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

A regular meeting of the City Council was called to order by City Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra. At 7:09 p.m. on a roll call the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Ward 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.
Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster
Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash
Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe

At-Large Councilor William H. Dwight
Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett
Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore

At 7:09 p.m., Councilor Sciarra convened the regular meeting. She announced that the meeting was being held by remote participation and audio and video recorded.

Public Hearing
Councilor Sciarra read the following announcements:
Announcement of Public Hearing - City Council Budget Hearings June 3rd and 4th, 2020
BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL, and in accordance with Section 7-4 of the Charter of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, the City Council will hold a Public Hearing to consider the Proposed FY2021 Budget commencing on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 5 p.m. by remote participation and continuing on Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. by remote participation. Instructions for accessing the meetings will be posted on the agendas. The City Council will hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon. The budget is available for inspection by the public on the City of Northampton website at www.northamptonma.gov.

Announcement of Public Hearing - 20.048 National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition #25763215 - two separate petitions, same #)
in accordance with the provisions of Section 22, Chapter 166 of the General Laws, a public hearing will be held on Thursday, June 4, 2020 @ 7:15 p.m. on the petition of National Grid/Verizon New England to erect poles and wires upon, along, under or across one or more public ways. The hearing will be held via remote participation. Please see the agenda for the June 4, 2020 City Council meeting for instructions for accessing the hearing.

Public Hearing on 20.047 National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Fox Farms Road (Petition #29597581)
in accordance with the provisions of Section 22, Chapter 166 of the General Laws, a public hearing will be held on Thursday, May 21, 2020 @ 7:05 p.m. on the petition of National Grid/Verizon New England to erect poles and wires upon, along, under or across one or more public ways. Pole Petition #29597581 - Fox Farms Road.

Councilor Dwight moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

Lisa Jasinski of National Grid said the utility is looking for permission to place a pole on Fox Farms Road approximately 215 feet south of the intersection of Bridge Road and Fox Farms Road. The purpose is two-fold – to raise a wire hanging low between two spans and to get a service line off the roof of a house. The service line for 8 fox farms road crosses its roof. They’d like to get it off the roof and they’d also like to correct those low-hanging wires. She reached out to the property owner of the second house on the right-hand side where the pole is to be located but did not hear back.

Councilor Sciarra asked if anyone else wished to speak in favor or against.

There being no further comments, Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote. The public hearing was closed at 7:15 p.m.
### Updates from Council President & Committee Chairs

The June meeting of the City Services Committee will be held during the June 4, 2020 City Council meeting. Councilor LaBarge reminded it will be an abbreviated meeting to make a recommendation on the appointment of Jonathan Flagg as the Building Commissioner. There will be no regular meeting on June 1st, she confirmed.

### Recognitions and One-Minute Announcements by Councilors

**Recognitions and One-Minute Announcements by Councilors**

Councilor Quinlan gave a quick shout out to three people and organizations to thank them for their cooperation and work on the community food distribution project: Heidi Nortonsmith of the Northampton Survival Center, Alisa Klein of Grow Food Northampton and Mary Clare Higgins of the Community Action Pioneer Valley.

Grow Food Northampton is seeking volunteers Tuesday and Thursday specifically to help pack food packages and deliver them to people in need. It is not a huge time commitment: Tuesday from 9:30 to about 12:30 p.m. and Thursday from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Councilor Maiore invited everyone to join her Saturday morning between 8 and 9 for the Leeds annual clean up sponsored by the Leeds Civic Association. Participants will meet at the Leeds post office. Organizers will be handing out bags while practicing social distancing and people can choose a road and go to their own section if they’d like. She encourage participants to bring garden gloves and a face covering. Trash bags will be provided.

Another Ward 7 announcement is that, sadly, the Memorial Day service they usually have in Leeds on Sunday is cancelled, Councilor Maiore continued. A wreath will be placed, and people may leave a wreath or some sort of message on their own if desired.

