



Roll Call

NORTHAMPTON
Northampton, MA

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
JFK COMMUNITY ROOM
100 BRIDGE ROAD
FLORENCE

A special meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Ryan R. O'Donnell. At 5:30 p.m. on a roll call the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Bill Dwight (5:39 p.m.) At-Large Councilor Ryan O'Donnell
Ward 1 Councilor Maureen T. Carney Ward 2 Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell
Ward 3 Councilor James Nash Ward 4 Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Ward 5 Councilor David A. Murphy Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 7 Councilor Alisa F. Klein

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording

Councilor O'Donnell announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded for broadcast by Northampton Community Television.

Public Hearing Concerning the FY19 Budget

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Councilor O'Donnell asked if there was any public comment. There being none, he introduced the public hearing on the FY2019 budget.

Councilor Sciarra moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Murphy seconded. The motion passed 8:0 by voice vote (Councilor Dwight absent).

The plan is to continue the public hearing from tonight to tomorrow night to coincide with the regular City Council meeting at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. This will be an additional opportunity for public comment, Councilor O'Donnell announced.

FY2019 Budget Review with Department Heads

DPW Director Donna LaScaleia presented the FY2019 budget for the Department of Public Works (DPW).

The DPW's budget reflects the scale and the scope of the services the department provides. The DPW manages engineering, parks and cemeteries, highways and equipment repair as well as the four utilities: water, sewer, stormwater and solid waste. Ms. LaScaleia proceeded to review the highlights of each division's budget.

ADMINISTRATION AND ENGINEERING. This year administrators combined these two budgets for simplicity. She is pleased to say both are at full staffing, which is important because of the number of engineering projects they are managing. There are nine members of the engineering staff - including someone dedicated to watershed operations and someone with advanced GIS mapping capabilities – three of whom are MA registered professional engineers.

HIGHWAY DIVISION. The DPW has the ability to do in-house repair and maintenance of its highly-specialized vehicles and equipment, including equipment to maintain utility lines. DPW employees also repair and maintain 150 miles of roadway. She highlighted the city's commitment to trees by citing the fact that the DPW has a dedicated tree bureau and \$50,000 budgeted to support the planting of new trees.

PARKS AND CEMETERIES DIVISION Like administration and engineering, these two divisions have been combined in this year's budget. This group is responsible for maintaining 80 acres of recreational fields as well as four cemeteries. Forest Field is 100% organic, she noted.

WATER ENTERPRISE. This division manages and operates a 6.5 million gallon per

day water treatment plant as well as 160 miles of water mains, 1,400 hydrants and associated structures and facilities. The list of personnel is long because it includes folks who are allocated across many divisions. As an example, her salary is partially paid out of water, sewer and storm water enterprise funds.

SEWER ENTERPRISE. This division includes the operation of a 15 million gallon per day wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) as well as 110 miles of sanitary sewer, associated structures, facilities and equipment. It has a dedicated position (camera-man technician) that enables it to investigate and catch abnormalities in the system before they become a problem.

SOLID WASTE ENTERPRISE. This division operates two transfer stations and hosts events such as hazardous waste collection day and other recycling events. This requires a dedicated equipment operator as well as significant administrative and engineering support, with engineering related to closure of the landfill.

STORMWATER AND FLOOD CONTROL FACILITY. This division is responsible for maintaining and operating the flood control pump station, two levy systems, 120 miles of storm drains, 5,000 catch basins and more than six miles of ditches and drainage channels. The budget reflects the engineering oversight that's needed to support a system of this scope.

Councilor Dwight arrived at 5:39 p.m.

Councilor LaBarge asked where trash is presently disposed of.

The city hauls trash to Chicopee now, Ms. LaScaleia responded. At some point, that will no longer be an option and they will need to haul it somewhere else.

She said she noticed several vacancies in the sewer enterprise and another department and asked if they have been filled. Ms. LaScaleia said yes.

Councilor Klein pointed out that several of the departments have fairly significant increases; i.e. – parks and cemeteries (\$11,000) and solid waste (\$40,000). She asked her to speak generally about what these increases represent.

Some of the increases in Parks & Cemeteries represent contractual obligations to employees, Ms. LaScaleia explained. In this particular case, the division has stayed stable with staffing levels. She has tried to see where she could save in Ordinary Maintenance (OM) so as to present a level-funded budget overall across all divisions.

Councilor O'Donnell noted two large decreases in the water and sewer enterprise budgets, about half a million dollars each.

