

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

October 15, 1996

Upon Recess of BMA

Mayor Wieczorek called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll. There were ten Aldermen present.

Present: Ald. Wihby, Elise, Reiniger, Clancy, Shea, Domaingue,
Pariseau, Cashin, Robert, Hirschmann

Absent: Ald. Sysyn and Soucy

Mayor Wieczorek addressed item 3 of the agenda:

1996 Budget Authorization:

7.50101 School Sidewalk Construction - Revision #2

On motion of Ald. Wihby, duly seconded by Ald. Elise, it was voted to approve the 1996 CIP authorization, subject to the final adoption of the related resolution.

Mayor Wieczorek addressed item 4 of the agenda:

1997 CIP Budget Authorizations:

2.10205 5% Incentive Funds

2.10605 Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention

2.20504 Public Health Improvement Program

On motion of Ald. Clancy, duly seconded by Ald. Shea, it was voted to approve the 1997 CIP budget authorizations.

Mayor Wieczorek addressed item 5 of the agenda:

1997 CIP Budget Authorizations:

5.50201 Library Literacy Volunteers of America

7.50102 Sidewalk 50/50 Program - Revision #1

On motion of Ald. Domaingue, duly seconded by Ald. Clancy, it was voted to approve the 1997 CIP budget authorizations, subject to the final adoption of the related resolution.

Mayor Wieczorek addressed item 6 of the agenda:

Resolutions:

“Amending the 1997 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds for various School Department Projects.”

“Amending the 1997 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of \$12,500 for the 1997 CIP 5.20201 Library Literacy Volunteers of America Project.”

“Amending the 1996 & 1997 Community Improvement Programs, transferring, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of \$50,000 for the 1997 CIP 7.50102 Sidewalk Fifty-Fifty Program.”

“Authorizing the Finance Officer to effect a transfer of Twenty-five Thousand Dollars from the 1996 CIP 7.50101 School Sidewalk Construction Program to the 1997 CIP 7.50102 Sidewalk Fifty-Fifty Program.”

On motion of Ald. Shea, duly seconded by Ald. Elise, it was voted that the Resolutions be read by titles only, and it was so done.

On motion of Ald. Domaingue, duly seconded by Ald. Shea, it was voted that the Resolutions ought to pass and be enrolled.

TABLED ITEMS

On motion of Ald. Elise, duly seconded by Ald. Robert, it was voted to remove the following item from the table for discussion.

Communication from Alderman Elise, proposing that the City repeal the increased fees associated with automobile registrations.

(Tabled 10/1/96)

(Note: communication from Mayor Wieczorek submitting departmental responses to potential budget cuts enclosed.)

Ald. Robert moved that the communication from Ald. Elise be received and filed. Ald. Shea duly seconded the motion.

Ald. Elise stated it was obvious from the responses from the departments that it probably would be impossible to repeal the fees at this time, but thought the departmental responses showed it was a very big warning sign as to what would be done next year noting there was a revenue problem noting a lot of time was spent looking at raising taxes and fees and indicated she would like to spend just as much time this year looking at economic development incentives to raise the tax base so they would not have to rely on raising taxes and fees as much and knew the Board would be looking at the "Bag & Tag" once again and would want to do it early so that people could understand the benefits of it.

Ald. Wihby stated when the motion was made at the last meeting it was to have been decided which way the Board wanted to go either make the cuts as they couldn't open the budget; that the new Charter would enable the Board to open the budget at any time noting his concern with that was that three months from now if they did so...and if they found out there was additional revenue they could just say fine, okay, let's just go ahead and spend some more noting he had a concern with that and also once the Mayor's budget was presented and the Board reviewed it and if the Board never reached agreement and did things at the last minute what would happen with the new Charter is that the Mayor's budget would pass which would have been done two months earlier, so the numbers that the Mayor would have come in with two months earlier would be the budget which was being passed with all additional information received by the Board, the

Mayor could keep vetoing the budget and they'd end up with the Mayor's number rather than a number which was closer to what would make more sense noting he had concerns with that as a result of his recently been made aware of.

Mayor Wieczorek stated he also had concerns and had discussed them with the City Solicitor and also other individuals noting he was unsure as to what he would do because as he had stated to many people when the Mayor presents his budget it was not the end of the process, but rather the first step of the process because they were working with soft numbers noting they did not know what the tax base was, the insurance premiums, retirement costs, county tax, so they're working with a lot of soft numbers indicating he would hate to see that happen because there had never been a budget which had been accepted because the numbers changed, so it really wasn't the end of the process, but rather the beginning.

Ald. Wihby stated people had been asking him how he felt about the Charter noting members of the Charter Commission had been calling him and asking him if they could count on his support noting his response had been he was still reviewing the document as to its content and he did not know what to say when his constituents were asking him for his opinion and wondered if it was a good idea to open the budget in the course of six months down the line as a result of having found additional revenues and did not think that was a good idea because if additional revenues had been found and say the School Department went before the Board pleading their case, the Board would say okay, there's additional revenues we'll give you \$300,000 rather than putting it towards the tax rate; that he didn't know if it would help the Board if a special meeting was held with the Charter Commission at this time.

Mayor Wieczorek stated he was evaluating each of the changes to see if it was better or worse for the City noting he had not yet made up his mind as to what he would do or what position he would take because he was unsure.

Ald. Wihby stated the Board could put in an Ordinance to address the Ethics Code if it wished noting they did not need a Charter change to do so, but his biggest concern was with the budget noting they would end up going in with a number which was not right and they would be forced to keep opening the budget and changing it during the course of that year because the number would have been wrong when they started.

Mayor Wieczorek stated the Mayor could not even use the Mayor's number because they had soft numbers they were using.

