COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

April 15, 1996 **6:30 PM**

In the absence of Mayor Wieczorek, Chairman Wihby called the meeting to order.

Chairman Wihby called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Ald. Hirschmann.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

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

PRESENT: Ald. Wihby, Reiniger, Sysyn, Soucy, Shea, Pariseau, Cashin, Hirschmann
Ald. Elise and Domaingue arrived late.

ABSENT: Ald. Clancy, Robert

MESSRS.: F. Testa, D. Prew, J. Brisbin, P. Porter, J. Gardner, J. Kane, T. Carson, K. Sheehan-Lord, K. Sullivan, K. Devine, M. Roy, T. Nichols, S. Tellier, R. Girard, B. Lemire

Chairman Wihby stated some Aldermen were not present due to the fact that another meeting was being held and would join them as soon as possible and that the Mayor had another commitment this evening which had been previously scheduled prior to notification of this meeting.

Chairman Wihby advised that the purpose of the meeting was to hear comments from the following departments relative to the 1997 proposed budget.

AIRPORT

Mr. Testa stated the budget they had proposed this year being the enterprise fund which was governed by contracts by the airlines they felt was one that was sufficient for their purposes and under any circumstances they made more money than what they expended noting their leases covered the contingency that if they didn't the airlines did fund the difference indicating last year there had been a slight deficit because of the bankruptcy claim by Precision Airlines and by their contracts with the airlines they would have to make up any deficits and carry forward account receivables which was now being paid and that their budgets were always self-balancing.

Chairman Wihby stated that previously they used to get a certain percentage for revenue asked if they were now charging for whatever services offered the highway and where did it show up in their numbers.

Mr. Testa replied in their numbers it was probably under general revenue and was not sure where it appeared in the City's budget but the Airport got a bill every quarter which was prepared by the Finance Department noting each department submitted a bill for their time such as if he was on the phone with Tom Clark, the clock starts to run and he pays per hour for his costs plus his benefits and also a 10 percent overhead for the things they don't cover such as City Hall and things of that nature noting it went for everybody whether it be the Personnel system during recruiting, etc. and reimburse the City for every expended dollar.

Chairman Wihby asked if $30,000 sounded right.

Mr. Testa replied that was wrong, it was closer to $60,000.

Chairman Wihby noted it was $75,000 back in 1996 and they were now only figuring on $30,000 and asked Mr. Testa if he knew why.

Mr. Testa replied for the current fiscal year they had expended $45,620 so far.

Chairman Wihby asked if they were expecting a decrease or something.

Mr. Testa stated he did not understand the question.

Chairman Wihby stated account 0761 Airport General Fund on page 6 of the revenue.

Ms. Carson stated she did not understand why fund 101 of the general fund would be using only $30,000; that they were anticipating that their reimbursements to the City would be somewhere in the $60,000 range.

Chairman Wihby asked if they could then count on $60,000.

Ms. Carson replied they could count on whatever services they used.

Chairman Wihby asked if that was a general number they felt comfortable with.

Mr. Testa replied that was a fair approximation of what they would use.

Chairman Wihby stated on page 6 in the back of the book where it said general fund (revenue) under Finance Department, account 0761 Airport General Fund they were only figuring on $30,000 noting the Airport was saying they could count on $60,000.

Ald. Domaingue stated she appreciated the $60,000 but in looking at the 1995 figure of $42,471 and wondered how realistic $60,000 would be.

Mr. Testa stated they currently had $45,620 which was after the first half of the year.

Ald. Domaingue stated the 1996 figure of $21,000 was way low then.

Ms. Carson stated it would be higher than fiscal '95 because the City was performing more audit functions for them than when they used Ernst & Young as the auditors noting they had taken more of the audit functions in-house which was why they were up to $45,000 already.

Mr. Testa stated they were also using a lot more legal services now that they had the extra attorney on board in the City Solicitor's Office; that instead of going out for legal services they were paying the City for those legal services such as title searches and court matters such as evictions where they would normally had gone out with private attorneys or collection and were using the Solicitor's Office much more which would show a bigger increase also noting they were now getting a faster response with the extra attorney.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Ms. Prew stated she wished to begin by giving a little history on the on-going project which greatly affected her budget for the coming year; that as part of the 1996 budget $2.58 million were appropriated to upgrade the entire City's data processing systems and as part of that plan they were replacing 13 year old microcomputers in all departments and by the time they were through they anticipated over 380 PC's located in 23 buildings across the City and hoped to have it completed by September of this year and were also putting in a City-wide network to tie together those 23 buildings to allow those departments to communicate amongst each other, to get back to their main frames, to participate on the internet, to do City-wide fax and dial up access; that that part of the project should be completed by the end of July and finally they were replacing and upgrading all of the main frame systems that they had which include payroll, tax billing, EPD billing, real estate assessment, telephone billing, ordinance violations, motor vehicle registrations, voter registration, and the City's financial systems; that the RFP for that would be going out around May 15th and were hoping to have a new payroll system in place by January 1, 1997 and a new financial system by July 1, 1997; that in looking at the budget there was a sizable increase which was directly related to the project she had just outlined.

Ald. Shea asked how many employees were in her department.

Ms. Prew replied there were presently 15 employees and was looking for one additional position.

Chairman Wihby stated the increase in 110 was more than one position and asked what would happen if she did not receive that extra position.

Ms. Prew replied the extra position was to support the wide area network they would be installing; that it was a brand new system, something the City had never had before, it was a very complex communications network that would tie the 23 City buildings together and the almost 400 PC's plus the main frames; that if they were not to get the position it would mean that they would have difficulty responding in a timely fashion to keeping the network running and keeping the departments at an efficient level; that the City's entire communications network would be relying on that particular network going in; that it would give the departments, bring them into the 21st century they were looking for and would be able to get on the internet, they'd be able to get to the various bulletin boards, get to the State for legislation, they'd be able to communicate among each other, they have E-Mail, they'd be able to share documents noting it would be a whole new world as far as being able to get at information.

Chairman Wihby asked why postage was so high.

Ms. Prew replied they mailed out all of the tax bills and the motor vehicle notices.

Ald. Shea asked if the School Department would be included as well in that particular network.

Ms. Prew replied they hoped to do that; that the School Department did have their own project going on for educational purposes through the federal grant they got, but once that network was in place they planned to tie the two networks together so they could communicate together.

Chairman Wibhy as if that would be part of the 23 buildings.

Ms. Prew replied in the affirmative.

Ald. Hirschmann stated there was an RFP which was due to go out for the payroll.

Ms. Prew replied she presently had two main frame computers in the department with one of them running all of the City's financials with the other machine running payroll, the tax bills, EPD billing, tax assessments, voter registration, all the other applications that the City had; that what they were planning on doing was consolidating onto one platform and replacing those systems; that a lot of the systems had been in place for many years and to get the job done it was very difficult to get information out and for Finance and the Mayor's Office the new systems which would be going in would allow the departments to get at the information as they needed it to manipulate it.

Ald. Hirschmann stated his question with the RFP was why couldn't they contract manpower, why did they have to put an employee on.

Ms. Prew replied they had looked at the outsourcing of network management and the figures they got, a person at that level would cost between $65,000 and $80,000 a year noting they would be paying between $30,000-40,000 and the outsource person would be specialized noting this person would be able to do other things for the department.

Ald. Elise asked if the equipment line item was all City cash.

Ms. Prew replied, yes, it was part of the line item budget.

Ald. Domaingue stated they had recently put out for a Microcomputer Systems Specialist noted that was not what she was looking for in the '97 budget, but an addition to that.

Ms. Prew replied there had been a person on her staff resign, so they were replacing that position which would be a new addition to the staff and would be part of the communications group noting that there was currently two persons in that group and would make it three.

Ald. Shea in reference to the payroll situation of the School Department with the software being antiquated stated the system she was speaking about would replace that and upgrade it, so it would coincide with the departments now.

Ms. Prew replied the RFP which would be going out would be going out for software which would be available for the School Department.

Ald. Domaingue in reference to item 591 Contract Manpower stated it was up 400 percent and if the new person was going to be able to do not only that but everything else asked why Contract Manpower was up so high.

Ms. Prew replied they were looking for Contract Manpower for data entry; that when a new system is put in there was a lot of tables that had to be built and they would have to get someone who would do data entry and that person would be a lot less expensive than using a professional to do the data entry; that they probably wouldn't hire just one person in that if they'd be trying to get a payroll system in in a few months there would be several people who would be doing that data entry to get the information in in a very quick fashion.

Ald. Domaingue asked how many other municipalities would be ready for the 21st century as she was preparing this municipality to be asking if Nashua was following that kind of setup.

Ms. Prew replied Nashua was structured a little bit differently, but Concord was in the process of putting in a wide area network noting they had been speaking with communities outside of the State which were doing things of that nature.

Ald. Domaingue asked at this expense.

Ms. Prew replied, yes.

Ald. Hirschmann stated for a project of this magnitude wasn't it a big capitalization and were they merely expensing it into the budget.