At the WWTP, administrators have been budgeting for electricity at a very high level. Over time, they have engaged in process improvements and energy saving measures that have allowed them to reduce energy usage significantly. As they make process improvements, they also find they need fewer chemicals and less manpower.

Councilor O'Donnell asked if the department factors in ongoing savings from improving the facility as it undertakes capital improvements to the WWTP.

What's in the budget is what they anticipate spending this year, LaScaleia confirmed. It is fair to say that equipment and process improvement savings will continue to be reflected in future budgets, she agreed.

With regard to paving, at a superficial level, Councilor Bidwell noted that miles paved this year is less than 1% of total paved miles. At that rate, the city will get to everything only every 66 years. From a personnel point of view, he asked if there is capacity to increase the attention to the paving program if the dollars on the equipment side are available.

Paving is something they contract out and is handled by the Engineering Division, Ms. LaScaleia explained. They do have internal capacity to manage increased volume, she confirmed. It is a question of dollars for the actual work. A lot of permitting and design goes into it since many of the city's roads need massive infrastructure work, she pointed out.

School Superintendent John A. Provost presented the budget for Northampton Public Schools (NPS).

He comes forward with a \$29.7 million school budget request, representing a 3% increase from the prior year, Supt. Provost presented. Priorities within the school budget include increasing social/emotional support for students. Councilors may have read that the population of Northampton students is changing; schools are educating more and more students who come to them with trauma experiences, which can be very disruptive in the school setting. Providing additional capacity to address those needs and allow students to still learn is an important goal, more specifically, school psychologists and Board-Certified Behavioral Analysts (BCBA).

Administrators also made a significant addition to the ESL program, which has frankly been understaffed the whole time he has been here. This year the school had a significant infusion of non-English speaking students due to relocation of students from Hurricane Maria and the beginning of the refugee resettlement program. After social/emotional supports, the next area the school department made investments is the ESL program.

They added two new pieces to the budget process this year to increase community engagement and transparency. The first was issuing a survey that received 283 responses. In the academic area, priorities identified were hiring more academic core teachers and reducing class size. He believes they've been able to achieve that with this budget at the elementary level. The elementary class will be reduced from 19 to 18 students, which is very favorable compared to nearby neighbors.

In the non-academic area of the survey, three priorities were identified: increasing student services (increasing social-emotional supports and ESL services fall within this domain), increasing arts and increasing technology. They weren't able to do a lot to increase arts, but they are increasing the band teacher from part-time to full-time. In the third area – technology – they are making significant advances thanks in no small part to the purchase of chrome books made possible by the city council.

Supt. Provost pointed out that the budget summary includes special education in the site budgets. The summary shows the portion of the district budget found in each of the cost centers. One concern voiced in the budget process was whether there is parity in the provision of services among the four elementary schools. Bridge Street Elementary has 8.2% of the budget, Jackson Street has 8.1%, Leeds has 7.8% and Ryan Road has 6.6%. (Ryan Road is significantly smaller than the other three elementary schools, he noted.)

Another piece added to the budget process was a district-wide joint school committee meeting to review the budget. All six school councils met together to see the spending plan. That was an important part of the healing process this year and this chart was an important feature for them all to see.

The Department of Secondary Education (DESE) is going to be requiring them to report differently in the future, including special education costs within the cost centers, and this gets them ready for that change, he added.

Supt. Provost drew attention to the major budget areas of the NPS FY 2019 school department budget. Utilities are decreasing due to the city's investment in solar, he pointed out, thanking the council for its foresight. This was really one of the things that was 'saving their bacon' this year. They were overextended, especially at Bridge Street School, but felt comfortable making some investment beyond the budget

because they were confident that solar savings would help them, he elaborated.

There is a new transportation contract, Mr. Provost noted. The city had four bidders which is unusual. Remarkably, there was only an \$893 difference in the two lowest bids on a \$5 million contract.

Administrators are spending \$166,000 of School Department reserves in order to make this budget balance, Supt. Provost reported. Their projections are that the schools will run out of reserves in 2022. Much like the city, the schools drew on reserves this year.

Councilor Sciarra said she appreciated the budget message and emphasis on healing on multiple levels. Bridge Street School has a significant increase both in funds and in personnel, she observed. She asked how this will help with the continued implementation of the new inclusion model.

