



Committee on City Services and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell

Councilor Maureen T. Carney

Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

Councilor Ryan R. O'Donnell

MEETING AGENDA

Date: May 19, 2016

**Location: City Council Chambers
212 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts**

1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call: At 8:09 p.m. Councilor Carney called the meeting to order. Present were committee members Councilor Bidwell, Carney, LaBarge and O'Donnell. Also present were Councilors Dwight, Klein, Sciarra and Murphy. One seat remains vacant on the City Council.
2. Public Comment: None
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings: Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of May 2, 2016; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.
4. Appointments:

16.075 Appointment of DPW Director Donna LaScaleia - Referred to committee on May 5, 2016

Mayor Narkewicz introduced Donna LaScaleia, the newly hired Director for the Dept. of Public Works. Director LaScaleia was the former Superintendent for Vermont's largest electric utility, Green Mountain Power where she oversaw daily operations in the Brattleboro and Wilmington districts. She oversaw all regular and emergency utility work, management of personal, budget administration, planning and construction of capital projects, warehouse logistics and fleet management, training, safety and customer service.

Prior to Green Mountain Power, Director LaScaleia's was the Director of Facilities Management at World Learning/SIT Graduate Institute, an international college located in Brattleboro, Vermont. There she led all aspects of daily facility operation, including supervision of maintenance and custodial staff, budgeting and purchasing, capital planning and construction, snow removal, field and grounds care, environmental and code compliance, vehicle equipment and materials management. She also oversaw the college's private water and sewer utility infrastructure, planned its upgrade and expansion, and created a multi-year master plan to address deferred maintenance. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston College and is a licensed master electrician having worked for the IBEW Local 103 in Boston. She holds a commercial driver's license and is now one of only two licensed operators at the DPW.

Ms. LaScaleia reports that since her start date three weeks ago, she has been spending time learning the operations of the DPW, meeting the staff, and learning about the current projects and those in developmental stages. She recognizes that the staff is skilled and dedicated and she plans to continue the exceptional service to the City and look for ways to improve upon that, if possible.

Councilor LaBarge asked Director LaScaleia about the field design work that she had previously done at Green Mountain Power. Director LaScaleia explained that when you install a particular type of power line, there is a specific type of construction that is used on each pole depending upon the angle of the pole. The surveying includes the placement of the pole and the measuring of those angles between poles to determine what type of construction will be needed. Standards are used to make this determination. This will have an effect on third-party "attachees" regarding how they will construct on the pole.

Councilor LaBarge asked about how Director LaScaleia planned to survey land. Director LaScaleia noted that a department engineer would perform this function. Councilor LaBarge commended Director LaScaleia on her work experience as noted on her resume. She supports the idea of hiring a director with management and budgeting experience to run the department. She also notes that communication with residents is important as they value transparency.

Councilor O'Donnell asked about institutional changes and how she has been involved in making complex changes. Director LaScaleia notes that she has recently been involved in a merger between Green Mountain Power and Central Vermont Public Service, two longstanding Vermont utilities who came together as one company. The biggest and most important piece in the process is "communication from leadership". In her experience, honesty and communication with people is the most effective way to ensure positive change and to get the buy-in necessary to make changes. People who do the work are the ones with the experience and knowledge. It is up to leaders to recognize that and to make good decisions with that in mind.

Councilor Bidwell is impressed with the background of Director LaScaleia. He commented that in his experience with public works departments that brilliant engineers and technical people are sometimes difficult to understand when explaining technical information and engineering concepts to the public or political bodies that need to buy-in to plans brought forward. Director LaScaleia noted that this is something that she learned early on at Green Mountain Power that of interfacing with engineers regarding line construction. She feels that it is her job to collect information from all parties involved and put the information together in a way that can be understood by others.

Councilor Dwight noted that when working for a private agency, one might be accountable to a small concentrated group. Working for the public sector may require wearing two hats, maybe three. The DPW is an unlauded agency in the City. However, the DPW is recognized as a critical need by Council because it is DPW services that constituents call and complain about. This requires the ability to be more approachable and easy to understand. This is helpful when making critical decisions on competing projects. Director LaScaleia noted that in her experience, there are competing priorities where she will balance the needs of everyone involved and then communicate effectively to all parties involved.

Councilor Sciarra noted that it is never easy to step into a new position such as this, but that the timing is deemed "tough and sad" for the department given the passing of former Director Ned Huntley followed by the resignation of Acting Director Jim Laurila. Director LaScaleia commented that she has tremendous respect for the people that have come before her; the department would not be where it is today if it was not for their contribution.

Councilor Klein asked about Director LaScaleia's experience with green infrastructure. Director LaScaleia noted that the SIT Graduate Institute is well known for its green initiatives. During her tenure there she oversaw the implementation of recycling and composting programs. The campus engaged in

environmentally friendly practices as renovations were made to the campus. She spent time working on solar arrays at the Institute; there is a large solar array that was installed off Exit 3 of Rte I-91 that was installed by her crew. Regarding the use of herbicides and pesticides, Director LaScaleia has some knowledge about targeted removal of problem areas.

Councilor Carney notes that she shares a common experience of working for the IBEW Local 103 and notes that it is still a field that has only 2% women workers. Director LaScaleia started her career at the new Boston Convention Center; for the first six months she carried 4" pvc through mud from one end of the Convention Center to the other. She also vacuumed sludge out of over 1,000 floor boxes. Having done the work in the past, she has a great appreciation for the people who do the work and feels that makes her a better manager.

Former DPW Director George Andrikidas was present and spoke in favor of the appointment of Donna LaScaleia as the new DPW Director. He met with Donna when she first joined the department and believes that she is going to move forward successfully. She has tremendous challenges in front of her and feels that she will be capable in addressing the needs of the City. She will need support from residents, the DPW itself, the Mayor and the City Council.

Councilor O'Donnell moved to send the appointment forward with a positive recommendation; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

5. New Business- None

6. Adjourn: At 8:39 Councilor Bidwell made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Prepared By:

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