



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor David A. Murphy, Chair
Councilor Maureen T. Carney
Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra*

**City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building
Northampton, MA**

Meeting Date: January 18, 2018

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during the City Council Meeting as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 7 p.m.

- 1. Meeting Called To Order:** At 9:01 p.m. Acting Chair Councilor Murphy called the meeting to order.
- 2. Roll Call:** Present were committee members David Murphy, Maureen Carney, Marianne LaBarge & Gina-Louise Sciarra. Also present from the City Council were Bill Dwight, Jim Nash, Ryan O'Donnell, Dennis Bidwell, & Alisa Klein.
- 3. Election Of Chair**
Councilor LaBarge moved to open the floor to nominations for chair. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0.

Councilor LaBarge nominated David Murphy as chair. Councilor Sciarra seconded.

There being no further nominations, Councilor Sciarra moved to close nominations. Councilor Carney seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilor Murphy called the nomination of himself as chair to a vote, and it passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

- 4. Election Of Vice Chair**
Councilor Sciarra moved to open the floor to nominations for Vice Chair. Councilor Carney seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0.

Councilor Sciarra nominated Councilor Carney to serve as Vice Chair. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

There being no further nominations, Councilor Sciarra moved to close nominations. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0.

Council Murphy called the nomination of Council Carney as Vice Chair to a vote, and it passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

5. **Approve Minutes of December 21, 2017 Meeting:** Councilor Carney moved to approve the minutes; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

6. Second Quarter Financial Report

Finance Director Susan Wright reviewed the quarterly financial report for the period ending December 31, 2017. General Fund revenues are on track, she reported. Some of the indicators that can be variable are those that have an economic component such as the meals tax and motor vehicle excise tax. It is too early to tell how vehicle excise tax is trending since the Tax Collector's office does its big commitment in February. However, hotel/motel taxes are up 12% over last year and meals taxes are up about 9%. Other than that, everything else is pretty much on track [to meet projections]. Building Department revenue is doing quite well, which is another indicator of the general economy.

Likewise with expenditures, almost all salary accounts are at 50% or less.

Similarly, enterprise funds are also on track, she continued. All enterprises have brought in at least 50% of projected revenues or slightly above and their expenditures are right on track. There are really no areas of concern that she can see. She drew attention to the snow and ice account, which is only 31% expended at this point.

Councilor Sciarra asked if the new parking system has had an impact on parking revenue. Ms. Wright said she is just starting to analyze that. She expects parking revenues to see a little dip this year because of the implementation of the new system. The good news is that tickets are down, so people are presumably using the app.

7. Financial Orders:

A. 18.004 An Order to Appropriate Community Preservation Act Funds for Housing Support Services

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

This was a tough round for the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) as they had applications for much more money than was available, Sarah LaValley reported. The CPC made a total of \$738,877 in funding recommendations which will leverage several million dollars in grants, donations and volunteer work.

Housing Support Services was determined eligible for CPA funding as support for community housing, LaValley explained. The appropriation will allow the Northampton Housing Partnership to continue to provide a Housing Coordinator through FY2019. Fifty-plus evictions were

prevented as a result of the program in its first three years, many of these from Housing Authority properties.

Housing is one of the designated areas for CPA funding, Councilor Murphy reminded. Councilor Dwight expressed his understanding that there was an expanded effort during this round to prioritize and fund affordable housing. Ms. LaValley confirmed that this is the case; the committee funded every housing request that came before it at a level that would allow the project to proceed. CPA funds are only allowed to be spent on people making 100% or less of the area median income, and generally projects benefit people making much less than that, she clarified.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to return the order with a positive recommendation to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

B. 18.005 Order to Appropriate Community Preservation Act Funds for Restoration of Jail Farm Parcel to Agricultural Use

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded.

City Council approved this acquisition several years ago, Ms. LaValley reminded. The parcel is a surplus property from the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM). The plot was used for growing food when the property was used as a jail but has been vacant since the 1980's. For a pretty small investment, this will allow the city to return it to active agriculture and lease it to a farmer.