Supt. Provost expressed the opinion that it is important to take a historical perspective. In preparing for the June School Committee meeting, one of the things he looked at as part of the measure of the success of implementation was Worker's Compensation claims. He wanted to see if the change was creating a more chaotic, less safe environment for students and teachers. In the last 24 months, the most conflict-ridden time was about a year ago, he reported. There were seven worker's comp. claims in May and four in June based on student aggression to staff. The best 90-day period was the period they're in now. The roll-out certainly had problems, he acknowledged, but a significant corner was turned about the first of the year and Bridge Street is now well on its way.

The new resources provide Bridge Street the opportunity to 'hit the reset button' on social/emotional supports, he suggested. A brand new school psychologist and new BCBA will be a strong support for the teachers. Having that kind of leadership from the social/emotional domain will be the strongest change at Bridge Street. Up to a quarter of the students in Massachusetts schools now have some kind of diagnosable mental illness, meaning that, when a teacher gives an instruction, about a quarter of the kids may do something unexpected. Giving teachers the lens of what it's like to be a student with an unusual reaction is the major change. Otherwise, it is easy for the teacher to go to his/her own professionalism and ask, "what am I doing wrong; am I in control?" That is wrong, he stressed. What is needed is to go to the student's perspective and ask what is happening with the student that is making them act this way. Having a BCBA and school psychologist full-time at Bridge Street will allow them to form strong relationships with the students so they can get some insights and share that information with teachers.

Councilor Nash asked if the superintendent thinks this budget adequately addresses the concerns and if there is a plan in place around the concerns at Bridge Street.

Absolutely, Supt. Provost responded.

Councilor O'Donnell thanked Supt. Provost for his excellent work on the budget. He thinks everyone recognizes that the superintendent is doing an outstanding job despite the fact that there's much he can't control, Councilor O'Donnell observed. He mentioned the school being short-changed by the charter school reimbursement formula, referring to the broken funding formula under which the school department labors. If it were different they perhaps would not be drawing money from the stability fund, he suggested. He is grateful that, despite those frustrations, the superintendent has put together a very strong budget and made progress on a number of fronts.

Councilor Bidwell asked what more they can do as a city council to address the funding problem presented by charter schools. He mentioned the enormous drain represented by money going out to charter schools.

The problem really is the reimbursement formula, Supt. Provost confirmed. The number of students going out to charter schools is only increasing by one but the

cost to Northampton is going up \$200,000. The funding formula is outside of any municipality's control, so what can they do about that? He asked rhetorically.

Most of what they have been able to do has been by reallocating resources. One educator said it feels like you tear down a shed to build a barn, etc. More resources; encouraging more families to stay within the district [would be helpful], he suggested. As someone who visits schools across the commonwealth, there are some savage inequalities. Some school districts right outside of Boston have people waiting to sanitize door handles after you go through the doors. In answer to the question of what they can do, he replied 'more funding.' He promised them if they had more than 3% they would use it wisely on behalf of the district.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Councilor O'Donnell asked if there was any public comment.

Phil Arnold of 30 North Maple Street Florence said he comes to the building every day to go swimming. It is a great resource and the staff is amazing. Since the warm days of February and the emergence of thousands of potholes, he wondered aloud how it is that the roads and sidewalks have been allowed to deteriorate. It has taken decades of neglect to create the worst roads in the valley in a community with the highest tax rate and biggest budget, he asserted. City officials have determined that roads are a low priority. For somebody with a cane or a walker, the sidewalks are like a minefield. Earlier in the spring the excuse for the potholes was that the asphalt plant had not yet opened. There was a time when the city had a schedule for resurfacing all the roads about every ten years. Now the DPW tries to glue the roads together. He mentioned the marijuana sales tax. He believes there is a proposal to bond and repair the roads. His mother used to say that she never charged her food or her furniture. About 80 miles from here, Henry David Thoreau counseled that we should live within our means; "We do not," he maintained. They buy things they don't need at the expense of their infrastructure, he insisted. He mentioned a time when Sears Roebuck was a fixture in town. They can't go back to the good old days but they can return to the times before then by driving on their dilapidated roads.

Police Chief Jody Kasper presented the FY2019 Police Department budget. The budget is relatively unchanged, she said. On the Personnel Services (PS) side, they currently have three police officer vacancies. In addition, they have three recruits in the police academy scheduled to graduate in August and be on the street in January. This means the department is short on the street right now. She anticipates losing other officers because the Massachusetts police academy is putting on a training class. The only change on the personnel side is a change in contract and the crossing guard rate going from \$12 to \$13. They have trouble filling these positions now and when they are empty they use an officer to fill them.