### Communications and Proclamations from the Mayor

**Communications and Proclamations from the Mayor**

FY2021 Budget Message

Councilor Sciarr outlined arrangements for reviewing and approving the FY2021 budget. The City Council will hold its budget hearing beginning with presentations from the five largest departments on Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 5 p.m. and continuing on Thursday, June 4, 2020 at 7 p.m. After the close of the public hearing, the City Council will begin its deliberation and take its first vote on the budget orders. The second vote on the budget will be on June 18, 2020.

An item on the agenda tonight is presentation of the FY2021 budget message, she continued. The council will not be deliberating on the budget tonight but the Mayor may entertain general questions that pertain to the budget message itself, she explained.

**Presentation by Mayor David J. Narkewicz**

The charter specifies that the budget submitted by the Mayor to the City Council 45 days prior to the end of the fiscal year include a budget message. Mayor Narkewicz explained. The tradition has been for the Mayor to deliver that message at a City Council meeting. This is the first budget message he has delivered by zoom. He read the budget message in its entirety. (See attachment to original minutes.)

**Discussion**

Councilor Sciarr thanked Mayor Narkewicz for his message. As sobering as it is for them to hear, she knows it was sobering for him and his team to write, she commented. She is awed that he has been able to pull it together while working remotely and under these conditions. She asked if there were any general questions for the Mayor.

Councilor LaBarge thanked the Mayor and Finance Director Susan Wright. It has been very difficult for everybody living in Northampton, and they’ve done an excellent job with this budget book. She also thanked the Mayor’s staff and department heads for their tireless work.

She is really impressed with how fast he’s turned this around having to switch gears, Councilor Maiore volunteered. She is grateful to be in Northampton and to have his leadership. She has been telling people that, despite the beautiful weather, the rainy day is here. She is just curious if Northampton has ever had to have a budget before where there was no annual increase in
spending.

His first budget and second budget was a cut, Mayor Narkewicz said. The original budget submissions in 2014 was a reduced budget which was overturned by an override after the fact. He was a councilor during the so-called great recession when state aid was cut dramatically in the middle of the fiscal year and then-Mayor Mary Clare Higgins had to bring forward some significant cuts. They were facing a $6 million deficit at that time. This is not unprecedented, he confirmed. These economic crises tend to be cyclical. It definitely tends to be tied to periods of economic downtown where there is some sudden loss of revenue or other severe event.

Presentations

None.

Resolutions

None.

Consent Agenda

Councilor Sciarra reviewed the items on the consent agenda, asking if anyone wished to remove an item for separate consideration. Councilor LaBarge moved approval of the consent agenda. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed 9:0 by roll call vote.

The following items were approved as part of the consent agenda:
A. Minutes of May 7, 2020
B. Approve Pole Petition - 20.047 National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Fox Farms Road (Petition #29597581)

Recess for Committee on Finance Meeting

At 7:38 p.m., the City Council recessed for the Committee on Finance meeting. The Committee on Finance adjourned at 7:52 p.m. The City Council reconvened at 7:52 p.m.

Financial Orders (on 1st reading)

20.052 Order Authorizing Acquisition of Easements for Drainage Improvements on Rocky Hill Road (Route 66) - 1st reading

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the order in first reading. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

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

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the order in second reading. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).

The following order passed two readings:
Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.

Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)
20.049 An Order for FY2020 Budget Transfers – 2nd reading
Councillor Dwight moved to approve the order in second reading. Councillor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councillor LaBarge).

The following order passed two readings:
Passed two readings and enrolled.

Orders

Orders

None.

Ordinances (Not Yet Referred)

Ordinances (Not Yet Referred)

None.

Ordinances

20.037 Ordinance Relative to Essential Services and Municipal Facilities – 2nd reading

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the ordinance in second reading. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor La Barge).

The following ordinance passed two readings:

Orders

None.
Passed two readings, ordained and enrolled.

| Information (Charter Provision 2-7) and Information Study Requests | None |
| Motion to Adjourn | Upon motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge). |
| Attest: | Administrative Assistant to the City Council |
City of Northampton
Fiscal Year 2021
Proposed Budget

Mayor David J. Narkewicz

May 18, 2020
Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Message

May 18, 2020

Northampton City Council
City Hall, Room 3
210 Main Street
Northampton, MA 01060

To the Honorable Members of the City Council,

I submit for your consideration and approval my proposed $116,988,993 fiscal year 2021 budget for the City of Northampton in accordance with Article 7, Section 7-3 of our Charter.

