



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

Roll Call

A special meeting of the City Council (FY2021 Budget Hearing) was called to order by City Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra. At 5:15 p.m. on a roll call the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra	At-Large Councilor William H. Dwight
Ward 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.	Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett
Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster	Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash	Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore
Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe	

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording

At 5:02 p.m., Councilor Sciarra convened the regular meeting, welcomed participants and announced that the meeting was being held by remote participation and audio/video recorded.

She began by acknowledging another troubling chapter in human history, referring to the recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. Millions of people risking their lives to take to the streets during this pandemic is hard proof that their reality is that their lives are always in grave danger, she observed. She asked for a moment to think about these names and think about a personal commitment to be ready for a change.

Councilor Sciarra reviewed the agenda and the process she would use in conducting the hearing. She noted that, for many of them, this is their first budget hearing, and, for all of them, this is their first remote budget hearing. The council itself will not be deliberating and voting on the budget but this is an opportunity to hear from department heads and for the public to share their thoughts, she explained.

Public testimony given as part of the hearing becomes part of the public record for the hearing. After departmental presentations are concluded, the council will allow public testimony. She explained the mechanics for electronically asking to be recognized and for unmuting participants.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to general public comment not pertaining to the budget.

Public Comment

Public Comment

Richard Hendrick noted that, as a new resident of Main Street, this is his first contact with the city council and with local government. He thinks any consideration of money to the police department at this particular time would be seen and perhaps is an affront to what is going on in the world. This is just not the time for this kind of consideration, almost aside from the question of the need for the funds and the good work of the police department. It is just an inopportune time, he suggested. His educated guess is that it was on the agenda before the events of the past week unfolded. Not knowing the process, he is surprised that it is still on the agenda; he thinks it is just so obvious that money to the police department at this particular time should not be considered. He knows economics are going to change throughout the whole country, everyone is going to be short of money. He doesn't think money at this particular time should be going to the police department as there are many other places that need this. He is a proponent for the preferential option for the poor, he added.

There being no further general public comment, Councilor Sciarra convened the meeting with a roll call.

Public Hearing on FY2021 Budget

Public Hearing on FY2021 Budget

Councilor Dwight moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote. The public hearing was opened at 5:19 p.m.

Councilor Sciarra read the legal notice associated with the hearing. She announced that they

would start with departmental budget presentations and introduced Northampton School Superintendent John Provost

Departmental Budget Presentations

Northampton Public Schools – Superintendent John Provost

Superintendent Provost began by thanking Council President Sciarra for the way she began the meeting tonight. He comes to them tonight as they are really in the midst of three overlapping crises, an acute outbreak of violence against communities of color, a health crisis that is having a disproportionate impact on people of color and an economic crisis that threatens the viability of all forms of public and private enterprise. With that, he comes to them gratefully and humbly with a request for \$30,162,012 for the public schools. He knows it is a large ask; it is a larger increase than they've had at any time in the history of the schools. But when they think of the scope of the problems that come before them, he doesn't think they could ask for any less.

He really wished that members of the City Council could have heard the School Committee meeting that took place last night because one of the points mentioned again and again is the relationship that exists between the schools and the city, he related. They were discussing the results of the district review, an accountability process which takes place every six or seven years. One of the strengths noted was the good working relationship the schools have with the City Council and the Mayor. He personally is grateful to work in a city that values education as Northampton does. They also were discussing weaknesses of the district identified in the district's report. It was clear to them that they do not serve all students equally well. Specifically, they have difficulty helping English language learners and Hispanic and Latino students achieve at the same rate as their white peers. The budget they put forward was developed with the district review and those priorities in mind. Many recommendations made it through to the final budget recommended by the School Committee.

