



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

A special meeting of the City Council (a continuation of the FY2022 budget hearing) was called to order by Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra at 5:33 p.m.

Roll Call

At 5:33 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 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett
Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster	Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash	Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore
Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe (not present on roll call but joined shortly after)	

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording

Councilor Sciarra announced that this was a continuation of the FY2022 budget hearing and that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.

The public hearing will begin with departmental presentations, after which the floor will be opened to public comment, she said.

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Public Hearing on Proposed FY2022 Budget**

**Public Hearing on Proposed FY2022 Budget
DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET PRESENTATIONS**

Department of Public Works – DPW Director Donna LaScaleia

Councilor Jarrett disclosed that, as a member of the Pedal People Cooperative, he has an interest in decisions regarding the Locust Street transfer station which is overseen by the DPW, so he will not participate in this item but will come back at the end to ask questions.

The DPW General Fund (GF) budget is organized into four different divisions: Administration & Engineering, Highway, which includes streets and fleet maintenance divisions, Snow and Ice and Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries, Director LaScaleia presented. The scale of operations is quite significant. Some of the responsibilities funded by these budgets are maintenance of 150-plus miles of paved and unpaved roadways, 85 miles of sidewalks, 38 bridges, more than 30 signal-controlled intersections, more than 150 vehicles and pieces of specialized pieces of equipment, more than 10,000 public shade trees, 225 acres of athletic fields and parks, four cemeteries - all of which are active burial grounds with over 20,000 monuments - and more than 11 miles of bike paths. As an item of note, within this GF budget they will see an increase in highway Other than Ordinary Maintenance (OOM), specifically the Roadway Improvements item. This more accurately reflects the costs associated with purchasing asphalt and other roadway materials. Each year, the department purchases asphalt by the ton and also stone and hard pack. This material is used year-round for the repair of potholes, trench cuts and sidewalks and workers use hard pack and gravel for the stabilization and maintenance of dirt roads and the repair of shoulders or pull-off areas. If a road is in very poor condition they may do a very thin overlay of asphalt to hold it together until a more extensive reconstruction can be done. This overlaying action can actually save the department a lot of time and mobilization costs since they don't have to keep going back to fill the same potholes and are freed up for faster response times in other areas.

For clarity's sake, the Street Paving and Marking line item in the OOM section of the budget funds the annual contract for city-wide line striping, including crosswalks and roadway markings such as double yellow center lines. To stress the scale of that process, they are talking about around 650,000 linear feet of double yellow center lines and fog lines and several hundred crosswalks.

In the Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries Division, they are looking forward to the restoration of two full-time employees, thereby returning this division to FY2020 staffing levels.

For the enterprise funds, she spoke in pretty significant detail about water and sewer revenue,

operations and capital projects during the utility rate-setting process. To recap, the city operates and maintains expansive and complex water, sewer and wastewater treatment systems. The water treatment plant in Williamsburg flows roughly three million gallons of water a day to the city through more than 160 miles of water distribution lines and related infrastructure. The sewer system includes more than 110 miles of sewer lines, seven pump stations and a Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) which is undergoing significant renovation. They have managed these enterprises very carefully and are submitting level-funded budgets for FY2022 and requesting no change to water and sewer rates, despite modeling for and requesting \$20.78 million in capital project spending in water through FY2026 and \$17.497 million in sewer.

The Storm Water enterprise is similarly level-funded and the solid waste budget has been reduced by more than 15% due to efficiencies in hours of operation at Locust Street and savings due to the reduced need for security services there. Director LaScaleia called attention to and offered appreciation for the remarkable support from fellow department heads over the last 15 months. It has obviously been a very challenging operating environment and has required significant collective effort every single day, seven days a week, often, 24 hours a day.

She also thanked Mayor Narkewicz for his steadfast support of the DPW as reflected in changes in the GF budget and publicly acknowledged the men and women of the department who have gone above and beyond in many ways. Their work is not remote; they have managed projects from two miles of paving on North Farms Road to the \$11 million reconstruction of the WWTP, not to mention the daily operations of providing drinking water, treating waste water and maintaining roads and parks. These folks are not able to work remotely and they have been there every day and every snow storm. The city's critical infrastructure needs have been met and she is very grateful to every single member of this department for their efforts during this time.

Councilors asked detailed questions on DPW operations, ranging from the status of efforts to restore gravestones in the West Farms Cemetery to the director's justification for requests for vehicle and equipment replacement.

She submitted a very detailed plan itemizing vehicles/equipment she is seeking to replace over a five-year period, including the age of the item being replaced, Director LaScaleia reported. The older the equipment, the higher the maintenance cost and risk of loss of service, she reminded. Especially with snow removal, the reliability of equipment is imperative. She is asking for replacement of equipment between 10 and 20 years old and sometimes older than that.

In response to questions from Councilor Quinlan about paving, Director LaScaleia explained that big capital projects are funded through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), most recently a \$1.5 million bond authorized by the City Council in January. Local funding is supplemented by money from the state, typically about a million dollars a year, which figure has held steady with very little fluctuation. She confirmed that the King Street reconstruction is a state Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project and therefore within the state's jurisdiction.

The director explained the DPW's internal process for prioritizing paving projects. An outside engineering firm annually surveys a quarter of the city's roads to evaluate their condition. Each roadway is then listed by category in terms of pavement condition and required treatment (routine maintenance, preventative maintenance, structural repair or base rehabilitation). She encouraged folks to visit the public works website to see the data upon which decisions are made. It helps residents understand their street in the context of the larger city network.

Over the winter they will consider other factors such as pressing utility needs, she added. Winter Street is a good example in that it has had two catastrophic water main breaks over the last two years, which is something the city has to address. All these factors go into their decision-making.

In response to a question from Councilor Maiore, Director LaScaleia explained that the current \$11 million project at the WWTP is the first of several phases to bring the sewage treatment facility up to code. The city is currently upgrading electrical and emergency power systems and, once complete, will commence design work for the next phase of upgrades which are more specific process upgrades. It is a multi-year, multi-step process that they are just getting started, she advised.

Director LaScaleia fielded additional questions on the status of other projects, programs and

facilities, such as the cold storage facilities at Spring Grove Cemetery and DPW headquarters, the transition to organic pest management of city fields and parks and security services at the Locust Street transfer station.

Northampton Police Department – Police Chief Jody Kasper

The proposed police budget includes three changes: 1) an increase to Personnel Services (PS) as a result of negotiated salary increases, 2) a slight increase to the part-time Animal Control Officer position from 17.5 to 20 hours a week and 3) shifting \$15,000 from Training Overtime (leaving \$29,984) and \$10,216 from Court Overtime (leaving \$14,479) to add a combined \$25,216 to the Special Police line item, Chief Kasper presented. The department has eight special police officers who fill in when needed on a per diem basis. With current staffing shortages, they are asking them to work regular patrol shifts, and they anticipate this need will increase as they move into FY2022, she explained.

Ordinary Maintenance (OM) items remain the same. It can be challenging to predict expenses for the OM budget due to the unpredictable nature of their work. To inform the FY2022 budget, she conducted a three-year look back. In FY2018, they used 90% of the budget, in FY2019, 80% and in FY2020, 94.1%. It's notable that the vehicle fleet is aging and older vehicles are not only less reliable but result in increased maintenance and repair costs. She monitors fuel prices and a January 21st report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) anticipates fuel costs increasing 12%.