Members asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor O'Donnell asked about the process by which the city will decide who to lease the parcel to. The property will be controlled by the Conservation Commission but managed by the Agricultural Commission, so these bodies will determine that process, Ms. LaValley responded.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

C. 18.006 An Order To Appropriate Community Preservation Act Funds For Open Space Acquisition

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

All of these acquisitions were previously approved by the City Council in 2017, Ms. LaValley reminded. The areas include opportunities for trail and wildlife connections, views and access to a historic lead mine. They are requesting two readings to allow closings to occur.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

D. 18.007 An Order To Appropriate Community Preservation Act Funds For Mass Central Rail Trail Extension

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

Planning Director Wayne Feiden and she have been before them many times on this project as the trail continues its very slow march toward the Williamsburg town line, Ms. LaValley related. The appropriation will match \$50,000 in federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds. Williamsburg also received a \$50,000 grant, so Northampton planners will be working with them to maximize their funds and hopefully have a ribbon-cutting at the town line very soon.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

E. 18.008 An Order To Appropriate Community Preservation Act Funds For The Sargeant House Expansion Project At 82 Bridge Street

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

This is the third time this project is coming before council, Ms. LaValley related; once for the initial \$50,000 appropriation, then again for zoning approval. The project will provide much needed single room occupancy (SRO) dwelling units and also rehabilitate a historic structure. It is located within the Pomeroy Terrace Historic District. The committee really loved this project.

Councilor LaBarge confirmed the need for SRO's in Northampton.

Councilor O'Donnell asked the total cost of the project and Ms. LaValley confirmed that it is many millions of dollars.

The \$300,000 dollars is being leveraged many times over, which is one of the benefits of spending CPA funds on housing, Councilor O'Donnell point out.

Development of these types of projects is incredibly expensive and the city's contribution for this project is really incredibly low per unit, Ms. LaValley observed.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

F. 18.009 An Order To Appropriate CPA Funds For Affordable Housing As Part Of Village Hill Apartments

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

This is the last significant residential development on the north side of Village Hill. An initial commitment of \$50,000 is being recommended to demonstrate local support for the project, which is creating 35 units of income-restricted community housing.

There are many things he likes about this project, Councilor Bidwell said. He expressed approval that the state selected Community Builders as the developer. It is quite remarkable; in a relatively short period of time there is a really complete-feeling community up there. He is delighted the city can add some support to it, he stated.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

G. 18.010 An Order To Appropriate CPA Funds To The Conservation Fund

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded.

Most of the open space acquisitions that have taken place would not have been possible without this fund, Ms. LaValley explained. Having approved similar appropriations in the past, committee members are familiar with this fund as the mechanism for funding priority open space acquisition, Councilor Murphy indicated.

Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

H. 18.011 An Order To Appropriate CPA Funds For A Pioneer Valley (PV) Habitat For Humanity Home On Garfield Avenue

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded.

Garfield Avenue is an excellent location just north of Route 9; east of Florence, near the bike path. This is in a neighborhood with several Habitat for Humanity houses already. The lot was part of the 'Small lots; great ideas' competition. The ultimate owner decided to donate it to Habitat for Humanity.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

I. 18.012 An Order To Appropriate CPA Funds For Three PV Habitat For Humanity Affordable Homes On Glendale Road

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded.

This project has a slightly higher ticket price since it involves three units instead of one. This was part of a municipally-sponsored limited development project for the former Kensington Estates on Glendale Road and Westhampton Road, Ms. LaValley related. The Community Preservation Committee thought this was a great project to provide home ownership opportunities in an area where it can be difficult for people of low income to obtain homes.

One of the three homes was supposed to be handicapped-accessible, Councilor LaBarge said. She asked if that is still the case. This didn't come up during discussion of the project at the CPC meeting but, if it was part of the original agreement, she is sure it is still in effect, Ms. LaValley responded.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

8. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

9. **Adjourn:** At 9:50 p.m. Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn; Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

*Contact: D. Murphy @ david.murphy8@comcast.net
or 413-586-5461*