Problems noted in this district review have become exponentially more profound since the time of COVID-19, Superintendent Provost added. The schools are in the midst of a shutdown; they are attempting to do remote learning and it certainly isn't an ideal methodology for the majority of their students, it isn't an ideal way to maintain engagement. Their expectation is that the deficiencies that they sought to resolve prior to the school closure are going to be all that much more profound after the reopening. They are also in the process of developing a new district improvement plan (DIP). Their goal is to have the DIP blended with a plan for reopening and recovery, a process they believe will take at least three years. One of the documents prepared for the beginning of the DIP looks at the effects of school closures that took place at the beginning of the century. The data is grim. There were a series of school shutdowns in Argentina that were about as long as their shutdown as been. One of the things they learned from studying that cohort as they grew up is that there were detectable levels of impact for those students for the rest of their lives. There were lower levels of academic attainment and lower levels of lifetime income and even effects on their children. This may be a multi-generational problem that they're trying to recover from so he thinks the resources they are requesting are essential for getting students back on the path of learning.

He offered to entertain questions.

Councilor Quinlan thanked Superintendent Provost for presenting the budget and complimented him on the process, voicing the perception that he worked very hard in getting many voices involved. He was a student athlete at Northampton High School and is a proud alum and avid Blue Devils fan. His father was the baseball coach there in the 1980's and his sons were on the track and soccer teams, winning multiple state and local championships in soccer and in track. The athletic program means a lot to their family. When he was an athlete and his dad was coach, the school had a half-time athletic director. This is the sixth budget that has increased the position to full-time. He asked if the superintendent thinks that investment has been worth it.

He was part of the process of professionalizing that role by making it full-time and focused solely on the AD position, Superintendent Provost related. He does think the results have been good. Participation in athletics has increased over the past six years over both Coach Sheridan and Mark Morrison. They've actually just had to shut down the largest spring season they've had since he's been here. Another reason for increasing the position is that the complexities of MIAA have become much more involved in recent years. They are looking at possible solutions to reduce the number of courses students have to be on campus for but in order to find out if they

could do that they had to have a conference call with two rules experts from MIAA. Having someone with their finger on the pulse of that is helpful to him as an administrator. One of the things he found when coming to the district is they were running a program without a sufficient budget to land the program. They had to rely on a tremendous amount of fundraising, gate receipts, etc. to run the program and that led to a great deal of instability and entrepreneurial-ship that was unknown to him. Last year, he ended up receiving a check from an organization he didn't know existed. It was for the sale of athletic equipment bearing the Northampton logo. It was a legacy from the time the program was so underfunded that it was scratching for funding.

Their goal was to try to have an athletic program that was more administratively professionalized and that also had a sufficient budget to provide predictability for its athletes and a sense of being able to build from year to year. The position was important but he thinks it has to be seen in the context of all of those reforms for athletics.

He thinks the best thing he's seen since the increase in the budget is unified teams, Councilor Quinlan observed. He thinks it is a great addition to their athletic offerings. He mentioned a friend with a daughter with Downs Syndrome and the joy they have had in seeing her participate.

When his older son was a sophomore and went out for the indoor track team, he was given a uniform that didn't match everyone else's; he got an older version because there were too many kids and not enough uniforms, Councilor Quinlan continued. This year he went to a JV soccer game, and the kids on the team had to buy their own shorts. This year too, he went to a track meet where he observed a kid taking off a sweaty jersey after running a race and giving it to another kid to wear in a subsequent race. He notices they are spending \$56,000 more, and he is wondering if the investment has been worth it since it doesn't seem the problems are being resolved. He asked if the superintendent thought that kids whose families paid a user fee and then had to go to Dick's and buy shorts felt fully included in the system.

Superintendent Provost agreed that unified teams have probably been the greatest accomplishment over the last several years. He also agreed that the shortage of shorts and students sharing uniforms is unacceptable. He said he wasn't aware of that and will follow up with the athletic director. It may be a consequence of having an expanded program, he suggested. The idea is that user fees cover the cost of the sports so students can participate without additional expense, he confirmed.

The budget mentions that 16% of youth get free or reduced lunch; those kids didn't get free or reduced shorts at Dick's Sporting Goods and that's a concern for him, Councilor Quinlan commented. They have increased the investment in the athletic program by \$56,000 tax dollars every single year from six years ago to now, he observed. He wonders if the athletic term is an anomaly in that budget when he sees that. Are we getting a good return on the investment for the entire thing? He questioned.