Ms. Prew replied, no; that the $2.58 million was a bond issue; that the staffing was a brand new system on communications network that they were putting in place and that was the reason for staffing; that on item 271 Staff Development, there was $25,000 being requested there for training City employees; that the City employees were having new equipment put on their desks with all brand new software (Windows, MicroSoft) applications that many of them were not familiar with and so what they propose to do was to have a firm come in and put on training classes for the City employees.

Ald. Hirschmann asked why wouldn't they use the $14.00 an hour person to do the training.

Ms. Prew replied training was very specialized.

Ald. Domaingue in reference to a firm coming in to do the training asked how many people was she talking about.

Ms. Prew replied they were probably talking, in terms of training, from 250 to 300.

Ald. Domaingue asked how many people would be training those people.

Ms. Prew replied it would depend on...the classes were usually small from 5 to 10 people at a time because it was hands-on and they'd have an instructor, there were different formats noting some companies used interactive where there would be an instructor and a CD so they'd be working at their own pace; that in most cases it was one instructor; that they would be paying by the class.

Chairman Wihby asked if they brought any revenue in.

Ms. Prew replied, some; that it was very small, it was reimbursement from the agency/departments and it went into the general fund.

Ald. Soucy in reference to line items 419 Service Agreements and the 441 Maintenance asked why it was changing - one decreasing and one increasing.

Ms. Prew replied that on Service Agreements the reason it had gone down about $69,000 was that they were gradually taking the old microcomputer equipment off of maintenance and the reason that Maintenance and Repairs in 441 had gone up was that the new PC's were being maintained internally by the staff and it was to purchase replacement parts to repair that equipment.

Ald. Hirschmann in reference to the telephone line item asked if it was due to the linking of all the buildings.

Ms. Prew replied, yes; that they would be adding new ISDN high speed lines which was included in that amount.

Ald. Hirschmann stated it would go into her budget rather than in all the other budgets.

Ms. Prew replied in some cases those lines went to buildings and were shared by multiple departments and such, so historically items such as that had always been included in her budget.

Ald. Hirschmann in referenced to an enterprise asked if they were broken out.

Chairman Wihby stated it would be kind of confusing to take it out now.

Ald. Hirschmann stated, no it wouldn't; that in future years they would be wanting the enterprises to float their own expenses.

Ms. Prew stated they did bill the enterprise for their services and whatever costs they could attribute to them.

Chairman Wihby asked if it was part of the thirty-two thousand.

Ms. Prew replied, yes.

Chairman Wihby asked Ms. Prew where she was planning on traveling to.

Ms. Prew replied they maintained a hot site which was a computer site which was ready to go should there be a problem with the system, should the computers get wiped out at the Fire Department they could move immediately to the hot site and continue processing.

Chairman Wihby asked if it was in town.

Ms. Prew replied, no, it was in Connecticut; that it was a contract where they went out to bid for it similar to an insurance policy.

Ald. Pariseau asked about security on the computer network, did the City have it where every Tom, Dick, and Harry wasn't able to get into some cyber space.

Ms. Prew replied that was one of the things that the person they would looking for to manage the network would be installing what was referred to as fire walls which provided protection so that people from the internet would not be able to get onto the City's system whereby there would be walls in between and they would only be able to get to certain points, but no further.

Ald. Pariseau in reference to the phone bill ($11,000) asked if it was for all of the departments or just hers.

Ms. Prew replied the $11,000 included her department's regular telephone, but it also include those telephone lines used for communications purposes.

Chairman Wihby stated he had a letter coming which he would give to the Chairman of the Committee on Administration relative to where the Elderly Center reduced the rent $11,000 and was willing to go year-to-year which would help out and also a letter from the Assessors consolidation.

LIBRARY

Mr. Brisbin stated the revenues that the Library had were basically fines and there was a separate RSA which provided that they be used only for replacement of Library books, other materials and other Library costs; that in the department heads first FY '97 budget back in December, Mayor Wieczorek had said that this was the seventh budget and he was still waiting for a good budget year; that he had been the Director of the Library for almost that same amount of time and echoed those sentiments; that it was tough times and very tough decisions for him and ultimately for the Board; that in their April 10th meeting with the Charter Review Commission, Director of Planning, Bob MacKenzie commented about the tough economic factors which had defeated most department requests going back six years; that people ask them daily at the Library if they're set up for patron use of the internet, getting up to speed on the information highway and we have to tell them, no, we aren't and thanks to the Board of Mayor and aldermen they had done their part in upgrading their automation system and were about to offer taxpayers a limited form of dial access to the Library's automated card catalogue from their home PC's, they were planning a small local area network of CD ROM resources in the Reference Department, but they were far and getting further from getting to the cutting edge of electronic information delivery; that the Mayor proposed that their book budget be level funded at $100,000 this year which was still $16,000 less than the amount received a full decade ago (1986) and even considering the fine money and trust fund money which was added each to what the City gave them to spend on books for the taxpayers, it was just a fraction of the book budget of other similar size public library; that the Hartford Public Library ($300,000) for their book budget with a population of 133,000; that Providence, Rhode Island ($251,000) for their book budget with a population of 160,000; that Portland, Maine ($221,000) with a population of 68,000; that even in Keene, NH with a population of 21,000 had an $85,000 budget and within the past five years the Town of Keene matched $150,000 in special collection development money which local businesses donated to the Library and what Manchester City Library lacks behind regional and national standards not only in technology and the quality of its collections, but in services, staffing, and space; that the Carpenter Memorial Building is gorgeous, it's an architectural masterpiece, and they taking the very best care of it they could noting they had just renovated three rooms on the second floor and returned the largest of those spaces back to public use, the New Hampshire History Room which was all done with non-City money, but the Carpenter Building was built over 82 years ago for a Manchester which was much smaller and much less well-educated than the Manchester of today; that the still germinal Manchester City Library Foundation sponsored a formula needs assessment of the Library this year by the nationally-recognized Providence Associates which document showed where the Library was and where it needed to go over the next 5, 10, and 20 years if it was to be the foundation of Manchester's success, if it was to give Manchester citizens the kind of advantage library users have elsewhere in New England and elsewhere in the country and obviously it wasn't the year to be making great and costly changes, but it was a year in which they needed to hope and dream; that the Foundation Trustees would be going back to the Board during the coming months to explain and explore more about the long-range plan and would be looking for some of those elusive good budget years in which to embark upon this public/private partnership process; that the Mayor's proposed FY97 budget almost level funds the Library from FY96 and there were a couple of places where cuts beyond that had taken place and could cause some jeopardy and a few places where even level funding could cause some jeopardy; that they were talking about eight different lines in the budget and were asking the Board of Aldermen to consider replacing $20,013 which was far, far less than their actual needs, ninety percent less than the increase represented in their initial FY97 department request; that in a year where layoffs and other pains are likely to take place and where an unpleasant tax hike is also likely to take place they've reduced their needs as drastically as they could to achieve some equality of suffering across departments and to still keep going; that the first line was 342 Snow Removal where they had requested

