



Joint Meeting of the City Council Committees on Community Resources and Legislative Matters and the Northampton City Council

Community Resources Committee Members:

*Chair: Councilor Gina Louise Sciarra
Vice-Chair: Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell
Councilor Alisa F. Klein
Councilor James Nash*

Legislative Matters Committee Members:

*Chair: Councilor William H. Dwight
Vice Chair: Councilor David Murphy
Councilor Maureen T. Carney
Councilor Alisa F. Klein*

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 13, 2018

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: City Council Office, 210 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call.** At 7 p.m. Councilor Dwight called the joint meeting to order. **Legislative Matters Committee Roll Call:** Present on roll call were Councilors William Dwight, David Murphy, Maureen Carney and Alisa F. Klein.

2. **Community Resources Committee Roll Call:** Present on roll call were Councilors Gina-Louise Sciarra, Alisa F. Klein and James Nash. Councilor Dennis Bidwell was absent.

Also present was Northampton Housing Authority Executive Director Cara Clifford, Northampton Housing Authority Commissioner Jeff Jones and Tenant-Commissioner Emily Laufer, Northampton Housing Partnership members Julio Alves and Patrick Boughan, Councilor Marianne LaBarge and Council President Ryan R. O'Donnell.

3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**

Councilor Dwight announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded for broadcast by Northampton Community Television (NCT).

4. **Public Comment**

Although people were present for the public forum, there was no public comment of a general nature unrelated to the forum.

5. **Community Forum on Proposal to Expand Tenant Membership of the Northampton Housing Authority**

A. 18.142 An Order to Strengthen Democratic Representation in the Northampton Housing Authority - referred to CR and LM, 8/16/2018

This is the second public forum that has been held on the order; the first being on October 24, 2018, Community Resources Committee Chair Gina-Louise Sciarra reported. As at the last meeting, they will allow the order's sponsor – Council President Ryan O'Donnell - to give a brief presentation. She noted that the order has been amended so she asked Councilor O'Donnell to present the amendment

The order asks the legislature to pass legislation through the home rule process to modify the structure of the Northampton Housing Authority (NHA) governing board, Councilor O'Donnell explained. As originally introduced, the proposal had two policy objectives – to increase tenant representation on the board and to allow tenants to choose those representatives through an election.

Both of these goals were part of his overall belief in the need to increase accountability and democracy in the housing authority. The housing authority's own mission statement says it best when it declares its aspiration to “hold ourselves and each other accountable.” As a practical matter, no governing body can be expected to be given its due automatically, it must actively exercise its power of oversight, engage the people to whom it delegates authority and demand to be consulted when it believes it has a role in oversight. When there are problems, it has to take responsibility for those problems. If it doesn't do these things, the governing board is ultimately going to lose influence and effectiveness. He believes the formal inclusion of more tenants and housing advocates as commissioners would support the governing board in its effort to be more involved, vigilant and focused on the central needs of the residents of public housing due to their natural direct experience as tenants and ties to the community. Stronger connections with tenants are just going to make the board work better, he suggested.

While it tries to improve its connection to tenants, the housing authority also needs stronger connection to the city and its democratic institutions. The housing authority is actually larger than some small towns in Massachusetts. In some ways it is really its own city but today that city is isolated - cut off legally and socially in many ways from the government and civic life of the wider community.

In contrast, Northampton is about to embark on a year-long review of its charter; a process to evaluate itself and recommend reforms if necessary. That is never done for the housing authority, but it should be. The tenants of the housing authority deserve some thought on their part about reforms that could help them.

Councilor O'Donnell reviewed the proposed amendment that he was asking Legislative Matters to adopt. Originally, the proposal would have added six tenant-commissioners to an existing five-member board. The City Council set up a public process for review of the proposal consisting of two public meetings and two public forums, and this process entailed conversations with the Mayor, City Solicitor, tenants themselves, legal experts, housing advocates, housing authority representatives, Northampton's incoming state legislative representatives and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the agency that oversees public housing among other things.

