

PERSONNEL/ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

MARCH 20, 2006

---

A meeting of the Personnel/Administrative Affairs Committee was held on Monday, March 20, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Chair James R. Tollner presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderman Robert A. Dion, Vice Chair  
Alderman Daniel Richardson  
Alderman David MacLaughlin  
Alderman Greg Williams

Members Not in Attendance:

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large David W. Deane  
Alderman-at-Large Brian S. McCarthy (6:05 p.m.)  
Alderman-at-Large Fred S. Teeboom (6:10 p.m.)  
Alderman-at-Large David Rootovich (6:15 p.m.)  
Alderman Michael Tabacsko (6:18 p.m.)  
Alderman Richard Flynn (6:20 p.m.)  
Maureen Lemieux, Division Director, Administrative Services  
Angelo Marino, Chief Assessors  
Digit Taylor, Ctr. for Land Cons. Assistance, NH Forests

COMMUNICATIONS – None

NEW BUSINESS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS – None

Chairman Tollner

We are going to hear two presentations this evening on information pertaining to O-06-01. The first presentation Maureen Lemieux and Angelo Marino will give us an update as far as where we are with the land to give everybody a perspective of how much money the city has dedicated to the preservation of the land – the acreage and dollar amounts, etc. After that we will have a presentation from Digit Taylor who is the Director of the Center for Land Conservation Assistance at the New Hampshire Forests.

For anybody who is in the audience tonight that would like to provide public comment, we will provide some time for that as well.

*A discussion ensued with Maureen Lemieux and Angelo Marino regarding an overview of the current standing of the conservation fund, conservation property purchased by the City of Nashua since 1999, and the intention of the conservation fund going forward with regard to the proposed legislation.*

*A presentation was given by Digit Taylor, Director, Center for Land Conservation Assistance at New Hampshire Forests.*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Bretz, 6 Tomolonis Drive, Chairman, Nashua Conservation Commission

Provided the committee with an update on where the Conservation Commission is with regard to the expenditure of conservation funds, and voiced her opposition to the proposed legislation.

Paul Johnson, Browning Avenue

Spoke briefly on the reason for and purpose of the conservation fund, and expressed his opposition to the proposed legislation.

Kathy Nelson, 4 Massasoit Road

Provided a historical perspective of the conservation fund, and expressed her opposition to the proposed legislation.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS – ORDINANCES

##### **O-06-01**

Endorsers: Mayor Bernard A. Streeter  
Alderman-at-Large David W. Deane  
Alderman-at-Large James R. Tollner

#### **REDUCING THE PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE PLACED IN THE CONSERVATION FUND FROM ONE HUNDRED PERCENT TO FIFTY PERCENT**

#### **MOTION BY ALDERMAN TOLLNER TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE**

#### ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Richardson

So far what I am seeing is that the amount of land available in current use a lot of it is around waterways. One of the things we are going to need to be doing in the future when we own the Pennichuck Water Works, is to buy and hold for watershed, land around the watershed. That is a very important thing to have available to us money to do so. Also within the city itself, in the more dense areas, there are large parcels, which will be available. It certainly seems to me to be a very good idea to maintain that as an option for the Conservation Commission to acquire.

The other thing is that projected revenues we are looking at per year on the order of say \$150,000 at a 50% rate \$150,000 going into the conservation fund and \$150,000 going into general revenue. Right now the school budget is off by about \$6 million that school budget alone versus the 5% cut that the Mayor had spoken of. I don't see this amount of money as contributing much to our fiscal needs this year and in the out years also. I am afraid I cannot support this resolution. Thank you.

Alderman Teeboom

I am not a member of this committee, but may I ask a quick question? You have \$1.7 million in the fund right now correct?

Chairman Tollner

I think it is \$1.9 million.

Alderman Teeboom

How much are you expecting to get next year from the 100% contribution?

Chairman Tollner

The estimate is \$300,000 give or take.

Alderman Teeboom

So we are talking about \$150,000 less if this legislation passes. Does anybody have an idea of how much land you can buy with \$1.9 million?

Chairman Tollner

It depends upon where the land is, the size of the parcel of land... I think we were discussing the cost of an acre was between \$100,000 and \$120,000.

Alderman McCarthy

That is a large variable because the current going rate for land with developed infrastructure is well over \$100,000 an acre. If you go back and look at previous purchases from the conservation fund they have averaged between \$10,000 and \$15,000 an acre so you are talking 10 acres for that \$150,000. If we get substantial matches from other sources, which we can particularly for lands around watersheds, that could leverage as much as 45 or 50 acres worth of land.

Alderman Teeboom

I would like to make a point. I am not on this committee and will not have a vote, but I am 1000% in favor of this kind of conservation. If I could contribute 150% I would do it.

Alderman Deane

Thank you. I wanted to go over a couple of things here. When I looked at this fund, and I am glad to hear that the Conservation Commission is going to put a group together to understand the monies and what proactive steps they need to take, but I look at the professional service monies that have been spent out of here and it makes me wonder, consulting services, what we are getting for that. Maybe I can speak with Linda Bretz afterwards and get an accounting of these monies. I enjoyed your presentation. Had it been 1950 today I think it would have put us in perhaps the right direction, but if you look at the maps over there and the little towns and communities that you pointed out well North of here that presentation would probably be helpful in those areas, but unfortunately we are at build out as was stated earlier.

