



CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

MASSACHUSETTS

Councilors:

- President William H. Dwight, At-Large
- Vice-President Ryan R. O'Donnell, Ward 3
- (Vacant), At-Large
- Maureen T. Carney, Ward 1
- Dennis P. Bidwell Ward 2
- Gina Louise Sciarra, Ward 4
- David A. Murphy, Ward 5
- Marianne L. LaBarge, Ward 6
- Alisa F. Klein, Ward 7

Meeting Minutes

Annual Budget Hearings with City Departments

Location: Northampton Police Station Community Room, 29 Center Street

Meeting Date: June 1, 2016

Meeting Time: 5:30 pm

1. Roll Call:

At 5:32 p.m. Councilor O'Donnell called the meeting to order. On a roll call the following councilors were present: Councilor O'Donnell, Councilor Carney, Councilor Bidwell, Councilor Sciarra, Councilor Murphy and Councilor LaBarge. No other City Councilors were present. Councilor Murphy left at 6:45 p.m.

Also present was Mayor David Narkewicz and Finance Director Susan Wright.

2. Budget Presentations by Department:

Councilor Bidwell moved to open the Budget Hearings; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 6 Yes, 0 No.

- A. 5:30 p.m. Department of Public Works: Donna LaScaleia was present to give an overview of the department's FY2017 budget. Mayor Narkewicz points out that since Director LaScaleia has only been on the job for four weeks, the department's budget was prepared without input from the new director. Also, the FY2017 budget does not reflect collective bargaining agreements since this process is not yet complete. The budget will need to be revised upon completion of collective bargaining; contracts will likely be retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year.

Director LaScaleia explained that the FY2017 budget is similar to that of FY2016. She reports that built into the new budget are modest step increases for staff in all departments. Snow and Ice will be level funded for the upcoming year. The department will continue focus on infrastructure improvements for street paving, sewer line and water line replacement, some design work for wastewater treatment plant improvements. Additionally, the department is planning for a City-wide fueling depot for all City-owned vehicles.

The Mayor reports that monies will be used again this year for various paving projects. Last year over 7 miles of new roads were completed; it is difficult to know how much new roadways will be completed in the coming year. The department makes use of a computer program in which

paving projects are prioritized. Sometimes roadway repair/replacement projects are coordinated with other major projects, such as water/sewer line replacement projects. Crack sealing is a paving alternative that is often used. The City expects to receive some funding from the State and intends to add more money to the State's amount to fund paving projects. Pavement materials have different life expectancy depending on the type of material used; life expectancies range from 10 – 30 years. Councilor Carney asked about plans for sidewalk repairs; the Transportation and Parking Commission has taken a look at the DPW study of sidewalks. A plan for sidewalk upgrades will be added to the pavement management system that is currently in place for roads.

Director LaScaleia explained that the DPW is prepared to send out water/sewer bills using the new tiered rate structure. Munis is able to handle a tiered rate structure approach. Utility bills for first quarter will come out on or about July 1st.

There are a few positions in the City that are funded from several departments. The City Electrician is one of those positions that is funded by the DPW, Central Services, NPS, and Smith Vocational School budgets.

Councilor Bidwell noted that several DPW positions currently show vacancies in the budget book. Mayor Narkewicz indicated that it will be the responsibility of the newly hired Director to post the positions and hire the staff required for the department.

Councilor Sciarra asked about crosswalk maintenance; Director LaScaleia reports that there is currently one person who is responsible for painting and maintenance of all 600 crosswalks in the City. The Director indicated that she will take a look at allocations for this function and is willing to consider alternatives to get the job done, including adding more staff, hiring a contractor or other resources. Regarding when crosswalk maintenance can be done, weather is a factor, including temperature. Crosswalk maintenance is typically done at night when there is less traffic.

- B. 5:50 p.m. Forbes Library: Janet Moulton and Lisa Downing were present to talk about the Forbes Library budget. Director Moulton explained that seventy-six percent of the Library's budget is through City appropriations.