After listening to all opinions and concerns, he approached Mayor Narkewicz and together they collaborated to arrive at a mutually-agreed upon revision that he believes crucially can secure the necessary political support to succeed in Northampton and stand a better chance in the legislature – this while pursuing the reform objectives described. He stands by this revision, which he asks to be adopted and which he believes will make a big difference. If enacted by the legislature, the NHA would expand from five to seven members. This would include a minimum of two tenant members as opposed to the one

tenant-commissioner that is required to be a member today. It would also add one housing advocate from the Northampton Housing Partnership, the city board charged with pursuing affordable and fair housing in Northampton. These would be appointed by the Mayor and would be subject to City Council approval as all appointments are. In addition to the people that reside in units directly owned and operated by the housing authority, Northampton residents who receive a rental subsidy through a voucher program would also qualify to be one of the tenant-commissioners. The result would be a board of a size on a par with other jurisdictions in the country with a greater capacity for subcommittee work, resident services, etc.

The tenant-commissioners would be well-positioned to forge a stronger connection to the residents of public housing and, hopefully, they would facilitate the creation of a resident advisory board and flourishing tenant associations across Northampton. The housing advocate would be well-positioned to forge an equally strong relationship with the City of Northampton and its overall efforts to fight for affordable housing.

Ever since he was the councilor from Ward 3 and worked at the Walter Salvo House he has been puzzling about what they could do to address some of the concerns they would want addressed if they lived in public housing. He thinks this is a meaningful reform and he looks forward to the comments tonight from the public and his fellow councilors, he concluded.

Councilors received three letters from members of the public which have been shared with the committees, Councilor Sciarra related. She read aloud letters from Ella Smolenski and Kimberley Rogers and stated that she would refrain from reading the third letter due to privacy concerns.

Councilor Dwight read aloud a memo from City Solicitor Alan Seewald dated October 16, 2018 re: Home Rule Procedures and also read a memo from Amy Stitely of DHCD re: DHCD Comments on Proposed Northampton City Council Legislation – 10/10/18.

Councilor Sciarra read the text of the amended order into the record.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kenneth Richard Pratt, a Salvo House resident for over a year, said he has watched the place go 'down and down and down into the sewer.' They have a lot of problems of all kinds at Salvo House, he shared. He has been assaulted by a deadly weapon. (The case was handled by the district court – NHA did not take care of it, he reported.) He believes the intention of 18.142 is correct; he agrees that communication between residents and the authority needs to be formally improved. However, he questions the means. To use an agrarian metaphor, "We have a situation here where the fox will be guarding the hen house if the authority is allowed to run whatever elections do take place," he asserted.

Residents of Salvo House are not used to speaking up; they have been beaten down, he contended. He doesn't think the authority is intentionally doing this, they are just typical bureaucrats, not listening to people. If they are one day late with the rent, they will listen; if they have people crashing out, overdosing in the newly-commemorated Budgar room, no action is taken. Something needs to be done to protect the residents. He is in favor of 18.142 if it really does represent the people's wishes.

Roy C. Martin of 81 Conz Street, Apt. 529, said he was in favor of the proposal when it said there would be six additional tenants; one from each place. The reason he was in favor is that since Cara Clifford became the director, she has taken away tenant association after tenant association and has taken money

that was supposed to go to the tenant associations and given it to the service coordinator, Lynne King. She has taken everything away from the people. She lies her way through a meeting, and "people eat it up."

"We need representation," he agreed, noting that means they need one person from each building to go to the board meetings and sit down with them and say 'this is what's going on.'

'We try,' he asserted. He talks to Gerry Budgar once in a while. They commemorated a room for Gerry's parents, who did a lot for the Salvo House. People are making a mess there; the rugs are filthy and the rugs in the hallway are filthy. A door closer is broken and the door stays wide open. He reported this to the office today and was told he needed to call in the complaint. However, if they call in at night or around a holiday, they get no coverage.

He was former president of the tenant association. When he was president, it was strong; almost like a union. People would have parties; they also had commitment from the office. When John Hite was there, "we had good commitment." They could call him up at home and he would be there in 15 minutes no matter what time of day or night.

Right now they have to deal with Cara, and "Cara is two-faced," he alleged.