Then I guess I wanted to give my opinion on conservation land. It was just a couple of years ago when there was talk of building a wastewater quality education center in the center of Mine Falls Park, which would have required a bridge, lighting, and things of that nature to the tune of about \$3 million, which I opposed big time. I guess conservation land has a broad description. I look at \$40,000 for a railroad corridor purchase and I don't consider that to be conservation land although I guess it is as these funds were allowed to be used for that purpose.

What I really want to look into is the allowable uses of these funds – what the broad scope is if there is one that is currently there because to call it to purchase conservation land, there are a lot more expenses associated with land purchases; appraisals and things like that that have to be accounted for, but I am going to be looking into that. Thank you.

Alderman McCarthy

Yes there are other expenses that come under the heading of conservation. There is stewardship, we have had to put up signage of conservation land in the northwest so that people using it will understand what they can and cannot do there. I believe that all of those things do fit. There is an expense in there to the Audubon Society that if I am not mistaken was covering expenses to get another piece of land transferred into control of the Audubon Society that they did not want to give to us, but it is a substantial piece of property that is now perpetually conserved on our behalf by another organization, and all we had to do was make sure that the legal bills were covered to get that transfer to take place. That is conservation. It has the same affect, and there is no reason that shouldn't be covered out of there.

I want to comment on the amount of space that we have and the amount of space that we ought to have. Some years ago, and I think Alderman Rootovich and Alderman Tollner will remember this, we looked to take a certain parcel of land in the northwest quadrant for a park, which we could have had for \$3.4 million at the time. One of the questions asked at the public hearing on the bond was is there any other city that has this much of its land area devoted to parks and open space. I thought about that for a while afterwards. We wound up not buying that parcel then for \$3.4 million. We bought part of that parcel for \$1.25 million, and a few years later we bought the rest of it for another \$6 or \$7 million, which by the time the appeals and BTLA took place was about \$7.5 million so all told the site that the North High School site on we paid almost \$9 million for when we could have had it for \$3.4 million three years earlier.

The answer to that question of what city has this much of its land devoted to open space – New York. Someone had the foresight to take a tremendous portion of Manhattan Island and devote it to a park that today represents a piece of real estate that is probably worth more than the State of New Hampshire. Yet it remains the only substantial piece of open space available to the millions of people who daily inhabit that island.

Why I go to look at Nashua, and I think Mr. Marino told us earlier we had 1,700 acres. Let's start to think about what that is with 85,000 people – that is about 1 acre for every 50 people or thereabouts, which means if we all decided to head out into our open space on a nice spring Saturday afternoon assuming we have one of those soon, Alderman Tollner could be enjoying his open space there and the next person would be standing just a little past the microphone 29 feet away. We don't have enough for the future. We won't have enough for the future and we owe it to ourselves and to the next generations to make as much benefit of what we can as we can.

I think given that the amount of money that we are talking about being able to divert to the tax rate are small given that they are also unpredictable, and every time we have a year where this produces a decrease in the tax rate there will be a corresponding increase the next year or the year after when this isn't there to offset it. It just makes sense to me to continue putting this money in the conservation fund for our future use rather than trying to spend the money this year.

#### Chairman Tollner

I received a couple of calls from some people who thought that all of the money should go back to the general fund, and I wasn't comfortable with that. I think that a 50/50 split right now is a reasonable one to consider. The example that Alderman McCarthy just used where the North High School is, that was open space, but I would have to say that was a challenged piece of open space at best because it was a gravel pit. I voted the first time to purchase that. I pushed very hard if people remember to purchase that, and that failed by one vote. I don't want the public to – some of the comments tonight are that if this legislation passes my God there is going to be no land for people to purchase for conservation and there will be no money. This legislation in itself doesn't affect the land that is available first of all to purchase. What we are looking at is to take 50%. I think one of the people that commented said that if it is passed we should keep an eye on this and see how it works for a year or two. Maybe that is something that we should do.

The ironic thing is we are not talking about a lot of money here if the targets are \$280,000 to \$300,000. We are not talking about a lot of money, but we are faced with a financial crisis right now and we have to start not somewhere, we have to start everywhere to look for opportunities to try and balance the budget. I don't think that this is a really drastic piece of legislation. The 50% is a reasonable compromise. If it passes at the full Board level I also think we should keep an eye on it as we move forward in the future.

#### Alderman Williams

I wanted to bring to everyone's attention on the committee – I am not sure if you are aware, but we have a piece of pending legislation, R-06-30. It is a piece I sponsored, and it was passed by the Infrastructure Committee on 3-8-06. What this piece of legislation does is it approves the acceptance of title to open space lots in the Maplewood subdivision. This was something that our Planning Board had the foresight a few years ago to require the Maplewood subdivision when they gave it a Flexible Use Overlay District to require them to transfer more than 100 acres to the City of Nashua. Let me

just read from the Warranty Deed that is part of this legislation – it says “This conveyance is to satisfy the open space requirement of the Nashua Revised Ordinances 16:38, and the land shall be used for public purposes including a greenway system of public trails as depicted on the plan and placement of utilities. The city shall use, maintain, and preserve this open space area and the existing conditions except for development of trails.” We have nearly 100 acres pending now that are not coming out of the Conservation Fund but simply a function of that development. That is a really good thing that has happened, and people should be aware of it.

Chairman Tollner

Are there any further questions?

*A Viva Voce Roll Call was requested, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Alderman Tollner, Alderman Dion, Alderman Williams  
3

Nay: Alderman Richardson, Alderman MacLaughlin  
2

**MOTION CARRIED**

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

DISCUSSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN MACLAUGHLIN TO ADJOURN  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:15 p.m.

Alderman David MacLaughlin  
Committee Clerk