In the midst of conversations of reimagining policing nationwide, there have been calls to cut police budgets, Chief Kasper acknowledged. If any are considering further cuts, it is critical to understand the deep impacts of last year's 10% cut as these impacts would be compounded by further defunding. The two clearest outcomes from last year's budget cut were the loss of funding for five police officer positions and for the entire vehicle budget. However, beyond those immediate losses, there have been long-term consequences with serious and significant detrimental impacts, she reported.

The community climate in combination with employment insecurity took its toll on all of their staff. Reflective of the sudden decline in morale, they began to struggle with employee retention. Within weeks of the council's vote to defund, 11 officers (27.5% of their patrol staff) submitted employment applications to other departments. Since that time, nine officers (22.5% of patrol staff) have resigned and three have submitted paperwork to retire early. Those resigning did not leave the field of policing but instead left Northampton, taking with them thousands of hours of field and academy training. It costs the city a minimum of \$46,000 to hire and train a single officer, so each time an individual leaves, the city must spend \$46,000 to train a new officer. Employees who have left in the last year have taken with them over \$400,000 in training costs that other communities are now benefitting from. As a result of this employee loss, they are now struggling to meet minimum staffing levels and routinely require officers to work overtime to ensure basic staffing. Officers sometimes fill these shifts voluntarily, but, if not, people are unexpectedly forced to work overtime. This further contributes to low morale and the loss of experienced and trained officers.

An additional outcome of last year's budget cut was a decrease in people applying for positions with the NPD. In the first six months of 2020, they received 42 applications; in the last six months, they received only 20 and, thus far in 2021, they have received only 14 applications.

As it stands today, out of the 60 full-time police positions funded, only 49 officers are available to work shifts; others are in long-term training, out injured or on Family Medical Leave. Typically, on a monthly basis, about seven of the 60 positions are not available due to one or more of those reasons.

In addition to probable continued resignations, they anticipate five to six employees leaving in FY2022 because of retirements. This is a significant number, and if they do not plan ahead to fill those positions, they will be in an even more critical situation next spring. Shifts will be understaffed, and forced overtime will be required to meet minimum staffing levels. This is not sustainable for an extended period of time.

These are impacts within the department but there have also been consequences to the community at large, Chief Kasper continued. Historically, Northampton has always had at least five officers available to handle calls. In April, they were forced to drop that number to five officers from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., four officers from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. and only three officers from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. That's three officers to serve a city of nearly 30,000. They reduced staffing during hours with the lowest call volume, although the overnight shift often handles some of the most serious and dangerous calls. On most days through 2020 and early 2021 they have been able to handle call volume because bars and businesses have been closed and many people remained at home and inside.

"As our community reopens, we are unlikely to be able to keep up with calls," she observed.

"We are at a breaking point. We were not an oversized department before the cut to defund and we are certainly not now. Expecting three police officers to serve a city of nearly 30,000 is not reasonable," Chief Kasper attested.

For them, it means that single officers will be alone on calls and there may be no one to assist if a situation escalates. For community members, it means that there may be no one available to respond to their calls for help.

The chief asked councilors to consider the example of an impaired driver striking another car and careening into a telephone pole at 4 a.m. Two victims need medical assistance, the road needs to be closed and the impaired driver needs to be arrested. That one call requires more officers than they might have working. And during that collision call, what about the person overdosing who needs Narcan, the person in cardiac arrest who needs CPR and the second collision on the other side of town?

Public safety in their community is her responsibility and theirs and she wants to be clear that their response capabilities have diminished over the past year and they are less able to handle calls than a year ago. In 2020, officers handled over 29,000 calls. Just over 1,000 involved some of the most serious crimes, including sexual assault, robbery, assault, arson, breaking and entering and theft. Members of their detective bureau conducted 217 investigations in 2020 and had an impressive case clearance rate of 88.5%. As a result of the 29,000 calls, officers arrested 336 people, charged 61 people with operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, investigated 811 motor vehicle accidents, completed and investigated 1,334 offense reports and 1,418 additional reports, wrote 1,680 motor vehicle violations and issued untold more verbal warnings, she reported.

The city of Northampton has one of the best police departments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Their award-winning work serves as a model for other communities. NPD continues to be one of the only police agencies in the state that requires a minimum of a college degree. In 2016, they were the first police department in the commonwealth to join President Obama's Whitehouse Police Data Initiative to increase transparency. She reviewed numerous other departmental accomplishments, including establishment of the DART program which has served as a model for other communities and becoming only the sixth agency in the commonwealth to be accredited by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission in 2002.

In 2021, NPD was selected to join the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) program and became the first department to join the '30 by 30' initiative, the goal of which is to increase the representation of women in newly-hired officers to 30% by 2030. Currently, NPD officers are the most diverse they've ever been.

All of these programs, policies and training courses were implemented after they identified areas of need. Officers are forward-thinking with a focus on community health and safety. Like councilors, she listened to countless hours of testimony during both City Council and Northampton Policing Review Commission (NPRC) meetings and gained new insight into community concerns. She also carefully reviewed the final NPRC report. The NPRC did not recommend defunding the NPD but recommended the city of Northampton continue to provide a police response to many calls, she stressed. Policing is a necessary and critical city service.

When people call for help, they expect and deserve to have highly-skilled officers respond promptly. The only way to achieve this is by supporting and maintaining a work force of

educated, professional, well-trained and experienced police officers. Police know as well as anyone else the need for additional support services for some community members. They welcome adding additional resources, including rapid mental health crisis response and addiction services. Supporting quality policing and alternative response services to people in need can and should operate in tandem. The city of Northampton has a police chief and police officers with a long history of collaboration and leading the way in providing public safety services. The council's support of the FY2022 budget will help provide stability to this agency and will support the invaluable and critical police services they provide. "It will set us up on a path of being able to move forward together as we explore the future of public health and safety in our community," she concluded.

Councilor Nash said he, too, has been listening to public testimony and has been moved and shifted in meaningful ways. He will go on record as saying he supports the proposed police budget as submitted tonight.

He thanked the NPD for the way members have carried themselves throughout the last year, particularly commending the handling of the large protest in June and a demonstration at the police station during which people tried to vandalize and enter the station. While state police set up a blockade on Gothic Street in June, NPD just shut down downtown and allowed people to show up and express their views, even though they were contrary to the NPD, and kept people safe. There were no arrests at either protest, he pointed out.

He appreciates the way NPD stepped in last night in a very thoughtful way at City Hall to keep people safe, including people who are critical of the police department, he added.

Councilors asked questions and offered comments. Among other things, Chief Kasper talked about mutual aid arrangements, the department's response to COVID, optimum staffing levels and the NPRC's recommendation to create a Department of Community Care (DCC).

In response to a direct question, Chief Kasper said the department should have six officers on every shift. With 60 budgeted positions, seven are typically not available as they are either vacant or held by an employee out on FMLA or injured, Chief Kasper explained. If they staff for 65, they really are only talking about having 58 available to work. "You have to be healthy to do this job," she pointed out.

Where they were before – 65 - was an appropriate staffing level for their city, she suggested. Right now they are doing very one-dimensional policing. Officers are patrol responders and detectives are investigators, but they've lost the community services bureau, the community services sergeant and the ability to focus on relationship-building and other critical services councilors have heard people talk about.

Regarding the community care department, Chief Kasper said she is very open to seeing what that looks like. Talking about a department without details of its logistics, communications, legality and location leaves a lot of unknowns. Generally speaking, she fully supports clinicians working for the city. To her, it makes sense to have them out of the police department. That's the model she's seen across the country; from CAHOOTS to the program recommended in Ithaca, mental health responders are affiliated with the police department. She has already seen what happens when other agencies work in silos; there are communication breakdowns and lapses in information-sharing. It doesn't work as well, and she imagines adding clinicians to the police department would be a much more seamless process. In looking at successful models across the country, what she's seeing is clinical responders paired with the police. It doesn't mean they have to respond in cruisers; they can respond separately.