The budget is comprised of a $101,074,681 General Fund budget together with four Enterprise Fund budgets for Water ($6,945,000), Sewer ($6,177,500), Solid Waste ($795,326), and Stormwater and Flood Control ($1,996,486). This budget proposal represents a 0.03% decrease from the current fiscal year 2020 City of Northampton budget expiring on June 30, 2020.

This is not the budget I had envisioned drafting on the evening of Tuesday, March 3, 2020, after Northampton voters overwhelmingly approved a $2.5 million Proposition 2 ½ general override renewing our multi-year fiscal stability plan. Just one week later on Tuesday, March 10, 2020, Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our schools and non-essential government buildings were soon closed, the closure of non-essential businesses would soon follow, and our city and state economies were put into what some have described as a “medically induced coma” in an effort to stem the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

With the exception of those businesses and industries deemed essential by the Governor, most of the small, locally owned retailers in our downtown districts have been closed for weeks. Many Northampton residents have been furloughed or laid off from jobs, and unemployment nationwide has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. The pandemic has plunged our economy into a recession that may take years to recover from.

Municipal government has not been spared from the economic impacts of COVID-19. The City of Northampton’s major sources of local revenue like parking, building permits, taxes on hotel/motel, meals, and adult-use cannabis have dropped significantly. We are
projecting a shortfall of up to $1.85 million in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020 and potentially over $2 million in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 alone. The city is also experiencing significant unbudgeted expenses as our public health, public safety, and other city departments respond and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic both now and for the foreseeable future.

The severe economic stress facing Northampton residents and businesses led me to delay implementation of the voter-authorized Proposition 2 ½ property tax increase scheduled to go into effect in six weeks and forgo utilizing any of the $2.5 million in additional tax levy capacity until fiscal year 2022 beginning July 1, 2021. While I feel strongly that we cannot in good conscience implement the tax increase during a combined public health and economic crisis, this decision will put additional stress on an already dire revenue picture.

As I submit this message, we have no updated information on the still pending fiscal year 2021 Massachusetts state budget which in fiscal year 2020 provided 16.63% of the revenue used to fund the city’s budget. In a normal year, both the Governor and House would have completed their respective versions of the budget by now and the Senate would have begun working on its version. With no clear timetable for if and when a state budget will be enacted, we are building our city budget with very conservative state aid estimates knowing that we may need to revisit them later in the fiscal year.

It is in this context of extreme economic disruption and financial uncertainty that I am proposing a city budget representing an overall decrease from the current fiscal year and only a slight increase to the General Fund of less than one half of one percent. Given the high likelihood that additional budget cuts may be needed in fiscal year 2021 and future budget years, it is only fiscally prudent and responsible to trim our sails now rather than deferring what would only be deeper and more severe cuts moving forward. This has required difficult fiscal and personnel decisions.

My proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 eliminates 17.25 full-time equivalent positions across a number of city departments including Building, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Public Works, Parking Enforcement, Senior Services, and Treasurer/Collector. I must lead by example as Mayor, so my own office will shoulder some of these difficult reductions through the elimination of one staff position.

Some of these staff reductions have already occurred through layoffs in the current fiscal year to address our fiscal year 2020 revenue shortfalls. Other reductions involve the elimination of positions left vacant by promotions, transfers, or retirement and, together with any needed reallocation of duties, will net us a projected $613,952 in expenditure reductions to balance our budget.

We have shielded the Health Department and our frontline public safety departments of Police, Fire Rescue, and Emergency Dispatch from any staffing reductions as they are critical to the city’s ongoing response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

We have also worked to hold our public schools harmless from any program or personnel cuts. The education and social and emotional well-being of our city’s children have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown and we know this will require its own recovery process. While not providing the same level of appropriation increases
we had projected in conjunction with passage of an override, both of our public school districts will receive substantial appropriation increases to support their critical educational missions. The two largest expenditure increases in this proposed fiscal year 2021 budget will go to the Northampton Public Schools ($1,118,095) and Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School ($646,747).

