

Committee Report on a Legislative Matter

Report Regarding: 16.034cr Ordinance Pertaining to Water Resources

From:

Comm. on Community Resources

Date of Meeting 3 /21/2016

Prepared By: P. Powers

Recommendation:

Positive Recommendation

Yes: 3

No: 0

Absent: 1

Abstain: 0

Factors Considered:

The Committee reviewed the ordinance and heard testimony from Councilor Ryan O'Donnell. He, along with Mayor Narkewicz sponsored the ordinance. Councilor Sciarra read the proposed ordinance into the record. (Councilor Klein was absent from the discussion and did not vote on this ordinance).

Comments, Discussion & Debate:

This ordinance prevents the City Council, Mayor, or the city in general from privatizing the city's water infrastructure. This ordinance models an ordinance adopted by Gloucester, Massachusetts in 2010. Gloucester later took the step of putting the elements of the ordinance into their charter. The premise of the ordinance is that there are basic public resources that should not be privatized. Councilor O'Donnell noted locally, now is a good time to introduce such legislation since there is much talk about investments being made in the city's water and sewer infrastructure. Nationally, there is a lot in the news about water resources, including what is happening in Flint, Michigan. In the case of Flint, the water system has been poisoned by lead. While this is not attributable to privatization, it is attributable to emergency managers being appointed over the water infrastructure and comporting themselves as though they were a corporation and making decisions with no public input and taking drastic cost cutting measures that lead directly to the risk of public health. Northampton has outstanding water resources, and Councilor O'Donnell feels that steps should be taken to protect water going into the future.