



Roll Call

*CITY COUNCIL MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
February 20, 2025*

A regular meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Alex Jarrett at 6:32 p.m. Upon a roll call, the following City Councilors were present:

- At-Large Councilor Marissa Elkins
- Ward 1 Councilor Stanley Moulton, III
- Ward 2 Councilor Deborah Klemer
- Ward 3 Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg
- Ward 4 Councilor Jeremy Dubs
- Ward 5 Councilor Alexander Jarrett
- Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
- Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore

Announcement that Meeting Audio/Video Recorded

At-Large Councilor Garrick Perry was absent.

Councilor Jarrett announced that the meeting was being audio/video recorded.

Public Hearings

Public Hearings

None.

Public Comment

Public Comment

Councilor Jarrett explained the procedure he would use in conducting public comment and opened the floor to comments.

Penny Geis, Leeds, said this is the kind of weather that reminds them how important it is to adequately fund the public works department. So many things are important. She supports the downtown renovation. But, “why should we do all these things if we’re not going to support the next generation?” They have to be ready to survive whatever’s coming down the road and to be active citizens. “Funding our schools adequately, increasing the funding to our schools, is critical to all of our future,” she asserted.

Shelly Berkowitz, Ward 1, commented that being civil should not be viewed as an end goal if it means being complicit. It’s not about politics, it’s about priorities. After the recent storm she was astounded by the dangerous conditions on their streets and roads. The Northampton Facebook page with 200 comments confirmed her impression that the DPW is understaffed and underpaid with starting salaries of \$18 an hour. The Facebook thread also revealed comments from people related to their municipal government pitting one essential service against another, with some saying it was ‘not nice’ to complain about the city. One commenter wrote that the plowing was grossly inadequate and they would have appreciated a robo call from the mayor acknowledging the difficulties this caused for residents, and she agrees. On February 13th, she was pleased when eight out of ten school board members voted to request that the mayor immediately appropriate \$600,000 to their schools after hearing poignant testimony from parents, staff and students about injuries, unfulfilled and mandatory IEP’s and the resignation of JFK’s autism head in response to her physical and mental distress from working in a dangerous and untenable situation. The mayor relayed the request with the added words ‘without recommendation,’ signaling to the City Council to vote the request down. In each of these cases, the mayor did not read the room or seemingly care about the pain her constituents, including children, are experiencing. She hopes those on the council will recognize and respond to these crises by allocating \$600,000 to the schools for the remainder of the year and refocusing Northampton government on prioritizing all essential services.

Paula Rigano, Ward 1, quoted from the First Amendment that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free speech thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

People are organizing around their displeasure with their current government. Those who tell them to stop seem to forget that the 1st amendment gives them the right to speak their mind both for and against their government. The 1st amendment gives people the right to express their views at public meetings, including criticizing the government. This fundamental principle was affirmed in the landmark Supreme Court case New York Times v. Sullivan in 1964, which emphasized the importance of unrestricted public debate. The court stated that discussions on public matters should be ‘uninhibited, robust and wide open,’ potentially including harsh critiques of government officials. During public meetings, government officials are expected to tolerate diverse viewpoints, even those they may find disagreeable or offensive. This

tolerance is an essential aspect of a functioning democracy where free speech allows for open dialogue and criticism of those in power. The right to express opinions even if they are unpopular or critical is a cornerstone of 1st amendment protections. "This is what democracy looks like." Please figure out a way to fund the schools and essential services in this city.

Inde Francis, Westhampton, urged the city not to renew L3Harris's business certificate which is set to expire in April of this year. He also complained about the inadequate notice of the street clearing Saturday night. He had a number of friends who were towed and received poor treatment by the towing companies and offices because adequate notice wasn't given.

Al Simon, Ward 2, asked the City Council to suspend its rules requiring two readings for the financial order for \$600,000 for Northampton Public Schools (NPS) and to approve that appropriation tonight. This is an urgent situation for which there is no excuse for ignorance. Harm from the mayor's cuts to public education were loudly predicted by many who spoke to them. The idea of a midyear appropriation started last fall; the council even discussed the matter in January before rejecting the request. Council also recognized the severity of the harms caused by these cuts when it approved a midyear appropriation to restore two positions to head off a likely legal matter. The School Committee heard searing testimony about the impacts of these cuts on staff, students and families. The impacts include the on-camera resignation of the JFK autism program leader, dozens of Workman's Comp. claims and student IEP's routinely not being fulfilled. "The power is in your hands tonight to finally act." He sat in this room a few weeks ago and heard them suspend their rules for a nonurgent matter - to improve the sound system in this room. The crisis in their schools is urgent.

Thursday, February 13th, Jessica Terry, director of the autism program at JFK, resigned, **Lisa Modenos of Northampton**, reported. In her statement to the School Committee, she said she could no longer deal physically or mentally with the crisis at JFK Middle School. This is a devastating loss for the district and for autistic children at JFK. Ms. Terry has been a steadfast presence and support for so many autistic middle schoolers for years. The crisis in their schools due to budget cuts has taken another victim and this one is huge. She is terrified of what it will mean for her disabled son and all their special education children and the educators who support them, who were already struggling before she resigned. The crisis, particularly as related to special education, has reached emergency status. Anyone on council even remotely denying it at this time is not fit to hold elected office. She thanked the School Committee for recommending this appropriation; no thanks to the mayor for submitting it without recommendation. To the City Council, please suspend the rules tonight and vote to approve this appropriation. Some reminders: mid-year hires happen all the time in public education and the so-called quality of hires does not decrease depending on the time of year. Employees who take positions, even temporary ones, willingly, work as hard as anyone else. Some folks want to have a conversation about next year's budget in relation to the appropriation, including councilors. These cuts and the trauma they have caused to the brains and bodies of children must be mitigated now. Please do not deny their children the help they need now because of next year's potential rainy season.

Carrie Foley, Ward 5, a special education teacher at **Bridge Street**, said that, in the six years she has worked there, they have always struggled to meet the needs of special education students due to the lack of resources, training and staffing. When they meet as a special education team, their now retired school psychologist would always tell them, 'the cavalry is not coming.'

Their building wasn't okay last year prior to budget cuts, but they've all continued each day, each week and each month, focusing on the students, meeting as many needs as they can in one day and forgiving themselves each day that they can't.

"Our school cannot continue to function this way." She does not understand why the Mayor believes she cannot advocate or support helping to alleviate significant building struggles now because it wouldn't be reliable in the future. At Bridge Street, three staff members who provide special education services for their highest needs students resigned this month. For them, one month of funding to support more staffing and support could have been the difference between staying and leaving. Their building will struggle significantly in coming months due to the loss of well-loved and dedicated staff. Right now, they could fund full-time office clerks in all buildings. They could fund much-needed reading and math interventionists and teachers and paras in buildings that are experiencing overrun. They could certainly take a step tonight to show students, staff and families in the city that they support temporarily helping them for the rest of the school year. In the 23 years she has been teaching, she has witnessed countless midyear and end of year hirings, including many capable staff members. Three months of funding to support their buildings might not seem like a lot, but it is a significant amount of time in their teaching and learning environment.