The Mayor did not reappoint one member because he had spoken up to Clifford on a couple of things. Who's doing what? He asked rhetorically. Are Cara and the Mayor working together? He asked. If the Mayor appoints people, how do they know they're going to get representation?

"The place is getting like the old wild west," he observed. They don't get police reports when there are disturbances there, he added.

The amendment leaves them "without representation," unlike the original order. The sponsor figured the City Council wasn't going to vote for it so he changed it around, Mr. Martin charged. "Now there's no balls to it whatsoever," he claimed.

Tom Burton of Salvo House commented that, as the proposal was originally designed, it was a minimalist approach. Electing people is the core to this because it is giving people within the community power, he stressed. With the air conditioner issue, they had nobody to turn to. Representation on Beacon Hill had been eliminated and the Mayor said it wasn't his bailiwick; finally it went to the District Attorney. Fortunately, what fixed it was Councilor LaBarge showing up at a meeting. There was a lot of ballyhoo about it in the newspaper and they were able to get it rescinded.

He would think that a democratic process where tenants have people to represent them from their community would be a better way to do it than having appointments by a Mayor who is 'indifferent to that population, obviously.'

Board members have no accountability to anybody, he continued. To have additional members appointed by the Mayor doesn't really solve the problem "because the Mayor is part of the problem," he claimed. He has lived there for five years and he's never seen him there. It is a very critical situation. The people in the housing authority have to make their own decision about who represents them. To him, this is critical. Having Mayor Narkewicz do it will lead to the same disaster they have now. He acknowledged that there

may be some things they have to work through. Democracies are more time-consuming than a dictatorship, he pointed out.

The most important part of this legislation as it was originally promulgated is that people would be elected, he reiterated. In reality, they should all be elected.

Julio Alves of 35 Fort Hill Terrace identified himself as a member of the Northampton Housing Partnership but said he was speaking on his own behalf. He is here to speak in support of the expansion of tenant membership in the NHA, he volunteered. He thinks the current proposal in its amended form is much too modest, but if that's what they have to work with, then he urged them to support it. He thinks all agree that fair election and representation is a fundamental right. He was very surprised to learn that residents had such little representation. He thinks representation is essential because no one knows the needs and issues of the buildings like the tenants do. It has become clear that without tenant representation they will not be able to hear the diversity of voices they need to hear.

He hears a lot of frustration and has been hearing a lot of frustration among the tenants for a long time. It is not just an issue of fairness; it is also a matter of expediency; if things are really going to change, they have to hear from the people who are most affected.

Jeff Jones of 76 Woods Road said he is chairman of the board of the NHA but is not speaking for the board; only for himself. He has no idea whether other members have voiced their opinion or come to the prior meeting, he said. He was never consulted for the first proposal nor to his knowledge was anybody else on the board. He read about this second proposal in this morning's Gazette and found out about the first when a newspaper reporter called him on the phone.

He is very sensitive to the tenants' situation. He is the representative of organized labor that is mandated to be on the board. Right now, of five people, they have two tenants as the governor's appointee is also a tenant. In his opinion, two out of five members is sufficient representation to get across the tenant's point of view to the executive director.

His goal has been to activate the tenant associations. Recently, Hampshire Heights formed its tenant association and was recognized by the NHA. Salvo House and McDonald House at one time had tenant associations but these have since dissolved. His vision to get this started is to have functioning tenant associations to bring those issues forward to the NHA.

If you look at its definition, the housing authority is a quasi-governmental agency. The NHA is not a department of the city. Basically, he thinks there are bumps in the road but he does think they are getting the job done. They have a grievance process in the bylaws for tenants to go through. Instead what they're getting is tenants calling the City Council and calling the Gazette; they don't go through the grievance process. One of the things he's tried to do as chair is to have ample time for tenant issues. He tries to have time for tenant issues and, recently, with the air conditioner fiasco, they had a public comment period. The current board is committed to making the NHA bigger and better than it has been and to moving forward.

Edgardo Cancel of 19D Hampshire Heights said he can't help but be extremely frustrated after hearing this man talk. He has been going to all the NHA board meetings for the last couple of years and has been consistently shut down and consistently told to shut up and consistently interrupted by the executive director when he is trying to make a point.

