



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.
Councilor John Thorpe*

**City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building
Northampton, MA**

Meeting Date: February 6, 2020

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during the City Council Meeting as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 7:41 p.m. Councilor Sciarra called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Gina-Louise Sciarra (Chair), Marianne LaBarge (Vice-Chair), Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. and John Thorpe. Also present from the City Council were William H. Dwight, Karen Foster, Alex Jarrett, Rachel Maiore and Jim Nash.
3. **Approval Of Minutes From The Previous Meeting**
 - A. **Minutes of January 16, 2020**

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of January 16, 2020. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.
4. **Financial Orders**
 - A. **20.018 Order To Appropriate \$25,000 In Whiting Street Trust Funds**

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

The order is pretty self-explanatory, Mayor Narkewicz noted. The city has had the Whiting Street Fund for many, many years. Access to it was sometimes not easy and not well known so administrators decided to revamp the program working with the committee, essentially setting it up as a sort of grant program to work with local agencies that serve the worthy poor. Every year the Treasurer makes a recommendation as to the amount of interest that has accrued and the Whiting Street Fund Committee conducts an RFP process, evaluates grant applications and makes recommendations for funding. Ultimately, the City Council approves the appropriations. He noted that Manna is missing from the list because it did not apply this year. (It has been a recipient of an award for the last few years.) He thanked the Whiting Street Fund Committee

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for its work in making sure Mr. Street's funds actually do get out to serve those most in need in the community.

Councilor LaBarge said changing the way they did it before is excellent. She asked Finance Director Susan Wright how much they actually have in the Whiting Street Fund and she said \$300,000.

Mr. Street gave gifts of principal all up and down the Pioneer Valley, Mayor Narkewicz related. Before, individuals would come to them with requests for funds. It was very challenging for a public body to evaluate the requests because of confidentiality concerns, etc. They think this is a much better model. Committee members have been using food insecurity as the theme for the last several years. He commended the committee.

Councilor Quinlan said he served on the committee for the last two and a half years and it was very rewarding work. With regard to the theme of food insecurity, committee members discussed every single year whether the priority should be food or fuel or housing and they came back to food as being the most basic and essential need. He stepped down from the committee when he joined the council. He has a ton of respect for Rabbi Jacob Fine at Abundance Farm and is sure that the \$10,000 will be well-used; similarly, he is thrilled with Grow Food Northampton and, in former Mayor Mary Clare Higgins' words, the Survival Center walks the very last mile in serving people in need.

He was disheartened when he saw the Salvation Army listed. They have a checkered past with the LGBTQ community and when he saw it Tuesday night he couldn't really sleep right away. In the last 36 hours, he has reached out to people he knows and asked them what they think. One friend said they give to the Salvation Army because they believe in their work. Another friend said, "It's amazing what good work they do." Since it's a trust fund the city manages, he is okay with it and he thinks they should feel good about it; however, if it were his tax dollars he might feel differently. He's thrilled to support this but just wanted to voice that because, as part of their welcoming community, he thought it needed to be addressed.

Councilor Jarrett said he has heard from several Meadowbrook residents about the Thursday neighborhood market Grow Food Northampton runs and how much they appreciate it. He's glad they're supporting it.

The motion passed unanimously with 4 Yes, 0 No by voice vote.

B. 20.019 Order To Reprogram \$7,500 From CS Energy Management System To Senior Center Energy Control Upgrades

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

As described, the money is from a Central Services capital project at the main fire station headquarters for needed upgrades to the energy management system. There is a residual left over from that project and there is a need at the senior center for similar upgrades of the HVAC system. They are seeking to reprogram the money from that project for similar work at the senior center.

There being no questions, Councilor Sciarra called the motion to a vote, and it passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

C. 20.020 An Order To Authorize NPS To Enter MOU For Every Student Succeeds Act

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

This is a new program the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has developed working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), Mayor Narkewicz explained. Some councilors may be reminded of the McKinney Vento program, which provides money for transportation for homeless children sheltered in one community to the school in their home town so they can remain in their home district. The new program is a corollary of that for foster children. It would provide a funding stream for limited reimbursement to districts for transportation expenses. One of the conditions is that the school district enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with EOHHS, DESE and DCF. The local governing body and the mayor have to authorize the local school to enter into the MOU. This is authorizing Northampton Public Schools (NPS) to enter an MOU so it can participate in this foster care program. The School Committee will also take a vote, he confirmed.

Councilor Sciarra called the motion to a vote, and it passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

D. 20.021 An Order To Appropriate Free Cash To NPS For ERATE

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

E-rate is a long-standing program, Mayor Narkewicz advised. It is a way most public schools receive funding for telecommunication/internet service. A small fee is collected on phone bills and that money is compiled and distributed by a non-profit designated by the FCC and comes back to schools. Schools get the money on a formula basis. It is a separate grant program to replace old technology equipment in classrooms, provide teachers with newer audio-visual (AV) and interaction technology and replace networking equipment. Normally the money goes straight to the schools but under this program it flowed to the city as undesignated revenue. The money was received by the city and administrators are asking the City Council to appropriate it from the undesignated fund to the schools. He clarified that the city is acting as a pass through and is not the source of funds.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

5. New Business

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

None.

6. Adjourn: There being no further business, Councilor Quinlan moved to adjourn. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

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