Jerry Halberstadt, Peabody, the coordinator of the **Stop Bullying Coalition**, a statewide network for the rights of tenants, spoke to a general issue affecting the Northampton Housing Authority (NHA) as he understands they are considering the appointment of a commissioner. He has watched some of the board meetings and been in touch with tenants and employees. Some tenants and staff may experience bullying, mobbing and hostile environment harassment, forms of aggression that create fear, stress and take away the peaceful enjoyment of tenant victims. Investigations are past due on allegations of bullying and malfeasance. As an outside observer, it seems that the board as a whole has not been carrying out its fiduciary duty and the one commissioner who has tried has not been enabled to look into concerning allegations. A major change in government and community relations is in order, an example of why they need legislation to create oversight and accountability. Support HD1704 to create an office of tenant advocates, he urged. Whomever they choose for a commissioner, he wishes them every success.

Deb Henson, Northampton, describing herself as being relatively new to the city having been here seven years, said she fell in love with this city but is deeply concerned with what she has been seeing over the last year and a half with school underfunding. She speaks to them not just as a resident but as a former school social worker for the New Orleans public schools. They have the potential here to have great everything. She does not believe the current underfunded schools are what the majority wants. She thinks money has been well-handled. She used to meet monthly with former Mayor David Narkewicz when she was president of the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association and was impressed with the idea of reserves. "I don't believe that we have to make an either/or choice," a robust stabilization fund or well-funded schools and city services. She urged councilors to support the midyear appropriation and suspension of the rules.

Laurel Frangelo, Ward 3, seconded or thirded support for the midyear appropriation. She has two kids at JFK, one with an IEP in the autism program. "Our kids deserve better."

Nathan Chung, Ward 4, a city government employee but making comments as a general member of the public, said he emailed his public comment to the council clerk this morning so it is a matter of public record. He asked that the midyear appropriation order be carefully considered. The underlying idea might be fine but the process is the problem. A lot of bullying and murkiness at the School Committee led to the order before them. He personally had a negative experience with his Ward 4 School Committee member Mike Stein who was the leader in this order. He verbally interrupted and stopped the mayor and other people during the February 13th meeting and said he knew he violated decorum.

Based on Member Stein's potential disregard of School Committee policies, including the ethics code, murky rationale for coming up with \$600,000, his bullying behavior and his communication with him, a constituent, that show shortcomings in his professional competence and empathy, he asked them to carefully consider the order because it came out of bullying and dysfunction. Even if the amount and underlying concept might be fine, there are no details and no consideration for other people. He asked the council for at least two readings and when it's time to vote, to vote 'no.' He'll go into details, including some detailed documents and links that show his conduct. In these difficult times, they all need to come together and recognize their individual dignity and humanity and need for safety.

He submitted his public comment in writing to the clerk.

Ian Goodman, Ward 1, said councilors have heard from the School Committee, families and teachers about the devastating consequences of the lack of funding of their school district. He came before them and told them about his eight-year old's classroom of 26 children. He's going to tell them about somebody else today; someone he saw at work, also eight years old. Not a Northampton student but very easily could have been. Bullied at school (he reminded councilors that budget cuts eliminated some people students trust to talk to), bullied on the playground (there's fewer adults monitoring that now) and bullied on line. ("You've managed to cut counselors," he observed.) He came to see him because he wrapped a belt around his neck at eight years old and his younger brother found his body. "That is one of the consequences of your lack of action tonight," he charged. It's not a matter of when, it's not a matter of if; it's going to happen. When you remove resources from struggling children, they get hurt. There was nothing he could do for that child; there is everything they can do tonight.

<u>Recess</u>	<u>Recess</u> The City Council recessed briefly at 7 p.m. The council reconvened at 7:05 p.m.
<u>Public Comment (continued)</u>	<u>Public Comment (continued)</u> Raymond Paquette, Black Birch Trail , said the city needs to reconsider the idea of requiring individual property owners to keep sidewalks clear; it doesn't work and isn't enforced. The city plows the roads so people in cars can get around; they should clear the sidewalks so people not in cars can get around. Councilor Dubs said he couldn't get here tonight because the sidewalks weren't cleared; that's appalling.

He urged the council to approve the midyear appropriation. Referring to money in reserves as 'one-time funding' is disingenuous because it's actually money that should have been allocated and budgeted in past years, he asserted. With respect to the idea that it's unsustainable to take money from the General Fund to fund the schools; "what's unsustainable is to underfund our schools;" he insisted. Northampton will lose students, staff and residents to other towns because they no longer have great public schools. "We do right now. Let's not let them become not great. . . underfunding the schools is not sustainable."

Heidi, Ward 3, reported that on October 17th, the NHA executive director had a meeting with the local tenants' organization (LTO). She was yelling on the phone to the mini split contractor that he had to fire some of his people because they were having sex with tenants. It was not reported to the board or any of the staff. The following week she was in the hallway with the contractor and he took a picture of her surreptitiously. She filed a case with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). The board was blocking the one commissioner trying to do something about this and all the other corruption going on at the housing authority. The executive director slandered her and accused her of having sex with them, which is not true. She is going to start holding the board members accountable and also holding the mayor accountable because the mayor is not insuring that board members understand their job. They are acting like the executive director is their boss. Board members are supposed to hold the executive director accountable for following her job and make sure she doesn't mistreat the tenants, like Elizabeth Silver did. "What's going on right now is abuse."

Martha Ebner, Northampton, said she is here to ask them all to work together to support their students and their public schools. She and every person in this town want what's best for their kids. A group of outspoken citizens claim to be the only people who care about their children; that's simply not true. There are clearly issues in the public schools that need addressing. She asks; does allocating \$600,000 for this limited time without a plan make sense? She suggested following Dr. Bonner's recommendation to plan for next year to support the schools as part of a long-term fiscal strategy and to ask the School Committee to do the hard work of figuring out how to use the resources available to support children most in need.

Mareatha Wallace, Sunderland, a **paraprofessional** at **JFK**, commented that, for the last two years, she has worked with Jess Terry in her program. She's amazing and the fact that the district is losing her as an educator is tearing her heart out. Since she doesn't think a lot of people are listening and they are being told they're being divisive by continuing to bring the underfunding of the schools to the public, the mayor and to anyone who will listen, she is going to be silent for the remainder of her time so she can think about people like Jess Terry and other teachers who have put in their resignations and those students who are being harmed. (She sat without speaking for 45 seconds.)

Benjamin Spencer, Northampton, expressed appreciation to the DPW for its work in the recent storm, which was unlike any they'd seen in quite a while. He saw the plows out continually. As the DPW director said, it was like an ice storm stuck between two snow storms; it was a mess. He wanted to make sure the DPW knows that a lot of people appreciate their hard work.

[On an unrelated topic], two weeks ago, an appointment to the Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC) was approved 8:0 with one abstention. The reason given for the abstention was that the councilor hadn't had enough time to learn about the applicant. There was ample time to prepare for that meeting. The application the individual filed four years earlier was included in the meeting minutes and he met with someone from City Services. If the councilor had questions, she could have reached out to the councilor who did the interview. To abstain and express concern that commissions are being filled by people who are just going to be a 'yes' vote, thereby calling into question the integrity of a citizen, he finds 'not cool.'