The uniform allowance for police officers (\$57,000) used to be on the personnel side and was moved to the operations side, she noted. They also moved some money around on the Ordinary Maintenance (OM) side. Vehicles and repairs has been exceeded for the last three years so she moved some money from another line item to more accurately reflect actual expenditures. She also increased the line item for communications.

Councilor Nash asked about the 7.4% increase in Chief Kasper's salary.

The chief was appointed about three years ago, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. The city has two employees working by contract, the Police Chief and the Fire Chief. Chief Kasper's contract expires June 30th so they are looking at renewing her contract. As part of that process, they are looking at changes to the internal contract.

A goal agreed upon with both bargaining units is to try to maintain separation in pay scales between all of the ranks. City officials did a lot of work around that with the last contract. As one of the only non-represented employees, internal changes started running up against the chief in terms of her salary getting closer to captains'. They also looked at how her salary compared to other communities. Among

comparison communities (Chicopee, Holyoke), her salary was in the lowest quartile. For both internal and external equity, he felt it was important to bring that salary up both to maintain separation within the organization and to recognize that they have an outstanding chief of police. He mentioned her involvement on regional and state bodies and the fact that Northampton is one of the busier communities because it is such a destination. The pay increase is part of the new three-year contract negotiated with the chief. He thought it was important to reset her salary in terms of what he thought was appropriate. Now, instead of being in the lowest quartile, she is in a higher quartile.

With regard to the \$92,000 increase in operating budget, Councilor Klein asked about overtime. It appeared Northampton was on the high end for a city of its size in terms of number of officers and a little on the high side for the amount of overtime.

The biggest change on the OM side is a \$58,000 increase due to movement of the uniform line item, Chief Kasper reiterated.

With regard to the \$72,000 increase on the PS side, it reflects the step raises in the new contract. They didn't make any other changes other than the salary of crossing guards. She didn't request any more for overtime but they go over every year. The department responds to over 40,000 calls a year. People want the police involved in a lot of preventive work. On the investigative side, when they have any large case it takes a certain amount of overtime. The six detectives are completely over-tasked. The department is working with a regional drug task force, and she considers this money well-spent. They have a really high number of cases that come in and require follow up.

Regarding the number of officers, she knows that number has been the same. Ever since she's been on they've had 65 full-time sworn personnel. They use a small number of former police offers to supplement for overtime. The problem is that they just can't staff empty positions fast enough. They are really short on the street right now and are moving into vacation season.

In looking at Northampton from data from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Northampton looks on the high side based on the size of its force, Councilor Klein observed.

Chief Kasper said she couldn't speak to that but could say the number of personnel (65) has been the same for about 20 years.

It's really tricky in Northampton because it is such a destination city, she commented. 25% of calls are downtown. They have a lot of people that come into their community which causes them to have a lot of calls.

One of the issues they are having is that they have a ton of administrative work to do, Chief Kasper continued. They have police officers do work and don't have them available for patrol and police work. She wants to make sure officers are not doing administrative tasks.

Regarding the work of accreditation, the Northampton Police Department was the 6th police force in Massachusetts to be accredited. It is very important to her and was important to Chief Sienkiewicz. Accreditation management is a big job and it comes in waves. If they have an incident, policy requires that a supervisor respond to that. Accreditation manager is a very administrative job. Her discussion with the Mayor was that they could better use resources if they took jobs like that and assigned them to a civilian to assist. \$42,000 reflects a new position for a grants coordinator, training manager and accreditation manager, she noted.

With respect to police officers going to the state police ranks; is well known that this police department is very poachable, Councilor Dwight remarked. Northampton invests a lot in the training, which makes its officers very poachable. With that looming, he asked if she had a sense of how many were involved.

There are five who may go to the Massachusetts State Police (MSP), Chief Kasper said without hesitation.

The MSP class is not scheduled yet so they can't plan for when they're going to go. That academy is not funded but her understanding is that it's going to happen. Her guess is they may see some activity around September.

Councilor O'Donnell asked if there was any public comment. Hearing none, he invited Fire Chief Duane Nichols to present the Fire Department budget.

The FY2019 budget represents a 2.7% increase over last year including contractual increases, Chief Nichols presented. Overtime, which hasn't increased in four years, increased \$20,000. The challenge is having people out on long-term injury, FMLA, etc. He is thankful right now to say he is fully staffed. He has one person in the academy and no vacancies. They have been running full staff since January. In the past overtime has run kind of high because of filling vacancies so he added that money there as a kind of buffer.

