



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor David A. Murphy, Chair
Councilor Maureen T. Carney
Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra*

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

Meeting Date: March 21, 2019

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 8:41 p.m. Councilor Murphy called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members David Murphy, Maureen Carney, Marianne LaBarge & Gina-Louise Sciarra. Also present from the City Council were Jim Nash, Ryan O'Donnell, Dennis Bidwell, and Alisa Klein. Councilor William H. Dwight was absent.
3. **Approval Of Minutes From The Previous Meeting**
 - A. **Minutes of March 7, 2019**

Councilor Sciarra moved to approve the minutes of March 7, 2019. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed 4:0 by voice vote.
4. **Financial Orders**
 - A. **19.013 Order To Appropriate Approximately \$1.699 Million From Free Cash For Various Capital Projects**

Councilor Murphy read the list of projects to be funded through Free Cash.

Councilor Sciarra moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Carney seconded.

Regarding the High School domestic hot water boiler replacement, last week at the Northampton Energy & Sustainability Commission (NESC) meeting, Chris Mason talking about the possibility of installing a solar hot water system which could affect the type of boiler the school would need, Councilor Klein advised. She wondered if administrators may be jumping the gun in appropriating money to replace the boiler.

The project is coming from Mr. Mason's department and they are not specifying the type of boiler, Mayor Narkewicz responded. If funding is approved, he assumes any proposal for a solar hot water system will be incorporated. It doesn't lock Central Services in to any particular type of boiler, he assured.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

There being no further questions, Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed unanimously by voice vote with 4 Yes, 0 No.

B. 19.014 Order To Appropriate \$44,000 From Parking Receipts Reserved For Four Parking Kiosks
Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor Carney moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Sciarra seconded.

The order is pretty self-explanatory, Councilor Murphy observed.

The request is part of an ongoing project to replace meters with kiosks, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed.

Councilor Sciarra asked if drivers would be able to see the park mobile number from the kiosk. Mayor Narkewicz said they put big stickers on the side of the kiosk. Your app will tell you what meter zone you're in. Generally they are visible, he assured.

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

C. 19.015 Order To Appropriate \$1.175 Million From Capital Stabilization For Various Capital Projects

Councilor Murphy read the list of projects to be funded through Capital Stabilization.

Councilor Sciarra moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Carney seconded.

Councilor Bidwell asked how much \$150,000 for sidewalks is going to get them and how it ties into the sidewalk replacement study.

Each year the city allocates a certain amount to the sidewalk fund, Mayor Narkewicz explained. Often as they move through street re-pavement projects they will add sidewalks if they don't exist using this funding. They are looking to prioritize sidewalks that have been identified by the study as high priority routes so they are using it as a tool.

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

D. 19.016 Order To Authorize Borrowing \$950,000 To Construct Cold Storage Facility At Spring Grove Cemetery

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor Bidwell stepped out momentarily.

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

Mayor Narkewicz reminded members that he provided them with a pretty detailed map and memo on this project during their consideration of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The project is intended to move items currently stored outdoors indoors.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

E. 19.017 Order To Authorize Borrowing \$220,000 To Purchase DPW Vehicles And Equipment

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

The proposed vehicle replacements are part of the DPW director's long-term vehicle replacement schedule, the Mayor confirmed.

Councilor Bidwell returned.

The money will be used to replace a Ford tractor and mower and street sweeper.

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

F. 19.018 Order To Authorize Borrowing \$180,000 For Jackson Street School Boiler

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

School officials are replacing an aging school boiler at the Jackson Street School to insure they have heat, Mayor Narkewicz advised.

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

G. 19.019 Order To Appropriate \$25,000 From Cemetery Trust And Income Fund For Cemetery Restoration

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order, replacing the word 'restorative' with the word 'restoration.'

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

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

H. 19.020 Order To Appropriate Mayor's PILOT And Gift Fund Money To Purchase Chromebooks

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

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

Councilor Klein asked about the 'GoGuardian' piece; i.e. - the software installed on Chromebooks. She spoke to the city solicitor and members got a pretty long, detailed letter from Superintendent Provost, but she has additional questions.

She referred to a case in Pennsylvania where a school system was sued and settled for \$600,000 for the capture of images of students that were shared with the company that installed the software.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

Superintendent Provost tried to reassure her that they don't have screen captures and some of the things the Lower Marion Pennsylvania school district was sued for but she thinks there are other possibilities for the violation of student privacy that they do need to take into account. She is curious about information such as screen shots that are collected. She is concerned about how long they continue to exist, what GoGuardian does with the data, etc.

When GoGuardian receives information about students, are they receiving individual student's identifying information? Councilor Klein asked. She is concerned that GoGuardian is keeping data about students' browsing activity and that it then owns this information. "We need to know how this information is ultimately used," she asserted.

