in the Highway Department. I just wanted to bring out that point for clarification.

Alderman Arnold stated this is more of a comment than a question. I want to first say that I respect very much Alderman Ludwig's opinions. I respect his experience as the former director of Parks and Rec so I want to lay that as the backdrop before I say what I am going to say. Change is not easy and as Alderman Ludwig pointed out, changes have occurred in our City time and time again and the City always adapts because that is what this City does. We have an incredible workforce, incredible people in the City and a tremendous amount of talent. This is certainly not an easy decision, but as this Board has pointed out on a number of occasions at least in the last couple of months, members of this Board were elected to make difficult decisions. I think that this definitely counts as one of them. I offer that on behalf of the individuals who support these proposal. I do think it is an opportunity for us to find efficiencies in government and I think that certainly serves the taxpayers of our City.

Alderman Shea moved to support the reorganization proposal of the Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Department. The motion was duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil.

Alderman O'Neil stated I have a comment. I want to go back. I have no idea where the votes are on this, but I want to go back to what Alderman Ludwig touched on. He made a comment last night that was absolutely appropriate. If this happens to pass, this is not going to solve the Enterprise issue. Ron is absolutely right. In order to solve it, we have to charge money that the public can't afford and if I recall the phrase from last night, Alderman Ludwig, quality of life. Some of these items that are grouped into the Enterprise are actually quality of life issues. I think that if this happens to pass we have to continue down that road of thinking that way, that we are not going to solve the Enterprise issue.

Mayor Gatsas stated Alderman O'Neil, I will give you my word that we will work on that in the next four months to make sure that we find every asset possible to make the Enterprise System work.

Chairman Lopez stated just for the record for the Enterprise Fund, as long as we have a plan, according to bond counsel, it could be ten years or twenty years to pay off that debt, but it is the plan that is the most important thing.

Alderman Shea stated Alderman Arnold made a very good point. He wasn't on the Board two years ago, but two years ago we voted to keep the status quo for Parks and Recreation and the last two years have not seen any change at all and I think that we have to start thinking a little bit differently because basically, if we don't support this proposal, it will be another year or two before it is brought up again. This was brought up under Mayor Baines, Mayor Guinta and now it is under Mayor Gatsas. There is a time and place for all things. I think that even though it is a very difficult decision to make, I think that each one of us has to make their own decision. I think that at this time I am in favor of this.

Alderman Corriveau asked Your Honor, the current employees of Parks and Recreation, under what you envision with this reorganization, in the immediate future and in the long term future, will they be operating from their current facilities, will there be some sort of new Highway building? What do you see behind the synergies? Can there be synergies like the efficiency commission if we have people in satellite offices? Can there be the sort of synergies that you are talking about or will everybody be brought together in a new atmosphere?

Mayor Gatsas replied well certainly that is a great question and I think that moving forward there is the ability to take a look at facilities to see how we can put them in one area for maintenance of vehicles to see if the storage is there, if we do all operations in one location. There is no question that that must be something that

we look at in the future because having mechanics in seven or eight different places in the City is not the best function for all of us. There are people who can work on a police cruiser as well as they can work on a pickup truck that may be at Parks. I think that when you start looking at consolidation and you start looking at whether we bought ten cases of oil to change oil or we brought 100 because there are ten locations for that to happen in, those are the types of things that we have to look at moving forward. There is no question that as I always said, the facility that the Highway Department is in, if it wasn't the City, we would have a very difficult time operating. I think in the very near future and I think you all know that I have been trying to acquire some federal funding to see if we can't make that project move forward where we can at least have a campus that is in one location for Police, Highway and some other departments that can have their storage equipment there. I think that as the Parks sits today, having them in the same operation that they are in, but as Facilities is not at the Highway Department, but the overview is still at the Highway Department, I envision Parks being the same.

Alderman Corriveau stated let me go back to the Efficiencies Committee for just a moment. They mention that this would be an item to possibly act quickly on and I don't necessarily see a problem with their recommendation, but one of the issues that I am trying to interpret for myself is if we will be setting a series of benchmarks or a series of reports. For example whether the new chief or the Public Works Director may periodically report back to the Administration Committee reporting on some of the synergies and efficiencies that are being implemented throughout the course of however long they deem an effective consolidation to take place.

Mayor Gatsas stated that is an excellent point, Alderman. I think it is important that there is always transparency and there is always reporting back because the more communication you have the better the operation works. I think it is important that this Board understands what is going on in those different departments so that when we make decisions on whether we are moving people from one position to another, we have adequate information to do that. I think those are the important things and I think reporting back to this entire Board, whether it is just Administration and a report coming out of Administration to the full Board those are things that should be happening. There is no question.

Alderman DeVries stated Your Honor, having looked at the letter you put forward, what I don't really see is what your vision of change is going to be. There is a very different mission between Parks and Recreation that is mainly dealing with the youth of our City, at least in my guess except for the golf course which is for older youth, and Highway takes care of the upkeep and maintenance of the infrastructure of our roads. I am not quite sure that I fully understand because as Alderman O'Neil just mentioned, without us addressing a few things differently for the Enterprise of Parks and Recreation it is not sustainable the way it is, but

that is because it has not been funded appropriately for them to maintain. They have had no leader or director of that facility for four years. I can see many reasons why the Aldermen think that the vision of Parks and Recreation is failing, understandably.