She thinks it's a great idea, she would love to see clinicians responding yesterday out of the police department. She understands it might go in a different direction in their city.

In the course of the remaining wide-ranging discussion, Councilor Quinlan, Councilor Dwight and Councilor LaBarge explicitly stated their intentions to support the police budget. Councilor Jarrett also said he would not like to see further reductions until there are alternatives in place.

Councilor Dwight commented that Chief Kasper has identified the elephant in the room and,

indeed, the elephant in the middle of the nation. When he last saw her in person, he mistakenly mentioned that most people present were speaking out against the institution of policing generally and not the department here specifically. He has been called out on that, but he will continue to point out that in his 40-year experience with the police department, Northampton has been a model of progressive policing. Starting with her predecessor, Northampton was the first community in the state to initiate a harm reduction program, and it was at the initiative of the police. A police chief approached him as a very young councilor and told him they had to take loitering laws off the books because they were unconstitutional. After George Bush eliminated funding for community policing and made resources available to up-arm every police department in the country with Desert Storm paraphernalia, this same chief turned down that offer and instead directed the funding to hazmat response systems, saying we're not going to militarize our department with tanks, desert camo and high-capacity weapons. That tradition continues with her.

He's participated in many interviews and witnessed the department's hiring challenges, even after the city removed itself from civil service. He can only imagine that the challenges that existed prior to the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are amplified a hundredfold. This department has been on the receiving end of projections, of an unveiled contempt for policing in general. The trick comes with the fact that the police are unique in the job culture of this country. Only one job in this country allows the appointed person to 1) arrest and detain and 2) have means to kill. There is automatic and embedded resistance to that. The grant of that kind of power to any individuals [understandably] comes with concern, fear and resentment.

He does believe they need to reimagine how they are policed, but "that's on us." Ultimately, the department is a reflection of the community. He's not especially proud of their 10% cut last time. It was actually a decision that seemed to be developed more out of expediency than the actual practical application of reality. She is correct in stating that the policing review commission did not recommend defunding the police. He will support the budget.

As they know, there is a marked genuine sense of distress in the community. It's easy to focus it on the police, but in point of fact it's on us; it's also on the people who are being critical as well. If they're going to strive for the ambitious goal to address their systemic, intrinsic racism and, as she points out, her department is working on that. . . He's always been grateful for the NPD and for the department people he's had interaction with.

He's grateful for her efforts to be receptive and to participate in the conversation. He is also grateful for officers who are willing to participate and for the effort of people trying to create this change. He will commit whatever energies he has going forward even when he's no longer serving.

Councilor Maiore said she respectfully disagrees with Councilor Dwight; she stands by the 10% cut. It was a pandemic year where every department was cut except the health department and fire rescue. "We spent hours and hours thoughtfully thinking about that." She said she's sorry Chief Kasper experienced it as painful.

The idea of a DCC is precisely to offer different policies and practices. The idea is that they would approach policies and problems in our community differently. It would be great in the field of policing to have more metrics. There is not always evidence-based data for a lot of services police offer. She knows Chief Kasper says they need five or six officers, but where is the data that it is keeping their community safer? She thinks they all struggle with metrics in policing and not just assumptions.

Chief Kasper said she thinks the best metric are calls they can't go on, and that's what's coming for them this summer. They have been very lucky in 2020 and '21 that everything has been pretty much closed. Even over the last two weekends, they have been extremely busy and they don't have enough officers to handle the calls. As they start to see calls stack up, delayed response times and calls not answered, that is their metrics. Over the summer they will do their best to get to every call but they will be operating with reduced staffing.

Recess

Recess

The City Council took a brief recess at 7:37 p.m. The City Council reconvened at 7:46 p.m.

Public Comment

Public Comment

At 7:46 p.m., Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment. Over the next two hours and 40 minutes, 46 different speakers gave testimony, with some speaking more than once. For a full transcript of their comments, please see the recording on the Northampton Government Archive page of YouTube. Highlights of each speaker's remarks are transcribed below.

Jose Adastra of Northampton identified himself as the founder of the Western Massachusetts Abolitionist Collective. He called 'pro-police rhetoric' he heard 'alarming' and said "white-guilt monologues" haven't really addressed any issues. He has suffered real abuses personally at the hands of diverse new hires, and his houseless comrades have suffered abuses since he was a child. They are not projecting anything, he insisted. More than one of them has come to say it and there are court cases to prove it.

The city has a long history of city projects displacing people and interrupting their sleep, he charged. Referring to the Roundhouse parking lot reconstruction, he claimed it is going to be used as an excuse to clear out homeless encampments and arrest the occupants. Special police officers hired recently are especially aggressive and violent, he contended. Diversity does not solve the issues of police brutality. The community care department must not run out of the police department; this is one of the most insulting things he's heard tonight.

L from Montague said that, at this point, she is not going to be a thankful citizen. She guarantees that any change made will be out of 'white supremacist ideation.' She believes councilors know exactly what they are doing by holding a public hearing at night; they are purposely preventing their community from speaking out against oppression. Last night, demonstrators put up a beautiful mural of George Floyd and, the very next day, the city took it down; it was so disrespectful and insulting. Last night and this past year has proved to her that Northampton does not give a sh** about black lives, black liberation and public safety. "I don't know what it will take for you to realize that black people are dying and that you are staying silent." When there is any resistance to state violence they use force, incarceration, institution-alization and murder to silence opposing voices. She hopes they understand clearly that if they do not reject Mayor Narkewicz's budget to increase the police budget, "you are racist."

Josh Wallace, President of New England Police Benevolent Association (NEPBA) Local 186 representing Northampton patrol officers, thanked those councilors who publicly announced their support for the proposed budget tonight. He named cities that have defunded their police budgets (San Francisco, Minneapolis, New York, etc.) and now publicly regret that decision. All of these cities have seen massive spikes in crime. The Northampton police budget cannot handle any amount of cuts without losing staffing. He referred to the 'crime triangle.' In order for crime to occur three factors must be present: desire, target and opportunity. Police officers work on the opportunity portion of the triangle as their primary function. With more opportunity, those with a desire and a target will have more opportunity to commit crimes. Just this year, this department caught a group stealing catalytic converters while doing a property check. This is just one example of how proactive policing is successful and should be the model.

In 2017, the New York City police department conducted a sociologic study following the tragic death of Eric Gardner. NYPD lessened their proactive policing and minor crime summoning at the desire of the community. Prior to the event crime was on a decreasing path and continued to decrease shortly after the decision to lessen proactive policing. However, a short time later, crime began to climb and spike, demonstrating that less policing leads to more crime. The foot traffic in Northampton has decreased significantly due to COVID and will now begin to increase. Booker Bush already stated in a meeting that the NPRC did not recommend defunding the police. Officers are wanted and appreciated by most members of the community.