$810 and that was what they requested, so they'd like $310 to be restored noting that the $850 represented 13 plowings of their small handicapped patron and employee parking which was $50 a swipe to plow it and also four hours of snowbank removal which was modest enough which anticipated a medium snowfall, certainly nothing like what they had this year; that line 441 Maintenance & Repair of Equipment noted the Mayor's proposed cuts of $2,257 off what he requested and respectfully requested that the $2,257 be restored as it represented repairs beyond simple maintenance contracts to both Library elevators where those repair visits run into the $200 range easily and also represented repairs of periodical CD ROM units, their microfilm reader/printer, magazine index, their new local area network stations (PC stations); that they did trouble shooting at the Library, Info Systems does some maintenance for them but there are always things beyond that which do need to be repaired which was costly; that line 445 Contracts which represented two things with nine tenths of it being the Manchester City Library share of the operating budget for their automation consortium which was a fixed figure and they must participate noting it was called GMILCS (Greater Manchester Integrated Library Cooperative System) which was nine different libraries, two academic libraries (UNH Manchester and NH College) and seven public libraries, but their portion of the operating was not a formula in consideration of their size, the size of their collection and their portion was $12,294 with the only other thing in line item 445 was $400 for the maintenance on their computer room air conditioning unit which was the only place in the Library that was air conditioned which had to be for the running of the computer; that in line 532 Postage the Mayor had proposed FY97 cuts $500 off the FY96 figure and respectfully asked that the $500 be restored and would like the whole $1,535 restored which was what he asked for in his department request so they could offer taxpayers two reminders on overdue materials before they received a book bill, but in this bad year they could do with just one reminder and the $500 restored and reminded the Board that the Library was the custodian of publicly-owned materials and they must assure their quick return and frequent reuse; that in Printing, Publishing, and Binding the Mayor's proposed FY97 budget cuts $3,615 off what the department had requested and respectfully requested that $1,000 be restored noting they would like the whole amount restored, but in this bad year they had reduced the request to $1,000 which would be used for bindery costs so they could extend the life of publicly-owned materials and $1,000 to be spent on bindery costs was very little and did not go very far, but there was an obligation they had and wanted to extend the use of those materials; that in line 652 Electricity the Mayor's proposed FY97 budget cut their request by $7,251 and respectfully requested that that amount be restored; that their FY95 actual was $44,788 noting that the Mayor's Office had recommended that they add 5.5 percent to utilities to reflect increase and costs which was what he did and where the $47,251 came from; that in Fuel and Oil and Mayor's proposed FY97 budget cut was by $2,000 below what FY96 was and they respectfully requested that the $2,000 be restored noting that winter fuel costs at the Library and the west branch Library together, at the main Library ran between ten and twelve thousand dollars, so they would forego the 5.5 percent increase and would get along if they were simply able to replace the $2,000 there; that in line 610 Supplies the Mayor's proposed FY97 cut $5,000 from their request and respectfully requested that $3,000 be restored although the central purchasing plan should save them on ordinary office supplies, library supplies were unique noting many could not be handled through central purchasing such as date due cards, security tags, processing materials for books, and especially plastic security cases for CD's, videos, cassettes noting they cost roughly a dollar apiece and they had to outfit those whole non-book collections so they could secure the materials and prevent theft; that they wished to thank the Mayor for those areas in which he was able to give taxpayers some service increases at the Library such as giving an additional $5,000 in line 120 Temporary Salary & Wages which would allow them to hire an additional Library Page for 17 to 20 hours per week noting they were mostly high school age employees who shelve the 40,000 and more items they circulate each month who were terrific kids who worked for them and a couple of adults also and did a great and essential job for them and reminded some of the newer Aldermen that all Pages were laid off in 1990 due to budget problems which was a major catastrophe which meant shortening of Library hours and the deployment of their entire staff including the professional level of staff to do the work of the Library Pages and since then they had been working their way slowly back to a full Page complement which was 12 noting they had 7 currently and would move it to 8; that in Contract Manpower the Mayor's proposed budget increased it by $10,000 from $15,000 to $25,000 over the FY96 level which would allow them to increase the hours of their Library Security Guard from 30 to 40 hours per week and would ultimately need coverage for all the hours that the Library was open as it was currently opened for 55 hours per week with the State recommending it be open for 72 hours noting there had also been various questions from Aldermen over the past several years about the likelihood of their being able to be open on Sunday afternoons or additional evenings and would like to do so, but it would mean more money so right now they were delighted that they were able to have the Security Guard moved from 30 hours service a week to 40 and wanted to salute Heather Carl who was doing a fine job of minimizing problems in the Library including petty theft, vandalism, disorderly behavior, and ensuring patron safety and also wanted to thank the Manchester Police Department especially Deputy Chief Driscoll and Sgt. Holmes and the Juvenile Division for the excellent backup they'd been giving Ms. Carl as she was now in the midst of an 8-week training program with the Manchester Police Department and would be remiss if he did not take this opportunity to thank the entire Board of Aldermen for helping to get the Security Guard on board last year noting it had made a world of difference for them and especially for the taxpayers who had a greater degree of safety when at the Library; that in lines 440 and 470 Equipment & Special Projects were given $8,000 apiece which was not nearly what they requested, but it was something to let them move forward in those areas and was greatly appreciated whereby they would be able to put in a drain to eliminate flooding in the Children's Room during times of heavy rain which had been a problem for 10 years and would be able to afford another PC work station either for the Reference Department local area network or for the Children's Room and thanked the Mayor for maintaining the Library book budget at its FY96 level during the serious crunch and whatever small amounts of money they might be able to apply to line item 630 now was desperately appreciated by taxpayers who often did not find current or appropriate information in whatever area; that Library books were used not only for leisure reading and general enrichment, they helped citizens find jobs, learn to start businesses, get into the Armed Forces, master basic skills, and become job ready for perhaps the first time in their life, etc.; that he knew it was not the night to address CIP but wanted to note that the one CIP project which was still they appreciated it very much which was $30,000 for repairs of the west branch of the Library and wished to thank Mayor Wieczorek for that and Ald. Bill Cashin who was always helpful with the needs of the west siders and who was responsible, in great part, for bringing the branch to life noting they had just recently celebrated the 16th birthday of the west branch two weeks ago and had a nice party with a whole gang of people there noting the west branch users of the Library were important to them all.

Ald. Soucy in reference to line item 445 Consortium asked Mr. Brisbin to describe it for her.

Mr. Brisbin replied it was the dynic system which ran their computerized card catalogue and ran automated circulation so patron records and especially subject, title, author information for their collection and also what was at all the other libraries, so if it wasn't at their library patrons could see who owned it and it could be made into a library loan request, but that was a State service.

Ald. Soucy in reference to line item 441 Maintenance & Repair asked if it was an ADA problem for him knowing that there were a lot of disabled patrons using the Library.

Mr. Brisbin replied, not to his knowledge.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord stated they were handicapped accessible, so keeping the elevator working, etc.

Mr. Brisbin stated there was also an elevator at the west branch.

Ald. Domaingue stated she heard and understood everything that Mr. Brisbin had said noting that his employees had been very good throughout and asked of the cities he had cited was it correct that only Keene, NH was one in which the State did not have either a State sales and/or an income tax from which those communities benefit which could be a little of a difference and asked if the City charged people outside of the City of Manchester for the use of the Library.

Mr. Brisbin replied, yes, pretty reasonably at $25.00 per year if they didn't pay taxes in Manchester, attend school in Manchester, or work in Manchester.

Ald. Shea stated as a frequent user of the Library he urged the Board to do whatever it could to assist the Library; that one of the most trying things that he had found was the fact that they had had to cut back on hours and also that Pages were a stepping stone for the community at-large and many of the young men and women that worked there profited immensely noting he was an advocate of the Library one hundred percent.

Ald. Elise in reference to the electricity, fuel, and oil items asked if there had been shortages in the past and if so where had he made up the shortages.

Mr. Brisbin replied, yes; that they had had to come asking for contingency monies over several years.

Ald. Elise asked Mr. Brisbin who removed their trash.

Mr. Brisbin replied the Highway Department emptied the dumpster.

Ald. Elise asked if the Library paid for that service.

Mr. Brisbin replied, no.

Ald. Elise asked if that would be a service that the Bag and Tag people would be funding, so in terms of the Library not paying for the trash removal services.

Chairman Wihby replied the City would continue doing what it was doing.

Ald. Elise stated so if it went to an enterprise, it would be the Bag and Tag people having to pay for the removal noting she would be interested...

Chairman Wihby suggested they wait to see what happened when it came up to a vote.

Ald. Elise stated in terms of her voting on that issue or making a decision on it she would need to know what the people buying the bags would be paying for as it was her impression that they would be paying for...they would not be paying for their own trash removal but rather would be supplementing other City departments having trash removed such as the Library.

Chairman Wihby stated it was being done now; that the Bag and Tag people would share more into the cost of it than what they were paying now, but did not know if it was a good idea or not.

Ald. Cashin stated there was no City building paying to have trash removed as they were all picked up by the Highway Department noting it would not change no matter whether there was a Bag and Tag or not, it would remain the same.

Chairman Wihby stated Ald. Elise was correct in her assumption.

Ald. Cashin stated he did not understand Ald. Elise's statement.

Ald. Elise stated she was wondering what the people who would be buying the bags would be actually paying for as they would not be paying for their own trash removal, but rather they'd be subsidizing other City buildings having their waste removed.

Ald. Cashin stated just as they were subsidizing it now in the real estate tax, so it wouldn't change.

Ald. Hirschmann in addressing Mr. Brisbin stated he sounded really sincere in the $20,000 and what it meant to his expenses for heat, plowing, etc. and if the will of the Board was to not give him the money would he be willing to take it out of salary lines or transfer from salary lines.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord interjected she would like to answer that question.

Ald. Hirschmann stated he was asking Mr. Brisbin and wanted to know would he do without the expense items or would he sacrifice some salary line for those expenses.

Mr. Brisbin replied he would keep the thermostat down by ten degrees and put up with patrons informing him about uncomfortable that was.

Ms. Sullivan interjected the responsibility for developing the Library budget was the responsibility of the Trustees and thought that was why Chairman Sheehan-Lord wanted to answer that question and thought she should have the opportunity to do so.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord stated she did not wish to step on anybody's toes and certainly appreciated the situation they were in noting they had met at length this afternoon reiterating they were very appreciative of the situation the City was in economically but as far as the salaries went as Director Brisbin had stated they already were way below State standards for a Library their size; that at the current time they had three positions which they were trying to refill noting they were positions that they had vacant due to retirements and they could not function with any fewer staff members.

Ald. Hirschmann stated the vacancies were due to retirements, but the people they would be bringing in...

Ms. Sheehan-Lord stated they would not be bringing in new staff, they were replacing.

Ald. Hirschmann asked her to explain the difference.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord replied they had three retirements of people who had been with them for many, many years which were three different levels of librarian service and were doing without now as they were currently interviewing for the positions.

Mr. Brisbin stated two of the three had been vacant for four months, one vacant for seven months noting his people were already strapped as they had the same staffing they had 20 years ago but library services kept increasing as well as demands; that they were able to build circulation and more people were taking advantage of the service as years had gone by but they were doing with the same manpower; that they did not have a receptionist and you'd think that a million dollar City department would have a receptionist and a telephone switchboard operator, but they didn't and the problem when he cam in 1991 was that the phone would ring for 25 times because there was no such person and whenever somebody at the circulation desk could answer, they would between patrons and what he'd done was he'd robbed from Peter to pay Paul and brought those people in on two-hour shifts to a reception desk area; that they had people wearing multiple hats right now; that they were making up for the sins of the past also because they had those type of budget crunches back in 1990 and 1991 also when they lost all of their Pages and they put the books back on the shelves themselves and agreed with Chairman Sheehan-Lord that...