Michael Stein, Ward 4 School Committee member and chair of **Budget & Property Subcommittee**, said they have a moral choice before them. They have an opportunity to right some of the consequences from the budget passed last year. They are lucky to live in a city with surplus revenue every year and can figure out how to adequately fund their schools this year and going forward; all it takes is a political choice to do so. For the past eight months, he hasn't heard anything about opting in. City Council doesn't have to be spectators, they can take an active role in this process. The process for deciding what to do with the \$600,000 is to determine what needs exist from the ALT team, which is already compiling requests for additional needs ahead of next year's budget process. Lists have been developed; they also received a lengthy list form Bridge Street educators today. There is no shortage of what the money could do to support teachers and students. He was befuddled by the memo accompanying this order. The vote the School Committee took did not specify a per pupil allotment. For a city in federal court over a student suicide, he thinks they all need to take bullying and the profound role understaffing and under-resourcing plays in the risk to their kids a little more seriously.

Karen Hildago, Ward 1, a 28-year resident who watches City Council and School Committee meetings regularly, said she grew up in Hopkinton and moved to Ashland, MA at the age of 16 to live in a foster

home as a ward of the state. She mentions this because it gave her a certain perspective on the role of government in caring for people. She wanted to attend a large public university and so went to UMass and majored in plant and soil science. After graduation, she decided she wanted to go into education and, at 28, went back to UMass for school counseling. She worked in Easthampton and Turners Falls before starting work at Northampton High School (NHS) in December of 2014. She is a school counselor and department chair but speaking as a concerned citizen. Her children attend NHS. There are great things about NHS and also a lot of challenges. She chose to live in Northampton because of its diversity and commitment to progressive values. In her decades here, Northampton has chronically underfunded its schools. For a long time, the district kept the high school understaffed and teachers earned some of the lowest pay in the state. The city has finally begun to turn that around. However, school staff need to be paid well without losing resources. When federal pandemic funds were discontinued, the city had no plan for how to support its children. It was predictable they would still be struggling. Students are struggling. What are they going to do about it?

Amber Clooney, Ward 5, said Northampton schools are clearly suffering from decades of underfunding, which is why people have to pay for the school bus, don't have musical instrument instruction starting in elementary school and why the high school band has to run fundraisers to get its uniforms cleaned. None of this is normal or what she would expect from a city purporting to value education. She is here because the mayor's budget has put the schools in such a crisis that they're asking for emergency funds. She will be back to ask for the extras but, right now, she is asking for a commitment to provide the children the literal basics of care; to meet not just their moral but their legal responsibility to them. Please vote to fund the schools tonight.

Brian Wilby, Ward 5, said he has three children in Northampton Public Schools (NPS), two at Ryan Road and one at JFK. He is asking the council to suspend its rules today and approve the midyear appropriation recommended by a supermajority of the School Committee. There was significant public comment at last week's School Committee meeting. Commenters described major shortcomings affecting staff and student safety and educational services, particularly among high needs students. From public meetings, he understands Superintendent Bonner has spent significant time with her ALT team and has a plan to address the immediate needs at NPS that the entire School Committee acknowledges. While the midyear appropriation only addresses FY2025, it is within the mayor's power and the city's means to ensure these funds continue into FY2026 so these services will be available to students on an ongoing basis. Please approve this proposal.

JoElla (Jada) Tarbutton, Northampton, said she came tonight because she knows two potential board members for the NHA are on the agenda and she thought she would be able to sneak a peek and see who they are and say hello. As far as the snow and ice, it's been terrible and she heard the crews all night scraping. "We really had a whoop-de-doo here." She used to work in teaching in Springfield and what people talk about now would have been wonderful to have then. She hears people say they have been coming to City Council and school council meetings. That's wonderful, but there's also public housing and a lot of people in public housing have children who go to school in Northampton. "Don't forget about us; we matter!"

She asked the council to please give them some money for security at Salvo House since tenants there are almost captives to the drug traffic going on.

Gwen Nabad, Ward 1, said her grandfather was the Superintendent of Schools in Marlborough, MA for 25 years. In those days, school systems could turn students away because of their disabilities. She went to apply for an apartment in her 20's and the landlord chose not to rent to her because her grandfather had caused his family harm by not supporting the education of his little sister. My grandfather's decision not to fund educating his sister had a lifelong impact on him and there he was telling her in his 60's how he himself had to quit school and help take care of his disabled little sister. She knows they like to think they're immune from that sort of harsh, cold reality in the United States but it does seem increasingly like there is a real struggle. If people are reporting there are special needs students in crisis, the teachers are in crisis and she asks them to apply this stop gap measure, this \$600,000. She would like everyone to consider the most vulnerable students, the public housing families.

Janet Kyle, Leeds, said she doesn't need to repeat all the reasons why they believe they should be voting to spend this money. She is here as a citizen and taxpayer to urge them to do the right thing. She is not going to be nice about it. She is not going to be accommodating. Too many people in this town have been too accommodating and nice. Please do not behave like the politicians on the national stage; please do not just be a 'yes' person to the Mayor. Please do the right thing and don't continue to lie to them and raise their taxes on water bills and property. There is no reason not to spend the money on the schools when they have in excess of \$11 million. "The children are our future and we need to invest in them."

As a physician (pediatrician) for 20 years, **Melissa Maciborski, Northampton**, said what that experience has taught her is that empty words do not help children; words need to be followed by actions. She is hoping nobody looks at that \$11 million surplus and tells them they can't have a \$600,000 midyear appropriation to reduce some of the harm the city has caused. She has noticed that a lot of councilors are on their cell phones during public comment. Mareatha Wallace asked people to pause and think about the harm that's been done to children and, during that time, some people were texting. She said she was going to give them another chance and use the rest of her time to ask everyone to please think about the harm that has been and is being caused. "Please put down your cell phones and think about the children of Northampton that are being harmed," she requested.

She repeated her request several times, saying she hopes they all notice who's paying attention to the comments and to the harm being caused to children.

Debra, Florence, said she is here to ask for the midyear appropriation and that they suspend the rules. There needs to be a lot of organization around the budget. She agrees \$600,000 is just a temporary band aid but they are in a massive emergency. IEP's are not being met; the law is being broken. "Kids are being hurt." She thinks budget and property is changing and will be moving forward. Referring to the list of injuries, "that's what happens when these kids aren't supported," she observed. "Please vote for this temporary fix." Everybody in city government needs to work to make sure this doesn't happen next year.

Nykole Roche, Ward 3, read aloud an email she sent this morning. "As you know, the School Committee voted on February 13th by a supermajority to make a midyear \$600,000 appropriation to alleviate some of the harms being done in our public schools as a result of the city's defunding efforts. I'm urging you to vote tonight to suspend the rules and immediately appropriate \$600,000. Our public schools, our students and our educators are in crisis. We cannot wait for another meeting to do something. This midyear appropriation is not enough, but it is something and, in the world of harm reduction, something is better than nothing. So please do something tonight. Thank you."

There being no further comments, Councilor Jarrett ended public comment.