Mary of Florence, a 35-year resident, said she called in to support a fully-funded police budget. She believes the goals should be improved technology, improved training and more diversity in their department and, without a fully-funded budget, that can't happen. These are the first few meetings she has ever come to because she feels strongly about the police department. Recently she went to the Northampton Abolition Now (NAN) website and noticed that many of the members are from out of town. Somehow they seem to have inserted their voices into their discourse so much so that it has become hard for ordinary citizens like herself to even speak at

these meetings. She referred to the 'very angry demonstration' in front of the police department last year; it was at the expense of people who pay taxes here. She believes in peaceful assembly and peaceful demonstration, but they should be peaceful and she's seen anything but peace. Recently she saw a video of an angry guy confronting a police officer in the middle of the street. The horrendous language that was spewing was awful. She thinks that respect has to happen on both sides. She would like to see Northampton restored to its former glory. She would like to see every storefront occupied and to feel safe walking up and down the street or having her grandchildren walk up and down the street, so she absolutely supports fully-funding the police department.

Hattie Adastra of Northampton said she agrees with L from Montague on all of her points but especially with the point that this meeting feels purposely inaccessible. Having the public comment section at an undesignated time at the end of the meeting feels like an intended silencing of opposing voices. The proposed budget makes her feel like they are pretending that the last year and last 500 years didn't happen. She would like them to adequately fund the DCC and cut the police by at least 50%. Addressing the comment that NAN members are coming from out of town, she commented that, if she had children here or went to school here she would be showing up to these meetings. She thinks it is perfectly reasonable that people who live outside of Northampton have a voice in these meetings because many can't afford to live here.

David Murphy of Northampton noted out that in 2002, the NPD became accredited by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission. At the time, only about a dozen police departments were accredited and today only about 100 of the 351 municipalities in Massachusetts have accredited police departments. The department itself chose to raise the level of professionalism and its standards. They did this to encourage the best and brightest young people interested in a career in law enforcement to join the NPD. Ten years later, voters approved an override to build a modern police facility. The new building also served as a recruiting tool to attract the most qualified potential applicants. As a result of internal department efforts to raise the level of professionalism and voters of Northampton's action to fund a modern police facility, Northampton has not experienced the kind of issues experienced by major police departments across this country. A year ago, the city council made the decision to cut the police department 10%. At the time, five councilors had less than six months' time on the council and were voting on their first municipal budget.

A year later, he asked councilors to consider the results. The city had three officers at the police academy when the budget was cut. Upon graduation, Northampton had to inform these three officers that they no longer had jobs in Northampton. The fallout continued over the next year with eight additional fully-trained police officers resigning to continue their careers in communities whose political leadership chose to support their police departments. In a typical year, the NPD handles 30,000 to 40,000 calls with no pandemic. If only 10% of Northampton's police calls are criminal in nature, that's 3 to 4,000 times a year where they want a quick police response. He finds it ironic that the city council routinely inserts itself in union labor disputes consistently siding with labor but, when it comes to its own unionized police department, has no qualms about cutting its budget, terminating police jobs and creating working conditions that result in Northampton police officers feeling the need to seek employment in other communities.

The city council in one year has done its best to undo 20 years of progress. Well done, he said.

Amy Olson commented that it was so unbelievably offensive on so many levels that, the day after the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder, councilors listen to Chief Kasper for five minutes and suddenly forget everything people have told them over the past year about their harmful relationship with police and the harm police have caused in this community. It's so offensive that they talk about the logistics of policing and the number of calls when hundreds of people this year have been murdered by police. She agrees with everyone in saying they should reject this budget and actually listen to the people who've been telling them over the past year to cut the police budget. Support of police in Northampton is also deeply offensive to the history of abolitionism in Northampton. Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglas lived here as abolitionists and now, years later, here they are supporting the police budget and saying that it's not realistic to cut the police. Reject the police budget and defund the police.

NPD spouse, Westfield, said she again doesn't feel comfortable for her own security giving her name. Last year, she spoke to them about her experience as a police spouse and about the

extremism and hypocrisy that have kept her frightened and anxious for a year now. Yesterday that trend not only continued but intensified. She had to once again watch helplessly as there was a second smaller riot downtown. Protestors gathered and graffitied ACAB, "All Cops Are Bad," multiple times on City Hall and then beat a man who spoke out in a way they did not like. Luckily, Northampton police were there to rescue the man from protestors and restore peace. Afterwards, Jose Adastrá publicly on record flagrantly and unapologetically threatened councilors. Not only have they disrespectfully ignored the voices of victims in their community as well as officers themselves, but they have exclusively listened to and emboldened the most extreme, dangerous minority in the community who now feel entitled to openly encourage fascism.

They have marched down the street with posters saying that Northampton police cannot be 'pinkwashed,' a direct attack on Chief Kasper's sexual identity as well as other officers on the force. Attacks are now welcomed on anyone if they serve in a profession that a minority has decided to generalize and demonize. "The vast number of your community members support their police" but are in fear of retaliation should they come forward with their knowledge and opinions, she asserted.

In 2019, of all calls police responded to - 40,040 - only 84 resulted in any use of force, no matter how slight. From the same data, all racial categories other than white had a 0.0006% likelihood of a use of force encounter. According to the review board's own statistics, mental health calls only made up 0.015% of police interactions in 2020. The department of care would be a 24/7, fully-funded, department serving only 0.015% of calls coming in. No one thinks clinicians responding to certain calls is a bad thing but defunding the police to implement this department is a bad thing.

Dan Cannity said he wanted to express that he is excited by the appearance of the DCC as a line item in the budget. His focus is on the future and on the best practices for community safety. The NPD has worked for many folks and that's how policing works. Policing is a method of control; it's coercive and carceral; it uses force and authority to command rather than understand, and when they look at the outcomes, policing does not produce the best results. The NPRC didn't act as a judge and jury for the NPD but it also didn't absolve the department, he clarified. In fact there are plenty of worrisome statistics. The city has faced multiple lawsuits based on police behavior and misconduct and city insurers paid out for them.

Cities, states and entire countries are asking how communities are kept safe. The answer to keeping people safe by decades of data is by divesting from police models and increased community support and safety. "Asking only to improve the police department or offering services which continue policing models of intervention doesn't serve us," he suggested. Proposals for co responders are one option but even co responder models aren't ideal. Ithaca is pointedly not even having a police department any more. The NPRC looked at this on a local, national and even international level and came up with recommendations including reducing the footprint of police as well as creating the DCC to start responding to crises with homelessness, substance use and mental health calls and, not to stop there, but to start there and expand.

Corinne Olson of Florence, who identified herself as a licensed clinician, said she is speaking to support fully-funding the DCC. They've created a narrative of mental health crises and crises in general that is really narrow and unfair, she observed. "If you respond as if there is a crisis, you'll be sure to find one," she suggested. It becomes almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. If they respond as a DCC, with curiosity and not predicting the outcome, just asking what somebody needs, the outcome will likely be much different. Some believe if there is a lack of police response, there will be danger, but there's no evidence this is true. CAHOOTS' work has shown that when a clinician or peer responds to a crisis call, it is typically the person being supported who is injured and not the responder, because they are responding thoughtfully and intentionally instead of reactively as police are trained to do some instances. Calls become dangerous because of the ways they respond to them. If they're handled appropriately, the likelihood that they will escalate will be much lower.

David Kris, Ward 3, said it is despicable that the George Floyd memorial was torn down today. Last summer, many members of the city council made statements about striving to address racism, etc. The fact that the memorial couldn't stay up more than a day is disrespectful to the people who created it and disrespectful to George Floyd's life. It makes him question the city

council's commitment to addressing problems of systemic racism. When he looks at the city of Northampton, he sees lots of houseless folks and people struggling to make ends meet. The police get a raise this year yet houseless people don't have shelter or enough to eat and working class people struggle month to month just to pay their bills. He noticed there were a lot of questions for the DPW but there didn't seem to be much critical engagement with Chief Kasper. He thinks that's a negligence of the council's duty.