It's certainly his goal, Superintendent Provost responded. Their goal is to give taxpayers the best return possible on their investment in every aspect of the program. In evaluating the result, he looks at external sources such as the District of Youth. It certainly identifies a lot of things they are doing right and ways in which the community is benefiting, he pointed out.

The Department of Education identifies a number of comparison districts each year for every school. This year Northampton moved into a different class. One of their comparison districts is Cambridge. Cambridge is spending more than twice as much as they are per pupil, he reported. In some areas, Northampton is actually ahead of Cambridge; in other areas they are trailing them in terms of student achievement by just a little bit. When looking at it in those terms, he thinks they are providing a good value for taxpayer dollars. In USA school rankings, Northampton High School (NHS) is ranked 2nd in Massachusetts.

"On a dollar per dollar basis, we are delivering a good value," he asserted. Certainly, they always can make it better; certainly it's not perfect. "For the size of the investment we've been able to provide some good achievement and good outcomes for our students," he concluded.

Councilor Quinlan said he appreciated his being there and answering his questions and thanked him for his continued good work.

Councilor Nash asked Superintendent Provost if he could speak to the preparation that he and the School Committee and their schools as a whole are going through in regards to remote learning. His view is that, of all of the departments they are going to hear from tonight, none have a more challenging commitment in front of them than him. He doesn't know if they are going to be in school, out of school, partially in school, learning from home, etc. He asked him if this budget has the resources to tend to all of that.

The budget process is extensive, lengthy and involves many voices, Superintendent Provost confirmed. They began building this budget in December and hit full force in January. At that time, they presented two budgets because they had to have the School Committee take a look at the scenarios they were facing if the override passed or failed. After that process, they began moving forward with a budget based on Proposition 2 ½ override success; then COVID hit. Looking at the predictable financial impacts of that, they went back to the drawing board and tried to develop a new budget trying to pare back as much as they could knowing what the financial constraints on the city would be. They had at least three budgets and were faced with the complexity of trying to start remote learning.

Remote learning was something they began with almost zero preparation. The shutdown that took place was initially initiated by superintendents, he reported. The day they closed schools in Northampton they were actually on a conference call with the director of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MADPH) who was sharing the advice at that time that they felt there was no need to close schools. But they made the determination as superintendents that that didn't make sense and made the decision to close schools and, later on, the governor closed schools. They started this period with the recommendation that they keep schools open and trying to implement everything after the fact. He paused to give respect to the teachers; the work they've done to try to stand up a completely brand new system of education has been amazing. The work has been herculean and the creativity has been astounding. However, this isn't the way anyone would want to proceed. In the midst of it, they had a change of status in terms of the remote learning plan.

Initially, they had a plan based on a short-term shutdown and an emphasis on enrichment. Then they realized it was going to be long-term and had to plan based on trying to move the curriculum forward. What he can tell them is that this is an amazingly resilient team and they are able to improvise and make adjustments on the fly, but the future is somewhat unclear. He has begun a series of meetings to share with faculty and staff models for reopening. He has developed a total of 10 models for reopening. The thing to remember is they have never done this before so there is just no road map. The last time they had a global pandemic, schools were closed but it was before the common school era so it was mostly private schools being closed. Obviously, they can't fully explore 10 potential reopening scenarios. His goal right now is to start the community conversation to see if they can narrow down the universe of options. One thing is clear – it won't be school as usual in the fall.

Social distancing limits building capacity. They probably have the capacity for 50% of students at most with social distancing and that is with making major adjustments to the school. Lunch is a big problem. One of the models put out by CDC guidance for cafeterias shrinks the number of people you can feed at a time from 250 to 40. Another guideline says a 70-passenger bus can take 12 students and a minivan can take one student. All of the scenarios are going to require an immense amount of flexibility from staff and a great deal of flexibility from the community.