Ald. Hirschmann stated their salary line was going up five percent which was ahead of inflation.

Chairman Wihby stated that was for the raises noting there were no new positions, but rather raises.

Ald. Reiniger stated attorneys had found it more economical to use CD ROM's and asked if libraries across the country were moving away from hard copy materials and more towards computers, CD ROM, etc. and if so asked what plans would the Library like to make here and what type of expense would they be talking about.

Mr. Brisbin replied they had a lot of CD ROM resources as well as the LAN now which would be operational within a few months and would have at least four work stations.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord stated the biggest problem they had was if a person came in for a tenant/landlord law and the next person would come to look up the RSA to find that it had been ripped out of the book and what they were looking forward to was those materials on CD ROM so that everybody who would come for landlord/tenant law in Manchester could get the law and thought it would reduce theft considerably and make those resources much more available and much more updated for people coming into the Library which was one of the most popular uses of their reference materials was legal information.

Ald. Reiniger stated there were 50 magazines or something like that.

Mr. Brisbin replied it was called magazine index noting they would be glad to introduce Ald. Reiniger to it.

Ald. Reiniger asked if it became more cost-effective ultimately than having hard copies.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord replied, sure because more of the resources have full text associated with them so that they could get the full text of an article right there and as technology moves forward they're moving to images so they could get the actual magazine article as it appears in the actual magazine off a disk as well.

Mr. Devine on behalf of the Trustees asked if he could address an issue relative to their having been debating for three years on the Board the notion of reaching out and of being of greater service to the business communities noting that law firms were one of the areas they'd talked about because the materials they did have for law firms seemed to disappear, but the Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord had a fee of about $600 a year for law firms to have free access to all of their electronic data base and the Board had been debating whether or not they should not, in Manchester, which was the legal center of the State offer a similar for fee partnership with law firms because it would help law firms where they would not have to duplicate all the same materials, but doubted they could do it at taxpayers money, but if he and Ald. Reiniger could talk he would really like to look at setting up some joint ventures with businesses locally so that the Library could serve them better but there would have to be a fee associated with it.

Ms. Sheehan-Lord stated some of the materials in that area were some of the highest priced materials, reference materials out there for legal and business resources, Dunn & Bradstreet information, all kinds of mutual funds information was very, very costly.

Ald. Elise stated John and his staff had done a wonderful job with the Library with the resources that they'd been given noting it would be wonderful if they could be given more; that the Library would not be what it was without the Trustees.

Chairman Wihby recessed the meeting.

Chairman Wihby called the meeting back to order.

BOARD OF ASSESSORS

Mr. Nichols stated they wished to thank the Honorable Board of Mayor and Aldermen for allowing them to speak tonight; that they did not have a chance to talk to the Mayor during his budget deliberations noting this was the first chance they'd had; that they had cut out approximately $31,866 from their budget.

Chairman Wihby stated in the Mayor's proposal noting it was different with the Assessors than what had been done with other departments indicated the Mayor in other departments had looked to cut them back and do what he had to do; that with the Assessors budget he actually did a little reorganization, so the numbers would be off a little more than a regular department.

Mr. Girard stated he knew there was a reorganization proposal from the Mayor regarding the Assessors, however, the Mayor had not submitted budget numbers that reflected that reorganization, so with the exception of a new personnel request, a reclassification request, and reclassification request that the Assessors asked for their personnel/salary line item was whole, so it did not include the numbers from the Mayor's reorganization.

Chairman Wihby asked what they were short for personnel that they had asked.

Mr. Girard replied they had asked for a new full-time position to replace the temporary and if they didn't get the new full-time position they wanted the temporary noting the Mayor did not recommend funding either position.

Mr. Nichols stated without the part-time position or the full-time position it would hurt them as they were depending on that person and they would not be over much what they were last year.

Chairman Wihby stated that the current part-time position was temporary and the Assessors wanted to make it a full-time position, but in the Mayor's number he eliminated the part-time, so the complement next year from this year would be short a temp position.

Mr. Nichols stated as far as their line items $81 was cut from Maintenance & Repair, $95 from Postage, $75 from Printing, $1,000 from Travel Reimbursement, $100 from Duplicating, $200 from General Supplies, $210 from Graphics, $120 from Textbooks, and $250 from Periodicals; that the total expenses were only $13,430 about ten percent of the budget.

Mr. Girard stated for clarification for the Board under line item 740 there was a $4,000 entry from the Mayor's Office as a recommendation; that one should have been entered into line item 770 which money was requested by the Board of Assessors through the CIP process for what was called a Mylars Project and right now as they understood it, the City had no backup for its tax maps and the Board of Assessors were still using maps from the Amoskeag Industry days so as a recommendation from the Planning Director the Mayor's Office did not feel it was a CIP request but rather a special projects request, took the money out of CIP that they had asked for and put it into the budget with the recommendation that it be spent on that Mylars Project so they could have an alternate source of records if they were to ever lose anything in that office.

Chairman Wihby asked how much they had put in their CIP request.

Mr. Girard replied the CIP request was for $4,000.

Ald. Hirschmann stated he understood what they wanted to do knowing it was very important and it should be done and asked if the $4,000 represented the actual physical mylars or did it include labor to do it and how did they come up with that figure.

Mr. Girard replied it was a request made by the Board of Assessors; that they had requested it from CIP, the Mayor's Office removed it from CIP not thinking it was a CIP item and put it back into their operating budget.

Mr. Tellier replied there had been an inquiry about having that process done noting there were two alternatives with one being to use the Planning Department's copying machine and buying mylar blanks and having it done using employee resources, however, blemishes and problems could occur at that point and there was an alternative of going to a professional firm located here in Manchester that they could access the blanks and also have a very highly technical machine that they could adjust to come out with the best product possible which was where the $4,000 came from so they could subcontract it out and have a quality product that not only could help their department, but other departments as well.

Ald. Hirschmann stated they had shopped around and found those people noting it would be like an RFP.

Mr. Tellier replied it was a general inquiry at that point because of the fact that they were still using linen maps which had a tremendous amount of historical value, so it was a general inquire until they got the okay to go forward.

Ald. Elise asked who paid for the heat and electricity over there.

Mr. Nichols replied he thought it was through the City Clerk's Office or PBS.

Ald. Soucy asked if someone could tell her that the $1,960 in leases that the department did not request, but was put in represented.

Mr. Nichols replied it was for the rental of the copier which they needed desperately noting it would pay for itself at the end of the year.

Mr. Girard stated the Board of Assessors had requested a budget transfer during this fiscal year to rent a photocopier which was a non-budgeted expense in their FY96 and were part of the Solicitor's Office centralized office copy pool and for whatever reason that arrangement was no longer satisfactory, so they rented the copier during this fiscal year, transferred appropriate dollars after they rented the copier and incurred the expense and proposed funding it at the level that the Board had requested this year.

Ald. Pariseau stated he had questions of the Assessors noting it really did not pertain to their budget.

Chairman Wihby informed Ald. Pariseau to do ahead as they were present.

Ald. Pariseau in reference to non-profit entities in Manchester noted those properties amounted to approximately $370 million and asked if the City were to charge those non-profit entities the municipal portion of the tax rate, how much did they think the City could get back, what would be the impact on it.

Mr. Porter replied they had made a printout a couple of weeks ago that the non-taxable and tax-exempt represented approximately $320 million, $322 million and the tax rate for the municipal portion last year was $10.22 per thousand which would amount to and if they would take the $322 million times the tax rate per thousand, it would be approximately $3,290,840 and if they took the $48 million times the municipal portion per thousand it would be an additional $490,500 with the two combined for $370 million would be approximately $3,781,400.

Ald. Pariseau stated that would probably lower the tax rate to a buck maybe.

Mr. Porter replied probably a dollar to a dollar five in that vicinity.

Chairman Wihby asked if they knew of anybody that did so.

Mr. Porter replied offhand, he did not know because some of the parcels which were involved did make a payment in lieu of taxes noting that Charitable Housing did, but they were going on the overall basic assessment.

Ald. Pariseau stated the only one he knew of that made a contribution was the Housing Authority which was $25,000 which amounted to...

Mr. Porter stated there were a few others noting that the Diocese of Manchester had the Carpenter Center and made a payment in lieu of and Optima as the subsidiary of Hillcrest Terrace did make a payment in lieu, so there were a number.

Ald. Pariseau asked how much that payment was.

Mr. Porter replied it was somewhere around $85,000 noting it had been stepped up as they had gradually increased or through absorption occupied more of the space and there was under the Charitable Housing the RSA 76:23 K which addressed Charitable Housing noted Charitable Housing would make a payment in lieu of taxes equal to ten percent of the gross income or the municipal portion of the rate times whatever that assessment would be were it taxable and thought it was in the vicinity of $30,000 of payment in lieu of taxes which was made, but that was not and compared to what the base of $370 million would bring was not very much.