Ryan Wadsworth confirmed he had already spoken.

Ashwin Ravikumar of Amherst said he is very angry about the mayor's budget. He displayed a chart purporting to show that police budgets have grown in Northampton over the last 30 years by 148% while other budgets like public works and arts and culture have grown at much slower rates. This historical trend line is inscribed with violence, murder, white supremacy and police militarization, he claimed. One year after the murder of George Floyd, what they are doing if they support this budget is ratifying a reversion to this vile and revanchist trend that led to the murder of George Floyd and continues to allow for harm to happen in Northampton.

Addressing himself to Councilor Dwight, he said that when they spoke in Pulaski Park a few weeks ago, Councilor Dwight said to him, "Your victories are often small but they are not pyrrhic."

It is hard to imagine a victory more pyrrhic than reversion from the brink of change to a historic mean of white supremacy, Ravikumar asserted. Unless the durable victory they are seeking is a white supremacist victory for policing as they know it, this is not a durable victory, he stressed.

To Councilors Jarrett and Quinlan, Ravikumar said he appreciated their work on the NPRC yet is hugely disappointed that this budget is acceptable to them. To miss a central concept after so many months of study in any course he teaches would earn a poor grade.

Ashlynn Cradic, Northampton resident and member of the Northampton Arts Council, advised those present that, as of recently, members of the arts council stand with defunding the police. She is a local comedienne and artist who lives in Ward 3 and her family and ancestry is Cajun/Creole from Louisiana. She was born in Jackson, MS where the state still has a confederate flag, a piece of racist history. When she first came to this town, she was looking for a place of acceptance as a woman who is trans and queer. The thing she started to realize is that these problems of racism, homophobia, transphobia and able-ism are systematically ingrained in their country. She shared her opinion that Northampton has always wanted to achieve progression but never has. When she first moved to this town she was on the same street as Councilor Sciarra in a slum run by a slumlord. Within her first week, she watched a black man nearly get hit crossing the street by a white woman in a car who didn't like his attitude when crossing the street and police then went to arrest him. She has watched members of the LGBTQ community get harassed and beaten up by the cops. There is an obvious caste system of marginalized people in this town. The city arts council stands with defund even if the city council does not.

Ahalya of Northampton commented that a few points made by people in favor of the police don't make sense. There is no connection between punishment and deterring crime; the main thing is to decriminalize and address the fact that a lot of what is known as crime stems from poverty and oppression. She works with houseless people and has worked with at least three people who have been rendered homeless by police impounding their car for something as trivial as a broken tail light. It makes her really sad to hear people defending the police. It points to tunnel vision and not being able to see that people feel unsafe while police are enacting state oppression on the working class.

Jesse Hassinger, Ward 4, reminded those present that, last year, in response to the public outcry against police violence, the government of Northampton asked citizens to volunteer for the policing review commission with the special request that it be BIPOC-led. Not only did they spend six months reviewing how the NPD does its job but at the end they presented a report full of data recommending the DCC. After listening to the mayor and council speak on the FY2022 budget, it seems unequivocally clear that this body of primarily white, middle-class individuals continues to undermine and undervalue voices of oppressed and minority individuals asking again and again that the tasks that police do on a daily basis be transferred to this new department. This is the only way they can assure that violence against their community is taken away

from people who on a daily basis walk around with killing machines on their hips. He joins the dozens of like-minded individuals at this meeting demanding additional funding to the DCC of at least \$882,000.

Jasper, Ward 3, said he is perplexed and disturbed that it appears that city councilors have just ignored everything that the policing review commission has suggested and what people have been coming and talking about concerning the need to allocate funds to the DCC. He feels like it is pretty simple to put two and two together. If people are saying they don't feel safe and need alternative resources and asking them to fund the DCC and defund the police, they should listen to people's cries for help. It is confusing to him. Defunding the police wasn't a familiar phrase to him before this year but it became obvious to him that that's what they need to do. He hopes they reconsider their previous support of the police budget and realize that if they are going to fund the DCC, the money needs to come from somewhere and it makes logical sense that it come from the place that is currently offering those services very poorly.

Amy Francaes identified herself as a white woman who owns property and a small business in Ward 4. For the past year councilors have heard consistently from community members that they want to defund the police and fund the DCC to respond to wellness checks, mental health checks, traffic stops and countless other incidents where an armed responder is not needed and may make the situation more deadly. The NPRC report clearly shows that, based on 2019 data, of seven categories of calls listed, violent crimes only make up 6.7%. Clearly, the DCC can take on and uphold their community in a safe and wonderful environment while the NPD cannot. The amount of work is incredibly overwhelming. They need to have a well-funded DCC funded at \$882,000 in the first year.

Mark Cote, Ward 1, said he has heard some fear-mongering by people who feel that somehow Northampton will stop becoming safe if they even marginally reduce the role of policing in their community. It is important to note that, as stated, only 6% of the calls NPD handles are considered violent crimes. They are one of the few departments that requested additional funds during COVID while most other departments had major and significant cuts. It's important to note that crime is caused by poverty, not a lack of police. He referred to his personal experience being pulled over twice, once for campaigning in his own neighborhood and once for a non-existent light violation. He thinks they need to fully-fund the DCC if they actually want it to serve the purpose it's meant for. A budget of \$400,000 would probably fund three positions running the office but would not pay for social workers to function to take on some of these roles. He thinks they need to reject this budget and provide at least \$800,000 in the first year for the DCC.

Autumn of Northampton, who described herself as a working class queer woman, said she wanted to respond to some of the ridiculous claims supporters of the Northampton police are making, particularly the claim that people in favor of defunding/abolishing the police are from out of town and not connected to the community. That is utterly false and is common rhetoric used often in a very racist way by people on the far right; the idea that people who support revolution are outside agitators coming in and not part of the community. "We are not a minority," she stressed.

There are way more people who have had really offensive experiences with the police than not. It feels really intentional that this meeting is being held at a time when a lot of unhoused people and people with kids are not able to attend, she agreed. She wants to name the idea that if they abolish the police there will be a lack of safety. That is completely untrue. As abolitionists, every day they respond to each other without involving the police. She has never felt comfortable going to the police and knows she is safer going to her neighbors. It is absolutely ridiculous that getting rid of the police will cause a drop in safety. People who support abolishing and defunding the police are not loud outside agitators; they are part of this community. They are here and they will not be erased.

Mareatha Wallace said she does not live in Northampton but works at JFK Middle School, so she is one of those outside agitators. She is here to ask that they fund the DCC. She says this as a black woman and a woman who has had to interface with police officers and it's not always great. Her mother said the definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over again and expecting a different outcome. Things that happen in other parts of the country in smaller ways happen here. Newark, NJ, which had a very high rate of police shooting in the last year, didn't have one officer fired. They did just break their cycle. Can you imagine what those black

and brown people feel like? At least there is some modicum of safety. These officers found another way to deal with it, so they are breaking the model of insanity, expecting something different to come out of the systemic racism in policing. She's not saying every police officer is racist, she's saying they are in a system that can't help but put them at odds with anyone who is not white. She is a black, gay woman and she doesn't want to be afraid when she leaves the house.

It is time to start doing things they have never done before. "Let's change the definition of insanity," she concluded.

Gabe K., Northampton, said he is here in support of defunding the police and fully-funding the DCC. He hasn't spoken but has been a part of all council meetings on policing since surveillance cameras came into play. He found it really disturbing that some of the councilors came out in favor of the budget before even hearing public comment. Public comment was still to come and councilors were telling them how they were going to vote. It is so painful to have been saying all this stuff for years and not having anyone believe them and support them when police are following trans people with their hands on their guns. "I've been terrorized by the police."

He also doesn't understand why people who are injured need the police. As someone who had a severe injury on the bike path one day, the first person who responded was a police officer. He got a cop's gun in his face. He didn't get an EMT, he didn't get a paramedic, he got a cop. "I'm in so much pain!" he exclaimed.

Mary Jones said she lived in Northampton for three years but recently moved to Holyoke. Northampton is the most policed place she's ever lived. She has lived in big cities, small towns and all over the U.S. After George Floyd's murder, she used to play a game when she lived in Ward 2 where she would see if she could drive to work and back without seeing a cop. Not only did she never win that game, she never got to work without seeing a cop at all. This is the moment city councilors have been waiting for. Last year, they said they were horrified by the murder of George Floyd but just didn't have enough information. Well guess what? The NPRC has given them six months of research. They have clearly laid out that they can redirect the vast majority of calls that police handle and that they be accountable to the people who are most policed. The question is no longer what does Northampton need to do; it is do they, the elected leaders of Northampton, have the stomach to do it. The idea that they do not have enough information is an excuse they can no longer hide behind. That is why they have stayed here for four hours tonight; to ask them to reject the police budget and demand that Mayor Narkewicz fund the DCC by at least \$882,000. Councilors said they have seen them come to these meetings over the past years. If they have the courage to do what is right and fund the DCC, they're going to be right there with them, she pledged.

A woman who said they could call her 'N' said she has heard a lot of white individuals trying to define what it means to be a black woman. "Not all of us are against the police," she stressed. Some of them actually do appreciate the law and order. The further east you go in Massachusetts, the more you notice that minorities - Latinx and black and other immigrants - do appreciate law and order. If you look at states and other countries right now, people need help. If someone breaks into your house right now with a weapon, what are you going to do? Are you going to call someone unarmed to come and help you? Officers put themselves on the line to protect the individuals in this community. This community of almost 30,000 lacks diversity as it is. It's mostly white, very wealthy individuals. Minorities actually do appreciate law enforcement because a lot of them need help. When someone is in their house taking advantage of them, who comes to help them? A lot are faced with situations they cannot control; situations that are dangerous. Who is going to protect those individuals? Councilors are living in areas that don't need policing but in other areas, i.e., Florence Heights, anywhere there are a lot of minorities concentrated, those are the people they should be thinking about. In Boston, they love law enforcement because there are a lot of minorities. Not everybody in law enforcement is the same. In Northampton, the last time a service weapon was used against someone was in 1980.

Clara Wagner of Northampton said she feels really disheartened that the budget has even made it this far and that it feels really, really important that it be rejected tonight. She framed councilors' decision as 'choosing to either side on the side of activists or to side with police.' Thinking historically with that perspective, which groups of people tend to promote justice? She asked rhetorically. As a mixed race person and someone who works with marginalized

communities as a social worker, personally and professionally she has seen community care work really well. Almost all the calls are not for violent things; they are for things that don't require armed responders like wellness calls and traffic stops. [Activists] stand with any council member that's willing to stand firmly on the side of believing in this community and that guns and militarized force don't have to be a way of taking care of this community.

Aaron Clark, Ward 7, said he agrees with Jose, David, Jesse and so many others. This is a complete and total echo chamber to the point that it feels like it's by design. It should be clear at this point. Councilor Nash tells us it's been a tough year for Northampton PD and PD across the country. Josh Wallace tells us in response to a little bit of criticism, "I'll motion for property to sell you in Arizona." It really seems like a conflict of interest there, Josh. To further address Karen and Josh directly, police unions do not belong in the labor movement. They are reactionary bodies used to protect and defend racism and white supremacy. There was not one mention of white supremacy or police violence or of the 967 people who have been killed by police since George Floyd's murder last year on May 25th by Chief Kasper or by anyone else in this 'rigged opening'. Instead, he heard "a disturbing narrative by Chief Kasper and Councilor Thorpe full of inference and insinuations that police are somehow the victim of oppression." And, a riot downtown yesterday, Karen? Nope, I was there. We're going to continue to be here, that's not a threat, that's just reality.

Mal, Ward 3, pointed out that it is 9:08 p.m. She said she would like to echo those before her who stated that [public comment] started way too late. They could have started this earlier and they had this problem last year. Last year, she heard them say that they just didn't have the information or the power to change things or to know what to do. Over the past year, that road has been made clear; the information, that data has been given. It's very clear that what needs to happen is to lessen the footprint of the Northampton police. They don't need more police officers roaming the streets. She has never been able to go downtown or to walk between stores without seeing them. Speaking to the need for the DCC, there are so many people who need help but can't seek it because, at best, it comes in the form of handcuffs. They don't need handcuffs, they don't need weapons; they need community members who care. She is a person who doesn't turn to police; she turns to her community. She is totally in support of an entity separate from the police that streamlines that. She is horrified by Chief Kasper's idea that this entity should be through the police because that is antithetical to everything they've been asking for this year.

Sophie Chambers of Holyoke said she worked in Northampton for several years as a crisis clinician. She wanted to reiterate the idea that the root of crime is complex and intersectional and the root of safety is social and community services. Research shows them that communities with high rates of police presence are not the safest communities; the safest communities are those where people have access to education, housing and mental health support - the components that allow people to work and support their families. If their goal is to increase safety for Northampton, they should not support this budget, they should be funding the community care center. As somebody with a Masters in Social Work currently working with folks facing eviction, she can tell them that housing is a huge component for safety. The things people will do to keep their family safe and housed are sometimes not legal because they are forced into doing things just to maintain some modicum of stability. It is complex; it is a combination of needing to decriminalize things that are not about safety and providing support for people to live a life that is safe and supported.

Sean Donovan, Northampton, said he is a little bit done trying to appeal to the city council because it seems like most of them have made up their minds about the policing budget for FY 2022. He is pretty dismayed about that because it feels they like have an opportunity to be a leader in putting money and energy into supporting people in a different way. When so many police are leaving their town, it is an opportunity to fill that vacuum with something different that won't be targeting people of color or disabled folks. He is tired and sick of these meetings. He also feels like they shouldn't be measuring whether their city should separate from the system of policing and white supremacy just because police haven't killed a black man in their city. Death and murder shouldn't be the threshold for change. There was a beautiful memorial for George Floyd that was dismantled within 24 hours. A lot of people get channeled into the racist and unjust criminal justice system in MA and that's something police are a part of. He is grateful the DCC is being thought of as being a line item but he is really worried that, by underfunding it, they are destining it to fail. He really wishes they could put more money into the DCC that could be a

great asset to not only their town but their region.

Tim Edmond, Ward 7, spoke in favor of fully funding the DCC and echoed other voices in saying that he is a bit disappointed that they have come to this point in the budget. He started attending meetings last year and was sympathetic to councilors who didn't want to proceed really boldly because they had a lot of questions. He thinks the policing review commission has answered a lot of those questions.

Gwenevra Lodi Nabad said she was calling from a location that originally was the land of the Nonotucks, Pocumtucks and Nipmucs. She came here after them, so she wanted to express gratitude for being here and for having access to local resources that have been a gift and saving grace in her healing process since coming to Northampton. She said she also wanted to thank businesses and the NPD and to thank everyone for being here and for being part of a greater movement. Her grandmother emigrated here from Italy and she lived in the projects. She is a woman and still lives in the projects in Massachusetts. If this city is being less funded by the state because it is a very sought after city in MA, then it becomes part of the community issue. Programs that support mental health are absolutely essential. Problems start with programs that address issues for women and children and problems are also environmental. "Things need to get fixed, and I don't care how it is done."