Ald. Wihby asked how do they proceed when people ask them...if he wasn't comfortable with it he should probably be telling people that it shouldn't be passed.

Mayor Wieczorek reiterated that was why he would have to do what he was doing...evaluating it, each aspect of it and determine in the aggregate if it was better or worse because ultimately they would either take it or leave it and did not think they could pick and choose and thought perhaps there should be a meeting in ten days or so to see what they would want to do, maybe with the Charter Commission to discuss the pros and cons.

Ald. Domaingue stated she had asked when Commissioner Baines was present why the Board had not had that meeting with the Commission prior to their making their final determination and what they were going to put into that document noting she did not get a satisfactory answer; that her concern right now was that it was being sold to the public on the argument that if there was anything about those Charter revisions that the public did not like, the public could go ahead and request that the Board amend them and it almost sounded too easy to do and too good to be true which was the part that troubled her the most because she would not want to hoodwink the public into believing that if they adopt all of the document, which they have to do either say yes or no and then find out that it will take years to amend whatever changes had been made, if they didn't like it, for instance, if they didn't want to add two more School Board members, if they didn't want to add two more Aldermen at-large noted that could be very troublesome for them as a board to have supported such a document claiming it would have been very easy to amend whatever the public didn't like and was not sure if meeting with the Commission was the best idea because she would have preferred to have met with them prior to their having put everything into concrete, but certainly felt that the Board ought to have a discussion regarding what was being proposed.

Ald. Cashin stated the Board could not amend the Charter once it was passed noting Ald. Wihby had brought up some very valid points and was very concerned about the Charter change indicating he was opposed to it and did

not think it accomplished anything and thought it would make a real sad situation; that there were some good points to it, no question about it, but there were some that he thought were quite dangerous and did not mind going on record as being in opposition to it.

Mayor Wieczorek stated he was not ready to go that far as he was analyzing every aspect of the recommendations.

Ald. Cashin stated he thought the Board had to either fish or cut bait, they had one of two things either to come out publicly and support it or come out against it, they couldn't sit on the fence on this one.

Mayor Wieczorek stated he planned to do so and thought that the Board would have to do the same thing.

Ald. Wihby stated he agreed with Ald. Domaingue in that he did not see what meeting with the Commission would do because their minds were set, they passed it, and the Board couldn't change it, so there was no point in sitting down with them; that he did not know if he liked non-partisan, didn't know if he liked 14 Aldermen, but he could live with that stuff, his main concern was the budget process noting they had changed some things at the end with respect to School control and timing, but until a couple of days ago when he found out that was there...line item veto...they've given authority to the department heads because the Board had wanted them to manage and they were given authority to go ahead and live within their object groups, but now with the line item veto believed they would have to redo the whole budget over and make sure it's done by line in that he believe when you perhaps veto a salary, thought they'd be vetoing the whole salary of that department, so if they wanted to cut a position he believed they would have to veto the whole salary, the whole department would be gone because they couldn't just take out one part of that salary unless each individual salary was a line item and asked if that was true.

Mr. Clougherty stated he believed that was true.

Ald. Cashin stated the last time they had worked on the Charter noting it was very explicit, they could not open the budget and as Ald. Wihby had previously stated anytime there was a conflict as he understood the Charter

and the way in which it was being presented that budget could be reopened noting they couldn't afford to do that.

Ald. Shea suggested that they meet as the Aldermanic Board with the City Solicitor and go through aspects of the Charter and then they could better understand what they were talking about, about what was being said by Ald. Wihby in terms of opening or closing the budget versus what the Charter Commission had in mind when they wrote the document and whether or not it said what it really said, so he suggested they do so and would, therefore, have a better idea as far as being objective in terms of the Charter; that right now he was not in favor of the Charter either basically because he thought there were some strong points, but there were many flaws that would affect the community at-large even though there were some positive points, but if they had to accept it on the basis of all or nothing that was where the dilemma rested.

Mayor Wieczorek stated the City Solicitor was doing that for him right now and thought when he was done he would have done all of the things suggested by Ald. Shea and maybe at that point the Board could perhaps meet.

Ald. Clancy stated the Board should have a meeting among themselves and probably invite the City Solicitor and let their feelings be known; that he was not for opening the budget, closing the budget, having the tax rate up and down; that he had received a lot of calls from the people in his ward, especially the elderly about repealing the tax rate and having seen what the impact would be from the departmental responses would not want to cut them down any further especially with winter coming and snow plowing, etc. and the Contingency fund being as low as it was thought they had better stay the way they were.

Ald. Wihby stated he had asked Tom Clark to put some material together for him and answer some of the questions he's had, but back to the Mayor's comment and in reference to what Ald. Clancy had just asked noted what was scary about opening the budget wasn't that they would open it or lower the tax rate, if they were going to open the budget it would be because they would be putting something in which would raise the tax rate or take the extra revenue which was in there and use it where they could have been

lowering the tax rate with it, so he could not see the reasoning for keeping it open and liked the idea of scheduling a meeting with the Solicitor.

Mayor Wieczorek indicated they would try to do so. Ald. Cashin stated the main thing was reopening the budget; that once the budget was opened then everything was on the table, everything would then be negotiable noting that was the dangerous part.

Mayor Wieczorek stated he recalled that back in 1990.

Mayor Wieczorek called for a vote on the motion. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

Communication from George H. Boudreau, Jr., Director of Manchester on Parade, seeking the City's assistance for funding of Police coverage for the parade held on September 22, 1996.
(Tabled 10/1/96 pending meeting with Finance Office.)

This item remained on the table pending a meeting between Mr. Boudreau and the Finance Department scheduled for October 24, 1996.

There being no further business to come before the Committee on Finance, on motion of Ald. Pariseau, duly seconded by Ald. Shea, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee