Richard Bluestein may be Chicago's first podcasting star.

By Mike Seely

B ill Streeter wiped a stream of ill Streeter wiped a stream of sweat from his forehead as he pulled his maroon t-shirt over his head and turned toward the vice president of Podshow.com, a distribution network that's attempting to monetize home-brewed Internet broadcasts by attracting sponsors and, eventually, offering premium content. Curry is constantly smitten and soon added Yeast Radio to the Podshow roster. According to the network, the show has attracted more than 40,000 subscribers since it was picked up in early 2005; factoring in unique downloads and listeners to Podshow's channel on Sirius satellite radio—the same uncensored, pay-to-play network that's now home to Howard Stern—a monthly audience is likely to exceed 500,000. Richard Bluestein launched Yeast Radio from his Chicago living room in November 2004 with little but a microphone, streaming audio software, and a well-conceived persona.

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Richard Bluestein as Madge Weinstein, host of Yeast Radio
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A Million Here, a Million There... The City Council’s cut of the 2006 budget.

By Mick Dumke

A sense of good cheer pervaded the last City Council meeting before the holidays, on December 14, where the aldermen finished working on Mayor Daley’s 2006 city budget by making a few amendments and signing off on it 48 to 3. Fourth Ward alderman Toni Preckwinkle was the sole nay vote; the 33rd Ward’s Richard Mell was absent.

Some aldermen, led by the Ninth Ward’s Anthony Beale, would still like to add another nickel to the budget’s 20-cent hike in cigarette taxes to cover the salaries of an additional staff member for each ward. Beale says his office receives around 100,000 constituent phone calls each year. “The job of alderman has really evolved over the years,” he says. “We now have e-mail and faxes. We use to hire more staff. Tom Allen, the alderman of the 38th Ward and chairman of the committee on transportation and the public way, says the chairmen like having a lump sum for hiring because they need “flexibility.”

Number of council staffers who reviewed the 2005 (and the 2006) budget: 2

Number of legislative aides listed in payroll records in 2005: 290

Number of salaried legislative aides listed in payroll records in 2005: 8

Top salary for legislative aides listed in payroll records in 2005: $78,828

The responsibilities of and funding for the council’s legislative committees, some of which have been consolidated, are also wide-ranging.

Number of committees in 2006: 19

Number of committees in 2005: 2

Number of legislative assistants listed in payroll records in 2005: 8

2006 budget for the finance committee: $106,572

Staff titles don’t always explain what the people who hold them do.

Legislative aides for one alderman or committee may help research or even draft ordinances; other aides are essentially administrative or clerical assistants. (Most of them are paid under the “personal services” line item.) One of the longest titles is assistant council committee secretary in charge of committee rooms. “They do a variety of different things for the entire City Council,” says Schulter.

Number of assistant council committee secretaries in charge of committee rooms: 2

Salaries for assistant council committee secretaries in charge of committee rooms: $57,036 and $61,189

Number of legislative aides listed in the 2005 (and the 2006) budget: 2

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Number of committees in 2006: 19

Number of committees in 2005: 2

Number in 1990: 27

Percent increase in funding for committee staffing and expenses since 1990: 61

2006 budget for the finance committee, the council’s biggest:

continued on page 14