Councilor Thorpe asked why the superintendent did not recommend renewal of the Clarke School lease at the Leeds Elementary School.

Prior to the economic impacts of COVID-19, they were actually hoping to staff that school with some additional teachers, Superintendent Provost responded. They had some large class sizes this year impacting some of their grades. A limiting factor was space. Even if they were able to provide additional staff, they had no classrooms to put them in. When he presented the COVID-revised budget, he no longer felt they could ask for additional staff for Leeds School. Leeds is the only school right now that doesn't have separate space for students who need time to regulate themselves. What was happening is students were going through some extreme emotional distress in the front office or they were having difficulties in the hallways. When they found that they couldn't support the position in the budget they felt that the least they could do was provide the space. It was space they could only find by taking back some of the space that was leased to the

Clarke School. Over the course of the summer, Leeds was the school that experienced the greatest change in population. Over the last several years, in terms of change in population it had the most significant change in terms of increased needs. They found that having space where teachers could break out students to have therapeutic interventions would be beneficial.

Regarding the increase in the school budget, Councilor LaBarge asked the amount.

Superintendent Provost said it is a little over 5%. In response to a follow-up question, he confirmed there were no layoffs. They did do some reorganization and eliminated some positions to create other positions, he elaborated. They were able to move staff around so they didn't have any layoffs. As an example, they reduced two and a half (2 ½) SPED positions, but they had vacancies in SPED positions in other schools so they were able to move the people eliminated to other positions within the school system. There were reductions that didn't result in layoffs, he clarified.

Councilor LaBarge thanked him and all his staff for working tirelessly to come up with a very good school budget. She agreed the future is unclear. She publicly thanked Superintendent Provost and all the teachers in Northampton, Florence and Leeds. To do remote schooling at home is very difficult. It is difficult for parents but they're doing an excellent job and sticking right with it. She is glad to hear Councilor Quinlan talking about sports because sports is very, very critical. Both of her sons participated in sports all through high school and college and her son Richard's record is still unbroken; he is a two-time All American runner. She thanked him and the School Committee, noting it has not been easy for them or city councilors to make things work.

Superintendent Provost corrected himself to say that the schools are looking for a 3.6% increase, not 5%.

Councilor Dwight thanked the superintendent for the time and energy invested in the budget. Taking advantage of the unprecedented attendance at a budget hearing, he pointed out proportionally how much Northampton invests in its schools from the General Fund. As far as the slice of the pie, the large green square represents the educational investment but doesn't include employee benefits such as insurance and retirement. The city invests over half the municipal budget into education. He believes that is why the Mayor has chosen at this extraordinary time to not only hold the schools harmless but in fact to actually reinvest in education at a time when resources are limited.

He referred to the social disparity that exists in access to systems such as transportation and internet - equipment, broadband, etc. He would imagine this impacts students of need much more than children of privilege. With these shifting sands, he asked if the superintendent is anticipating having to reassess as systems change and they end up committing to a particular program or way of educating their children in the context of the pandemic.

Yes, Superintendent Provost said. One of the things that has become apparent as they've looked at shutdowns across the nation is the lynchpin role education plays in everything, he elaborated. It is not possible to restart the economy without schools getting back on their feet, he asserted. There is no way people can get back to work unless they get schools reopened.

With regard to how these multiple and overlapping crises have magnified the inequities in their society, it is clear that the work they'll have upon their return is much larger than the work of addressing institutional racism and inequities they were already preparing for. When they look at students who are disengaging, they see the shutdown is affecting students who they were already not being as culturally responsive to when schools were open. One thing they were able to do proactively is institute a one-to-one computer program in the district. Having devices for each and every student in grades 3 -12 put them in a better position to provide digital equity than neighboring districts. It doesn't address the issue of broadband. They were able to address the lack of broadband with wifi hotspots. They are looking at every possible option for providing access, including paying for families' cable.