The Library had over 200,000 visitors in FY2016 which averages out to an average of 90 people entering the library every hour that it is open. The building has three meetings rooms that can be used for community meetings and gatherings. The facility offers over 1,000 programs; in FY2016 20,774 people attended the events. There are currently eleven book groups and another summer reading program is about to get underway. The Library staff also offer instructions on the use of computers and devices, such as tablets. As part of the computer network offerings, the Library offers free Wi-Fi. Community space is accessible to many community groups and non-profit agencies. Using the library provides a safe environment with access to the internet, referral services, and other research help. Another important service is the outreach delivery to homebound residents.

Last year there were over \$7 million worth of services given to the community. Many hours of volunteer services were realized; 136 volunteers worked 6,647 hours. Non-city money is often spent on important resources for the community; in FY2016 over \$170,000 was spent on books and media for public use. Many of the non-city funds are realized through donations, grants, fees, state aid, and endowment earnings.

The building itself is 122 years old and holds the only Presidential Library in a public library in the US. The Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum was visited by 1,800 tourists last year. The Library also hold primary source material about the history of Northampton and surrounding communities in its Hampshire Room. Local artists can exhibit collections in the library's Hosmer Art Gallery. Just recently, the Northampton High School held an exhibit in this location.

On its “Wish List” the Library would like to open Saturdays during the summer and continue its outreach delivery service. To do so would require about \$30,000 in additional funding.

Councilor Sciarra asked about an order that the Council is considering regarding the window replacement project; Director Moulton explained that the windows are over 120 years old; they are very inefficient at keeping cold out. Many times during the winter the windows ice-over on the inside.

Councilor Carney asked about federal funding for presidential rooms. It was explained that such funding started with presidents after Truman.

- C. 6:10 p.m. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School – Superintendent Jeff Peterson and Business Manager Nancy Roberts were on hand to talk about the upcoming budget. Superintendent Peterson is very pleased with the support he is receiving from the City but expressed great concerns about funding the school will be receiving from the State. State aid regulations are detrimental only to SVASH due to the fact that the school is the only non-regional vocational school in the State. One new regulation is that beginning in FY2017, out of district students will need to have their “exploratory freshman year” in their own schools district. This affects enrollment which could be decreased by as much as 40%. Last year enrollment was 130; this year the enrollment is projected to be 105. There is not a lot of buy-in from other communities about regionalizing the school. The school serves sixty-one cities and towns and is the only vocational school west of 495 that offers an Agricultural program. Superintendent Peterson is also concerned about the mounting pressures that the aging facility is posing. The School has a ninety-eight percent graduation rate. Within-City enrollment fluctuates but is generally about ¼ of the total student population.
- D. The Police Department did not present their budget due to a scheduling conflict. At 6:45 the committee took a brief adjournment until the start time of the Planning and Sustainability presentation.
- E. 6:50 p.m. Planning and Sustainability: At 6:50 p.m. Councilor O’Donnell called the meeting back to order. Director Wayne Feiden was on hand to talk about the department’s budget for the upcoming year. Director Feiden explained that the Office receive over a \$1.4 million in grants over a three year period. A competitive public health and planning grant is funding the City’s first pedestrian and bicycle plan. The department is also working on a climate adaption plan and is working on complete streets ordinance. The department is also working with a developers’ forum to encourage more housing in and near downtown and several projects have been approved and/or are underway. Sustainable transportation continues to be a hot topic and several projects are being implemented, in addition to several that have already been implemented. Congestion mitigation and air quality are two of the key concerns that the car sharing initiative hopes to address. The department intends to hire a .5 FTE person as a “Lands and Projects Planner”.
- F. 7:10 p.m. Northampton Public Schools: NPS Superintendent John Provost and Business Manager Candice Walczak were on hand to talk about the NPS budget. The projections for next year include a 2.75% increase over FY2016. The FY 2017 Budget Priorities are as follows:
- Plans to open a pre-K satellite with a full-day option for four year olds.
 - Restore credential librarians in the elementary school levels
 - Establish a high-school reading class students identified with an interrupted high-school learning experience
 - Establish two global STEM education programs; one at JFK and one at Jackson Street School
 - Enhance robotics program with increased funding for program
 - Establish school recess assistants to maximize teacher prep time

- Raise salaries for school substitute teachers; many don't currently make minimum wage

3. Adjourn:

Councilor Bidwell moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.; Councilor Sciarra seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 5 Yes, 0 No (Note: Councilor Murphy left prior to adjournment).

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