"We need representation," he insisted. "Nobody was consulted about this," but he is glad somebody took the initiative to think about people whose rights are being violated on a daily basis and whose properties are deteriorating on a daily basis. He is really grateful somebody took the initiative to put the proposal forward. No, he's not crazy about the amendment, he would really like six members of the housing authority but he also doesn't think that that proposal is going to go anywhere. He reached out to many people and none of them think it's going to go anywhere. The current amendment is much more realistic and would at least give them one more representative of the housing authority and an advocate from the housing partnership.

To come here and hear the chairman of the housing authority say they're doing a good job is really frustrating, because they're not doing a good job. An election might work because residents are so disenfranchised that they have no faith in the city, no faith in their leaders and no faith in the Mayor because this has been happening for a long time. An election might not work because people might not come out because they might think 'why?'

He thanked Councilor O'Donnell for the original proposal and for the amendment because, "I feel like it's something and we're getting somewhere here." But there are a lot of problems. "We need to do something as a community; we need to come together," he urged.

The new person on the housing authority is not from Florence Heights, she's from Hampshire Heights - his neighbor Emily. They have a lot of cool things going on at Hampshire Heights, but no one from the housing authority is supporting them, he maintained. There is nobody supporting Florence Heights and there's no representation there. We've been working hard to have somebody with a voice and we finally have somebody in there. He said he didn't know if the amendment was going to cut it, but he pleaded with them as the City Council to continue to think about them. There are a lot of things that are going wrong and they're being consistently shut down.

"Grievance process? Nobody knows about that," he retorted. When tenants try to go through the proper process, they keep getting shut down. There is no resident advisory board, but, "I want to be on it," he stated.

Elizabeth Humphrey of 293 Prospect Street said she is not a resident of public housing, but after she heard one of the board members use the excuse of 'quasi-government.' telling her there's nothing they can do because they're in between government and private, she was compelled to respond. This is a huge problem which is coming up all over Massachusetts, she reported.

One of the candidates for state Auditor - Judge Stamos - made working toward abolishing quasi-government part of his platform because it is so easily corrupted and subject to money mismanagement. She highly resents the fact that someone is using this status to tell her that she can't help people in the town she lives in. She hopes this passes and really appreciates the effort Councilor O'Donnell has put into this.

Councilor Dwight reminded speakers to refer their remarks to the committee and not to people in the audience.

Patrick Boughan of 95 Straw Avenue, another member of the housing partnership, thanked Councilor O'Donnell for putting this proposal forward. He found out about the second version in the newspaper. As far

as the first proposal, he really liked that it was elected. In following school reforms, one thing that comes up is that, when schools close, participation in democracy generally goes down because school committees are a path for people to be elected for the first time. Participation in the housing authority would be a path into state government in the same fashion, he suggested. But even as an appointed board, he thinks it would be a step forward. He understands from the solicitor's memo and comments from DHCD why the sponsor switched from elected to appointed. He asked Councilor O'Donnell why he went from six to two?

It is a political compromise, Councilor O'Donnell acknowledged. When he put forward the original proposal, he believed in it, and he thinks doing it that way is possible. There are many other jurisdictions in the United States that have greater tenant representation on their boards and that elect tenants, he noted. Washington D.C has an 11 person board and three of them are tenants. Federal law establishes housing authorities on a federal basis. . . there are a wide number of models.

To change this takes political will at the local level and the state level. He has talked to the new state representatives and has full confidence that they will be supportive. The decisions made about the number and the election were purely political decisions. It doesn't do any good at the end of the day to fight a losing battle if it doesn't end up with any progress. "I want to see progress in this area. I'm not always good at getting votes but I'm pretty good at counting them and I made a compromise that I feel will be pretty successful in Northampton," he shared. "My answer is that this is a proposal that can pass," he concluded.

Mr. Boughan said he likes the purist proposal best, but he'd like to see progress as well so he supports the amendment. It would probably be most effective if members could be from larger communities instead of smaller sites. As a member of the housing partnership, he is interested in housing authority residents. They have talked about cross posting to bring the city's involvement with the housing authority closer in.