The next two largest expenditure increases are among the city’s many fixed costs that by definition cannot be deferred or significantly reduced despite our financial circumstances. Employee health insurance and the city’s required contribution to the Northampton Retirement System will rise $443,632 (3.98%) and $258,205 (4.1%) respectively in fiscal year 2021.

While we are delaying implementation of the March 2020 override and suspending the renewal of the multi-year fiscal stability plan until fiscal year 2022, we will utilize $935,020 from the Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund to balance this budget. This will leave a balance of just over $2 million in that fund which was created with the 2013 override. Combined with our three other stabilization funds we will enter the new fiscal year with over $13 million in total reserves to help us weather the economic and budgetary uncertainty that surely lies ahead.

During the many override town halls I held around the city in the months prior to the COVID-19 emergency, I spent considerable time explaining - and sometimes defending - my determined commitment to rebuilding Northampton’s reserve funds that had been severely depleted following the 2008-2009 “Great Recession.” I am thankful to the City Council for supporting a steady and disciplined approach to replenishing reserves over the last eight years. Our city’s strong reserve position will play a critical role in our ability to successfully navigate the uncharted economic and budgetary waters ahead.

This proposed fiscal year 2021 budget is the ninth budget I have submitted to City Council since being elected Mayor of Northampton. It has easily been the most challenging to compose both logistically - during a state of emergency with city offices being closed and all work done remotely - and because of the difficult fiscal decisions that could not be responsibly avoided or delayed given the very real potential for sustained revenue loss and additional cuts moving forward.

I am extremely proud of our city’s response to the COVID-19 emergency. City employees have rapidly adapted to maintaining core governmental functions remotely while delivering services and vital information. School administrators, teachers, and support staff have worked to continue educating, feeding, and supporting the well-being of our schoolchildren. Public safety departments have worked to keep our community safe and been on the front lines of responding to COVID-19 medical emergencies. Our public health team has led a city and regional response to the pandemic, working to track and contain the virus and issuing critical health guidance and orders to prevent its spread and protect our most vulnerable. Despite the significant fiscal challenges we face in the days and months ahead, your municipal government has and will continue to focus on serving and protecting its residents during this unprecedented public health crisis.

I want to thank our Finance Director Susan Wright for her incredible work on this budget under challenging circumstances. Between the override and our current crisis, she has
had to develop not one but multiple budgets over the last several months and has done so with her usual calm and clear-headed wisdom. Thank you to our city department heads and school superintendents for working with us to make difficult choices to develop this fiscally constrained budget. Thank you as well to the other members of my office staff, Alan Wolf, Annie Lesko, and Court Cline for their assistance compiling and finalizing this document with professionalism and remote teamwork.

I look forward to working with the City Council over the next several weeks to answer any questions about this budget or provide additional information it may need.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Narkewicz
Mayor
EXHIBIT A

List of Documents Reviewed at May 21, 2020 Northampton City Council Meeting:

1. May 21, 2020 Agenda
2. City Council Meeting Minutes of May 7, 2020
3. 20.048A National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition #25763215)
4. 20.048B National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition #25763215)
5. Memo from Felix Harvey, Staff Civil Engineer, to DPW Director Donna LaScaleia dated May 18, 2020 re: 2 Pole Petitions for Joint National Grid/Verizon New Pole Locations No. 29763215
6. 20.047 National Grid/Verizon New England Pole Petition for Fox Farms Road (Petition #29597581)
7. Memo from Felix Harvey, Staff Civil Engineer, to DPW Director Donna LaScaleia dated May 4, 2020 re: Petition for Joint National Grid/Verizon New Pole Locations No. 29597581
8. FY2021 Budget Message
9. 20.052 An Order Authorizing Acquisition of Easements for Drainage Improvements on Rocky Hill Road (Route 66)
10. Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Application for Ice Pond Resiliency Improvements dated July 12, 2019 by the City of Northampton.
11. Rocky Hill Road Order of Taking
12. 20.049 An Order for FY2020 Budget Transfers
13. 20.037 An Ordinance Relative to Essential Services and Municipal Facilities
At 8:02 p.m., Councilor Dwight moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Nash seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 8 Yes, 0 No (LaBarge absent).