Third-party billing is up partly due to success. The collection rate is running about 96%. Billing is paid on a percentage basis of what they collect with the third-party biller getting 2.95%. EMS will bring in roughly \$2 million next year. He increased EMS equipment about \$10,000 because of the increase in equipment contracts.

For the last item, \$6,500 is budgeted for emergency management. The Fire Department always ran a separate emergency management budget and he and the mayor decided they would just roll it into the fire budget. He is the emergency manager, while the emergency management coordinator is the Assistant Chief.

Councilor LaBarge referred to a report about an increase in cancer in firefighters. She asked if they were seeing that in their department.

Bob Davis passed away two years ago, Chief Nichols said. As an industry, the fire service has done studies that show that firefighters have an increase in cancer due to the chemicals. In the fire service as a whole an increase in cancer has been shown. It is due to building construction. Structures used to be wood, now they are made of composite materials which are petroleum products and give off toxic fumes. They have some policies in place to minimize exposure by washing gear after fires, etc.

Councilor O'Donnell asked Nichols to review spending on narcan and the personnel side in terms of responding to over doses.

They give narcan through an IV. EMT's exchange that at the hospital so they are not incurring any costs. All meds (medicine and narcotics) for the ambulance come out of the Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH).

The Police Department may have better statistics on overdoses, he suggested.

Blair Gimma of 3 Clark Avenue said she wanted to address pay for city councilors. They each get paid \$9,000, except council president, who gets \$10,000. While they are all here and the mayor is here, she just wanted to advocate for them to get paid a higher salary. The salary is a class issue since somebody who works full-time is supposed to be able to run for city council. She knows people who would like to run for city council but scratch their heads and say "How could I do it?" The sentiment is well-expressed in the poem, "I want a dyke for president." She said she would be interested in how many hours they work a week and what their hourly pay looks like.

Mayor Narkewicz presented the FY2019 Central Services budget since the director (David Pomerantz) was not in attendance. The department oversees facilities. Northampton is unique in that it has a combined maintenance program for city and schools. The department also oversees utilities, electrical and going out to bid for

those items.

The overall change to the Central Services budget is 5.6%. The PS side covers custodians, the energy officer, principal clerk and director himself. Streetlights, electricity, natural gas, trash removal and the telephone bill for all city buildings and departments are some of the larger items funded.

As far as staffing changes, there is a .52% increase in staffing which is essentially a custodian. It has been a long-standing challenge to have a custodian who can oversee the aquatics center. They decided to add .52 FTE custodian to be able to have stability in this position. It is hard to find somebody who will work Saturdays and Sundays every weekend. They added hours to a part-time custodian.

Most of the OM increases are increases in contractual inspection services (for elevators, fire extinguishers, etc.), Finance Director Susan Wright added. Other increases are in repair and maintenance. Administrators are trying to continue to make this a more robust budget so they don't have to come for a transfer. Forbes Library used to have a separate elevator contract. The city extended the offer to add its elevator to the city's contract to try to create cost savings.

They are now starting to see some energy savings with the landfill project. They are not actually generating electricity that's going to the schools but they are assigning the savings as part of the Power Purchase Agreement to different city buildings.

With respect to streetlights, Councilor Klein expressed her understanding from sitting on the Northampton Energy & Sustainability Commission (NESC) that the city went through the process of replacing all the streetlights. In comparing this year's budget to last, she sees that they are budgeting more for electricity this year. She would like to know the difference in the budget in terms of streetlights.

Last year they budgeted \$85,000, this year \$100,000+/- . Street lights were replaced a year ago, Wright confirmed. It has taken National Grid almost a year to give the city new rates. The utility has to go back and credit them from the time the fixtures were first replaced. They have just started to see some of the credits coming in from the whole year for the LED lights. National Grid was confused. . .

Money budgeted last year was much lower than what was actually spent because they thought they would already have LED lights in and would have new rates. They added about \$18,000 to the budget because the street lights now belong to the city and now must be maintained. Financial officers are hoping to be able to show a savings once credits are received, she concluded.

There is a \$15,000 increase in this year's budget, Councilor Klein observed.

Wright said she could get more data from Chris Mason for tomorrow. As far as electricity, she believes the increase may be because they are in a new contract.

Mayor Narkewicz said he would try to get those answers.

Councilor O'Donnell gave a final call for public comment, repeating that the intention is to carry the hearing over until tomorrow night when council meets at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Councilor LaBarge moved to continue the public hearing to tomorrow night. Councilor Bidwell seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by voice vote. The public hearing was closed at 6:56 p.m.

Motion to Adjourn

Upon motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Attest: Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council