



Roll Call

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CONDUCTED AS AN ON-LINE ZOOM MEETING
Northampton, MA**

A special meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra at 5:02 p.m. On a roll call, the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra	At-Large Councilor William H. Dwight
Ward 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.	Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe
Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster	Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett
Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash	Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore

Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge was absent. Also present was City Clerk Pam Powers.

PUBLIC HEARING on 20.063 National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Hebert Avenue (Petition #28701070)

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The purpose of the meeting is to approve the September 1, 2020 state primary election warrant and to hold a public hearing on a National Grid/Verizon pole petition for Hebert Avenue, Councilor Sciarra reminded. She introduced the pole hearing by reading the legal notice.

Councilor Dwight moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge). The hearing was opened at 5:04 p.m.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has determined there are no conflicts with public shade trees or utilities, Councilor Sciarra noted.

Steve Hayward was present on behalf of National Grid. He said he would be happy to answer questions.

Councilor Sciarra referred to the petition and attached plan showing a proposed pole to be installed on Hebert Avenue. Councilor Thorpe asked what kind of disruptions there would be when work starts.

Any disruption will primarily be traffic-based, Mr. Hayward said. It will be a one- or two-day job. Utility employees will have a police officer present.

There being no further comments, Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion carried 8:0 on a roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the petition for Hebert Avenue. Councilor Maiore seconded..

Councilor Nash said he knew Councilor Thorpe had done some outreach around this. He asked him for a report.

He sent it out on his email list, Councilor Thorpe confirmed. He was going to go door to door and talk to some people, but he was not able to do that.

The motion to approve the petition carried 8:0 by roll call with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

Approve September 1, 2020 State Primary Election Warrant

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Councilor Sciarra read the warrant.

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the election warrant. Councilor Jarrett seconded.

First and foremost, all of the polling places will be open at their usual locations, Clerk Powers reported. They have spread out polling precincts 3A and 3B and 4A and 4B by spreading them further out in the senior center for obvious reasons. If you go down to 4A and 4B on election day, it's a tight squeeze. She toured the building with Central Services Director David Pomerantz and found they could indeed continue to have elections at the senior center but needed to use

alternative rooms. Other locations were amenable to being spread out. They are going to have fewer voting booths because the requirement is that they be six feet apart. Also, they are not going to have a check out table at any of the precincts. They have mapped them out so that there is a flow and people aren't crossing back and forth at the polling location. For nearly all polling locations, this will be a change as voters will be entering and exiting via a different door.

Councilor Dwight asked if masks will be required.

They are hoping people will comply but are not going to require mask wearing. "We do not want to disenfranchise voters," she explained. The reality is they will have to create some distance around any person who comes to the polling place without a mask.

Councilor Dwight asked if she could ask the health director to provide disposable masks for anyone who forgets their mask. He is particularly concerned about the poll workers and thinks they should take advantage of every precaution they can take.

At every polling location there will be a seven-and-a-half-foot plexiglass divider at two locations – one at the check-in table (voters will be handed a ballot through a cut out) and the other for the warden and the clerk - so there will be some barrier between election workers and voters, Clerk Powers advised. Also, the state is providing them with masks, gloves and hand sanitizer for every precinct. She offered to check with Health Director Meredith O'Leary about having extra masks on hand.

Director Pomerantz will be working with her to put up signage, she added. There will be a lot of signs. Polling locations will have COVID social distancing advisories and mask wearing requests. There are so many moving parts, she observed.

Councilor Dwight expressed hope for a huge turnout.

Councilor Jarrett asked if she has all the poll workers needed for September 1st or if they should be putting out a call for reinforcements.

She will be tapping them for encouragement to get more poll workers, Clerk Powers confirmed. About 300 workers are needed throughout the city, including five wardens and five clerks. Clerks count the ballots at the end of the evening. Five of each of those positions are open. The state elections division has indicated precincts don't have to have a check out table. They are also able to do more in the office as opposed to at the polling location.

As they all know, buildings are closed to the public, but any machine testing or ballot opening has to be conducted so that it is open to the public in some way. They aren't going to be opening the building but will use the option of having these activities videotaped and broadcast.

Councilors asked if she is encouraging vote by mail.

Clerk Powers said she would hope people would use the mechanism that makes them feel the most secure. She doesn't want to say that she encourages one way over the other. She will let councilors and the mayor do that. She is mindful of the fact that she doesn't want to discourage people from coming to the polls if that is their choice.

Councilor Sciarra asked her to talk about options for in-person early voting.

In-person early voting is at the senior center from August 22nd to August 28th, Clerk Powers said. People will be able to go to the senior center during normal business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) except on the weekend. On Saturday/Sunday, early voting will be four hours per day.

Councilor Maiore thanked Clerk Powers for all she's doing and said she knows it is a formidable task in a crazy year. She expressed her understanding that some rules have been suspended at the state level because of COVID.

All requirements associated with ballot protection and the chain of custody of ballots will still be adhered to, Clerk Powers confirmed. The fact that the state took on the responsibility to mail out the applications is one way it is helping to promote vote by mail. Normally, they don't see any

government entity get involved in getting people to vote a certain way. Voter registration has also been relaxed. The deadline used to be 20 days before the election and is now 10 days. That will be the case for the November election as well.