Elizabeth Boughan of 95 Straw Avenue said two things struck her as she was listening. When they're deciding what's worth nudging the state about, most people on the City Council are homeowners. She wants them to stop and think about what it would be like to be a renter and not to have a choice to decide to move. "You're stuck," she observed. "If you piss somebody off, you're stuck."

It is a very specific situation that's very specific to public housing - wanting to advocate for yourself and being afraid to. Regardless of what goes forward, the City Council needs to think really hard about the culture there. People who live in public housing are citizens of Northampton and she thinks they can be more proactive about representing those voices. If they can't have elections (and she is strongly in favor of elections, she confirmed), having some mechanism for people within public housing to make some sort of recommendations might make people more trusting of the outcome, she suggested. One problem is people really feeling that their trust is betrayed.

Emily Laufer of 10B Hampshire Heights said she is a member of the NHA but speaking on her own behalf. She has total imposter syndrome when comes to being on the NHA board, she confessed. If there were even two more people who were residents or who came from somewhere similar to her she would feel so much stronger serving the community. She voiced the perception that low income properties in Northampton are already disregarded by the city in general. She feels she would be disregarded in many of her opinions but feels like if they had just two more it would make a big difference in starting to be recognized in the greater community.

A woman who identified herself as 'Jane Doe' asked the committee chair to read her letter aloud. She asked not to be publicly identified because she is a victim of domestic violence and her security is at risk.

Councilor Sciarra reminded her that the meeting is being audio and video recorded. She said she would keep her identity as Jane Doe. She proceeded to read aloud her letter.

The sponsor has made some changes to the draft, Ms. Doe noted. The thing that's not there is inclusion of voucher participants in the surrounding towns. The housing authority is still responsible for them. HCVP holders need to be represented and it is important to understand the issues they face. She said she couldn't figure out how an election could be legally conducted since the housing authority can't release the addresses of voucher recipients to the public.

She feels like everybody's screaming at each other, Ms. Doe lamented. They have a fabulous new executive director and they are about to send the fabulous four to Beacon Hill. She feels like they should rally around the director and support her. It doesn't feel safe so she is really hoping they can fix this soon. DHCD is the entity people should appeal to.

She hopes what she wrote is clear and that perhaps they can have commissioners that don't scream at the executive director. She understands that's what is supposed to happen. She doesn't understand why everybody is fighting and pointing the finger. She feels like the executive director is really in a difficult position because of this and it's hard for her to execute her responsibilities.

People are starving, she continued. She expressed the opinion that, "it's a luxury to have air conditioners." She thinks there are broader things to think about and it concerns her. She thinks they need to support Ms. Clifford as the executive director. She attended a meeting last month and tried to advocate for civility. There are 1,200 voucher holders and only half that number living in public housing. They have different needs; they are completely different, yet the NHA is responsible for them. There is a lot of funding at stake. "A lot of people have their eyes on us," she cautioned.

Even the second revised draft does not provide an opportunity for those who reside in surrounding towns but whose vouchers are administered by the NHA. They have issues; they're concerned about vouchers at the federal level. The housing authority is responsible for managing those people's relationships with landlords. "Someone needs to fix this," she admonished.

It's not that we need six people that are tenants on the board; we need talent on the board, Jane Doe opined. This 'old boy's network' that people are talking about, it's over . . . it's over, she asserted. She watched a commissioner screaming at the executive director and she was shaking. She wondered how the new member must feel.

"I risked a lot to talk, but I'm so passionate about this; it means so much," she concluded. She said she doesn't think it's finished.

Councilor O'Donnell said he wanted to recognize the importance of the speaker's comments. For the record, no privacy or confidentiality laws will be abridged or changed as a result of anything in the order, he assured. Even if an election piece were part of this that wouldn't have been the case. It is true that of the roughly 2,200 people that receive housing assistance, most are recipients of federal and state housing programs and he agrees that these are very important constituencies to represent. The amended version

allows a member to be an HCVP recipient. He is flexible on the point of whether voucher holders who are not Northampton residents could be candidates.