Announcements

Announcements

In the wake of the February 15th through 17th winter storm, Councilor Dubs expressed empathy to residents negatively impacted, thanks and appreciation to the DPW and strongly advocated for the need to take a hard look at the city's snow removal ordinance.

He stressed the importance of remembering they should be able to have conversations in which they can say what they think without others thinking they're complaining or unappreciative. He considers his comments on the snow ordinance to be constructive criticism since it is just not reliable and has not been working for years.

Although acknowledging the particular difficulty of this storm, Councilor Dubs pointed out that, living in New England, bad storms can be expected. With respect to curb cuts and sidewalks, he noted that many people simply don't comply with the ordinance and violations are required to be reported to the police. Police can ticket and issue a \$50 fine but enforcement rarely happens; people are usually given several warnings before they are fined. Many people are not able to shovel or plow their own property due to age, disability or limited mobility. The hope is to be able to rely on family or friends yet people want their city to be there to protect them in those times they're not able to get help from other people.

So many curb cuts are not clear at all and dangerous not just for disabled people but for people walking as well, he reported. Last night, it took four people to help him get into the road, including a UPS driver who got out of his truck and brought out boards to help him. Almost a week after the storm, it's still not possible for him to cross the street. People feel left behind and not cared for by their city, he shared. If residents who use wheelchairs are forced to ride in the middle of the street, "we have a problem," he asserted. He has been saying this for the last six years since he joined the Disability Commission and nothing has changed. The only thing that has changed is climate change.

Councilor Rothenberg said she also wanted to speak to the snow and general governance in the city. She received numerous messages and calls from constituents who were being injured slipping and falling and were slipping down hills in their cars. She tried to call the fire station and got sent to dispatch. Speaking to the dispatcher, she identified herself as the Ward 3 City Councilor and said she needed to talk someone at the DPW and needed some roads closed, among other things. The dispatcher told her she could talk to the DPW tomorrow but she said she needed roads closed before people went to work in the morning and asked if they could have whoever is on call her. She said, "do you know what a city councilor is? I've got to look out for 4,000 people."

The dispatcher said he was not permitted to give out their phone number or to ask the person working to call her; it was a policy.

She replied that she couldn't imagine there was such a policy, but she can imagine it. She's had so many instances where she's tried to get information and access her city government or tried to advocate for her constituents and she has no access, Councilor Rothenberg related. When she reads the city charter, she sees that it is the people of Northampton who hold the power and that their power is vested in their city councilors. Underneath them is the mayor who has to carry out the executive work, which is very difficult. The charter states that any power or duty not specifically set out as belonging to the Mayor belongs to the City Council. "It's City Council's ballgame." She referred to a line saying the mayor is supposed to give directives to city employees.

"That has been so narrowly interpreted that, if the mayor wants it to be that way, city councilors don't have access," she asserted. "Ward 3 does not have access. This is dysfunctional."

Fortunately, she has a more seasoned constituent in her 50's who was willing to be hung up on three times and was finally transferred to a police officer. The police sent someone to one of the intersections identified by the constituent as being dangerous and made the decision to block it off.

Just as parents know when IEP's are being violated, she knows when DPW workers have been instructed not to talk to her. "It's a violation of the 1st amendment. It's not cool," she observed.

When the dispatcher told her all they could do was send sand, she told them to send it to 22 Graves Avenue (her address) so she could at least talk to whoever was on call. She was communicating with a friend by text who knew the person on call and texted them directly. The friend texted her back to let her know the route driver said he is not allowed to talk to any individual along his route. She told her friend to tell him to turn around then since she didn't need sand in front of her house.

This goes on and on and she hopes they can have it on an agenda at some point, Councilor Rothenberg continued. She has had Alan Wolf and Charlene Nardi march her out of a director's office as they were about to meet so she could learn the purpose of an appropriation the council was asked to approve. "This is dysfunctional."

She knows the people of Northampton expect their city councilors to be able to represent them. She knows that is an efficient system and she respects their model of government. "We clearly need to tweak our city charter. We need to tweak how we're interpreting it and who's interpreting it."

She hopes they understand her frustration on behalf of her constituents and her deep appreciation for the DPW. She does think they need their wages raised so they can have more of them. She hopes they'll have lots of information requests and new business. "I need to let everyone know that the charter prohibits me as a single councilor from getting information," she said. She is treated exactly the same as a member of the public. The charter says that only six councilors can make information requests together.

She really hopes the council votes tonight to support the schools and to support her [future] information requests. "But you can see what we're up against here in Ward 3."

The 17th annual Volunteers in Northampton Schools (VINS) dog show is Saturday, March 1st from 12 to 3 p.m. at the high school, Mayor Sciarra announced. Registration is \$8 for those registering their dogs before February 26th and \$12 at the door. Bringing a dog which is not competing is \$5.

Monday, February 24th, at a special meeting in Everett, MA, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is taking up the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School's (PVCICS's) expansion request as well as the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts (PVPA) charter school's request to limit the amount of districts it can accept students from. The City Council's resolution and comments opposing the expansion are already part of the public record for the meeting but Senator Comerford is urging them to resend everything. She requested that the council resend its resolution to the board.

Councilor Jarrett thanked DPW staff for all its work with limited staffing through this difficult storm and acknowledged the difficulties residents have endured. He reminded anyone with safety concerns to reach out to the DPW at dpwinfo@northamptonma.gov or (413) 587-1350 or, after business hours, by calling the non-emergency dispatch number at (413) 587-1100. He thanked property owners who have cleared adjacent sidewalks as required within 24 hours of a storm's end, adding that, if it is not possible to clear snow and ice, the surface should be treated so that it is not slippery.

Councilor Jarrett announced his upcoming office hours as Tuesday, March 4th from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Lilly Library with Ward 4 School Committee Member Ann Hennessey and Thursday, March 6th from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at City Hall and every 1st Thursday at that time.

Presentations

Presentations

Director Nardi presented the 2nd quarter financial report as shown on the spreadsheets attached to the agenda.

Councilors asked questions and offered comments. The Finance Director and Mayor responded to questions related to water and sewer fees, preliminary estimates of FY2025 Free Cash and increased projections for various revenue sources for FY2026, including investment income and Hotel/Motel taxes.

Councilor Rothenberg asked about revenue projections for the Charges for Services (Licenses, Permits, etc.) category, which she noted generated \$1.5 million alone in Free Cash last year. She heard the Finance Director mention that it includes a one-time \$170,000 payment from Smith College for its geothermal system but noted that, in Q2, it is tracking ahead of last year already. She wondered if there is anything the director would add to caution them about looking at that as a potential source of recurring revenue for the schools to offset the \$600,000.

Director Nardi pointed to the extremely high cost of building materials and the \$350 to \$600 per square foot cost of building as potentially having a dampening effect on permit applications. In addition, besides the geothermal permit, other increases in permits over the last two years are also due to the campus-wide building project at Smith College, Mayor Sciarra advised.

Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda

Councilor Jarrett reviewed the items on the consent agenda. **Councilor Rothenberg asked to remove 24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority. Councilor Moulton moved to approve the consent agenda with the item removed. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent.**

The following items were approved as part of the consent agenda:

- A. Minutes of January 16, 2025 Regular Meeting and January 22, 2025 Special Meeting
- B. 25.218 Appointments to Board of Registrars and Northampton Housing Authority, for referral to City Services

Board of Registrars

Robert Boulrice, 127 Hinckley Street

Term: April 2025 - March 2028

Reappointment

Mary Lou Stuart, 15 High Meadow Road

Term: April 2025 - March 2028

Reappointment

Northampton Housing Authority

Ben Wood, 509 Riverside Drive

Term: February 2025 - June 2026

Filling the position of Edgardo Cancel

24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority, positive recommendation, City Services (split 3:1 vote with Councilor Rothenberg opposed) - 2/18/2025

Northampton Housing Authority

Patricia (Patty) Healey, 21 Longfellow Drive

Term: January 2025 - June 2028

Filling the position of Marilyn Richards

Councilor Rothenberg said she spoke to this issue before becoming a city councilor when last there was an appointment to this board. As they heard from some public housing tenants tonight, it is a tenuous situation and a very difficult appointment. She thinks that thoughtfulness in making these appointments requires them to seek people who have lived in public housing. Since she has no information that Ms. Healey has, this will be a no for Ward 3.

	<p>As the City Services Committee Chair, Councilor Moulton said that Councilor LaBarge, who interviewed Ms. Healey, delivered a very strong recommendation for her appointment based on a number of things, including her knowledge of public housing issues from having worked on discharge plans for patients from the Cooley Dickinson Hospital. She also described Ms. Healey as having a good knowledge of issues facing the housing authority, including security issues. Ms. Healey served on the Charter Review Commission he chaired in 2019 and he can speak to her work on that commission. It was challenging to define the mission of the commission and to figure out its focus and Ms. Healey was a fully-engaged participant in that process. From his experience working with her, he is confident she will be a thoughtful, fully-engaged participant on the housing authority.</p>
<p><u>Recess</u></p>	<p><u>Recess</u> Audio problems were reported, so the City Council recessed briefly at 8:46 p.m. With the problem resolved, the council reconvened at 8:55 p.m.</p>
<p><u>24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority</u></p>	<p><u>24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority, positive recommendation, City Services (split 3:1 vote with Councilor Rothenberg opposed) - 2/18/2025 (cont.)</u> Councilor LaBarge elaborated on her interview of Ms. Healey and highly recommended her.</p> <p>Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the appointment. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion passed 6:1 with Councilor Rothenberg opposed and Councilor Maire and Councilor Perry absent by roll call vote.</p>
<p><u>Financial Orders (on 1st reading)</u> <u>25.217 An Order to Make a \$600,000 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading</u></p>	<p><u>Financial Orders (on 1st reading)</u> <u>25.217 An Order to Make a \$600,000 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading</u> Councilor Jarrett noted that the order was submitted by Mayor Sciarra without recommendation. A memo from Superintendent Bonner details the amount of money to go to each school.</p> <p>Last Thursday, the school committee “voted to instruct the Superintendent to request from the City Council and the Mayor a midyear appropriation of \$600,000,” Mayor Sciarra reported. During the meeting, few specifics were presented. Superintendent Bonner asked where the \$600,000 came from as \$452,000 had previously been proposed and Member Stein said, “It’s in part knowing how much we cut and it’s in part knowing what I want to add is things that we had not cut. And it’s an imperfect number.”</p> <p>There was some discussion about whether to include a recommendation that it be rolled into the base. A \$600,000 appropriation for three months would be a \$2.4 million increase for the full year depending on positions and not taking into account health insurance, benefits and unemployment claims, Mayor Sciarra presented. Superintendent Bonner requested that anything at this late stage of the year be rolled in so it could be maintained, noting that Unit A members hired after the start of the year automatically receive pink slips. She said they were looking at some hiring priorities for next year, such as interventionists and a special education teacher at Ryan Road that they could try to hire now if there was a guarantee they could carry over and be built into the base. Member LaBounty was concerned that the requirement of building the \$600,000 into the base would lead to an automatic ‘no,’ so the original motion stood.</p> <p>The discussion came after another hard public comment period including testimony from parents of kids on IEP’s and a special education teacher who said she was resigning because of stress. If one child in the Northampton Public Schools is not receiving the services and support they need, it is a crisis for that student, the student’s family and the entire Northampton community, since every child’s well-being is their shared responsibility, Mayor Sciarra acknowledged. In a crisis, they must do all they can, but they can’t fixate on what they can’t do at the expense of exploring all they can do. As one School Committee member said, If they can’t [re]hire all the staff, “we need to let the community know that we hear them and we care about them and that we acknowledge their pain.”</p> <p>She thinks she speaks on behalf of every elected official in city government when she says that they do hear, care and acknowledge the pain that has followed the loss of NPS positions, and it is exactly the sort of disruption they should never risk repeating, Mayor Sciarra said. What causes disruption is making commitments for recurring expenditures without having the needed revenue. Without identified revenue to sustain a commitment, they would very soon face another shortfall and another round of disruptive cuts. In a crisis they must do all they can. She entered this office during a crisis - the pandemic - and at the onset of a budget crisis which she talked about in 2022. During her tenure, they have stretched the budget more and more to provide every possible</p>

sustainable dollar to their children's education. That is why the last three years were the only years in the last three decades with annual increases in the city's contribution to NPS of at least five percent (5.07%, 7.41% and 8.99%, respectively, to be exact).

Does this mean the schools have enough? Absolutely not. Until there is a sea change both nationally and statewide, she doesn't think schools will ever have enough.

She is never going to stop trying to steer more money toward their schools but it has to be sustainable funding. If the only thing they can do will make the situation much worse very quickly, it is not a solution.

She is in the early stages of preparing the FY2026 budget in the midst of an unbelievable amount of economic uncertainty, from potential economic shocks from a destabilized national economy to the huge potential loss of federal grants, she related. At this time, she cannot tell them how this increase could be sustainably incorporated into the FY2026 budget. Some have suggested that they use more aggressive budget estimates to generate more upfront revenue to schools and less Free Cash. They have already used more aggressive estimates for the current fiscal year and are pushing revenue for FY2026 to sustain the \$2 million transfer from the Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF). If draining the reserves would solve the problem, she would drain the reserves. No one has an emotional attachment to reserves. However, all this would do is lead to a giant deficit once the reserves are drained, leading to severe staff cuts and less money for all long-term needs. She has spent years in public office advocating for educational funding. She came into office with a pledge of an annual 4% increase for NPS and has gone beyond that every year. It breaks her to be in a position where she can't advocate for an additional appropriation for the schools. It doesn't mean there's nothing else they can do for the schools, but it's very hard to if they keep having the same discussion about state and federally-recommended fiscal management practices. "We can't repeat past budgetary mistakes. We need less confrontation and more collaboration."

Acknowledging the energy and love for the schools in this room and in the larger community, she expressed her hope that, however they vote on this order, they can come together afterwards to do right by their teachers, administrators, staff and students.

Dr. Bonner responded to questions and comments from councilors. Councilor LaBarge asked about the testimony related to teachers and students being injured.