Chairman Wihby asked if there was an RSA which would stop them from doing that.

Mr. Porter replied there was an RSA which allowed them to enjoy the exemption, so for the City to take a step in the other direction could possibly be counter to the RSA's.

Ald. Pariseau asked what the value of the Elderly Exemption.

Mr. Porter replied the Elderly Exemptions of which there were two assessment exemptions with one was the blind and the other being the elderly noted that the elderly was approximately $66.5 million to $67 million of assessed value with the blind being another million or in that range with approximately $66.5 million removed from the tax base in the form of an assessment exemption with the other being Disabled Veterans at $1,400 and the regular Veterans exemption at $100 was a credit to the bill rather than an exemption from assessment.

Ald. Pariseau asked if the abatements since 1991 amounted to $14 million.

Mr. Porter replied he had checked it and believed it was $14.7 millions since the 1991 tax bill not including the appropriation they had requested for this coming budget year 1997.

Ald. Pariseau asked how much was that, $2 million.

Mr. Porter replied at this point that was the number they had given to the Mayor he used in his budget proposal or budget request was $2.4 million.

Ald. Pariseau stated the Assessors had lowered it $600,000.

Mr. Porter replied, no, they had originally estimated back in December when it was premature, they estimated the same they had done the prior year at $3 million and in a subsequent meeting held with the Mayor they mentioned that the figure of $2.4 million at this point would be more appropriate if they could lower it eventually noting there was a lot of work to be done between now and October at the rate setting and would not know the exact amount they would be requesting until they actually went and set the rate, however, at this point they anticipated that it would be no more than $2.4 million.

Ald. Pariseau stated in looking at the Elderly Exemption indicating he was not picking on the elderly suspected there were several of them who were currently paying no taxes at all because their exemption was over the value of their home and asked if there could be a way in which they could set a minimum for those elderly people to payback to the City as he did not feel that anyone should not be paying taxes; that they were covered by Police, Fire, and Highway and did not feel that people should be getting away with not paying noting he knew he'd be elderly one of these days, but felt they ought to be able to pay $150, $200 and asked if using the $150 figure how much would that generate in revenue.

Mr. Porter replied without knowing off-hand the number of people who were 80, the only people who would be exempt totally from taxation under the elderly would be elderly who did qualify for an $90,000 exemption at age eighty whose property was valued less than $90,000 and they could get the number for them.

Ald. Pariseau reiterated they ought to be paying something.

Mr. Girard stated for the record the Assessor's letter to the Mayor in December indicated an overlay of $2.5 million and not $3 million.

Mr. Porter replied that was correct; that the overlay reduction from the $3 million was from last year.

Ald. Domaingue stated before she would want to tackle the elderly with asking them to pay given if they had a property valued at somewhere around $90,000 or under noted they did not have a heck of a lot of money to give given the tax structure of the City in the last 20 years and asked in looking at $14.7 million in abatements since 1991 were they talking about abatements to properties which were maintained at that level, in other words the settlement had been that they've been abated a certain amount of money and, therefore, the taxes that they pay as of that settlement were then based on that figure, it had not been changed, they hadn't been reassessed, the value was set, the taxes were abated, and that value was maintained as of the time of the settlement, and they had not been revalued which went for residential as well as businesses.

Mr. Porter replied, yes.

Ald. Domaingue stated she would want to know before she got any more money, ring any more money out of the elderly what the representation was of that amount of money which had been abated, how much of it was commercial, what the numbers were, what the figures were in the properties noting she would be willing to go into executive session if it were necessary, but there was an awful lot of material she did not have as one-twelfth of the Board trying to work out a budget and knew that in her own home if she tried to work out a budget and her husband walked in the door saying he had no idea what the revenue would be for the next eleven months, but go ahead and spend and she did that and he would then come in with something less than that she would be in trouble as the budgeter for the home and did not want to do that at that level with that size of a municipality, so she was looking at the Assessors and asking what kind of information could you provide to this Board in terms of the actual number, dollar numbers of the abatements what have been awarded and what the effect that is on their ability to go back to the properties and say, okay, time to reassess what your value is.

Mr. Porter replied they could not just go to a property because they were granted an abatement and justify a reassessment of that property; that in going back to 1991 which was the year of the revaluation noted as everyone had agreed and pretty much accepted the fact that that was just about the start when the market values of primarily the non-residential properties the bottom virtually fell out of many, many categories of property; that at that time as being understaffed as they were they had an Assessor who had retired which position was not filled having understood the budget constraints at that time and was not filled for almost a period of two years; that given the inability to address the overwhelming number of appeals they had experienced there was a carry over; that under the Statutes there was a carry over provision that if a person files for an abatement one year and it does not get addressed, all subsequent tax bills starting from that year will also be addressed; that last year they had just got through noting he was very happy that they did have a full complement of Assessors, but with the vacancy of an Assessor for almost two years, Mr. Lynch did retire in September of 1994 and they were tremendously backlogged and a year-and-a-half ago they had addressed a number of cases which dated back all the way to 1991 and 1992 and that that time they were dealing with three years of abatements; that if a person's assessment was adjusted for 1991 that assessment then carried over for all the subsequent years; that as they went along each year they were behind that three years; that presently they were catching up and were up to the 1994 appeals which were now at the Board of Tax and Land Appeals; that what had happened because they were granting abatements for a particular year that extended into multiple years which in essence virtually tripled the abatement for that year and subsequently the accumulative effect was almost like tripling the abatement account for those years; that at this time they were up to and had no more cases pending in Superior Court through 1994, they were up to the 1994 cases and were just finishing up a number of cases from 1993 and anticipated that by the end of the month they would have no more abatement cases pending at the Board of Tax and Land Appeals or Superior Court through 1993; that the only cases they had at the present time after that were cases that they presently had which were not scheduled but were docketed at the Board of Tax and Land Appeals with none at the Superior Court; that at the present time there was enough money in the Overlay Account to address the outstanding cases they presently had before them at the Board of Tax and Land Appeals; that they were facing, however, the 1995 appeals; that the appeal period at the local level was two months from when the bill went out which expired in January of 1996 at which time they were dealing with the 1995 tax bill; that at the Board of Tax and Land Appeals the appellant may not appeal to the Board of Tax and Land Appeals or Superior Court until May 9th and then they'd have from May 9th until July 9th to appeal at that level; that they did not know at this time because the appeal period had not yet started and could not predict, could not project how many people would appear and what the magnitude of the appeal would be and thought if they were to use a ten percent factor it would be all well and good except that if nine of the properties were single-family residentials and one property, for example, were a NYNEX building he could see where percentages would not be appropriate because it would depend upon the magnitude of the cases; that during the year a $14.7 million is a staggering amount of money and it had not been easy for them to even digest the kind of numbers and the magnitude of the abatements they had to grant; that most of the large commercial properties that had appealed were no longer in the appeal process; that they had settled a number of these cases and when dealing with substantial properties that were overassessed noting he wished to give one example and did not feel that it needed to be in executive session to bring one example; that the NH Insurance building noting he did not mean to pick on them because they were in a very difficult situation; that the property had been worth somewhere in the vicinity of $18-20 million five years ago and the last he checked it was on the market for approximately $8 million; that as an Assessor when an appellant presents them with documentation and proof through the appraisal process that their property was way outside of the limits allowed by the Statutes of the State of NH, it was incumbent upon the Board of Assessors to do their duty and make a change and in a case like that they did have that case a few years ago which had been settled; that there was a substantial amount of money that had to be refunded noting it could be appreciated that when dealing with three or possibly four years of an abatement it was then compounded, it compounded both in the magnitude of the abatement for one year times four, but also the interest at six percent Statutory interest compounded onto that figure was staggering noting most of those were done and believed that Manchester at the present time may not be totally out of the woods, but near the edge and they were looking forward of possibly from a year from now providing they were fully staffed to be able to do the job at-hand to be back down into the under the $1 million abatement account for subsequent years down the road and thought a city the size of Manchester with 30,000 taxable parcels, a million dollars was not an unreasonable or unusual number for a City this size; that part of the problem they had experienced was that some people were of the impression and did not believe they were incorrect that they were not given information, but thought that meetings such as this before the Committee on Finance could be extremely helpful to you as an Aldermen and to them as the Board of Assessors and in addressing Ald. Domaingue stated if she would like to go down and talk with them specifically, all of the abatements they had ever granted were listed, but also offered to the Committee to make themselves available recommending perhaps on a quarterly basis to discuss the Overlay, to discuss the tax base, to discuss what they saw possibly for the future, what they had done in the immediate past, and thought it was timely at this time because they were right in the budget process and three months from now would be in June which would be the end of the year with three months from that being September which would bring them up to the end of the summer which would be a couple of weeks before they would be closing up the computer to set the tax rate and offered to the Committee to do that to try to dispel the perception that they hadn't communicated or didn't communicate noting they certainly wanted to accommodate the Board.

Ald. Domaingue stated it sounded reasonable, but was a little taken aback by the term offer since she would expect making up the budget as one of twelve that that information would be readily available rather than be presented now as an offer in lieu of the fact that they had not had yet and in moving past that...

Mr. Porter interjected he would like to address that.

