

(EXHIBIT A)

JOHN CONSTANT, PRESIDENT  
SENIOR PROPERTY LOCAL 40  
APPRAISER ASSESSORS & APPRAISERS  
UNION  
AFSCME AFFILIATE

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Hearing on Proposed Budget for 2004

October 3, 2003

Back in October, 2001 I came before this Committee and tried to plead a case for full staffing as the Assessor's Office geared up for annual revaluations scheduled to begin in 2003. At that time I thanked Assessment Commissioner Mary Reavey for filling an approved appraiser position. At that time the Assessor's Office employed 33 appraisers.

Well, times have changed and there <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ no thanks <sup>to</sup> ~~as~~ expressed <sup>due to</sup> ~~within~~ the proposed 2004 budget for the Assessor's Office.

Now this proposed 2004 department budget cuts 5 currently vacant appraiser positions and 4 clerical positions – two of which are layoffs. In addition, one supervisory position has been cut.

This cut to the appraisal staff represents a 14% reduction from what should be considered as a fully staffed office. Under annual revaluations of the City this is narrow minded and shortsighted slashing. This makes no sense unless one is of the opinion that human beings with expertise in valuation work are less important in the process of assessing than computer models and automated number crunching.

The Assessor's Office 2004 budget write-up states that the reasoning for the appraiser cuts as well as the clerical cuts is due to internal reorganization. This is pure and simply a fabrication of the truth. Mary Reavey had openly stated to employees of the Assessor's Office that jobs would not be lost due to the reorganization; it was supposed to provide management with the flexibility to assign appraisers based on workload needs.

Another important point to understand as relates to the Assessor's Office Reorganization is that there was no tie in or connection with a cycle of annual revaluations of the City. Annual revaluations is a heavy additional burden and responsibility for the Assessor's Office.

You have heard this before but it is worth repeating under the circumstances. Extreme loss of positions has and will lower service delivery. We are already doing less inspections compared to the past. Past standards are and will be lowered to expedite completion of tasks within restricted timelines.

You might call it increased productivity and increased efficiency. Others with practical understanding can just as well call it reduction of quality or cutting corners. Adequacy of public service should be considered in addition to spending constraints. A balance should be determined by thoughtful people who have a broader understanding of what makes a community function. I'm hopeful that this Committee and the full Common Council are the "thoughtful people" – of course, I am not just talking about the Assessor's Office.

With that said, I would like to offer this Committee as well as the frugal Budget Office suggestions and alternatives to the excessive cuts in this 2004 proposed budget in hope that good sense can prevail.

Local 40 – AFSCME recommends:

- 1) **NO** administrative staff layoffs for the department – that's two positions of experienced clerical staff. I find it unconscionable for those layoffs even to be considered under the circumstances.
- 2) **If** annual revaluations of the City are needed and wanted than a full complement of appraisers should be required for adequate service to the public as well as internal customers. This means five vacant appraiser positions should be reinstated and filled in a timely manner.
- 3) **If** the budget problems over-ride all other considerations and the five vacant appraiser positions cannot be restored than reason and consistency with the Mayor's Budget Address should result in reversion back to a biennial revaluation cycle. In other words, if a department doesn't have adequate resources for service delivery than it makes sense to lengthen the period of the cycle.

I respectfully ask this Committee and the full Common Council to modify the 2004 Assessor's Office Budget. Thank you for listening and also for taking action so that reason can prevail for the good of employees as well as for helping this Department to ~~get back to providing~~ good service to the public.

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