The list read by the NASE executive board member may have represented just a few or recurring students, Superintendent Bonner noted. Injuries listed were for this school year and there was no comparison with a base from last or previous years. She doesn't want to submit that there are not problems, particularly at Bridge Street School. There are specifics and details related to each student and she doesn't want to share confidential information but she will talk about school staff.

Particularly at Bridge Street, there were some vacancies in terms of paraprofessionals and a BCBA and they had 30 additional new students come to Bridge Street, the majority of whom had IEP's, she explained. There was moving and reshuffling to meet the hours and commitments to those IEP plans. They also had a new Director of Student Services come on board and some internal issues. Paraeducators have an assignment but are pulled to cover classroom assignments or other duties. When they are unable to get subs, they utilize paraeducators to fill in. There are multiple factors contributing to the concerns families are lifting up. They are trying to meet their IEP obligations and know that, when staff are out, they are not in compliance. This year they really relied on the resources they currently have to meet those needs.

As a factor playing into the current situation, Dr. Bonner referred to the decision five years ago to eliminate some of the specialized programs for high needs students, particularly at the elementary schools. Administrators are rethinking that process and their Director of Student Services is guiding and leading them into restoring some of those programs within the current budget.

In response to questions about the timeline required to bring on additional staff, as of Monday, 15 weeks remain in the school year, Dr. Bonner advised. Assuming a two-week posting and two-week interviewing process, new hires would have 11 weeks to work. They would post them as temporary positions with the possibility of becoming full-time.

Her two concerns about the short time frame are the quality of the applicants and the temporary nature of the positions. Someone employed full-time is not going to leave their current position to accept a temporary job, Dr. Bonner suggested.

Councilor Klemer made the comment that nobody was talking about where the money was going to come from to make the positions more permanent.

To her point, Councilor Jarrett screen-shared the General Fund (GF) Fiscal Stability Plan projection worksheet from FY2025 to FY2030 presented during the January 30th joint School Committee/City Council meeting. He walked those present through an exercise showing how the city's finances would play out with the status quo (without approving the \$600,000 midyear appropriation) and with the proposed appropriation, highlighting some of the budget's built-in assumptions.

He expressed his willingness to meet with anyone to go over the plan together, plugging in different assumptions to come up with alternative plans to determine their feasibility.

In the 'status quo' scenario, an override is projected to be needed to balance the budget in FY2028, and so would have to be approved in FY2027, Councilor Jarrett indicated.

In response to questions from councilors, Director Nardi explained the basis for some assumptions.

Councilor Rothenberg interrupted to say that the exercise was not useful to her because it is based on projections and not an accurate accounting of actual revenue.

Councilor Jarrett stressed the need to play out the effects of changing the assumptions so that they know where they will be in five years.

There is a very good chance there will be a different Mayor, Councilor Rothenberg contended. "We need you to get us safely through 2026," she stressed. "We need to get safely through those 11 weeks."

She referred to the devastating effects traumatic situations in a child's early life can have on their life as a whole.

Councilor Rothenberg moved to suspend the rules. Councilor Dubs seconded.

Councilor Jarrett said he hears everybody's testimony. The testimony at the School Committee is heartbreaking; it is a crisis but it is not responsible to not understand and have an accurate picture of what their decisions will do to their finances in the future. For himself, he will need to see and agree with the facts of what the financial implications will be before he is ready to vote.

Councilor Maiore asked if he was done with his demonstration, and Councilor Jarrett said he thought it could be useful to understand what it would take to roll in the midyear appropriation.

If they were to roll in the \$600,000, they would be able to balance the budget this year, but it would require an override in the next couple of months to balance the budget for FY2026, he concluded.

He plugged in a \$5 million override for demonstration purposes, showing that, in this scenario, another \$5 million override would be required in FY2030 to balance the budget for FY2031. The question is whether a \$5 million override would be something the electorate would support, he suggested.

Councilors expressed their feelings about the appropriation.

"We have a crisis in funding which has resulted in a crisis in our schools," Councilor Moulton noted. They have assaults being reported, IEP's not being followed and honors courses no longer offered. They have to figure out how to address this over the next several years, not just for the next 11 weeks. "We have to figure out how we're going to best use the resources we have available so we are really addressing the most important problems that we've heard about from parents and staff."

Observing that the Mayor spoke with compassion, Councilor Moulton asserted his confidence that she is a compassionate person who cares about how the schools are serving families and children in their community.

He asked the superintendent to address Member Stein's comment that the School Committee's motion did not involve a per pupil allocation as proposed in her accompanying memo.

There was no clear directive for how the money would be allocated, Dr. Bonner reiterated. NPS has six schools and 2,500 students. Not having the opportunity to speak to her administrators right away, in order to be fair, she decided to allocate the money on a per pupil basis.

Councilor Maiore thanked the Mayor for bringing this forward despite her clear reservations. "One thing we do know is that we need periodic overrides," she affirmed. She is interested in rolling this in, she confirmed.

She appreciates the interactive tool but one thing it does not take into consideration is the monetary cost of underfunding their schools and having students fall behind. "That is going to cost us money if we do not address it." This is an opportunity to address some of the harm they've been hearing about, she observed. She respectfully disagrees with the mayor that what they're seeing in the schools was caused by the use of school choice funds. It was caused by their taking away a lot of staff. "We cut 20 positions and now we're having problems in the schools." She wants them all to hold the cost of not doing anything; those costs are going to keep going up the more they wait.

She asked if Dr. Bonner thinks additional funds and restoring some of these positions will help alleviate some of the immediate crises going on in the schools.

'Yes and no,' Dr. Bonner said. Even [with] putting more bodies in the school, she still needs current staff to work together as a team and be committed to their positions. There's something to be said about - not 'adding bodies' - but adding specific positions to work with students, she allowed. In adding positions back, it's important to realize she still needs those to step up to the plate in doing the work. "We find that our staff have been doing that," she hastened to add. "They've been working very, very hard with the resources that are given to them."

The key is that the needs of their students are changing. "We're dealing with behaviors that some of our staff have never ever had to deal with." Some of their staff are tired and burned out and this is reflected in attendance and in how they collaborate and work together.

She's not going to say yes or no or comment on whether she feels there is a crisis. "We're public education; there's always going to be a crisis," she commented. "We as public educators know how to work with the resources that are given us."

Some of their families have been affected by the cuts and are concerned about not only now but how this is going to impact their children in future years; i.e., are they going to fall more behind.

Yes, there are needs but her fear is the implication of bringing in positions now and not being able to continue them. If they're saying there's a need, it's not just for 11 weeks. The request should be thought out and should be long term.

When asked if she was saying she didn't think adding staff would help mitigate some of the immediate crises, Dr. Bonner said, "some of them, yes it would." It depends on the position and what's being restored.

Luckily, that's a decision she would get to make, Councilor Maiore pointed out.

Dr. Bonner asked if there is a way they could allow the funds to build up their school choice reserve account if they aren't able to expend the whole \$600,000.

They've had some vacancies throughout the year because of difficulty in filling positions, she noted. Bridge Street has a need for a math and reading interventionist. Most of the elementary school principals would like to restore a full-time clerical position. There's a request for a couple of special education teachers, a new one for Bridge Street and restoration of the one reduced at Ryan Road.