"The privacy and confidentiality piece is not going to change in any way," he stressed.

Senator-elect Jo Comerford said she was here to speak in strong support and on behalf of Councilor O'Donnell. She had something prepared to say but when she heard Emily Laufer, her comments captured the heart of what they're trying to say. "We need more voices to support tenants." It means a tenant is not alone, he or she has sustained support. She is in strong support of this and is in strong support of the leadership here in Northampton. She is grateful for these hearings. She would be very excited to work with Councilor O'Donnell should the City Council pull it forward at the state level.

There being no further public comment, Councilor Sciarra thanked the audience for coming to the public forum.

Members proceeded to deliberate.

Councilor Carney thanked everybody who came out, especially the two housing authority board members. She thanked them for their service, noting that she also served for many years on the NHA and was Commissioner Jones' predecessor as the labor representative from Northampton. Of the four mayoral appointments one is required to be a representative of organized labor, she reminded. According to Commissioner Jones, the governor's representative is presently a tenant. She also served on the housing partnership, so she thanked those members for their participation.

She had some difficulty with the original version of the proposal and can definitely understand why Councilor O'Donnell may have amended it to a version that has much more chance of not only passing the City Council but also passing the general court, given that Northampton would be the first city to introduce anything like this. She commended Councilor O'Donnell for his initiative. She appreciated the comments about civility and hoped that would be possible. She has been involved in Ward 1 with some tenant activities with Mr. Cancel. There is a lot of education work that has to happen. We as City Councilors can help people understand as our constituents that there is a grievance procedure, she suggested.

She appreciates that the change will actually lead to Northampton's housing authority in its present configuration having three tenant representatives since there are two now and this would be a third. There would always be at least two and she thinks two would be an appropriate number. "I am in support of this," she confirmed.

Councilor Murphy asked Councilor O'Donnell if he had reached out to any of the commissioners or staff at the housing authority before drafting the original order.

Councilor O'Donnell said he had not.

Councilor Murphy asked if had spoken to them since.

He set up a public process and invited members of the housing authority and staff to participate, Councilor O'Donnell responded. At the last meeting, one member of board and the executive director attended.

Councilor Murphy asked how many of the other members spoke individually to commissioners about their feelings about the existing structure. He spoke to Marilyn Richards and Gerry Budgar, and they said they would appreciate additional members who had the skill set to assist and advise them, he related. They said it would be helpful if the appointing authority would seek out individuals with skill sets that would be helpful to them.

NHA board members supervise the executive director, and the two noted that the air conditioner policy was not brought before the board. He is disappointed that they were not contacted before the original draft was made. He would be upset if someone jumped on his public body without contacting him first. He does think he can support the version that is before them now. He is also a former member of the housing partnership and has been involved in the property business for a long time and personally manages property. It is harder dealing publicly than dealing privately, he suggested. He would encourage commissioners to let the Mayor know what kind of skills they would like board members to have. He thanked Councilor O'Donnell for updating the order.

Councilor O'Donnell said he thinks it is important to understand what the housing authority board is. There is a tendency to believe they are somehow an advisory and an oversight board. They are the governing body, he stressed. The executive director only has authority because it is delegated to her by the board. Air conditioners were put in without consulting the housing authority board. The housing authority has the responsibility to create a political environment where they demand to be consulted, he maintained. It is also important to have incentives aligned so that tenants will demand that the housing authority function in a healthy way. If they have tenants and housing advocates, those housing boards are more likely to succeed.

Councilor Dwight asked Councilor Murphy if board members had an objection to the proposal.

No, their objection was that they hadn't been consulted, Councilor Murphy said. They didn't object to tenant representation; they mentioned that they now have 40% tenant representation. They objected to the initial version which more than doubled the size of the housing authority as they felt it would be sort of unwieldy. They said they wouldn't necessarily mind more members but wanted members with skill sets that they would find useful for decision making, be it an attorney or someone with property management experience. He thinks they objected to six people from the tenant base that wouldn't bring the skills that they needed, he clarified.