She referred to a letter sent to her by a constituent. One of the constituent's concerns is that 'this is contributing to the normalization of a culture of surveillance in our community.' Councilor Klein herself questioned why the school needs GoGuardian installed, commenting that it is "inuring [students] to be surveilled as a matter of course in their daily lives."

Schools are telling parents and children that it is for their own good, for their own safety. "I think we need to ask deeper questions," she observed.

She is still not clear whether there is a real sign off by students, Councilor Klein said. Regarding the acceptable use policy sent by Superintendent Provost; it has a very short paragraph instructing students they have no expectation of privacy but she is not sure if they are actually signing off on those statements.

She also has questions about the number of Chromebooks the school is purchasing.

The GoGuardian software program is used in many school districts, Mayor Narkewicz responded. Chromebooks are designed for educational use only. They are intended to be used to access web-sites that have been approved, research websites, run google applications, etc. GoGuardian allows a teacher to use Chromebooks in an interactive way. Screens are arrayed in classrooms to allow the teacher to see the students' progress and to make sure they are working on the task at hand.

They all understand how the internet is a place where people can target young people, attempt to get students to go to inappropriate websites or disguise themselves as adults and prey on children, etc. When schools provide this publicly funded computer, they need to make sure students are protected.

The case Councilor Klein referred to involved staff taking unauthorized photos. As part of the Chrome-book program the school is giving students camera covers to physically cover the camera so it doesn't work.

Regarding the reference to screen shots, if a student accesses an unauthorized site, there is a screenshot or a log kept of that so that if there is an issue down the road or some kind of investigation, there is a way to go back and see if certain sites have been accessed.

School officials try to model their policies around the policies of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). There have been a few parents who have opted not to participate because of this issue, he acknowledged. The software is designed to insure that students taking these home are only

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

accessing appropriate websites. He rejects the notion that the school is surveilling students. They have an obligation to protect students if they're giving them this technology and want to make sure they're using these only for educational purposes. They are not limiting parents from buying another computer and letting their children surf however they want, he pointed out.

That's really what he can tell her; he can't get into the minutia or details of this. As Mayor, he is chair of the School Committee and he can tell her that the School Committee is very engaged in this. He feels that it is the role of the School Department and School Committee to make these decisions.

Councilor Klein said she appreciates those answers. She does think it's important that questions be asked at this level too if the City Council is signing off on funding to purchase these items. She also represents a number of people who have contacted her with concerns about GoGuardian in particular.

It would be great if they could get answers to the more specific questions posed, she persisted. The computers are recording in real time information about where students are going on the internet both at school and at home. She is really curious to know what happens with that information. What is GoGuardian doing with it, how long do they hold onto it, etc.? Answers to those questions would be very useful. She thinks that is where trying to protect students can spill over into that area of surveillance.

She does know that in the school district it was made clear that only three administrators can access the information. But beyond those three, what happens to that information?

Mayor Narkewicz said he could try to get more information about that.

Councilor Klein also asked about the splash page Dr. Provost referred them to. She understands that in response to concerns from students, a splash page goes up that says something along the lines of, 'your privacy is not necessarily insured.' She talked to a couple of students who both said this doesn't feel adequate to them.

The principal of the high school is meeting with the student union to discuss these issues, so there is an ongoing conversation with students, Mayor Narkewicz advised.

Councilor Klein asked what the sign-off looks like for JFK and the High School. Are parents actually signing off on the policy and being provided with information about what's going to GoGuardian?

The Mayor said he didn't know if the sign-off contained that level of detail but he could find out.

The Mayor mentioned something that triggered a response in her, Councilor Klein continued. He said that if parents were interested in allowing their kids to visit other sites they could buy another computer. This creates a class issue in that kids from families with more means are able to use their own computers to surf sites without being monitored. They are necessarily creating a situation where kids from families of lesser means are more vulnerable to having all of their web surfing captured, she maintained. She is concerned about the vulnerability created when some kids don't have to use their school-issued computers. . .

One of the major reasons for the Chromebook program is to level the playing field, Mayor Narkewicz stressed. He doesn't want it to be cast that they've installed computers so that they can surveil poor kids, he added.

Councilor Klein said she doesn't believe that is the intention but she does think it is a possible consequence they need to think about as a city.

Regarding the numbers of computers, Councilor Klein expressed her understanding that Northampton owned 1,337 Chromebooks in 2018. The school bought 650 more in the summer and so owned 1,987. If the school has just over 2,000 students grades 3 to 12 and already has nearly 2,000 Chromebooks, it seems like they should only be short about 50 Chromebooks but the money they are signing off on is for far more than 50. She is a little unclear about why the amount is as large as it is.