High School is trickier because students are already in their second semester so their classes are fixed.

It's very exciting to even talk about restoring some of these positions, and she really hopes this council gives her that opportunity, Councilor Maiore said.

Councilor Dubs said Dr. Bonner's 'yes' is enough to convince him that if they can solve any of this crisis now they should be doing that. Eleven weeks in a child's life is extremely important and significant. He thanked the School Committee for giving them the opportunity to make this midyear appropriation. He completely agrees they are in a time of great national uncertainty. One of the

populations most uncertain about their future is people with disabilities who are at great risk of losing health care and financial support from the government. As a local government, he thinks they should be doing everything they can to protect them.

"We have this power right now to appropriate this money. I can't see any reason not to do it."

Councilor Elkins said she appreciated Councilor Jarrett's demonstration. Dr. Bonner said yes and no, and she really worries about the part she said 'no' about - the inability to sustain the jobs. She personally would vote for a big override because that's the only way to generate the kind of recurring revenue needed to allow them to keep increasing as long as the state is not helping them. With how Councilor Rothenberg and Michael Stein have talked about overrides in the past, "it's terrifying what we have done to the electoral prospects of even a small override," she observed.

She referred to overrides as 'the only tool in their tool shed,' noting they aren't taking care of this tool when they don't keep promises they make when campaigning for overrides and when they sow mistrust and spread misinformation about the fiscal stability and fiscal management of the city. If this passes, she hopes it will be with the idea that it would be rolled into the base and that they would work together to generate the revenue.

That's not what she saw in the last budget season and, quite frankly, it gives her a lot of pause about whether this is the right solution and the right thing to do now. She is not in favor of suspending the rules; she thinks there are too many unanswered questions.

Councilor Moulton said he is not ready to vote tonight because of the unanswered questions either. It is still perplexing to him how the \$600,000 figure was derived. The last time they were discussing a midyear appropriation, Councilor Maiore presented a chart listing specific positions.

Dr. Bonner said she asked the same question to the School Committee last Thursday and there was no clear response.

Part of the reason she's interested in suspending the rules is that these questions don't come up when they talk about other expenditures, Councilor Rothenberg asserted. When Alan Wolf and Director Nardi marched her out of a department head's office, it was about Memorial Hall. \$500,000 was requested waiving second reading with little explanation. This mayor comes to this council with requests like that with her recommendation. The schools are treated so differently.

"We just want you to put your votes on the record. We don't want to wait two more weeks to hear you say 'no' again," she said.

His votes are all on the public record and he has never abstained from a vote, Councilor Moulton retorted.

Councilor Jarrett called the motion to suspend the rules to a vote, and **it failed 3:5 by roll call vote with Councilor Dubs, Maiore and Rothenberg in favor, Councilor Elkins, Jarrett, Klemer, LaBarge and Moulton opposed and Councilor Perry absent.**

Members discussed how to proceed. Councilor Maiore expressed a desire for a clear directive as to what councilors expect to accomplish if they choose to refer it to Finance.

Councilor Moulton pointed out that a quick calculation showed an override being needed almost immediately if a \$600,000 midyear appropriation is rolled into the FY2026 budget. He would like to hear more discussion about that from the Mayor and finance director. He would also like to hear from Dr. Bonner what some priorities are for the use of that money.

Councilor Jarrett agreed. Based on this preliminary calculation, rolling this into the base would not be feasible, he stated. He wondered if there were some smaller amount that could be rolled in to address key concerns/critical needs and what the tradeoffs for doing so might be.

Councilor Maiore said she would support any amount of money going to the schools as soon as possible. Let's face it, \$600,000 isn't enough to bring their schools to where they want them to be. How do they go to the superintendent or school committee to try to find a lesser amount, she wondered. How do we pose that question to the schools?

Councilor Moulton moved to refer the order to Finance. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed 6:1 with Councilor Elkins opposed, Councilor Rothenberg abstained and Councilor Perry absent.

Orders

25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement - 1st reading

25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion - 1st reading

Orders

25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement - 1st reading

25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion - 1st reading

This is really just getting the ball rolling to be able to apply for Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funds for these two projects, Mayor Sciarra presented.

The MSBA is offering a new accelerated repair program this year that covers roof replacement and heat pump conversion, Dr. Bonner explained. The base rate is 31% and they look at community income, wealth and poverty to determine if the project is eligible for additional reimbursement.

The JFK roof replacement is on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for 2030. As they know, the roof system was completed back in 1997 with a 15-year warranty. It is nearing the end of its useful life with an increase in cracking and seam separating. The city has spent approximately \$22,000 in various repairs.

The other Statement of Interest is for heat pump conversion. Going with the city's plan to be carbon neutral they are looking to change out some of the existing boiler systems to be more energy efficient. The boilers at JFK are non condensing with a maximum efficiency of about 83% installed in 1986 and therefore expected to need replacement by 2030. Conversion would allow for a high-efficiency cooling system with the added benefit of providing cooling to the entire building.

The Statement of Interest (SOI) does not bind them to anything.

Councilor Rothenberg said she heard the School Committee's discussion in which they approved the SOI and referred it to their own Budget and Property Committee so she's comfortable suspending the rules.

Councilor Rothenberg moved to suspend the rules for the orders as a group. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent.

Councilor Elkins moved to approve the orders as a group. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent.

The following orders passed final reading:

APPROVED - 25.219
An Order to
Authorize NPS to
Submit an SOI to
MSBA for JFK Roof
Replacement - 1st
reading

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council February 20, 2025

Upon recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement

Ordered, that

The following resolution be adopted by City Council:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 20, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Northampton City Council, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 2025 for the JFK Middle School located at 100 Bridge Road, Florence, MA, 01062, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority as a Priority "5" (Replacement, renovation, or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy-related costs in a school facility) to replace the JFK School roof the roofing material of which is nearing end of life with an increased occurrence of leaks, due to cracking and seams separating; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Northampton Public School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

APPROVED - 25.220
An Order to
Authorize NPS to
Submit an SOI to
MSBA for JFK Heat
Pump Conversion -
1st reading

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council February 20, 2025

Upon recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion

Ordered, that

The following resolution be adopted by City Council:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 20, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Northampton City Council, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 2025 for the JFK Middle School located at 100 Bridge Road, Florence, MA, 01062, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority as Priority "5" (Replacement, renovation, or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation, and decrease energy-related costs in a school facility) for heat pump conversion at the school to eliminate the use of portable air conditioning units which are inefficient and ineffective; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Northampton Public School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

Recess

Recess

The City Council recessed briefly at 10:58 p.m. The council reconvened at 11:05 p.m.

Orders (cont.)
25.216 An Order to
Change the Dates of
Two Council
Meetings - single
reading only

Orders (cont.)

25.216 An Order to Change the Dates of Two Council Meetings - single reading only
Councilor Klemer moved to approve. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion carried unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent.

The following order passed final reading:

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council February 20, 2025

Upon recommendation of Councilors Rachel Maire and Alex Jarrett

O-25.216
An Order

To Change the Date of Two Council Meetings

Ordered, that, the following amendment is made to the [City Council Meeting Schedule 2024-2025](#) as adopted by [24.002 An Order to Set Date and Time of 2024 - 2025 City Council Meetings](#) on January 3, 2024 and further amended by [24.046 An Order to Cancel the April 18, 2024 Council Meeting](#) adopted April 4, 2024.