Jen, Ward 3, said she wanted to encourage the council to do a couple of things. 1) fully fund the police budget because there's no other system in place to transfer calls to, 2) consider working together with the police department to come up with solutions rather than just cutting them out of the process. She feels that communications coming from most people at this meeting are really not restorative; they're not looking for a way for everyone to get along. Finally, she asked them to support a mental health program within the police department at least until something else is in place.

Rowan, Florence, she/they, said she supports cutting the police department by 50% and fully-funding the DCC by no less than \$882,000. If they don't adequately fund the department, of course it won't succeed. A cynical person might posit that it is by design, likely in collaboration with Chief Kasper herself. She is also extremely troubled by the speed at which Northampton removed the mural. Northampton claims to be a progressive and moral city, but anybody who cares about social issues should recognize how regressive the NPD and all police departments are. Even if city government refuses to recognize the social harm the NPD inflicts, they should be working to scale NPD back before they make headlines by killing a citizen. "We have so much more work to do if we want to make Northampton the moral haven residents, the mayor, Jody Kasper and you city councilors claim it is." Cut the police budget by 50% and fully fund the DCC, she implored.

Brian Zayatz, noted that he had already emailed comments in a similar vein to the council. He drew an analogy between policing and defective equipment. Let's imagine that policing is a machine and every town has one, he suggested. If the machines across the country killed about 1,000 people a year, did they think [Northampton's machine] would face a recall? He asked. If the machine in Northampton were showing signs of the same issues as machines in other towns before they killed people, would they look at that and say, that's not an issue, it hasn't killed anyone; it's probably fine or would they say it probably should be recalled?

Since throwing money at public safety seems very important to them and accountability doesn't seem very important, he would suggest that instead of fully funding the police department and giving very little funding to the DCC, they could give half of the police department's funding to the DCC. That way they're still throwing money at these things and that way from the activists' standpoint it doesn't feel like the DCC is being set up to fail. Naturally, for those who believe community care is important, this is concerning. Then they can decide which strategy is being helpful to their community.

Ya-Ping, Turners Falls, said she is very confused by councilors tonight who've spoken with a positive assessment of the Northampton police. When Mareatha spoke earlier about her bad experiences with the police and fearing for her son, when Gabe spoke earlier about being injured and being terrified by police and being hurt, when Ahalya spoke earlier about someone who was rendered houseless because the police impounded their car and when everyone else has spoken about their personal experiences with Northampton police, how is that computing

with you? How did those testimonials fit with their assessment of the Northampton police as being progressive? The only explanation she has is that they don't believe these people. Many people have spoken about their personal experiences of terror and abuse. She confessed 'basic confusion' about how their positive experiences with the police had any bearing on someone else's experience. "I think rendering someone homeless is violent."

Danielle Amadeo, Ward 3, said she felt the need to say that she graduated summa cum laude at Amherst College, holds a Master's degree and taught at Williams College, serves as chair of the arts council and is a survivor of sexual assault, domestic violence and poverty. She is calling on them urgently to defund NPD by 50% and fully fund the DCC. She wants to live in a city where everyone feels safe at no one's expense. She knows many do not feel safe here because of NPD. "Councilors, respectfully, if this has not sunk in over the course of the past year, you are not listening. At best, you are choosing a course of convenience through willful ignorance, and, at worst, you are knowingly using your positions of power to uphold systems of racism, violence and oppression right here in our city."

She recalled Councilor Sciarra movingly acknowledging the murder of George Floyd last year and holding moments of silence. The time for silence and statements of solidarity is over. The time for change is now. Beyond the very real present situation, it is also their responsibility to address historical inequities that have taken place in their city. She is grateful to Ashwin for sharing the chart showing the historic bloating of the police budget. Last year's 10% cut was a tiny first step and, frankly, it did little to correct those historical inequities. If they are not willing to listen and to take action to make meaningful change in their community, please step aside. It's time for 'Cops Out,' not cop outs.

Lemy Coffin identified herself as a licensed clinical social worker who lives in Ward 1. Chief Kasper said the police administered something like 1,680 motor vehicle infractions this year. That is 1,680 opportunities for people to be uprooted from their lives. One infraction like this can lead to a domino effect of mothers losing children to DCF, families losing parents to incarceration and any person losing employment or housing. It can be the thing that sends folks over the edge or is the last straw with their boss or their DCF workers in deciding that they no longer can have custody of their children. She's seen it firsthand as a social worker. A Valley Advocate article from 2015 states that the majority of arrests are not Northampton residents. The article said 66% of arrests are people outside of Northampton; 19% are people identifying as homeless or transient. The article also detailed testimonies of Hampshire Heights' residents who do not feel safer with police in their community.

Lastly, she emphasized the implications of policing on their young people. Numerous young people of color who stayed at the Cutcheons program on Pomeroy Terrace are criminalized by police. When they run from the program into the community often dysregulated, they've gotten charges of assaulting a police officer when police intervene and try to get them back into their residential programs. She has seen it firsthand in her work and the way it literally keeps children out of their homes with their families. It is not just the aggressive and excessive action police take that is violence, cutting the police budget is divesting from the pernicious violence of everyday criminalization that the Northampton Police Department upholds. Funding community care while the river of criminalization runs strong is setting the department up for failure.

Councilor Sciarra said she believed the remaining hands are only those of people who have already spoken. People may speak again only if they can provide additional testimony or if they have new information.

Javier Luengo, Ward 3, identified himself as an immigrant who has been living in Northampton for 12 years. He said he heard statements today that he didn't expect. Black and brown people are not monolithic, he reminded. "I grew up really poor. I lived in the streets," he shared. If asked who he would call at the time, he would have said the police. Communities of color need to have an option, trans communities and LGBTQ need to have an option.

In debating the resolution to support the NPRC's recommendations, one council member abstained because he said he didn't have enough information. "Shame on you," he chided. He served on the policing review commission for six months. Six months of videos, six months of testimony, etc. Part of their jobs as elected officials is educating themselves to be able to make those decisions. When talking about the NPRC's recommendations, Chief Kasper mentioned the

needs assessment as one of the priorities. **The** priority is fully funding the DCC, he stressed. "Our intention was to diminish the footprint of the police department. Period," he emphasized.

He can understand when community members say they can't understand because they haven't read the report or didn't go to the meetings. He cannot understand and cannot accept when elected officials say they don't have enough information.

Money has to be allocated for an advisory board because the NPRC lost three or four women of color because they didn't have access to childcare, he added.

Yesterday she was confused about how this budget could have happened, and she was angry, **Dana Goldblatt** observed. Now, she has new information because she thinks she's figured out what's going on: "Language as we've been using it is broken," she suggested.

This council asked for information sufficient to justify turning down a budget that didn't fund the police. A report was given, hundreds of hours of testimony were given and, "it was as if it didn't happen. You couldn't even hear it." Hundreds of people provided testimony of their personal experience with Northampton police.

She said yesterday she thought it was denial. But listening to councilors say they were going to support this budget after the testimony in the report, "Language is broken," she concluded. It is literally impossible for people to understand the experience of others just from hearing them talk. She said she wanted to take a moment and think through how they can build the government they want without using language, "because language is broken."