Ald. Domaingue replied he could in a minute; that he had listed numbers and assumed they had come from his department in the black book, the number of appeals filed to Superior Court and to the Board of Tax and Land Appeals; that the total number of appeals listed as having been filed from 1993 and 1994 for the municipality 1365, the 894 the abatements file versus the appeals filed seemed to be a grand discrepancy; that the number of abatements filed was somewhere in the vicinity, including the projected 1996 of 3,600 and yet the number of appeals filed was somewhere in the vicinity of 400 and asked if she understood that to mean that 3,200 of those abatements were negotiable right here in Manchester and that that information had not been presented to the Board.

Mr. Porter replied he did not know what Ald. Domaingue meant by negotiations not being presented to the Board.

Ald. Domaingue replied she was using an average; that 3,600 abatements which had been filed or would be filed by the end of 1996, 400 of them had to be appealed which meant whoever filed the abatements didn't agree with whatever the Assessor's determination had been and asked was that correct.

Mr. Porter replied, correct.

Ald. Domaingue stated it then left 3,200 who had agreed with the assessment and reached a settlement, so of the 3,200 cases was there ever a time that the Assessor's had presented the Board with a detail on those cases and the amount of the abatements since 1991.

Mr. Porter replied, no; that in all fairness he had been on the Board for 15 years noting this had been the first year to his recollection that it had ever requested and required of them and was not to say that they would not have provided it if they had been asked and it was not to say that they shouldn't have provided it without being asked; that the fact was they didn't provide it because they were not asked and it was never an issue; that now that it had apparently become an issue and was not disagreeing with the fact that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen could certainly be more not public from the standpoint of the taxpayers because they were on the front firing line every day, but to the Board of Aldermen; that he did not think they could fault the Board of Assessors for not having been asked for things and not having known that they were things that were supposed to be requested and required that they didn't just think on their own to present it and wished to address that the past abatements that were granted had nothing to do with the budget the Board was presently working on; that they were requesting what they thought would be a prudent amount to request and reserve aside for the appeals to be yet filed for the 1995 tax year beyond this Board and because of the workload they have had they had been unable to keep up with, on a current basis, taking care of the appeal(s) in the year it was appealed because of the simple case that they had been short-staffed and had been talking about it for a number of years; that they were presently at full staff in terms of Assessors and their office and were requesting that the Board see to it that they retain that level of staffing, but they were trying to project into the future; that the abatements that had been granted in the past had been granted and happened to bring with him not knowing what to expect in terms of what might be requested this evening every abatement that they process goes through the Finance Department; that they do not handle money, they handle paper; that they did not process any abatements that do not get sent to the Finance Department and in the case of a tax credit where a person had not paid the bill they process it with the Tax Collector and the Finance Department and for lack of a better amount they chose the past calendar year from April to April and had a list with him of all of the abatements that the Board of Assessors had granted all the way back to 1974, so they did have it in the office as far as the amount of the abatement, who received the abatement, the location of the property, and so forth.

Ald. Domaingue stated the record should show that she did not, at any time, indicate that they were being reluctant to comply because that was not the nature of her question noting she had asked him a direct question regarding the number of abatements and the difference between the 3,200 and the 3,600 noting Mr. Porter had answered it in that he would feel sensitive to that was something she could not address but stated it was very much a part of the process, the former abatements as far as this Alderman in this term was concerned because the concern of the nature of the way those abatements were granted had no oversight by this Board meaning the Board of Assessors was not given any kind of a direction nor was it allowed to be given any kind of a direction by the Board of Assessors for five years as those abatements were being granted, the 3,200 that did not get appealed noting this Board and prior Boards in that period of time wasn't given an awareness of how those abatements were handled, what the pressure was, what the issues were, and so it had been an in the dark kind of situation and whether that responsibility rested with the Assessors or the Board was a point of concern for her noting what was of concern to her was that they operate in full daylight with as much of the facts as they could possibly get from the Assessors Office noting she did not doubt for a minute that they prepared to meet those requests.

Ald. Pariseau commented that at tomorrow night's meeting of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, Item 12 referred to the suggested Committee descriptions submitted by the City Solicitor and under the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment, and Revenue Administration it stated "that the Committee shall receive periodic reports from the Board of Assessors as to the real estate tax base of the City, the number of abatements files, and their disposition." and asked Mr. Porter if he had a problem with that.

Mr. Porter replied, not at all.

Ald. Pariseau stated that would take care of what Ald. Domaingue was referring to and the information could be passed along as a Committee report to the full Board monthly.

Ald. Elise stated she had the same thoughts as Ald. Pariseau and suggested if it were the wish of the full Board that they might make it a motion and refer that item to the Committee on Accounts, Enrollment, and Revenue Administration to discuss period reports from the Assessors Office which would fulfill the missing pieces of information they were all looking for.

Chairman Wihby stated he did not believe a motion was required noting if the Board wished to they could do.

Ald. Shea stated as with all departments there had been a problem with the Right to Know and believed every department should have followed a certain procedure so that information would be revealed under the Right to Know Law and thought whatever direction the Board took whether it be in Administration or

Accounts they should report to the Committee on a monthly basis so as to let Board members know how many abatements were granted, appealed, denied, etc.

Chairman Wihby suggested the Committee on Accounts review the matter and perhaps have the Assessors address the Committee on a monthly basis.

Ald. Soucy stated the number of abatements filed (3,200/3,600) was not the number of abatements grants but rather the numbers requesting abatements and asked what the current timeline was now to get a decision out of the Board of Land and Tax Appeals.

Mr. Porter replied they were three years behind on the State level noting that the time frame was part of the culprit where all communities were going through the same thing with the overwhelming number of appeals and even though they were not necessarily appeals that would be granted, they still required the time to do the investigation.

Ald. Domaingue in reference to the Committee descriptions asked if such descriptions could be amended to make it monthly instead of quarterly.

Chairman Wihby replied it could occur at Committee level.

Ald. Domaingue asked how many of the 3,200 were granted.

Mr. Porter replied he did not know off hand, but they could get a total; that a number of things had surfaced where they would keep track of more of those statistics than they had in the past.

Ald Shea stated he would be interested in what the process was when someone came in and were granted an abatement asking who made the decision.

Chairman Wihby replied the decision was made by the Board of Assessors.

Mr. Porter stated the Board of Mayor and Aldermen had not say in the matter; that by State Statute it was the decision of the Board of Assessors whereby they investigate the situation, take a look at the property, and come up with a conclusion in their opinion that there was an adjustment due or not.

Ald. Elise suggested that the Committee on Accounts develop some procedures to be followed with respect to reporting of the Board of Assessors.

Chairman Wihby asked if there were already procedures in place.

Mr. Girard replied, there was not; that in the general description on the Committee on Accounts and Revenue, it did provide that the Board of Assessors would report at a minimum on a quarterly basis regarding various items on the Overlay and the tax base and thought that Ald. Elise was looking for the authority of the Committee to develop reporting procedures requiring the Board of Assessors to go to the Committee on Accounts which the general job description did not currently do; that the job description of the Committee on Accounts could be adopted without the procedures and thought that Ald. Elise was looking for a request of the Board to have the Committee develop and procedures in conjunction with the Board of Assessors and to make it easier for everyone thought that because of the Committee's job description they had in inherently within its purview to develop those procedures and make recommendations to the Board to act, so was not sure if a separate action by the Board would be required.

Ald. Shea asked if it was by Charter that the Board of Assessors grant the abatements.

Mr. Porter replied it was by State Statute.

Ald. Reiniger thought he had heard that the NYNEX building had received an abatement asked if it was based on vacancy rates.

Mr. Porter replied NYNEX had not received an abatement, but rather it was the NH Insurance building.

Ald. Reiniger asked if commercial properties were given abatements on the basis of vacancy rates or occupancy rates.

Mr. Porter replied that would get into the heart of the appraisal techniques used with certain types of properties one of which was an income approach; that when a new building was erected normally a developer did not build a building with the knowledge that it would be filled up right away; that there was an appraisal term called "absorption rate" which when a building was built, a 200,000 square foot building, an analysis is completed, a feasibility study of the market to see over what length of time would that property be at its optimum level of occupancy; that anywhere along that line the income stream does change and naturally when a building would be a third occupied it held less value than when it was two-thirds occupied so a building like the NYNEX building start from scratch and building up did have various levels of value at each point along the way and typically a three-year period would be for full absorption.

Ald. Reiniger asked as the occupancy rose would they then reassess it at that time.

Mr. Porter replied, yes.

Chairman Wihby asked if the Board added in a temp so as not to lose any positions, how much would they be looking for.

Mr. Porter replied approximately $13,325 in salaries, no benefits.