As far as managing property or providing services for tenants, he imagines that's a skill set that tenant representatives would bring, Councilor Dwight rejoined. He referred to etic and emic perspectives, explaining that these mean two different views - one from outside and one from within the culture. The initial proposal actually had him pretty excited, but he also recognized and acknowledged that it was pushing a very big rock up a very steep hill with the only impact being a lot of people getting crushed and their hopes and dreams dashed.

The compromise actually does get that rock further up the hill. It was very encouraging to hear the senator-elect's comments, he noted. She will be introducing this to a body whose constituency they don't know. Part of the frustration from all of this is that there are so many divisions here. Part of the frustration tenants have expressed with the City Council's response is that their authority is rather limited. There is a difference in elected representation; there is authority and then there is influence. There is a cultural attitude of division where people living in public housing are somehow thought to be beholden to the rest of them. They are expected to make accommodations based on the theory that society is doing them a favor. It's

been a grotesque cultural phenomenon that's been aggravated and expanded in recent years. He is excited about a little pushback from a community that will be making an unprecedented request. Councilor O'Donnell has had the courage to give it a try and say, "Let's see what we can do." He is excited to support any portion of this, he volunteered.

He understands that, as elected officials, there are a lot of assumptions about what they can and cannot do. It's a structural problem and a cultural problem and he's grateful that the councilor has invested the energy. "I hope it's not quixotic. I'd like to see this move forward," he concluded.

Councilor Murphy said he wanted to object to the assumption that there's something unique about coming from within public housing. Every issue that someone brought up today is something that one of his tenants would have brought up. The concept that there are different expectations from people in public housing is inaccurate. Everyone wants the same thing: a clean, safe place where things work, he asserted. They want their unit to be safe; they want their complex to be safe, they want to be treated with respect and when they call the administration they want service. He doesn't think they want to stigmatize public housing residents by saying they're a little bit different. He thinks it is important not to make distinctions.

There is in fact a distinction between public housing and landlords, Councilor Dwight pointed out. There is a culture they've heard testified to tonight that makes it more challenging to have problems addressed. That's what he's speaking about.

Councilor Klein added that, in the commercial housing market, a person can walk away from a place where the landlord is not serving his or her needs. If someone has enough money to find a place on the open market, he or she has enough money to find another place on the open market. There are people who can't necessarily walk away from a situation that is not serving them fairly. There are particular demands to listening to people in public housing. It is quite different from people who can pay market prices.

She thanked those who spoke, acknowledging there's some fear in speaking out about what's not going right in public housing. It is very much appreciated because it takes courage. She thanked Councilor O'Donnell as well for what she termed a noble proposal. "I think the values and ethics behind it are really important," she observed. She supported the initial proposal and is frankly disappointed because the concept of 'nothing about us without us' is really central to her personal values. She thinks people should have a voice, but she also has served long enough on the City Council to understand that you have to be a realist about what is needed to move something forward. The piece that is pretty disappointing to her is not seeing this as an elected office. They all have the privilege and the voice to select those who represent them and she thinks people in public housing should have the same privilege.

She doesn't think it is mutually exclusive to support Ms. Clifford and the housing authority board and also to support tenants, Councilor Klein continued. She doesn't think it has to be a battle or a demonization of the people on the board and the executive director. But she thinks they have to be accountable and one of the ways to ensure that is to have strong tenant representation and interweaving on that board.

She takes exception to the call for talented people as preferable to having more tenant representation. Again, she doesn't think those have to be mutually exclusive. It feels rather denigrating to assume people have to be lawyers or businessmen to bring those skills to the housing board. Yes, you need talents and skills but you need experiences. You need to know what's going on in the homes and in the communities in

order to be able to respond and to correct and address issues. She reiterated how important it is to her to insure tenants have as much representation as possible.

She asked Ms. Doe a question to clarify why elections wouldn't be a possibility for HCVP voucher holders.

They would put her at risk of having her address disclosed, Ms. Doe replied.

Councilor Klein said she thinks an election is possible but that appointments could be used for people who are voucher holders.

To campaign a candidate would need 1,200 private addresses of voucher holders, Ms. Doe replied. Ms. Clifford can't disclose those.