Ryan Wadsworth said he is with someone he holds dear who is brilliant but doesn't want to speak because of how intimidating this process is. He is hearing over and over people saying how disappointed they are in this process. He hopes there will be an ongoing written dialogue between the NPRC and the city council about what fully implementing these recommendations means. What Dan Cannity and the NPRC have said very clearly is that the report calls for reducing the footprint of the police. This is done by reducing their budget and reallocating their money.

Chief Kasper mentioned power outages, fallen trees and fender benders - those are precisely the things for which they don't need armed people showing up. He agreed with Councilor Dwight that reimagining safety is "on us." From one CIS white man to another, "anything short of throwing our entire collective will towards creating alternatives in the shortest possible time period; that's complicity."

The budget as it stands is just another stalling tactic, he added.

Jenna, she/her Turners Falls, said she is here to encourage councilors to reject the proposed budget and fully fund the DCC by at least \$882,000 this fiscal year. She had written a huge statement about her family's experience with police, but right now she just wants to highlight that there have been countless stories shared of people's experience with fear and abuse by the Northampton police. The NPRC recommended defunding the Northampton police and investing in a DCC. The current budget does not support this recommendation and that's a slap in the face of volunteers. Last night, community members put up a beautiful George Floyd memorial at City Hall. To tear this down so quickly and so crassly sends a direct message: Mayor Narkewicz and the city of Northampton do not believe that black lives matter and don't care about community safety. In creating a peer-led DCC, many responsibilities will be taken out of the police and put into the hands of people better trained and better equipped to handle such situations without force or coercion. It is thus confusing to her why the proposed budget moves \$178,633 more into the police department when responsibilities are being taken out of the department; why are they paying them more for less work? She wants this community to be safe for everybody, not just people who look like her. "Just because you may not have personally had a bad experience with the police does not mean that you can ignore people who have."

Rye Buckley, Ward 3, said he wanted to agree with and build on Mary's comment about Northampton being heavily policed. Last night around midnight he gave two friends a ride home. Both times when he pulled over to drop off the friend, a police vehicle drove up behind him and sped past where he was parked. He passed a third cruiser parked on Main Street. He decried

the tearing down of the memorial to George Floyd.

He noticed Chief Kasper said police are leaving the job because the community doesn't want them here anymore. This seems like an elegant consensus in their community He can think of a clear, elegant solution. "Fund the Department of Community Care."

To Councilor Nash's question about who the community would prefer to have show up to their emergencies, NPD or state police: "We would prefer our peers arrive with tools and intentions to help us,' not the police with weapons to harm them and legal powers to arrest them, he stated. He was really discouraged to hear so many councilors had already decided to support this budget before this meeting. He hopes those who stated they had already made their decision will consider what they've heard tonight.

Ezekiel Baskin said he is really worried tonight that if this budget passes in its current permutation they are going to be here next year doing the exact same thing. Back in 2012/2013, he was on a subcommittee of the School Committee looking at the start times of school. It was only eight or nine years later that those recommendations were implemented. That can't happen with the policing review commission. This is urgent. One full-time project manager and one half-time administrative assistant are not going to be able to build out a plan to make this happen. He can just see them here in his mind's eye next year. NO.

To those who say policing services are essential, **Lemy** said she wanted to talk about the harms of their services. Police cause harmful solutions to social problems and keep real solutions from emerging. According to statistics, there is disproportionate use of force on people of color. She read statistics about domestic violence survivors from a document entitled "Interrupting Criminalization."

90% of incarcerated women are survivors of sexual or domestic violence.

Mal said not only has she been a member of the community but she has been a homeless member of the community. At no point during that time did she feel that the police were an option to help her or did she not feel threatened when she saw police surveilling the community. She is absolutely horrified by how many of them have made up their minds. That is unspeakable and entirely against the positions they hold in this town. They are here to beg them to listen and to follow through on what they said they were going to do. Please listen.

Jesse Hassinger, Ward 4, said he wanted to add some data. According to the policing review commission, the time spent on calls per category in 2019 lists violent crime at only 6.7%. There are six other categories listed that make up the remainder. Of the seven, only one category comes in less than violent crime and that is the undocumented miscellaneous category. Non-violent crime covers 93.3% of their job. The call for a 50% cut seems reasonable when looking at this data.

Rowan –In 2017, the Northampton police department received a grant from Walmart to produce baseball-style trading cards of police officers to be handed out to school children. Students who successfully collected all 50 cards received a ride to school in a police cruiser. In response, activists are creating NPD misconduct trading cards. The first is Officer Robert Powers who they recently profiled. Powers recently made headlines for stating that "one bad hamburger from McDonald's does not make McDonald's bad."

Moving on, in 2013, Alan Borowski is one of three officers who responded to an incident at Tully O'Reilly's. In a video, officers are seen shoving an individual to the ground as he yells repeatedly, "I didn't do anything!" before Borowski pepper sprays him. Jonas Correia was charged with assaulting a police officer and disorderly conduct. The charge of assaulting a police officer was dropped and the disorderly conduct charge converted to a civil infraction. The city's insurer paid Jonas Correia \$52,500 for excessive force and wrongful arrest. Borowski has been the subject of two internal investigations for alleged wrongdoing and has been the defendant in two lawsuits claiming damage from the wrongful investigations. In 2017, an anonymous letter surfaced within the NPD accusing Borowski of removing pills from the department's drug lock box without another officer to witness. Borowski was placed on paid leave while an independent investigation took place.

Cherilyn Strader, Ward 6, drew attention to the fact that, as Northampton, they call themselves Paradise City. She'd like to call it Paradise City but, to her, it can't be when they're actively harming the people that live in, work in and visit their area. This harming involves upholding white supremacy. She asked them to cut the police department by 50% and fully fund the DCC.

Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

Councilor Nash brought to the chair's attention that Grace Rountree would like to speak.

Councilor Dwight withdrew his motion.

Grace Rountree of Greenfield, said she wanted to reiterate what had been said. She would really like to see a meaningful funding of the DCC and is really disappointed to see that this budget intends to increase funding to the police after a year of so much work on the part of so many people. She continued reading the document Rowan had begun reading for the balance of her time.

Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

After being told there was another hand, Councilor Dwight withdrew his motion.

Ya-Ping stated her intention to read some of the testimonials heard at policing review commission hearings. For three minutes, she read aloud from a transcript.

What amount of evidence and testimony and data would sway councilors? **David Kris** asked rhetorically. What prevents them from standing up to Mayor Narkewicz? He has heard testimony tonight that is absolutely horrifying. As a CIS white male, straight-passing, he hasn't experienced this. Maybe councilors haven't experienced living in terror either, so it is hard for them to relate. Do we need to wait until someone in Northampton is murdered by the police before we say enough is enough? With regard to the nature of crime; it's not a crime to smoke marijuana, especially now. It shouldn't be a crime to be addicted to drugs or be publicly intoxicated, that's a failure of a lack of public transportation and a lack of housing. We're punishing people who are disenfranchised, punishing the underemployed. What is actually crime and what will it take for you to finally accept and believe what people are telling you? What do you need to see? Do you need to see someone else die in front of you? Do you need to be the victim of police brutality?

There being no further comments, Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The public hearing was closed at 10:24 p.m.

<p><u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) & Study Requests</u></p>	<p><u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) and Information Study Requests</u></p>
<p><u>Motion to Adjourn</u></p>	<p>Upon motion made by Councilor Foster and seconded by Councilor Dwight, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m. The motion carried unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.</p> <p>Attest: _____ Administrative Assistant to the City Council</p>