TAX COLLECTOR

Ms. Gardner stated a considerable amount of time, thought, and discussions preceded the submission of their budget; that there were two major factors guiding their budget - the service to the public and the impact on the tax rate; that as a department head it was her responsibility to tell the Board what she needed to run the Tax Office in a cost-efficient manner with the customer, namely their constituents being well-served; that in the past year thanks in large part to the Board's understanding of their needs and to the total dedication of her staff extensive lines had been nearly eliminated though not entirely; that if any Board member had received complaints she was sure it was related to the telephone and it was for that reason that they consider the reason of staffing of a Grade 5 entry level position to answer their telephones noting their telephone in their office never rested with many other departments including the Mayor's Office, the City Clerk's, Assessors and Info Systems could attest to it since many people called those departments to get messages to them; that presently their Clerk Stenographer did most of the phone duty, however, despite the fact that they realized and appreciated that anyone calling their office was their reason for being there noting the fact was that she had a tremendous amount of work to do and the telephone, for her, was an interruption of those other duties and more often than not she needed to use a computer screen to answer the question which either meant changing the screen she was working on or relocating to a screen and in either case time was lost simply with remembering where she left off; that others did help with the phones including the Deputy and she but the same was true of each of them; that it was a department which serviced over a thousand constituents and/or businesses that represent constituents a week; that there were several departments that now had phone people on staff and they were support departments in that they did not directly serve the public and urged the Board give serious consideration to the allowance of a person to answer the telephones; that she had requested one job reclassification and one promotion from Senior Clerk to Second Deputy; that last year they began the Municipal Agency Program which allowed the City to issue State decals for a fee of $2.50 per registration which was added revenue to the City budget and obviously had it corresponding added work; that the Clerk Stenographer mentioned previously regarding telephones was restored to a full-time position last year after several years of budget constraints with the understanding that she learn to do auto renewals and process mail instead of hiring another License and Revenue Clerk noting she had done amazingly well asked the Board to close their eyes for a minute and picture a Clerk Stenographer who always had a full-time as a Clerk Stenographer who was then cut back to part-time for budget reasons, the work was the same and now that she was full-time doing all of her required duties while answering the phones and registering cars and for that reason she requested that the City show its appreciation by giving her a slight upgrade which amounted to about $943 for the year; that the promotion to Second Deputy by a Senior Clerk was for similar reasons; that the Senior Clerk received about $20 more a week than a License and Revenue Clerk for which she was expected to maintain supplies from State Motor Vehicles including forms, decals, and envelopes and deal with all of the problems encountered at the counter or through the mail, be the liaison between the City and the State and be constantly interrupted while attending to her own customers to answer questions of the other Clerks; that in addition she had taken on many of the responsibilities that the Second Deputy (which was vacant) including bagging, logging in deposits, training and scheduling; that many times the Deputy and she needed to be out of the office and as Senior Clerk she did not have the responsibility to act in their office during their absence noting as Deputy she would; that the addition to changing her to Deputy would be sixty-one eighty for the year; that she chose to explain her justification in requesting those changes to their current staff and the Board must decide the necessity or lack thereof and while she realized the Board must look at the whole picture, she had to look at what was best for her department and the customers they served; that in their budget cuts there was $10,000 taken out of their Professional Services account and if PBS was going to have the designated duty of handling City properties that the City would take then they would not need as much in Professional Services assuming that liens remained constant and as long as they didn't have more liens than they did this year; that in their Postage if the liens remained constant they would need $30,000 noting they had been cut more than that; that there were several areas which were cut which could not be cut because they had agreements for contracts such as rental agreements, they had requirements by State Statute to attend conference and so various line items needed to be restored to what they had originally asked because they had asked for exactly what they needed.

Ald. Domaingue asked if there was a listing of those line items which she had indicated needed to be restored because of contractual commitments.

Chairman Wihby asked that a list be prepared and also wanted to know what the total was.

Ms. Gardner replied the total of everything restored back to where it needed to be was $387,052 noting the Mayor had recommended $375,217.

Chairman Wihby noted they were then short about $10,000.

Ms. Gardner added without the telephone person or the changes in personnel, yes, about $12,000 for everything being restored.

Ald. Cashin stated he wished to congratulate Joan on one helluva job; that he had not received one complaint of anybody in the Tax Collector's Office since she'd been there noting he would be remiss if he hadn't made it be known public and he was very proud that he had been instrumental in her getting the job as some people did not think she could do it and she proved them wrong.

Chairman Wihby asked if she saw anything they could add to the revenue side.

Ald. Hirschmann noted it was $3 million under '96.

Ms. Gardner stated she was unsure as to what Ald. Hirschmann referred to as $3 million.

Ald. Hirschmann stated that under 1996 Revenues were listed at $103 million currently with the request going in at $9.9 million.

Ms. Gardner replied the property taxes were not in there; that was something usually plugged in by the Finance Department.

Chairman Wihby asked if there were any numbers in there where it would come in low.

Ald. Hirschmann stated everything was per request and asked if there wasn't a new policy coming out relative to auto registrations to grow that revenue.

Ms. Gardner stated the Municipal Agency Program had brought in $91,600 noting April was a big month for municipal agencies because there were two major leasing companies that did an awful lot of registrations during the month and that they would probably have a better idea by the end of April as to how close they would be on that 150 for agency; that they did not have anything to judge it by from the year before because they had started it in July '95; that she hoped that by the end of the month they would have all of the Ford Motor Credit and GMAC renewals in and was expecting to see a lot of agency renewals on it and would also be going to increase it to include transfers as they were not now completing transfers noting it was only another $2.50 per transaction and only if someone was doing a transfer as she had not wanted to over estimate.

Ald. Pariseau in reference to car registrations asked how many of the non-profit entities didn't pay any taxes.

Ms. Gardner replied they were non-exempt for car registrations; that they did pay; that some special permanent plates were done through the City Clerk's Office.

Ald. Pariseau asked why they got permanent plates.

Ms. Johnson stated the Statute allowed for permanent plates for local government as well as some non-profit agencies and the City Clerk's Office was the department which processed those.

Mr. Girard stated under State laws vehicles at places like Easter Seals were actually considered government vehicles and it was incumbent upon the City to register them as part of the City's fleet.

Ald. Domaingue asked who set the rates on those.

Mr. Girard replied the State of New Hampshire; that the City did not have any leeway in what it charged for auto registration rates on any vehicle as they were all set by State Statute.

Ms. Johnson stated there was no fee for government vehicles.

Chairman Wihby called a recess of the meeting.

Chairman Wihby called the meeting back to order.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Kane stated he appreciated the fact that the Board went through all of the departments and took the time noting it was an important process and wished to thank them for going through the process and wished to thank the Fire Commissioners who were present here this evening; that the budget process they went through in their department was an extremely complicated process noting it was a very large budget and read a communication into the record as follows:

> Ladies and Gentlemen:
>
> I would first like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss our fiscal year 1997 budget request and recommendations. We are here to offer you a packet of information and a presentation which will illustrate the impact that the proposed budget will have on the fire and emergency medical services of the City of Manchester.
>
> One of our concerns is the recommendation for our overtime (130 account for minimum staffing of the fire companies. You may be aware that we staff vacancies in the department (vacations, sick leave, injury leave, etc.) using our off-duty personnel. With all of our apparatus in service, and all stations open, we anticipate a shortfall of $105,000 and respectfully request that amount be added to the line.
>
> In addition, we want to specifically address the elimination of five (5) District Chiefs' positions from our budget. We intend to offer you information on the duties and responsibilities of the District Chiefs and a comparison study we have done with other cities of comparable size and fire experience. It is hoped that this illustration of facts will assist you in your understanding of their function and why the City of Manchester needs two on duty.

Again, thank you for your time, and we intend to be responsible to your questions and concerns.

Yours very truly,

s/Joseph P. Kane
Chief of Department

Chief Kane stated on page 1 there was an analysis of their request versus the Mayor's recommendation; that in salaries they had requested $8,562,415 which represented $8,506,346 in new salaries, $52,949 in new positions and $3,120 in temporary help; that the Mayor's recommendation was for $8,249,632 which they believed the deductions came in the new positions of $52,949, elimination of their current EMS Coordinator at $38,904, the elimination of temporary help of $3,120, and elimination of five District Chiefs at $217,810 for total salary reductions of $312,783; that there were additional factors included that being $95,678 if they eliminated the five District Chiefs for severance pay and $35,000 in overtime costs and where they were unsure as to where those funds would be accounted for; that the next section Overtime they had requested $495,000 with the Mayor's recommendation being $390,000 which reflected a $37,000 increase but was a $105,000 reduction in 95 requests; that during the current budget year they were concerned about their budget amount which would be in effect with a ladder truck out-of-service and would have an effect on their service coverage ability because of all of their apparatus in service; that on page 2 Special Salaries their request had been for $820,516 and was reduced by $20,516 and believed that was related to the elimination of the District Chiefs and the EMS Coordinator; that in Line Items their main concerns dealt with Vehicle Maintenance, Staff Certification, Tires and Batteries, and Electricity; that their next area of concern dealt with their request in the Capital Outlay such as Equipment, Rust Repair, Special Projects, and Protective Clothing which were all reduced by $219,812; that although some of the line item reductions concerned them their primary concerns were the District Chiefs and the reduction of overtime in their accounts; that the cost to maintain the positions was $236,744 and in addition with fire apparatus staffing there Overtime account need an additional $105,000 which amounted to $341,774 and requested that the Board appropriate that money to the '97 budget.