Another inequity was the tremendous amount of families that rely on schools as part of the puzzle for feeding their students. The first response to the pandemic and shutdown was standing up a remote feeding program. The schools distribute more than 1,000 meals every week and plan to do that throughout the summer because they are a critical part of the food solution for many

families. This has come into stark relief. With regard to having a preferential option for the most disadvantaged, that is one of the components they are looking at in the nine models for reopening. They may do an A day/B day where they have half the students one day and half another or one week off/one week on. They have been thinking all along that in order to address pre-existing inequities and remediate some of the gaps that have grown over the shutdown there may be some students that have to go every single day. After reopening, they very much have an eye toward trying to reopen in a way that for once puts the needs of those who are in every way disadvantaged by society first.

Councilor Foster highlighted the work and partnership of Northampton schools around issues of food insecurity. The community food distribution program at Jackson Street School has been great to see and she wanted to commend him for that. It looks to her like charter school sending tuition is remaining relatively consistent throughout the years, she added. She asked about the actual number of students going to charter schools.

His belief is that the initial cherry sheets were showing a decrease in the number of students going to charter schools and a decrease in the assessment for charter schools, Superintendent Provost responded. One of the issues around the whole charter school issue is reimbursement. The benefit of having a reduced number of students going out to charter schools is somewhat offset by a reduction in reimbursement to the city. In order to have a stable or growing reimbursement model, school districts have to have an ever-increasing number of students going to charter schools. He believes the cherry sheets showed a reduction in the number of students going to charter schools and a reduction in the assessment but also a reduction in reimbursement.

He deferred to School Business Manager Camie Lamica, who confirmed that the number of students projected to attend charter school is the same number as shown on the cherry sheets. She believes the increase being shown for the dollar amount is based on per-pupil expenditure. It will cost Northampton more to send the same number of students but they are not seeing a larger number of students going to charter school. The number actually went down from FY19 to FY20. They went from 193 students down to 169 and for FY2021 they are projecting the same 169.

Councilor Maiore thanked the superintendent for his hard work. It looks like all negotiations with Northampton school employees are going to be honored and able to proceed, she commented.

Councilor Sciarra offered immense thanks to the superintendent and school staff and teachers.

One of the things he is concerned about is the budgetary impact of personal protective equipment (PPE), Superintendent Provost volunteered. He thinks they are going to need between 400,000 and 500,000 pieces of PPE to get through the first 90 days of school. He really would want to put that money toward helping students impacted by this shutdown and does feel somewhat concerned and daunted by the amount of the budget that might be needed to purchase the PPE needed to reopen school, he shared.

Councilor Sciarra said there had been a request to know the schedule for this meeting. She reviewed the schedule, noting they will begin with departmental presentations and will open for public comment after the presentations.

The budget hearing will be continued at the regular City Council meeting tomorrow at 7 p.m., she said. People are welcome to email public comments to citycouncil@northamptonma.gov.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

Presentation by DPW Director Donna LaScaleia

Councilor Jarrett announced that he had a conflict of interest to disclose. As a member of the Pedal People Cooperative he has a financial interest in decisions made about the Locust Street transfer station which the DPW oversees, so he can't participate in this item (discussion of the DPW budget). There are many areas the DPW oversees, but since it is unclear when this particular subject will be discussed, he has been advised not to participate. He said he would be turning off his audio and video.

Director LaScaleia thanked the council for the opportunity to speak about the DPW's operations and the public works budget.

The DPW General Fund in FY2021 is broken into four divisions: Administration and Engineering, Snow and Ice, Streets and Fleet Maintenance, and Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries.

Administration and Engineering captures engineering and clerical support for the department's operations and includes the city engineer, who stamps, reviews and creates plans for paving and other projects. A dedicated traffic engineer supports transportation improvements and the modest OM budget supports the maintenance of the 125 Locust Street administration building. An overall reduction in this budget has been achieved by eliminating one principal account clerk position for FY2021, she advised.