They've had Chromebooks in the schools for many years, Mayor Narkewicz pointed out. As Superintendent Provost explained, as part of this program they are actually retiring some of the older Chromebooks. 213 are being retired, he reported. The other thing they are doing is purchasing some for staff and purchasing an extra supply for MCA's accommodation for students with English language learning or learning disabilities. These students often have to have additional Chromebooks to facilitate their taking the MCA's.

In the current year they have 2,126 but this will drop down to 1,913 because of the retirement of some units. "We're not buying a secret stockpile of Chromebooks," he assured. He has answered this question for School Committee member Susan Voss as well, he noted.

Councilor Bidwell commented that he for one can't imagine that they would want to take it upon themselves as a City Council to substitute their views for that of the School Committee, Superintendent and School Department staff who have spent a great deal of time answering questions on this subject. He appreciates the Mayor's patience in handling all these questions but it seems to him there comes a point where they need to trust that their colleagues on the School Committee have answered many more questions with access to more information than they have. He can't imagine them having better judgment than those who have researched this subject at length, he observed.

She had concerns herself about the discrepancy cited by the School Committee member who came to City Council to talk about Chromebooks but it is pretty well laid out here, Councilor LaBarge volunteered. She thanked the Mayor and School Superintendent.

The City Council approved the request for Year 1 of the Chromebooks project in FY2019, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. The School Committee took the unusual step to pause. On April 12, 2018 the committee had a three- or four-hour meeting about the issue and presentation by Antonio Pagan and NPS Digital Literacy and Computer Science Coordinator Molly McLoughlin. It was put to a vote – does the School Committee wish to return this money to the city and not accept it. There was a unanimous vote to move forward, he reported.

The School Committee had another discussion this fall. Superintendent Provost came back to the committee and presented all the capital requests, including the Chromebooks request. If anyone is saying that the School Committee has not approved this, it is incorrect, he stressed.

Councilor Nash asked if the GoGuardian software was discussed in great detail in School Committee. City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

Yes, especially during some of the follow-up meetings, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. They actually have School Committee members who use the software as part of their work as educators, he added. This year, before submitting the capital plan administrators did a check-in to present school projects to the School Committee, including Chromebooks, to make sure nothing had changed, Mayor Narkewicz reiterated.

Councilor Nash asked, if approved tonight, if the purchase would begin immediately.

Mr. Pagan will begin the procurement process, Mayor Narkewicz said. FY2020 starts July 1st.

Committee member Voss and another individual who expressed concern had the opportunity during those deliberations to make their case, Councilor Nash pointed out.

Ultimately, parents can opt out of the program if they are unable to satisfy their concerns, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. The feedback they are getting from both students and parents at JFK is that the program has been very successful.

The principal at Ryan Road called her yesterday and wanted her to come see how much the children love the Chromebooks, Councilor LaBarge related. She has an appointment to visit next Tuesday.

It's good to hear how much positive feeling there is in the schools around the Chromebooks and she supports the idea of students having Chromebooks, Councilor Klein affirmed. She was approached by several parents and several students from the high school with concerns about GoGuardian. When constituents approach her with concerns she is absolutely doing her due diligence by amplifying the voices of her constituents. She thinks it's important for councilors to do so.

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

I. 19.021 Order To Reprogram NFR Exhaust System Money To Replace NFR Utility Brush Unit

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

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

J. 19.022 Order To Appropriate Cable Funds To ITS For Various Projects

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

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

K. 19.023 Order To Reprogram NFR Surplus Funds To SCBA Replacement

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

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

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

L. 19.024 An Order For FY2019 Budget Transfers

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

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

M. 19.027 An Order To Award \$3,000 In CPA Funds To Lathrop Communities For Invasive Species Removal

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order

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

Conservation, Preservation and Land Use Planner Sarah LaValley was not able to attend due to a scheduling conflict, Mayor Narkewicz advised.

Councilor Nash reminded his colleagues that a woman was present during public comment to describe the efforts Lathrop Communities would be making to remove the invasive species.

If the full council wants to postpone action until someone is present to address questions, that would be fine, Councilor Murphy assured.

Councilor Sciarra suggested changing the committee's action to a neutral recommendation. The motion maker and second accepted the change as a friendly amendment to the motion.

The motion to forward the order to the full council with a neutral recommendation passed unanimously by voice vote with 4 Yes, 0 No.

N. 19.028 An Order To Award \$3,000 In CPA Funds For Signage Upgrades Project

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor Sciarra moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

O. 19.029 An Order To Award \$3,000 In CPA Funds To Historic Northampton For Historic Textile Preservation Project

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for March 21, 2019

P. 19.030 An Order To Award \$3,000 In CPA Funds To The ONE Northampton Logo And Signage Project

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Sciarra seconded. 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 other business, Councilor Carney moved to adjourn. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

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