

DEPARTMENT OF CITY CLERK

CITY HALL

JUNE 17, 1997

The Committee on Finance meets this day at 5:00 o'clock P.M., in Committee Room "A", City Clerk's Department, City Hall.

PRESENT: Chairwoman Patricia K. Nolan, Council President Evelyn V. Fagnoli and Councilman David V. Igliazzi.

ABSENT: Vice-Chairman Rollins and Councilman Peter S. Mancini.

Also present are Stephen Woerner, City Council Internal Auditor, Matthew Clarkin, Budget Analyst, Finance Department, Dale Thompson, Library Director, Providence Public Library, Sheldon S. Sollocy, Providence Public Library, William Piccerelli, Treasurer, Providence Public Library, Barbara A. Poirier, Second Deputy City Clerk and Claire E. Bestwick, Assistant Clerk.

MS. DALE THOMPSON, LIBRARY DIRECTOR - PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY, INVITED RELATIVE TO BUDGET DISCUSSIONS.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: The only two items we had on the agenda were the Providence Public Library and we don't have the Community Centers down because I didn't want to invite all those people in again. I think we just have to make a decision whether or not we want to fund that and we can take that up Tuesday night when Finance Comes in. Ms. Dale Thompson. Do you want to bring all the troops up with you?

MS. THOMPSON: Sure but I would like to ask Mr. Sollocy, --- President of the Library and Bill Piccerelli who is Treasurer of the Library.

MR. SOLLOSY: I am here sort of as a fifth wheel because I am no longer the Chairman but I just wanted to come. You know, I don't have to give you the pitch, especially you Pat because you know what the Library has done but I wanted to come and thank you, the Council, for the support that you have given us over the past years and to let you know that our needs have not diminished.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: We did help you with the CDBG budget last night to do your ADA adjustments.

MR. SOLLOSY: Good.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: In a multi year plan. That went in right?

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: I think so. I thought there was something in there, wasn't there?

June 17, 1997

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Yes, there was \$50,000.00 I think.

MR. SOLLOSAY: As you all know, we have made quite a bit of progress in the past year or so with the re-opening of the Library on Wednesday and we are hoping to be able to open it on Sundays again, come the Fall but also, to let you know that the needs in the branches are just getting more and more demanding and I wish there was a way that we could get people to start thinking of libraries as Education because we really are an intricate part of the educational system. Our IRIS is working with the computers. I think that that has to be even expanded more so that without going into a long array, just to let you know that whatever you can do, we would sure appreciate it. We also, I think, it has not gone to the Governor yet but in the State Budget, libraries as a whole got a little push this year.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Well, I certainly hope so. I know we sent a Resolution up there supporting it.

MR. SOLLOSAY: So we got, there is a total of 1.2 million dollars.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: They gave you the whole thing?

MR. SOLLOSAY: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: That is wonderful.

MR. SOLLOSAY: But also, they realize, you know, there is a statute that says, by the year 2000, the State is supposed to support libraries by 25%. This payment this year will bring it to about 6% so between now and the year 2000, we have a long haul but I think the realization has finally hit them up at the State House so that we do have that, which will help us by about close to \$100,000.00 in our budget so that things are not always as gloomy as they may sound.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: How much did they increase your budget?

MR. SOLLOSAY: What they did is they increased the State by about 800 and some thousand dollars and it is to be spread out between grant and aid and resource.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Okay.

MR. SOLLOSAY: The idea behind the whole thing was for the State to finance the CLAN system for every library. For example, we spend little over \$100,000.00.....

MR. PICCERELLI: \$101,566.00.

June 17, 1997

MR. SOLLOSAY: So we would, in fact, be reimbursed for that, which is money that won't come out of our budget and that will be the same for all of the libraries in the State, the smaller libraries, of course, getting less but it finally gets to the point where the State is financing the CLAN system.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Is that the only thing that they are financing?

MR. SOLLOSAY: It doesn't say that but total effect will be that but they increased by about \$800,000.00.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: That increase, is that going all over the State?

MR. SOLLOSAY: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: So it is not just coming to the Providence Library.

