



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: February 15, 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 8:10 p.m. Acting Chair Maureen Carney called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Maureen Carney, Marianne LaBarge and Gina-Louise Sciarra. Also present from the City Council were Bill Dwight, Jim Nash, Ryan O'Donnell, Dennis Bidwell, & Alisa Klein. Absent: Councilor David Murphy.
3. **Approve Minutes of February 1, 2018 Meeting:** Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes; Councilor Sciarra seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 absent (Councilor Murphy).
4. **Financial Orders:**
 - A. **18.039 An Order To Authorize Acceptance Of ValleyBike Share Easements**
Councilor Carney 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 a follow up to a previous order brought before them, Mayor Narkewicz advised. As part of the multi-community ValleyBike Share Program, Planning Director Wayne Feiden has been working to identify additional locations for bicycle stations. By means of the order, planners are working through the process of getting easements for the pads to install the stations, he explained.

Orders to accept easements and other interests in property routinely come before the council, and he is accustomed to seeing more specific properties referenced rather than a more generic request, Councilor Bidwell noted. He asked if there was a particular reason the order is being presented in more general terms.

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The easements are being presented as a group because there are still some questions about their exact locations and planners are still in the process of locating some of them, Mayor Narkewicz responded.

The plans are still in flux and the stations are relatively small (40' by 8'), so this gives them greater flexibility in locating the pads, Mr. Feiden elaborated. Plans call for 14 stations. Most are on public property but a few are on private property. For example, they are looking to locate a station at the Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH), and property owners may or may not agree to give them an easement. Planners would rather locate the station on the hospital side of the property line if possible. The city could do everything within the tree belt but this would have some effect on snow-plowing operations. Potential sites include CDH, the YMCA and Lilly Library. The Mayor can accept licenses without going before city council but since they are pouring concrete pads at a significant cost, they would like to acquire the property.

There being no further questions, Councilor Carney called the motion to return the order to the full council with a positive recommendation to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Murphy).

B. 18.040 Order To Declare Lot 4 Village Hill South Surplus

Councilor Carney read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge asked the size of the lot. The parcel is at the corner of Earl and Grove Streets and is just under half an acre with no legal access. MassDevelopment didn't want it and the city agreed to take it. There is a party interested in purchasing it. Money from the sale will go to economic development. The lot is between VCA Woodworking and the Grove Street Shelter. MassDevelopment chose not to develop the site because of its size, grade and lack of access, Mayor Narkewicz elaborated.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full council with a positive recommendation. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed unanimously with 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 absent (Councilor Murphy).

C. 18.041 Order Related To Eligible Traffic Mitigation Expenses

Councilor Carney read the text of the order.

The change allows more flexibility in the use of Traffic Mitigation Account money, Mr. Feiden explained. The City collects a fair amount of money for traffic mitigation projects which has to be used very narrowly. As an example, the city collected \$100,000 from the Food Coop, and funds are being used to pay for the redesign of an intersection near the store. The city collects anywhere from \$1,000 to \$100,000 per project, and funds are almost always specifically designated. As far as timing, the most immediate need is for authorization to use the funds for the purchase of bicycle share pads and stations.

Planners try to use the funds as a local match for other grants. As an example, the city just spent \$2.9 million on Pleasant Street for storm sewer and complete streets projects, and that all started with \$90,000 from NETA for traffic mitigation. In essence, that \$90,000 leveraged millions of dollars in funds.

In response to a question from Councilor Klein, Mr. Feiden confirmed that traffic mitigation funds always come out of a particular project. She asked if the suggestion is that the purchase of bicycle share pads will be for stations within the area of an associated development, and he said yes. As an example, the city collects \$5,000 per year from the Village Hill's owner's association for traffic mitigation, and planners want to use \$10,000 from the fund for a pad at Village Hill. Money from Walgreen's will be used for a pad at the end of State Street, which is close to Walgreen's, he added.

The grant for the BikeShare program included money for two pads, so planners are piecing together the cost of other pads from other sources, he explained.

Councilor O'Donnell asked if other communities use the same criteria.

Different communities have different models for obtaining and using traffic mitigation funds, Mr. Feiden indicated. Some cities have gone to the state legislature for specific grants and have more flexibility as to how those funds are used. Others, like Northampton, collect voluntary donations to mitigate traffic impacts of specific developments and are limited to using the money for projects related to those developments. Northampton's strategy has avoided the need to go to the state legislature, he noted.