The Highway Division's responsibilities include maintenance of 150 miles of paved and unpaved roads, 85 miles of sidewalks, 38 bridges, 30-plus signalized intersections and more than 150 vehicles and pieces of specialized equipment. The modest increase in this budget is a result of the following actions: reducing two positions, an equipment operator and a laborer, and making small cuts to the electricity line item due to modest savings realized in solar endeavors. She is recommending a modest increase in OM to accurately reflect the cost associated with purchasing asphalt for road repair, maintaining signalized intersections, line painting throughout the city and disposal of street sweeping debris.

The Snow & Ice budget includes the overtime required for plowing, contractor assistance with plowing as needed depending on weather events and the salt used to treat the city's roadways.

The responsibilities of Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries include maintenance of over 10,000 public shade trees, 225+ acres of athletic fields and parks, four cemeteries, all of which are active burial grounds with over 20,000 monuments, and 11+ miles of bike paths and associated green space. As a general rule, this division supports the Parks & Recreation Department with over 2,400 participants in organized sports, 128 organized teams and more than 2,500 people who use Musante Beach every summer. This division typically runs seven days a week April through November to support these recreation programs. Florence Fields alone totals 24 acres so it's quite a massive operation run with a small number of people.

With regard to the city's public shade trees, the city has planted more than 1,000 new trees since 2016 and has been named a Tree City USA in consecutive years for over a decade. There is an overall decrease in this budget due to the following actions – decreasing staff positions by two but increasing OM to fund contractor support for complex tree removals or height work that exceeds in-house capabilities. As the weather changes, they have to be mindful that they are at risk of more severe and frequent storms. In the event of a severe wind storm with wide-spread tree damage potentially requiring large-scale clean-up, it is beneficial for the city to have a contractor on call

ENTERPRISE FUNDS.

Within the water enterprise, the DPW is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 150 miles of water main, 5,000 valves, 1,400 hydrants, three drinking water reservoirs and dams, two wells, a water treatment plant (WTP) and 3,900-plus acres of watershed land. More than \$2 million of this \$7 million enterprise is dedicated to debt service for construction of the WTP built in 2006. This debt service does not fall off the debt schedule until 2028. Additionally, administrators are planning for large capital investments in the city's dams and transmission and distribution systems. They also project that the COVID-19 crisis and associated shutdowns may reduce revenue by five percent (5%), although the ultimate impact is unknown. Utility rates and fees are unchanged for the coming year. This is a conservative budget in that it has been built to insure their goals of capital investment and, most importantly, enterprise stability. In that vein, there is an overall decrease in the budget from last year achieved by the following actions – a reduction of one position, cuts to operating expenses - most notably watershed operations - and targeted cuts to certain capital expenditures such as vehicle replacement.

Within the sewer enterprise, the DPW is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 5,000 sewer and drain manholes, 110 miles of sewer lines and a waste water treatment plant (WWTP) on Hockanum Road which treats four and a half million gallons of wastewater per day. For the sewer enterprise, they also project that the COVID-19 crisis and associated shutdowns may reduce revenues by 5%. Utility rates are unchanged for the coming year. This is a conservative budget that has been built, again, to insure the goals of capital investment and, most importantly,

enterprise stability. They are on the cusp of a substantial upgrade project that will total just under \$15 million. Principal and interest on this loan will be a major factor in next year's budget but, due to timing, were not expenses that needed to be factored in this year.

Within the solid waste enterprise, the DPW is responsible for the operation and maintenance of two transfer stations and a capped landfill and provides 3rd party oversight of a gas to energy facility and 3.17 megawatt solar array. The solid waste enterprise faces declining revenues and increasing expenses. They have seen a steady decrease in transfer station permits sold from 2013 to present. They have gone from 4,028 permits sold to 2,928 sold. Additionally, they have seen increases in disposal costs for trash, compost and, most notably, recycling. As she mentioned with the water and sewer enterprises, in building any budget, their focus is on enterprise stability. Permit fees this year will increase from \$25 to \$45 which is a projected revenue increase of \$50,000. This is the first increase since FY2009. Even with this increase, they are still regionally the lowest cost municipal transfer station. Where they used to receive money for recyclables, they are now not only faced with the loss of that revenue but with a projected cost of \$110,000 based on tonnage estimates for the coming year.