MR. SOLLOSAY: No. We are going to gain about \$100,000.00 from what we got from the State.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: The Mayor has an increase, I believe, of \$78,000.00 in the budget. How much do you need?

MR. PICCERELLI: I don't know if you have the original submission that was given to the Mayor but our original submission to the Mayor showed that we had a shortfall in our budget for fiscal 98 of \$704,000.00.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: I saw that.

MR. PICCERELLI: In the packet that Dale handed out tonight, you will see that that number has been revised down to \$524,000.00 and how you get from the \$704,099.00 to the \$524,000.00 is the two items that were included as additional revenue was the \$78,000.00 that was included in the Mayor's budget and the \$101,566.00 that we are anticipating will come, should the article in the State Budget pass.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: So how much is the amount from the city again?

MR. PICCERELLI: Well, there is \$78,000.00. Those two items, the \$78,000.00 and the \$101,566.00 will total \$179,566.00. If you deduct that from the original submission we had that showed a deficit of \$704,099.00, that brings us down to \$524,532.00.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: We can't do that.

MR. PICCERELLI: We realize that.

June 17, 1997

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: There is no way.

MR. PICCERELLI: And I think what our original request was \$350,000.00 and basically what we are saying, if you look at the budget we submitted at \$524,000.00, if you take the \$350,000.00 and minus the \$78,000.00 that we have included because the Mayor included it in his budget, our request is really the \$350,000.00 minus the \$78,000.00 and I didn't do any math on that.

MS. THOMPSON: \$272,013.00. If you look at the last few pages of the budget, that shows you what that is made up of.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: Page 6.

MS. THOMPSON: The last number is \$272,013.00 and then the amounts before it shows what that represents.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: And that would be in addition to the \$78,000.00 in the budget now?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: And this is what it is going to, all these things?

MS. THOMPSON: Correct.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Only going to the branches?

MS. THOMPSON: Primarily to the branches, yes. Well, eliminate the furloughs, that is all the staff, the part-time clerks in the branches to allow our staff to have salary increases starting July 1. The Literacy Specialist, literacy programs are primarily in the branches, Reference Librarian.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Is the Reference Librarian, is that in the main branch?

MS. THOMPSON: That would be for, more support for the reference services from the main branch, which supports the services in the branches.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: The Central Library is not open now on Sunday?

MS. THOMPSON: Not during the summer but traditionally we have been open for the last three years during the Winter months and that is a very popular time, particularly for families and families from the neighborhoods who are not able to come down to the Central Library. The increase is for the clerk's. We have made some progress over the last four

June 17, 1997

or five years in addressing salaries, which have been a significant problem for us and what we need to do, we are in one of our final years in addressing the salaries and we would like to address the salaries that the clerk's receive and then we would like to also put more in to branch ---.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: What happens when we go down to add up all these numbers because we have to some how come up with a number that the rest of the Council is going to pass and we can't provide you any more than the \$78,000.00. What is going to happen then?

MS. THOMPSON: Those are the kinds of reductions that we have to look at.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Any questions from the Committee?

MS. THOMPSON: I am prepared to talk a little bit about the services that we are providing in the branches.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: We are so familiar with all the good things that you do.

MS. THOMPSON: I know you are. I would like to get some things on record in order to justify what it is that...

COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: All I have to do is walk in to my neighborhood library and I see all positive happenings all around with all the programs, everything in place, lessons in the evenings for English speaking, people that are learning to speak English, chess club in my neighborhood library. When ever did we have anything like this? These are all pluses. I just wish we had as much money as we could just spread around because you really do justify whatever we give you.

MS. THOMPSON: A couple of things, if I could. I would like to talk about the increase in hours because that has been significant in terms of us being able to add services and in the last year we have increased the hours that we are open by 26% from 323 hours a week to 418 hours so that has allowed us to look at a lot more services.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Are you going to stay for the Budget Hearing tonight? I think you should.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: And you will hear the other side. We are going to be asked not to pass a tax increase.

June 17, 1997

MR. SOLLOSY: We understand all of the ramifications and everything and you know, we just want you to know that whatever you can do will be helpful.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: We will.

MR. SOLLOSY: And also to let you know that we are not just sitting by waiting for the money to come in. We just had a very successful Count Basie series, which at that time, there were 3,000 kids from the schools who came to the concert.

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, if you look on the purple sheet, it shows you all the schools from the City of Providence that there were children attending to.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: I am so sorry I couldn't go.

MS. THOMPSON: And there are some of the comments. These are comments right from the evaluations.

MR. PICCERELLI: You know, one of the things that showed up real loud and clear with the Count Basie event, the libraries have a tradition every other year where you have a major fund raiser like this because I think we have a very active board who is trying to supplement the resources of this library as much as we possibly can. We scoured for a corporate sponsor for this event. This even came in \$25,000.00 short of what we had really anticipated. 2 years ago we had a corporate sponsor that really picked up a lot of the costs of running the event. This year, we tried major corporations like you couldn't imagine. We could not hide nor --- find a corporate sponsor. We tapped a lot of doors and I don't want to go down the litany of names.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: I think I know who your sponsor was, who dropped you.

MR. PICCERELLI: No, it wasn't the same one. I know who you are thinking of. It was desperation to find corporate sponsors and we did this event, we netted for the library \$60,000.00 but we were budgeting \$85,000.00. We netted \$60,000.00 without that major corporate sponsor. If we had gotten that, that would have helped our picture a lot and the private sector funds are drying up as they are ---.

MR. SOLLOSY: I can tell you, Chairman of the Board ---, so now, we get every letter and as ---, I mean, I think had 20 golf tournaments this

June 17, 1997

season that you are asked to support and you just, there is a limit to what you can do.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: I just know the organizations I am involved with trying to get corporate funding. It is a dry well lately. I am sorry, Dale, we interrupted.

MS. THOMPSON: I wanted to address actually, three kinds of programs because they really do have a major impact in the branches and that is what we are interested in here tonight. I wanted to talk about the Literacy Program, the after school homework help that we provide and then the impact we have for technology and I will just go very briefly. I want even go through everything I have prepared. On the yellow sheet, it does show you the numbers and the types of literacy programs that we have and it is important because our programs are unique, particularly the family literacy program and it is one of the advantages that we have with the branch system and they are located in all the neighborhoods because there are so many immigrants in the city and some times we don't realize what kind of barriers these immigrants face and when they are trying to learn about the new culture and learn how to live here in the United States. They face the barriers of transportation. How are they going to get out of their neighborhoods because they don't speak the language, they can't understand how you can travel from place to place. Certainly they don't understand the language and many of them have small children and they feel very much confined so our family literacy programs really address these issues because they are able to come right to a library right in their neighborhood. There is a first step literacy program. They bring their child. Their child gets a story read to them. They can read books, the parents learn how to read English and our measure of success for the first step program is to get them started in learning how to speak the language and how to live in this community. Our measure of success is how many people go on to either a second step literacy program or a job and right now our success rate is about 65%.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Where are you doing the adult computer training?

MS. THOMPSON: There are two ways. The Family Writing, within terms of literacy programs, the Family Writing Center, that is what that is geared towards. We use computers in our Literacy Computer Labs. It is a

June 17, 1997

program for school age children and while the kids are upstairs or doing their homework, the adults are working and learning the language, learning how to use the computer and then together they do such things as write, these are two publications, our stories where they together, the kids and their parents write these stories about some experiences in their country or people that --- what happened to them so it is a great way of carrying on some of the tradition. The other computer program we have is one that we started with the --- volunteer, the computers in the work place. We started that two years ago and that is for adults to become comfortable with computers so that then they are able to go out and get a job. This past summer we had kind of a mini program where we taught kids how to become comfortable with the computers so they can have success in the schools. That program was so popular that even ---- Program that is in the schools, through the Education Department, picked that up and funded one site this past year. They loved it so much that next year they are going to increase it five times the support that they are going to give. So we will be running these computers --- program. The other literacy programs that we do are connected with the IRIS network that we put in a little over a year ago and that is in two parts. It is the reference network and the public use computers in all of the branches. The reference program has a lot of, and these are work stations in all of the branches that are connected to the Central Library on the network and there are a lot of -- - magazines on the workstations, general interest, business periodical, investment periodicals. There is also consumer health information on that. The Rhode Island Scholarship search --- is there, census information, occupational outlook, what kinds of jobs, encyclopedias, those kinds of things so that means we are really increasing access to our resources because you don't have to come down to the Central Library you are able to go to the branch and have access to that. The other public use computers that we have are just work stations at all of the branches where anyone can come in and use what we call productivity software. That is word processing, spreadsheets, programs for how to learn typing or to produce your own resume and I have a couple of stories I want to share with you, one I just heard today. A Cape Verdian man who came in to one of our branches and he used the resume program, worked with the volunteer, did his resume and went for his job interview, came back from

June 17, 1997

his job interview and said, I really want to do a follow up thank you letter, which he did using the word processing software and he got the job and went to work for a manufacturing company doing maintenance but maintenance in plumbing and heating so it was a real good job and what he was told was, he got the job because he did that follow up thank you letter and so he was able to do that at the branch library because he didn't have a home computer. There was also another woman who worked for a law firm and she got laid off in down sizing and at the same time she was also going through a divorce and so her esteem was really low. She came in and worked with the volunteer with the resume program, did the resume, kind of got a pep talk from the volunteer, you know, you can do it. She went off and she applied for a job at Brown and is now working at Brown. So there are all these types. You are absolutely right. I mean, the reason why we did this is because there are so many people in Providence who cannot afford to, it is going to be a long time before they can afford to have computers and so they can come to their local branch library.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: I just want to say, when we finally get to the crunch in the numbers, if we can try to find some more money for the library. I think everyone is in support of the library.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: Yes.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: And I think that \$272,000.00, in the overall scheme of things is not a lot of money but right now it seems unbelievable but I guess we should ask our Internal Auditor when he starts looking for the cuts.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: We are going to do that Tuesday.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: When we start doing that balancing act, maybe we should have this as one of our priorities, at least as a committee and maybe we can find it, I mean, I don't know about \$272,000.00 but I would love to give them as much as they want. The library is obviously, unfortunately, I think Mr. Shaunessy made a good point.

MR. SOLLOSY: Sollosy.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: Sollosy, I am sorry. Made a good point that unfortunately they don't respect libraries as education. If they did, they would be in the State Aid to Education formula and they would be getting part of that multi-million dollar increase that all the schools get and really, that is where it belongs so I couldn't agree with you more, that is

June 17, 1997

where it belongs. We are not going to get it in there and unfortunately it is not going to be included in there but that is where it should be.

MR. SOLLOSY: I had a friend whose father used to write letters to him and he once said, whatever you do, be 100% honest. If you can't be 100%, at least 60% so all I can say to you, if you can't give us 100%, give us the highest percent you can.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: In fact, I am getting nervous because I think we are putting in more things into the budget than we are taking out. I am starting to get very nervous about it but we will do whatever we can for the Library.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: Before I vote for something else for an increase, I think I am going to vote for the Library. I will say that for the record. I will do that. They come in time and time again and they are the only ones that make, really, this is about the 5th, I have been on the Council 8 years, this is the 8th thorough presentation that you have made to me and it is the same thing and it is very thorough and very thought out which is a lot more than other organizations do. I know it by heart.

MS. THOMPSON: Let me just close by saying that there is an invitation in your folder for Frank McCourt who is going to be here on the 21st of July and we would like to see you there.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: You didn't bring all the school kids down tonight with their signs.

MS. THOMPSON: No, I didn't.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: We don't need it.

COUNCILMAN IGLIOZZI: We got the letters in the mail. That is sufficient enough. When we get letters from the children saying, support the library.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: And I got a lot of letters on adult literacy.

MR. SOLLOSY: The other things is ---, which is across the street from Knight Memorial, they use the facility for their training.

CHAIRWOMAN NOLAN: I know.

June 17, 1997

ADJOURNMENT: On motion of Councilman Igliazzi, seconded by Council President Fagnoli, it is voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 o'clock P.M.


Second Deputy City Clerk


Assistant Clerk