Councilor O'Donnell noted that the category of 'Complete street projects' is fairly expansive. He asked if the types of projects it encompasses are dictated by the terms of a particular grant or if projects simply have to advance the goals of the Complete Streets Policy contained in the Code of Ordinances.

Both, Mr. Feiden replied. He cited the complete street projects on Pleasant Street as an example of work funded by a state grant (MassWorks). In contrast, the proposal for an on-ramp to the bike path at Edwards Square is an example of a project consistent with the Complete Streets policy that was paid for with money from Walgreen's. Planners generally try to use the funds for improvements that make walking and biking more attractive rather than for just repaving roads.

Councilor Bidwell asked the size of the fund.

For a while the city was averaging about \$100,000 a year from new funds, but that has dropped as there has been less commercial development and developers have made their own improvements, Mr. Feiden explained. The first choice is always for developers to make their own improvements. As an example, the Montessori school put in a sidewalk expansion. He didn't check the balance before the meeting, but he would guess it is now about \$250,000. The city has a contract for a round-about design on North King Street, and most of the other funds are earmarked for specific projects.

Councilor Dwight said he had assumed that most of the eligible items listed were already covered under previous authorizations from the City Council. He expressed his understanding that they have previously approved bike path on ramps and traffic calming measures. He wondered why the additional specificity is needed if the stated uses are already allowed.

The City Council approved using the funds for feasibility, planning and design, Mr. Feiden clarified. In 2012, at the request of a former City Councilor, the Planning Department submitted a specific list of projects for council approval. There was an interpretation by a former city solicitor that individual projects did not

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require City Council approval, so prior to 2012, the Planning Department undertook traffic mitigation projects without specific authorization. That interpretation has since been determined not to be correct, he advised.

In response to a question from Councilor Sciarra, Mr. Feiden confirmed that the city has two recurring annual agreements for traffic mitigation money: one with Village Hill for \$5,000 a year and one with Smith College. The original amount with Smith College was \$5,000, but since its contribution is indexed to inflation it is up to over \$7,000.

For the mitigation projects she is familiar with in Leeds, city officials did a pretty comprehensive public prioritization process, Councilor Klein observed. She wondered aloud if that happens with all projects and, if so, if residents would be made aware of the new types of projects eligible for funding.

For projects located in dense residential neighborhoods, the Planning Department typically does outreach to area residents, Mr. Feiden confirmed. For commercial areas such as King Street, planners work primarily with businesses to ascertain owners' priorities.

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

Councilor Carney called the motion to a vote, and it passed on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Murphy).

D. 18.042 Order To Declare Cell Tower Site (170 Glendale Road) Surplus

Councilor Carney read the text of the order.

Although the current lease with American Tower, L.P. doesn't expire until May 16, 2020, administrators are coming to City Council two years early because these are fairly complicated lease arrangements and they want to do a very diligent and detailed RFP process, Mayor Narkewicz explained. If American Tower does not win the new lease it will need time to deconstruct the tower, and the new lessee will have to construct a new tower. The Municipal Modernization Act extended the allowable time for a lease from 20 to 30 years so that is why they are asking to surplus the property for 30 years, he clarified.

Lease of the land provides a significant income stream for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, Also, under terms of the lease, the city reserves space on the tower for some of its public safety equipment, thereby serving a dual purpose to make sure there is radio coverage in that part of the city.

Councilor Sciarra asked if there is an interim plan for the public safety antennas if the current tower needs to be deconstructed.

City officials would have to work out a transition plan, Mayor Narkewicz said. They would definitely stipulate that city equipment has to be accommodated on any new tower and would certainly not allow public safety equipment to go silent.

Councilor Bidwell wondered about the advisability of locking in a lease for that long a time in a period of such rapid technological change.

Mayor Narkewicz pointed out that the order allows city officials to lease the property for 'up to 30 years.' It doesn't have to be a 30-year lease, but administrators wanted maximum flexibility. He is mindful of the fact that no one knows whether people will be communicating the same way in 10 years. He will definitely be mindful of protecting the city's interests, he assured.

Councilor Dwight expressed his understanding that, when the city originally authorized cell towers, it stipulated that operators must make space on the tower available to other carriers to consolidate carriers and limit the proliferation of cell towers.

This is a zoning requirement, Mr. Feiden confirmed. Zoning basically says operators can't build a new tower until they have looked for space on other towers.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the item to the full City Council with a positive recommendation. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed with 3 in favor, 0 against. (Absent – Murphy).

5. **New Business**

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

Adjourn: At 8:42 p.m. Councilor Sciarra moved to adjourn; Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No. The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

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