- Change Thursday, May 15th City Council meeting to Wednesday, May 21st. The FY26 budget will be submitted May 16th and this will give councilors time to consider it prior to the meeting.
-
- Change Thursday, June 19th meeting to Wednesday, June 18th. June 19th is the Juneteenth holiday.

Passed final reading and enrolled.

Resolutions
5.214 A Resolution
Calling for Full
Support of the
Healthy Incentives
Program (HIP) – 2nd
reading

Resolutions
25.214 A Resolution Calling for Full Support of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) – 2nd
reading
Councilor Maire reviewed proposed amendments to add a citation to legislation (SD.829) and direct the council clerk to forward the resolution to local food assistance and farming organizations.

Councilor Jarrett moved to approve the resolution as amended. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent.

The following order passed final reading:



City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In the City Council, February 6, 2025

Upon the Recommendation of Councilor Deborah Klemer, Councilor Marianne LaBarge, and Councilor Rachel Maiore

R-25.214

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FULL SUPPORT OF THE HEALTHY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (HIP)

WHEREAS, In Massachusetts, the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) automatically applies to anyone who receives SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and allows them to receive limited reimbursement when they purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2024, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) cut HIP monthly benefits by at least 50% to \$20 per household per month, regardless of household size from a variable \$40 to \$80 based on household size; and

WHEREAS, HIP serves as a critical tool for nutritional well-being and in the fight against food insecurity and hunger, which is pronounced among low-income residents of Northampton and the Commonwealth, including children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities and chronic illness; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, nearly 200,000 households in the Commonwealth and 10% of households in Hampshire County benefitted from HIP through an increase in their access to healthy local farm foods, and nearly 300 Massachusetts farmers increased their income through HIP sales; and

WHEREAS, HIP serves to decrease the estimated \$2.4 billion in avoidable costs related to food insecurity and hunger in Massachusetts by increasing access to healthy foods; and

25.214

WHEREAS, as a result of this cut to HIP funding, families across Massachusetts are reporting increased food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, vendors at Northampton’s Farmers Markets and farmstands rely on the sales that they receive with the support of programs like SNAP and HIP to sustain themselves, and since the cut to HIP began, farmers from across Massachusetts have reported a 60% drop in HIP sales compelling them to lay off staff and change their business plans to adjust for lowered sales; and

WHEREAS, HIP participation is up 19 percent as compared to last year and the need for state and local governments to support their residents’ nutritional security is likely to increase if federal support dries up; and

WHEREAS, the Northampton City Council recognizes its duty to advocate on behalf of our constituents grappling with food and nutritional insecurity who rely on these critical state-funded programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council calls upon MA Governor Maura Healey, MA Senate President Karen Spilka, MA Speaker of the House Ron Mariano, the MA Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and the MA House Committee on Ways and Means to support an additional \$10 million in a supplemental budget to fully fund the Healthy Incentives Program to ensure food and nutritional security for the people of the Commonwealth; to allocate \$25 million to fully fund HIP in the coming fiscal year’s budget; and to support passage of State Senate bill SD.829, “An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program,” to make HIP a permanent program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Administrative Assistant to the Northampton City Council forward copy of this resolution to each of the individuals and offices named above, as well as to Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra and Northampton’s State Senator Joanne Comerford and State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, and to local food assistance and farming system organizations: CISA, Northampton WIC, Grow Food Northampton, Food Bank of Western MA, Northampton Survival Center, Manna, Cathedral in the Night, and CAPV.

Passed final reading and enrolled.

Adjourn

Adjourn

Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Perry absent. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Attest: _____, Administrative Assistant

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents Reviewed at February 20, 2025 Northampton City Council Meeting

1. February 20, 2025 Agenda
2. Minutes of January 16, 2025 regular City Council and January 22, 2025 special City Council meeting
3. 24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority - Memo from Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to City Council dated January 16, 2025 re: Appointments to Boards, Committees and Commissions proposing the appointment of Patricia (Patty) Healey to the Northampton Housing Authority, together with her application for appointment.
4. 25.218 Appointments to Board of Registrars and Northampton Housing Authority- Memo from Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to City Council dated February 20, 2025 re: Appointments to Boards, Committees and Commissions proposing the appointment of Robert Boulrice and Mary Lou Stuart to the Board of Registrars and Ben Wood to the Northampton Housing Authority, together with their applications for appointment.
5. 25.217 An Order to Make a \$600,000 Midyear Appropriation to NPS
6. Excel spreadsheet entitled, "General Fund Fiscal Stability Plan Projection Worksheet"
7. Memo to Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra from Dr. Portia S. Bonner dated February 14, 2025 Subject: Requesting Additional Funds to Complete Fiscal Year 2025, cc'd to School Committee, Bobbie Jones, Business Administrator and Building Principals
8. 25.216 An Order to Change the Dates of Two Council Meetings
9. 25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement
10. Memo to Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra from Dr. Portia S. Bonner dated February 14, 2025 Subject: SOI for JFK Roof Replacement and Heat Pump Conversion, cc'd to School Committee
11. 25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion

Record of City Council Votes for February 20, 2025		Dubs	Elkins	Jarrett	Klemer	LaBarge	Maiore	Moulton	Perry	Rothenberg	Total
Roll Call by Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council @ 6:30 p.m.		Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Absent	Present	
Approval of Consent Agenda	Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call
Minutes of January 16, 2025 regular meeting and January 22, 2025 special meeting	Consent										
24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority, positive recommendation, City Services Removed from consent agenda											
25.218 Appointments to Board of Registrars and Northampton Housing Authority, for	Consent										
24.211 Appointment to Northampton Housing Authority, positive recommendation, City Services		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Absent	Second Yes		No	Motion carried 6:1; Rothen-berg opposed; Maiore & Perry absent; roll call
25.217 An Order to Make a \$600,000 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading	Suspend rules	Second Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No		Motion to suspend	Motion failed 3:5 w/Elkins, Jarrett, Klemer, LaBarge & Moulton opposed/Perry absent; roll call
	Referred to Finance	Yes	No	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to refer		Abstain	Motion carried 6:1; Elkins opposed; Rothenberg abstained; Perry absent
25.216 An Order to Change the Dates of Two Council Meetings - 1st reading	1st reading	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Second Yes	Yes		Yes	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call
25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement - 1st reading	Suspend rules for 25.219& 25.220 as group	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes		Motion to suspend	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call
25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion - 1st reading											
25.219 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Roof Replacement - 1st reading	Approved as group	Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes		Yes	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call
25.220 An Order to Authorize NPS to Submit an SOI to MSBA for JFK Heat Pump Conversion - 1st reading											
25.214 A Resolution Calling for Full Support of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) -	2nd reading	Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call
Motion to Adjourn	to Adjourn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Motion to adjourn	Yes	Yes		Yes	Motion passed unanimously 8:0; Perry absent; roll call

At 11:15 p.m., Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn; Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 8 Yes, 0 No (Perry absent).