Councilor Maiore what her expectations are for how many will take advantage of the mail-in option. Do you expect much less density? She asked.

They will probably have between 60 and 70% participation for the primary and 90% participation for the general election, Clerk Powers predicted. Certainly, by mail voting has already doubled what they would normally see in an election. They would normally expect to see about 25% turnout in a normal election. She thinks there will be less crowding at the polls.

She thinks people are pretty concerned for their own welfare. That being said, if even 25% of voters show up at the polls, they should be prepared to wait, mostly because of the necessary precautions.

Councilor Foster asked when mail-in ballots would be tallied.

She is not taking advantage of one of the relaxed rules where the state is allowing election offices to pre-tally and then combine results at the end of the evening, Clerk Powers said. Early ballots will go to the polls early in the day and be fed into the machines. At the end of the day they will have results, by 10 or 10:30 p.m.

For November 3rd, she thinks final results will take a little longer. There are some pitfalls the state is trying to work out. The ballot has to be postmarked by November 3rd and the Clerk's office has to receive it within five days. That's different; they have never had it before so the end results may take a little longer. Normally they get about 10 ballots from overseas 10 days after the election. If a lot of people wait until the last minute to submit their ballots, they could see a longer delay. One concern she's aware of is that ballots coming back will be in prepaid envelopes so there is no cost for submitting absentee ballots. However, it is done through bulk mail and she is aware there is some concern that these items don't get run through postage meters.

Councilor Foster asked if she is still anticipating needing the same number of poll workers.

She wants to try to get poll workers to work shorter shifts so this will mean more, not less, Clerk Powers responded. Polls open at 7 a.m. and shut at 8 p.m. and they usually shut down polling places around 10 or 11, so it can be a pretty long day.

She thinks this is a time they should be helping people get plenty of rest. If someone comes down with COVID, they have to be prepared to continue to staff appropriately. They are required to have four people at a polling place. She would love it if they had 300 people.

Councilor Quinlan asked about personal protective equipment and protocols in place for sanitizing voting booths and pens.

This is one of the reasons they are likely to have more than four people at a polling location, Clerk Powers said. Voting booths will have to be wiped down every time a person leaves. If it requires people to wait, that's what's going to have to happen. Every polling place will have eight-foot tables with 7.5-foot protective barriers. They are working at getting lunch trays so ballot will be able to be pushed underneath the cut out in the barrier. They have ordered more pens. After use, they are going to dispose of it in a separate container and used pens will be sanitized.

Employees will be provided with masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and signs inside polling places. She is very happy about the protective barriers. She can't thank Dave Pomerantz enough for helping protect election workers.

Councilor Sciarra thanked Clerk Powers and said they would do their very best to get the word out to get her some more help.

There being no further questions, the motion to approve the warrant passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

Councilor Dwight moved to suspend rules to allow a second reading. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge)

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the warrant in second reading. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

The following order passed two readings:

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

20.100 A Warrant

To establish the date, time, and location of an upcoming election for the State Primary

In the City Council July 30, 2020

Upon the Recommendation of City Clerk Pamela L. Powers,

Ordered,

that meetings of the members of the Democratic, Republican, Green-Rainbow and Libertarian Party, in the City of Northampton, qualified to vote, will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 in the several polling places designated for the purpose by the City Council, as follows:

- WARD 1, Precinct A - In Jackson Street School Auditorium
- WARD 1, Precinct B - In Jackson Street School Auditorium
- WARD 2, Precinct A - In Smith Vocational-Agricultural High School Gymnasium
- WARD 2, Precinct B - In Smith Vocational-Agricultural High School Gymnasium
- WARD 3, Precinct A - In the Senior Center, Great Room, 67 Conz Street
- WARD 3, Precinct B - In the Senior Center, Great Room, 67 Conz Street
- WARD 4, Precinct A - In the Senior Center, Patte's Front Room, 67 Conz Street
- WARD 4, Precinct B - In the Senior Center, Activity Room #1, 67 Conz Street
- WARD 5, Precinct A - In Florence Civic and Business Building, 90 Park Street
- WARD 5, Precinct B - In Smith Vocational-Agricultural High School Building B
- WARD 6, Precinct A - In Robert K. Finn Ryan Road School Gymnasium
- WARD 6, Precinct B - In Robert K. Finn Ryan Road School Gymnasium
- WARD 7, Precinct A - In John F. Kennedy Middle School, Community Room
- WARD 7, Precinct B - In Leeds School Gymnasium, Lower Level

The polls will be opened at seven o'clock in the forenoon and closed at eight o'clock in the evening of the said day, and all such members will in the wards in which they are entitled to vote between said hours give in their votes for to the primary officers for the election of candidates of political parties for the following offices:

- SENATOR IN CONGRESS FOR THIS COMMONWEALTH
- REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FOR THE SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
- COUNCILLOR FOR THE EIGHTH DISTRICT
- SENATOR IN GENERAL COURT FOR HAMPSHIRE FRANKLIN & WORCESTER DISTRICT
- REPRESENTATIVE IN GENERAL COURT FOR THE FIRST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT
- REGISTER OF PROBATE FOR HAMPSHIRE COUNTY

Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.

Motion to Adjourn

Upon motion made by Councilor Dwight and seconded by Councilor Jarrett, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

Attest: _____ Administrative Assistant to the City Council