Within the stormwater enterprise, the DPW is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 120 miles of drain pipe, 5,000 catch basins, 350 outfalls, 150 culverts, six miles of channels and ditches, two levy systems and the flood control station on Hockanum Road. All of this infrastructure is supported by a \$2 million utility. Operations for stormwater collection are governed by the conditions of their MS4 permit and the Army Corps of Engineers governs flood control operations. There are no appreciable budget changes year over year within this enterprise.

Councilor Thorpe asked why certain employees are listed across more than one enterprise.

These are allocated employees that perform functions across multiple divisions, Director LaScaleia explained. Their salaries show up in multiple locations because the DPW takes the lump sum of their salaries and assigns a percentage of it based on the work they do for various divisions. They make sure they are apportioning the salaries according to time spent in each area.

Referring to a recent tour of DPW facilities, Councilor Foster commented that one thing that stuck with her is how the DPW has been able to save money over the years by consolidating operations within several facilities. She is curious about long-range plans for bringing people back to work in a building (Locust Street) where they are working so close together.

Overall the DPW has more than 100 employees, Director LaScaleia said. Most of them work outdoors. In terms of desk duty, the time behind the desk is often very limited, particularly during construction season. They are very mindful of the fact that they are close quarters but they are a unique department in that they're very flexible and do a lot of field work, herself included. Moving forward, she thinks they have the capability to do an awful lot of field work and will be able to establish an ability to keep folks separated and safe. Plans are in development and nothing has been finalized, but. "due to the unique nature of our work, I think it's going to be okay."

Councilor LaBarge said she received an email from Pedal People workers about concerns about bringing trash with their bicycles into the recycling center. She asked why a day was taken off the weekly schedule and got an answer from the Finance Director. She is hearing that the fees for the transfer station have not increased for 11 years. The current amount of \$25 is the lowest amount for regional municipal transfer stations and the current hours of operation are more than double any other regional transfer station. As an example, Amherst charges \$85 annually and is open 18 hours a week. By contrast, beginning July 1st, Northampton will charge \$45 and be open 43 hours a week. Even with the fee increase and reduction in hours, it will still be the transfer station with the lowest cost and highest number of hours. In addition, the cost of operating the transfer station has increased as the cost of disposal of trash and recycling has increased.

"I feel good about it hearing what she had to say," Councilor LaBarge concluded. Ms. Wright also noted that the usage of the transfer station has gone down with 44% less stickers being sold in 2020 than in 2013. The decision to increase the fee and reduce the hours is obviously a financial and operational decision. The solid waste enterprise fund does not bring in enough revenue to offset its operating cost. Even with the increase in fees and reduction in hours, there will still be a need to use retained earnings to balance the solid waste budget. This cannot continue

indefinitely as retained earnings will run out.

Councilors are getting emails about the fact that there are no bike lanes and that something that would help pedal people would be to establish a lined bike lane. There also was a concern that they have a police officer there doing a traffic detail. Those are some of her concerns

They have had a police officer directing traffic on Saturday for many years at the intersection of Locust street and the DPW driveway, Director LaScaleia reminded. It is a difficult intersection. The police officer is there to ensure orderly traffic flow and avoid accidents. It is a standard safety precaution that has been in place for many years.

Looking at the budget book, she sees only one vacant position, Councilor LaBarge observed. She asked if that is it.

Yes, only one, Director LaScaleia confirmed. They are not filling multiple vacant positions within the DPW but these have been removed from the budget, she clarified.

Councilor Quinlan said he is impressed with her presentation because she just mentioned she is not filling vacancies yet there is no reduction in service. He is very grateful for that. Her efforts to serve the people of Northampton really shine through in this presentation. He said he wanted to give her a chance to speak a little about the vehicle replacement program.