Mr. Girard stated the EMS Coordinator which was listed as a current staff reduction ($38,904) was approved by the Board at the time the ambulance service was transitioned and was approved as a Limited Term position to expire at the end of FY95; that they had missed it when preparing the FY96 budget and after several discussions with the Fire Department and Personnel Department, it was the Personnel Officer's ruling that because they had funded it in 96, the position existed which was why it was not funded in the Mayor's budget and with respect to the $219,000 removed by the Mayor from the Capital Line Items request noted he was in a position of a memorandum from Chief Kane who had indicated those monies could be taken out.

Chief Kane stated Mr. Girard was correct in both assumptions noting he had not gotten into the details of either one of those; that they were not talking about the Capital as they understood the EMS Coordinator's position and the Mayor's position regarding those items; that they wished to concentrate on the District Chiefs and the Overtime.

Chairman Wihby asked Chief Kane if he had another plan he could present to the Board on what they could do with the amount of money that they had allocated.

Chief Kane replied as he had stated earlier, the budget which they had in-hand was a fairly complicated budget noting it took a long time to understand some of the impacts; that they had had their budget in hand for approximately ten days during which time they had to analyze the complex documents, analyze what the changes were and the impact of such; that with respect to coming in with a new plan specifically to take the bottom line and change the bottom line they did not have that; that they had bantered it around with regard to staffing with the Commissioners but there was no specific plan.

Chairman Wihby asked if there was something they could do to look into that.

Chief Kane replied there were alternatives they could look at; that one of the things he would not want to get into specifically was where they were two years ago with regard to shutting stations down and did not think that was something the department looked at as an option and did not think that was anything the Board wished to get into after the last time.

Chairman Wihby asked if there were any additional revenues.

Chief Kane replied they had gone through their revenue account with the Mayor and his staff and tried to tighten it up, where they've increased some line items and had tried to push it up as high as they could as they did not want to inflate the revenues to the point where they couldn't.

Chairman Wihby asked if he was happy with that number.

Chief Kane replied, yes.

Ald. Domaingue stated she had a question of the Mayor's Office asking when they eliminated the five positions known as the District Chiefs did they build into the other line items such as severance the appropriate amount which would be necessary.

Mr. Girard replied it was anticipated that the severance would be taken from this year's budget as they had discussed with the Chief laying off those positions in the current fiscal year as of June 30th noting that was not without precedent.

Ald. Domaingue in addressing Chief Kane asked if that was his understanding and was that money still available in the budget.

Chief Kane replied they had had a conversation with the Mayor's Office this week regarding such noting they had said it was their interpretation and replied the Fire Department did not have the $19,000 in this year's budget for severance.

Mr. Girard stated knowing that was the case were proposing what had been done in years past which was to take it out of fund balance at the end of the year or Contingency.

Ald. Pariseau in reference for the department's request for new Mechanic and Principal Secretary asked if that would bring it up to four mechanics at the garage.

Chief Kane replied that would give them three mechanics; that they currently had two noting they did a real heck of a job for only two people.

Ald. Pariseau asked if the third mechanic would give them the opportunity for 24-hour operations.

Chief Kane replied, no; that was not something they were looking at.

Ald. Pariseau asked who the Principal Secretary would be for.

Chief Kane replied the Principal Secretary was in the budget noting this was the second year in a row it had been in the budget and would have been an administrative staff secretary as some may recall when he took over as the Chief of the Department one of the positions that was moved was the Chief's Aide, therefore, there was no one in administrative staff which had any secretarial responsibilities.

Ald. Elise asked if there was enough money allocated in the Electricity line item with the 5.5 percent increase in June.

Chief Kane replied, no; that he thought the line item showed $105,000 noting they had requested $120,000; that they anticipated because of the increase of electricity this year there would be a shortfall, so that was what they were anticipating but maybe something could happen but it looked like that line item would be short.

Ald. Elise asked if the Department had ever been short in the line item in the past.

Mr. Lemire replied, yes they had.

Ald. Elise asked where they got the money from to make up the shortfall.

Mr. Lemire replied they had had to make internal transfers such as what they had recently done out of guidance forms into that account; that their electricity included the Information Systems Department, so any new computer equipment they put on line had caused a tremendous increase in their electrical usage.

Ald. Elise asked if the Fire Department was paying for all of the electrical and heat for Info Systems.

Chief Kane replied in the affirmative.

Ald. Elise asked Chief Kane if he could see anywhere else in the budget where they might be able to make up the shortfall.

Chief Kane replied they would usually go through a heating season to determine where they fell at the end of the heating season to see if there was any anticipated money in utilities such as gas, or fuel oil.

Ald. Elise asked if the Highway Department removed their trash.

Chief Kane replied, yes.

Ald. Elise stated the Fire Department would be another City building which the Bag and Tag people would be paying for.

Ald. Pariseau asked Chief Kane if they were anticipating to maintain the EMS Coordinator position.

Chief Kane replied, no.

Ald. Pariseau asked why in the black budget book was the EMS Coordinator listed under new positions.

Mr. Girard stated they listed the EMS Coordinator as a new position at the request of the Mayor's Office given its Limited Term status; that it had not been funded as a new position and did not fund it as part of the current complement; that the Fire Department did originally have it budgeted.

Chief Kane stated he was asking for the Fire Chiefs and some money in the Overtime account; that the person had done an excellent job for the City, but in looking at a $734,000 shortfall in his budget he needed to set priorities which priorities were in the line staff, the command staff to operate and keep fire trucks operational around the City.

Ald. Soucy stated in 419 Service Agreements noted it was increased by 516 percent and asked what they were servicing or what was transferred.

Chief Kane stated one of the things kicking their budget around this year was computers noting they'd been in the process for about three years now and as they entered into that age a lot of things were happening such as the purchase of software, they needed to have a software agreement which needed to be paid on an annual basis.

Ald. Domaingue in reference to line item 130 Overtime Salary asked if that increase at 10.5 percent had been addressed noting they had requested a lot more than that about $100,000.

Chief Kane stated it was addressed in the initial letter noting that was a fairly complex line item in regard to how it was used; that the line item was used if say someone was on vacation, someone would call in sick, on injury leave, etc. they needed to staff the vehicle; that they had to hire someone to come in and staff the vehicle and were kind of unusual in that aspect of their business.

Ald. Domaingue stated if he was looking at an increase he had requested at almost $150,000 more than previous years noted she understood about contractual and increases but that was an Overtime account noting they could address that issue at a later time; that in item 610 was up 20 percent by the Mayor's figure noting the Fire Department had requested $5,000 more than what the Mayor gave them which was up considerably from where they were right now; that in General Supplies...and asked how do you get a threefold increase in a line item in one year.

Chief Kane replied in regard to the computers noted that the supplies for the computers would be coming out of that line item (i.e., paper, ink, etc.).

Ald. Domaingue in reference to line item 761 asked if they had computerized Rust Repair yet noting it was up 600 percent by the Mayor's figures with the Fire Department's request having been at a 1200 percent increase.

Chief Kane stated their vehicles operated in a 10 to 12 year period and usually about halfway through their life they needed to be rehabbed and have the rust taken care of.

Ald. Hirschmann stated Chief Kane was asking for his District Chiefs back, but not for their holiday pay back.

Chief Kane stated he believed he was.

Ald. Hirschmann stated in the summary under the District Chiefs salary it was included in the $236,774 number.

Ald. Hirschmann stated when all of this was discussed the complement being in-service and out-of-service asked if it had been discussed.

Mr. Girard stated they had discussed with the Fire Department their increase request for overtime, but they weren't sure that bringing a ladder truck on line justified a $150,000 increase in their overtime; that they realized they had the salary increases which were paid to the firefighters and the new truck coming on line but it didn't add up to $150,000 in their eyes.

Ald. Shea asked if he understood correctly that they were asking the Fire Department to go back and rethink their budget and sort of prioritize whatever their concerns were.

Chairman Wihby stated he would like to see them do so.

Mr. Girard stated in addition to the salary lines they would also have to multiply any salary line additions by 38 percent to get what they'd have to add in on the benefit side for the health insurance and the retirement and the FICA so the number which was in the Chief's letter this evening did not include that.

Chairman Wihby asked Chief Kane if he could go back and see what they could do to live within those means and how they would like to see it handled and report back to the Committee as soon as possible.

Chief Kane asked who they would like him to get it back to.

Chairman Wihby stated he could forward it to the City Clerk's Office.

Ald. Hirschmann suggested they invite Chief Kane to appear before the Committee at a future Committee meeting.

Chief Kane in reference to the last page of the handout noted it was survey results which were conducted of area fire departments and the City of Manchester with respect to the District Chiefs noting that Sean Thomas has conducted the survey and found that there was a District Chief with an Aide for 50,000 people which meant the City of Manchester was running two people where other cities were running four people noting that they were now asking them to cut it from two people to one person.

Ald. Domaingue stated with the exception of Manchester and Nashua all of those cities enjoyed the benefit of the revenue from the individual State sales and/or income tax.

Ald. Elise stated she would need how many departments were not allocated the 5.5 percent they would need for electricity and also how many municipal buildings had City trash removal.

Chairman Wihby replied all City buildings, schools and parks all had City trash removal.

Ald. Elise stated so no matter how much she or her constituents tried to decrease trash in their bags they put out at the curb they also had to look at the City decreasing their trash.

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