Councilor O'Donnell reiterated that they are not disclosing any information that they are not allowed to disclose. He mentioned the possibility of having a hybrid model with some appointed and some elected members.

What he would envision for the housing authority would be 'layers,' he elaborated. He would like to have more tenants on board but he would also like resident advisory boards and building-based tenant associations. He envisions this as pretty rich.

Councilor Nash thanked Councilor O'Donnell for bringing this forward. He thinks the most important thing about both versions has been the discussion they're having right now. He also thanked those who spoke. He echoed something Jane Doe said earlier; i.e. - that they all need to get on the same page. There's a lot of work to be done and a lot of distrust, as well as a lack of funding. "We need voices;" he agreed, adding that an advisory board would be terrific. "I think it would be a good first step for all of us just to trust each other and move forward and realize there's a lot of work to do."

He is going to support the order, he confirmed.

Councilor Sciarra echoed her thanks to everyone for coming. She too was in favor of the first version and sort of stubbornly in each meeting asked if there was a way they could have even more representation and a way each property could have representation. It is disappointing to her that they are moving away from that. She wasn't sure that the will wasn't with the council but she didn't have high hopes for it when it went to Boston. She wants to move the ball forward and so will support this. She is thankful for the strong voice she heard tonight for people in the voucher program and mindful of the complications that were expressed. She would like them to be elected but is thankful they are moving this forward.

Community Resources Committee Vote

Councilor Nash moved to send order 18.142 forward with a positive recommendation. Councilor Klein seconded. Councilor Sciarra clarified that this is the amended version. The motion passed with 3 Yes, 0 No on a roll call vote with Councilors Klein, Nash and Sciarra voting affirmatively. (Bidwell absent.)

Legislative Matters Committee Vote

Councilor Carney moved to forward the order to the full council with a positive recommendation as amended. Councilor Klein seconded.

Councilor O'Donnell pointed out two small clerical errors. There should be a comma after the word "Ordered" and a semicolon at the end of the paragraph after the word 'petition.' The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote with Councilors Dwight, Murphy, Carney and Klein voting affirmatively.

6. **Adjourn Legislative Matters/Community Resources Continue Meeting to Take up New Business**

Councilor Klein/moved to adjourn the Legislative Matters Committee meeting. Councilor Carney seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0. Legislative Matters was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

The Community Resources Committee took a brief recess and reconvened at 9:28 p.m.

7. **New Business**

A. **Minutes of October 24, 2018 Community Resources Meeting**

Councilor Klein moved to approve the minutes of October 24, 2018. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 (Bidwell absent).

B. **Discussion of Drafting Letter/Meeting Request to President of Columbia Gas**

Members discussed a draft letter to Stephen Bryant, the President of Columbia Gas, requesting that he attend a meeting to address questions about natural gas service and consumption in Northampton.

Members made a number of additions and corrections to the draft, after which Councilor Nash read the final version aloud. They decided to ask Mr. Bryant to attend the regular meeting on January 28, 2019.

Councilor Nash moved to accept his letter and authorize Councilor Sciarra to send it to Mr. Bryant. Councilor Klein seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0.

8. **Adjourn.** At 9:58 p.m., Councilor Klein moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Nash seconded. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No.

Prepared By:

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EXHIBIT A

List of Documents Reviewed at November 13, 2018 Joint Meeting of Community Resources/Legislative Matters:

1. E-mail from Ella Smolenski dated October 27, 2018
2. E-mail from Kimberley Rogers dated November 1, 2018
3. E-mail from 'Jane Doe' dated November 4, 2018
4. Memorandum from City Solicitor Alan Seewald to William H. Dwight, Chair, Committee on Legislative Matters and Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair, Committee on Community Resources dated October 16, 2018 re: Home Rule Procedures.
5. Memo from Amy Stitely, DHCD to Councilor Ryan O'Donnell dated October 10, 2018 re: DHCD Comments on Proposed Northampton City Council Legislation – 10/10/18.
6. 18.142 An Order to Strengthen Democratic Representation in the Northampton Housing Authority
7. 18.142 An Order to Strengthen Democratic Representation in the Northampton Housing Authority - AMENDED