Mayor Gatsas stated I think if you are looking for my vision, I think it is important and Alderman Ludwig hit the nail on the head. Last year three days before Memorial Day the grass at the cemetery was up about one foot and on Memorial Day people pay their respects. Certainly that staff wasn't put in place soon enough. I think they were hired that day or the next day to get the grass cut. I think that certainly as we look at what the abilities of the Highway Department are and the number of people that we have there, if we are in a pinch and we need services attended to there are enough people at the Highway Department that the Director can ask people to move over and do other things in Parks to get fields ready. I don't have to tell you that almost two years ago it was almost impossible to get onto a field because they had been wet for so long that the high school teams couldn't get out until May. To get those fields ready was a very difficult task with the number of people who were under the Parks Departments. I think that we have the ability to use the collaboration at the Highway Department along with the infrastructure that we have and the knowledge that we have at Parks to move people around and get the jobs done that need to get done in a timely manner and sometimes in a pinch. I think those are the important things that we need to talk about, either that or if someone says, as Alderman Ludwig said when we hit the nail on the head a couple weeks ago when we were having this conversation that at one point the Parks Department had 137 people in it. We are down to 39. There is no question that as we have eliminated bodies, the parks system has grown larger. There was never a park up at Derryfield. When I went by it last Sunday, because of the storm and the devastation at Livingston and being closed on the beautiful day that it was, that park was absolutely full of people with kids on every piece of equipment. That park wasn't there ten years ago so we have made great strides in the City, but we don't have the manpower to go out and do it. I think that with the consolidation with the Highway Department, if they need an extra five or six people to finish a job or get something ready so the athletic fields are ready to be played on we have that ability.

Alderman DeVries stated thank you for your testimony, Your Honor, but I have asked the same question and I don't see Public Works here this evening. Maybe they were here earlier and left, but I don't see Kevin Sheppard with us this evening. I have asked him exactly that question and he gave me a very different answer. At least that was my interpretation of his answer as far as the available bodies. We have two departments that have a peak time that pretty much occurs at the same time, when the roads are being vamped up for patching and potholes, the crescendo comes at the same time as readiness for Parks and Recreation. I didn't get the idea that there were a lot of stray bodies at the Highway Department that

could be loaned over to assist Parks and Recreation with their peak time. Certainly, I asked the question most recently of some individuals and it was in the other direction to ask Parks and Recreation to assist Highway with all of the down limbs that we had. You know, as do I, that there are a lot of issues there. The bodies aren't there floating around to assist each other department wise. That is why I wonder if our real problem is not looking to merge just because we are merging for merging's sake, but if we just need to further define and if we are not willing to fund, and we likely are not in this budget to Parks and Recreation to any greater degree than we have...I'm not up here lobbying for additional dollars. I know they wish I would, but it is just not the right economic climate for that. We ought to be removing some of their expectations from that department so they can accomplish their goal within the expectations of this Board rather than us leading them to failure as we have done for the last eight years.

Chairman Lopez asked will the Clerk please read the motion?

City Clerk Matt Normand stated I believe the motion on the floor at this moment is to approve the proposed consolidation of the Parks and Recreation Department within the Highway Department and revision of the related class specification and Ordinances to effect that change.

Alderman Osborne requested a roll call vote on the motion. Aldermen Osborne, DeVries, Ouellette, Ludwig, and Lopez voted nay. Aldermen O'Neil, Corriveau, Craig, Arnold, and Shea voted yea. The motion failed.

Chairman Lopez stated it is a five to five tie so it fails in Committee unless someone wants to make another motion.

Alderman Shea moved to bring this item before the full Board without a recommendation from the Committee. The motion was duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil.

Chairman Lopez stated the City Solicitor will have to weigh in on that.

Mr. Clark stated I'm not sure that I quite understood his motion. Is he asking to go to the full Board without recommendation?

Chairman Lopez replied yes.

Mr. Clark stated Committees have done that in the past.

Alderman Ludwig stated I don't see how we can all sit around here and make a motion or vote on a motion to put one department into another without the hierarchy of the other department here. How is that possible? I want to see Kevin

Sheppard sit in front of me and tell me that the synergies exist as have been stated here. I just don't see how we can do that. That is not doing this justice. If it comes to consolidation and that's how we have to go, I might give up on that, but I'm not going to vote for a consolidation because that's my passion and I won't vote for one that eliminates bodies, which is another thing I am passionate about. I know it is difficult economic times and we need to save money and I'm all for some consolidations that could work, but I don't think that the people who have been looked at in terms of applying for their jobs doesn't work for me. I don't see how we can do two departments and not have the other one represented here.

Alderman Arnold asked Mr. Chairman or Your Honor, is there any feedback about whether the Director of Public Works will be at the full Board meeting?

Mayor Gatsas replied he will be at the full Board meeting.

Alderman Shea stated I have a question for the City Solicitor, Mr. Chairman. Is it possible to bring this discussion to the full Board and have a vote taken at the full Board?

Mr. Clark replied the matter is presently in Committee. To get it to the full Board you would have to take a vote. You would have to take a motion to report it out to the full Board.

Chairman Lopez requested a roll call vote on the motion to move this item to the full Board without a Committee recommendation. Aldermen Lopez, Osborne, Ouellette, Ludwig voted nay. Aldermen O'Neil, DeVries, Corriveau, Craig, Arnold, and Shea voted yea. The motion passed.

On motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee