

DEPARTMENT OF CITY CLERK

CITY HALL

JUNE 11, 1975

The Committee on Finance meets this day in the Conference Room City Hall, at 2:00 o'clock P.M., to continue the scheduled invitations to Department Heads relative to the Budget.

Present: Chairman Lynch and Councilmen McKiernan, Garan, Councilwoman Brassil, Councilmen Crowley, Stravato and Bradshaw.

Also present is Finance Director Vincent T. Izzo.

(Rose M. Mendonca, Assistant Clerk.

Chairman Lynch reviews the procedure of the meeting held relative to the Appropriation Ordinance, Classes of Positions, Compensation Plan and the Assessment and Collection of Taxes.

Louis Santiano, Director of Recreation joins the Committee.

Councilman McKiernan: There are extensive staff changes from Recreation to Public Property, you were not there when it was prepared. There has been general discontentment of the City Council that the Recreation Fields were not cleaned up.

Mr. Santiano: I recall that was also a bone of contention back in 1947-1950, it was a problem at that time. I am not familiar with the last couple of years.

Chairman Lynch: Do you feel that the maintenance portion of the Recreation Department can be handled by the Recreation Department as well as it was.

Mr. Santiano: Everytime I have requested a problem be hendled it has been handled expeditiously and with dispatch. It is handled by my department. The two major areas have been the cutting of grass and repairing of equipment and it has been done with a great deal of dispatch.

Discussion ensues as to the Recreation Department coming under the Department of Public Property. Councilman Stravato is of the opinion the Recreation Deptment should be handled by Mr. Santiano.

Councilman Stravato: I should think in areas of recreation the staff is not enough for you to work with, but they should be under your disposal.

Mr. Santiano: I think we have to accept the fact I am not that familiar with this. Any human effort has to have cooperation, if something happened, another department would send men over, this I would do. I hope that is the same kind of approach other departments would take with me.

Councilman Stravato: If something needs to be done you have to call Public Property Department.

Mr. Santiano: That is the way it will be after July if the change is made.

Councilman Stravato: I think this should be under Mr. Santiano's jurisdiction. Do you have any CETA people.

Mr. Santiano: There is one now.

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Mr. Stravato: What are his duties?

Mr. Santiano: We just got him a week ago.

Mr. Stravato: I think he should present to us the people he needs and they should be transferred to his department.

Mr. Santiano: I would like to see a complaint department. I spend a lot of time tracking down the complaints.

Mr. Stravato: When you get these complaints, you have the men to do this, but you won't if the change is made.

Mr. Santiano: Right.

Councilman Bradshaw: The reason they rearranged the responsibility is that recreation is more seasonable and they could draw from the supply of Public Property Department when needed, instead of full time.

Mr. Stravato: I think it should be in reverse.

Councilman McKiernan: Last year you had 4 Equipment Operators, 4 Laborers, 3 Foreman, 1 General Foreman, 1 Maintenance Man ii and 2 Mechanics.

Mr. Stravato: What are the duties of the Foreman?

Mr. Santiano: The one I have now is Joe Ramada. He keeps track of records where they work, he handles grounds primarily. Mr. Sepe handles broken benches, etc.

Councilman Bradshaw: Why couldn't we let Mr. Santiano come up with his recommended budget, he inherited another man's budget and he may have some ideas of his own.

Mr. Izzo: Th/s is the last hour, before he gets familiar with it it would take two to three months, this has to be presented now.

Councilman Stravato: How many vehicles do you have.

Mr. Santiano: Two, to the best of my knowledge; one I have access to and the truck.

Councilman Stravato: The automobile allowance is \$2,760.

Mr. Santiano: Four people draw \$60.00 a month in lieu of a vehicle, it is transportation allowance.

Mr. Stravato: Who are the people?

Mr. Santiano: The two assistants, the equipment major and I can't think of the fourth. Of the things I have noticed is that people who are supervisors hired last year don't even have any automobile allowance.

Councilman Stravato: What do you feel, do you think the people that are going to work within the recreation should be under your supervision?

Mr. Santiano: I can't be pinned down because back in 1949 and 1950 when Mr. Cronin employed me one summer, I did as well as Joe DeStefano is doing. Whether or not it should be under the direct jurisdiction of myself, I cannot say. For a month of being here, so far it is very efficient.

Councilman Stravato: Was this budget prepared by Mr. Hassett?

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Mr. Izzo: Yes, he put in that he wanted the crew, the Public Property Department wanted the crew.

Councilman Bradshaw: Do you think it was put in to hamstringing the former director?

Mr. Izzo: I say no. It was done because Mr. Conca was with Mr. Farina and he strongly felt these people should be working for him and he had better control over the people and the equipment doing the cutting of grass, etc.

Councilman Stravato: Ecen the Director of the Forestry Department has to direct himself to Mr. Farina.

Mr. Izzo: You will have Mr. Conca in here and you can pin the question to him.

Councilman Stravato: I think the personal services should be brought back to the Recreation Department in the interest and services of the people. I feel the Recreation Department should be restored as last year for the coming year.

Chairman Lynch states that can be taken up for consideration later.

Discussion ensues on the budget for a new city car and if the former Director had one, which he did.

Councilman McKiernan: You set up a cut off date as of yesterday, are you going through it now.

Mr. Santiano: I am in the middle of that.

Councilman Stravato: Are you going to hire back a lot from last year.

Mr. Santiano: At least 50%, it is very difficult to get lifeguards.

Councilman Stravato: Any new employees over and above last year.

Mr. Santiano: No.

Mr. Santiano is excused at this time.

Joseph Plante, City Forester joins the Committee at this time.

Councilman McKiernan: Are these the same people you had working for you before.

Mr. Plante: Yes, the twelve people. We were at eleven and picked up a Secretary which we never had before. She was in the Park Department under Mr. Hartman and has been working with Forestry for six years at the boathouse. When we moved to City Hall we absorbed here from the Park Department.

Councilman McKiernan: The \$65,000 is that for outside contract.

Mr. Plante: That is for the tree and stump removal. Last year it was \$75,000, this is a \$10,000 reduction because we plan to buy our own stump remover.

Councilman Stravato: Do you have that many dead trees?

Mr. Plante: I can go out in two weeks and absorb that money. I requested \$120,000, I got \$65,000. All I am doing

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is skimming the top and trying to keep the bare minimum amount of maintenance. This is better than the last twelve years. I was hoping with CETA, I would get money. In a City this size we should have to skyworkers, last year we were without a skyworker. Personnel is way down. We had 24 people twelve years ago when I started. We are down to ten, other than myself and my secretary.

Councilman Stravato: What is your job.

Mr. Plante: It entails the planting of new trees, removing of dead and diseased trees and stumps and maintaining existing trees.

Councilman Stravato: When I called your department previously, I was referred to Mr. Farina, why, is he relieving you of any duties.

Mr. Plante: Mr. Farina told me that any Councilmen that call to check a job, give Mide a memorandum of the results of the findings.

Councilman Stravato: Who makes the decision if the work is to be done.

Mr. Plante: Mr. Farina, he is my director. I am not happy because it makes my job difficult.

Councilman Stravato: Shouldn't the burden be directly on you.

Mr. Plante: Yes.

Councilman Garan: Your department was set up last year as a division of Public Parks, now you are under Public Property.

Mr. Plante: We are both under the Public Property Department

Councilman Stravato: Materials and Supplies, page 122, is that directly under your control.

Mr. Plante: Yes.

Councilman Bradshaw: Would you operate more efficiently down at the boathouse.

Mr. Plante: I have a letter I sent to Mr. Farina. I thought I would operate more efficiently if I went back to Public Works Department, and that way work hand in hand. I received no reply.

Councilman Stravato: When did you send the letter.

Mr. Plante: In February. We were no longer located in the Roger Williams Park building as it was demolished. We have equipment in the municipal garage and at 40 Ernest Street and in the Recreation Department. Fertilizer in one corner, chemical samples, also, it is hard to run the department.

Councilman Stravato: You should be allowed to give the service to the people, it is said you don't run your own department.

Mr. Plante: I am told in case of emergency to get out and do the job.

Councilman Garan: Who is the Clerk III in your office.

Mr. Plante: My Secretary.

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Councilman Garan: She handles quite a bit of responsibility, she is your assistant really.

Mr. Plante: Yes.

Councilman Garan: She was put in for a Clerk IV?

Mr. Plante: She is a single office girl, we have to work out for lunches together.

Councilman Garan: What are her duties?

Mr. Plante: She does all the clerical work, payroll, etc.

Councilman Garan: Does she take shorthand.

Mr. Plante: No. She takes in calls and writes up work orders. I think she should be a Clerk IV.

Councilman McKiernan: How are you set for trees.

Mr. Plante: We have more money than in the past. With \$3,000 we can plant forty trees. They go about \$70.00 each. There is a tree planting advisory committee for which you have to submit a letter indicating an entire street you want planted, not just one, and they study it. Under the tree fund, she says where the tree will be planted.

Councilman Bradshaw: What about revenue sharing funds.

Mr. Plante: I think the money we got to remove the dead trees and stumps came from revenue sharing.

I have two foremen and three tree trimmers. My foreman makes the same as tree trimmers. I brought this up to Mr. Farina and he told me to put it in the budget and it is not in here. The foremen will go back to tree trimming and I won't have any Foremen.

Mr. Plante speaks of his many duties such as consultant for the Planning and Urban Development Department for the last five or six years and never got paid for the duties.

Mr. Plante is excused at this time.

The following join the Committee: Frank Corrente, Department of Planning and Urban Development; Joseph Vilenos, Mayor's Administrative Assistant for Federal Programs and Lloyd T. Griffin, Director of Code Enforcement. (Mr. Bernstein is unable to attend the meeting)

Chairman Lynch: (to Mr. Corrente) Do you have any comments you wish to make about the budget submitted and the status, feel free to do so, otherwise we will proceed with questions.

Mr. Corrente: Bring to your attention that our budget simply reflects no personnel increases over the year before. No salary increases except the Union Contract and increases of ordinary increments employees are qualified for. There is an increased monthly traffic allowance for people using their car from \$40.00 to \$60.00 a month.

Councilman Stravato: You have on page 140, item 870, Renewal Inspector, 14 in that department, are these the Housing Inspectors under Mr. Griffin.

Mr. Corrente: Yes.

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Councilman Stravato: If they are working their forty hours a week, their salaries are underpaid. This is more or less a political plumb job - work two to three hours a day and then go on their own. If it doesn't go back to being a political job and they work their forty hours a week, they should be compensated more, in my opinion.

Mr. Corrente: They are signing in in the morning and they come back in the afternoon to sign up and Mr. Griffin is keeping a close look at them. He suggested that these pays be increased and it was brought to my attention that it would not be feasible.

Councilman Haxton: Do you have people working under CETA as Inspectors.

Mr. Griffin: Five.

Council President Haxton: As of January 6, how many people have you filled in these positions, or were they already filled.

Mr. Corrente: Eight positions, people that left or retired, there were only two vacancies at that time.

Council President Haxton: We had about ten or eight inspectors.

Mr. Griffin: The figure runs constant, the replacements are those people who resigned or became eligible for other jobs.

Mr. Corrente: Two positions since change of administration.

Councilman Stravato: How many renewal inspectors are there.

Mr. Griffin: Twelve of them.

Chairman Lynch: Are Ceta employes operating as inspectors included.

Mr. Griffin: None are operating, except one as an inspector. Others are clerical and one planner.

Councilman Bradshaw: Do you think you can operate more efficiently outside of City Hall.

Mr. Griffin: I have put in a request since the first month I was in to be put out of City Hall. We have close to forty people every morning. That question was posed by one of the restoration people that came in and wanted us under Mr. DiMase and I wanted to be able to function under that department. I am having problems with Planning and Urban Development because if I want a warrant signed I have to have Mr. Bernstein sign it, If I want anything typed up I have to get everything approved.

For a department that generates as much heat as this department does and is as sensitive as it is, I think the Chief or Director, should have at least the authority to sign his own warrants and decide what equipment he needs.

Councilman Stravato: Do you have everything accessible to you like you did when you took office? Was anything moved out from your jurisdiction?

Mr. Griffin: I just had a problem getting the typewriters and I don't know the reason.

Council President Haxton: You should be in the same building as Mr. DiMase.

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Mr. Griffin: I have no problems as to the building, so long as we have the space. I have a problem with the mentality and the amount of work going on over there. I would rather not have someone sit over me that will hinder me and are afraid of responding because something might happen.

Council President Haxton: This is the problem we are having. When we call you, you go look at it and you say that is not under you, that is under Mr. DiMase, do you think it wise to have one of his men go with yours?

Mr. Griffin: When we have a violation, a copy goes over to Mr. DiMase and it says the building is abandoned, or it has been burned or should it be secured. That passes the information onto them. I don't think you need two people to determine that. I don't see where it would be to anyones advantage to go under his department.

Discussion ensues as to monies and where it is charged to and relative to federal money.

Mr. Vilenos explains in detail how they have reduced the City's share and expenses.

Mr. Corrente states the total city's budget in his department is \$365,000, out of that \$280,000 is related to Code Enforcement, only \$84,000 - \$85,000 of the budget for Planning and Urban Development is utilized by that department.

Discussion ensues on convention money, and where it is found the budget increased.

The questions of hours the attorney is brought up and Mr. Corrente states the City comes out ahead by paying their attorneys, as it would cost more to hire one when needed.

Mr. Griffin: The Code Enforcement Board is based primarily on salaries and traveling. I think it should be taken out and made something on its own. It is a little to important, it is not merely just going out and inspecting buildings. There are many things involved in it.

Council President Haxton: Were you ever asked to recommend anything?

Mr. Griffin: I raised some of the questions with Corrente and my understanding is that when they could sit down to the budget, it was my understanding that it be included.

Mr. Corrente: Everything is status quot this year. No increases. He wanted increases in salaries and to move out of City Hall. He wanted a lot of things.

Council President Haxton: You saw fit to give some/your people more money.

Mr. Corrente: That is in the Union contract. I thought the Chiefs and the Deputy Directors deserved more money than the \$12.25. I had suggested that to the Mayor.

Discussion ensues as to Mr. Griffin's not being able to submit his own budget.

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Mr. Griffin: I have no way of really knowing this year what the budget should have been because the Chief never participated in it before. (He continues on giving his opinion)

Chairman Lynch questions as to whether or not facilities are available in the Planning and Urban Development Department and Mr. Corrente states there is.

Questioned by Councilman McKiernan as to how long it will be before that department is phased out and Mr. Corrente states five or six years.

Mr. Vilenos speaks on how long it will be before the projects will be completed but is of the opinion the City Council would not want the department phased out.

The gentlemen are excused at 4:50 o'clock P.M. and the Committee is in recess.

The meeting will reconvene at 7:00 o'clock P.M. this evening.

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The Committee on Finance reconvenes at 7:00 o'clock P.M. in the Conference Room, City Hall.

Present: Acting Chairman McKiernan and Councilmen Garan, Councilwoman Brassil, Councilmen Crowley, Stravato and Bradshaw.

Also present is Finance Director Izzo.

Acting Chairman McKiernan takes the Chair in the temporary absence of Chairman Lynch.

Rose M. Mendonca, Assistant Clerk.

Mr. Donald M. Capuano, City Assessor, is invited to appear before the Committee.

Acting Chairman McKiernan: Could you give us the current assessment figures, different categories of property and record of collections for the past three years?

Mr. Capuano: The National Automobile Dealers Association arrange prices on all motor vehicles in the City of Providence and most for the State of Rhode Island. An increase in assessment first has to be groomed with a great deal of caution. The used car market has jumped and the new car market has declined. Prices have gone up according to the National Automobile Dealers Association. Any increases above that have to be dealt with with caution because of the challenge with the Mayor of Cranston which has been taken to Court. This will have to be tested. We had to put it on the roll at a higher figure in the event it holds. The estimate was made on April 21st.

What is the latest figure? Mr. Capuano:
Acting Chairman McKiernan: The latest figure \$116,247,220, which represents over last years assessment, plus 23.4% which is a substantial increase over last year. We have responsibility to assess it and have used the recognized standard to assess it. We had no way of knowing those values were that high until Computer matched it with computer tapes. That figure might be subject to challenge.

Council President Haxton: What is the percentage difference?

Mr. Capuano: \$116,000,000 divided by 33.

Councilman McKiernan: The total valuation \$116,000,000 by 33 - 28% represents what?

Mr. Capuano: The increase over the assessment. On April 21st, all we did was estimate what the assessed value would be predicated on last years figures and in declining economy, I dropped it five points for the economy. Six months later, on the tape, it comes to \$116,000,000. There has to be something wrong and everyone checks and it is a trend, not only statewide, but the nation. It has to be done with caution undertaken.

Mr. Izzo: That is raw data tax assessments and abatements only.

Councilman Garan: Where would the money go?

Mr. Izzo: Probably, the schools.

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Councilman McKiernan: Do you have your figures ready. Last year on the \$88,000,000 valuation being placed on the automobiles, what did you collect.

Mr. Philip A. Pitassi: (City Collector) We don't break down automobiles separately, we use them in the whole group. When we get our tax, we get it by the total number, not by breakdown.

(There is no breakdown on tax collections by house or car tax)

Discussion ensues relative to taxes collected and exemptions and it is brought out that exemption credits are up 10.6% over last year.

Councilman McKiernan: Automobiles are up, what about real property?

Mr. Capuano: Land - \$149,963,100, which is a half of a percent decrease over last year. This is from the Redevelopment Agency and State taking over property. \$883,000 is what it comes to. The buildings or improvements for this year will be approximately percentage \$523,565,940 and last year \$513,093,640, an increase of 2.4% in the assessment of buildings in the area of taxable personal property this year - \$137,780,330. 14.8 increase - \$119,903,130.

The reason for the total personal property is we conducted a computer scan of accounts and business by business it spells out wherever we thought serious problems were - was 14.4% increase and that goes with Motor Vehicles - \$927,498,230 total assessing is up approximately 5.9%. Exemption credit is \$19,820,060 over last year that was \$17,913,980. Those credits are up 10.6%. It gives you a net of \$907,677,970 - last years was \$858,009,260. Manufacturer's machinery and equipment - each year would be 10%. I would like to point out the elderly exemptions; there are 1900 more elderly exemptions this year than last year. The total exemptions are \$19,820,060.

One other important deletion that will show up - the shredder, it is not likely we will collect and the railroad. The Board of Tax Assessment Review can abate taxes and we don't know what they will be.

Councilman McKiernan: Approximately, this year, what will the abatements be?

Mr. Izzo: \$500,000, that is an estimate. If we come in 90%, you will be doing good.

Councilman McKiernan: \$907,677---, total assessed valuation of the City of Providence.

Mr. Izzo, That is raw data, that could drop a few percentage points, as much as a couple of million dollars.

Councilman McKiernan: It is up 5.8% from last year, do you have the last three years.

Mr. Capuano: No, I don't have the figures here.

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Mr. Izzo: The percentage going back to 1972-1973 is 93.5% and 1974-1975 is 93%. Where we fair out is when we pick up these assessments that we don't know in February or March, that came back in May or June. If you look back - 93% of the total assessment of taxes, all we now have is 91%.

Councilman McKiernan: The total assessed valuations over the last three or four years is what I am trying to find out. For the last three years.

Mr. Izzo: I say it has not gone up very much.

Discussion ensues as Councilman McKiernan tries to determine what the true tax figures were and City Assessor Capuano leaves the Committee at this time, during the discussion.

City Collector Philip Pitassi is invited to appear before the Committee.

Councilman McKiernan: What have your collections been?

Mr. Pitassi: Mr. Capuano deals in valuation, we deal in dollars and cents. I don't have last years and this years to compare.

Councilman McKiernan: You estimate you are going to collect \$43,976,150,00

Mr. Pitassi: I didn't estimate that. Mr. Izzo set the estimate in on page three of the budget. I have no idea, Mr. Izzo states these are the figures. I can only guess in percentage.

Councilman McKiernan: \$43,976,150, which is 93% of the rate.

Mr. Pitassi: I figure we collect 92% of our adjusted --, which I think is the original taxroll means, with the railroad and shredder and garage deducted from the gross roll, I say 90%.

Councilman McKiernan: What is that in dollars?

Mr. Pitassi: Up to today the gross is \$42,380,915.

Mr. Izzo: We have one million six, we will not collect it in two weeks.

Mr. Pitassi: As far as percentage collection this year, the way I figure it out, it is approximately 90%. That is if you take the assessment for \$47,686,861.37 and make the deductions, that is not talking about abatements.

Councilman McKiernan: What are you expecting to get from what they didn't get last year.

Mr. Pitassi: \$2,000,000.

Mr. Izzo: It will be short one million three or one million 2. We are \$1,600,000 short right now.

Mr. Pitassi. We will collect about \$500,000 the rest of the month.

Councilman McKiernan: Going back to 1972, you collected 93.5%.

Mr. Izzo, That is what we said we were going to collect.

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Vincent DiFusco, Data Processing Coordinator: The actual figure collected was \$39,219,446.

Considerable discussion ensues relative to estimated and collected taxes for prior years.

At this point Chairman Lynch joins the Committee and takes the Chair.

More discussion ensues relative to past budgets, collections and estimated collections for the next fiscal year.

Messrs. Pitassi and DiFusco are excused at this time.

Ara B. Boghigian, Personnel Director, is invited to appear before the Committee:

Chairman Lynch: How many people have been hired in the City from November 6 to January 6th and from January 6th to now?

Mr. Boghigian: from November 6 to January 6, approximately 55 people.

MR. Boghigian

Council President Haxton: From January 6 to now?/approximately 126 people, excluding CETA people.

Council President Haxton: Are there any vacancies left in the Public Works Department?

Mr. Boghigian: The Supervisor of Environmental Control position is vacant. The administration that came in on the 6th of January put their staff together.

Chairman Lynch: Were they jobs that were not filled?

Mr. Boghigian: From January 1st to June, 126 people have been placed on jobs that were filled and some not filled.

Councilwoman Brassil: How many of the 55 hired between November and January were let go?

Mr. Boghigian: I don't know how many vacancies there were from November 6, 1974.

Discussion ensues as to jobs filled and unfilled during the period of time spoken about.

Mr. Izzo: Twenty-three jobs that were dismissed by the Mayor and new people hired.

Council President Haxton: On the garbage collection, how many are allowed on the garbage trucks, I have seen three men.

Mr. Boghigian: Yes, I believe under the contract, they had some problems with guys filling in, so the fourth guy would take the time off, let it be sick leave or whatever.

Council President Haxton: Sixty-three on the garbage trucks and seven spares. Three men on a truck with twenty-one routes is sixty-three men, with a spare of seven, is seventy; we have ninety in the budget.

Mr. Boghigian: All the people that have been put on up to the present are on the list. (He submits a list of hired employees to the members from November 6 to January 6 and from January 6 to this date.)

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I have not pinpointed the reasons for the hiring, I have twenty-two vacancies in the City as of today.

(The Committee members review the lists.)

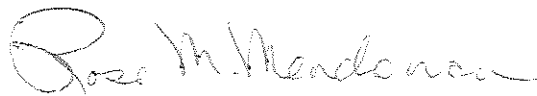
I also have a number of transfers from November 6th to January 6, 1975.

Councilman Lynch requests Mr. Boghigian have for the Committee members, Friday meeting, a list of vacancies that existed up until today, those hired from November 6th to January 6th, those transferred from November 6th to January 6th, a list of all positions that the administration has filled from January 6th to the present time.

The Chairman and members of the Committee also request a list from CETA relative to employees hired in each department.

The above information is to be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting.

On motion of Councilman McKiernan, seconded by Councilwoman Brassil, the Committee adjourns at 10:50 o'clock P.M. to meet again on Friday, June 13, 1975 for continuation of the hearings relative to the departments.



Assistant Clerk