They have over 150 vehicles and pieces of specialized equipment within the DPW spread across the General Fund and enterprise funds, Director LaScaleia related. This equipment needs to be ready to roll when needed; downtime isn't an option. One of the things they have done over the past several years is create a vehicle inventory and vehicle replacement schedule to insure responsible use of the city's resources. Regular replacement eliminates old vehicles within the fleet that become unreliable and which are a liability in terms of service and repair and maintenance costs. The vehicle replacement policy assigns general values to replacement costs and estimated years of useful life.

A lot of the investment made in their fleet has been to rotate out vehicles from the '80's and '90's, she continued. Those costs are reflected in the vehicle maintenance budget. The theory behind the replacement schedule is that city resources pay for this one way or another. They need to be mindful that, if they don't adhere to it, they will end up back in the same cycle they are just getting out of.

Councilor Quinlan said he wanted to get that information out there because he knew it was a concern for many residents.

Councilor Maiore said she was trying to find the cold storage facility approved in last year's budget. Director LaScaleia explained that it was a capital expenditure funded last year.

Some people are really excited about North Farms Road, Councilor Maiore shared. She told other residents she would convey their concern about the shortening of transfer station hours while raising fees. They fear it will lead to increased dumping.

Regarding the solid waste enterprise as a whole, what's happening at the transfer station starting July 1st is unrelated to the COVID crisis, Director LaScaleia noted. It is a combination of many factors that have been in existence for quite some time such as the cost of recycling, which is now a cost for the first time. In the past, they have been paid for recycling, but - come July 1, 2020 - they have to pay to dispose of recycling for the first time. With declining numbers of permits sold, which has been on a declining trajectory since 2012 when they sold some 4,000 permits, it would be irresponsible of them not to make an adjustment in price. Especially when they look at comparison communities and see that their cost is less than half and they have more hours. In that context, she thinks the changes are very reasonable. It is an effort to make sure the enterprise is sustainable and can only be achieved by a modest increase in the sticker fee and tightening up their operating hours.

Councilor LaBarge referred to an article in the Gazette with Holyoke Mayor Morse. Holyoke hired a consultant and got an estimate of what it's going to cost to recycle. They had an estimate of over \$325,000 just to remove the recycling from the city.

Holyoke generates significantly more tonnage of recycling than Northampton does, Director LaScaleia noted. Northampton has a five-year contract with fixed unit prices per ton so they know with certainty what their tonnage rate will be. What they don't know is how much tonnage will be generated.

Councilor Sciarra thanked Director LaScaleia, commenting that it is always remarkable to hear the scope of the work the DPW does.

POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Presentation by Police Chief Jody Kasper

Chief Kasper said she couldn't start any discussion on the budget without first acknowledging where they are right now. She thanked Councilor Sciarra for her opening statement. She knows these are difficult times and she understands the outrage of many in this country and local community. She shares in the outrage at what they all witnessed last week. She acknowledged the role of policing in past and present injustices. At the Northampton Police Department they will continue to be guided by the six pillars identified by President Obama's 21st Century Task Force on Policing in taking action to improve services provided to the community.

By way of background, the police department has 65 full-time sworn positions and seven civilian support staff - including the animal control officer - and employs special police officers to provide per diem police services upon request. The department gathers call activity by calendar year. In 2019, it handled over 35,000 calls, comprised of a combination of calls self-initiated by officers and calls for service. The department investigated over 1,200 major crimes, responded to 341 domestic violence calls, made 681 arrests (111 of which were Operating Under the Influence cases) and issued over 3,000 citations. In addition, police responded to 511 more serious motor vehicle accidents involving either injury or damage over \$1,000, registered 183 sex offenders, processed 305 license to carry applications, installed 118 car seats and did 38 Drug Addiction Response Team (DART) follow-up services, while the crime scene services unit responded to 84 crime scenes. These patrol services were in addition to planning, security and traffic control for marches and other large-scale events like First Night and the Hot Chocolate Run.

Outside of their patrol force, the detective bureau had a number of significant cases last year, including a fatal fire on Carolyn Street, a domestic murder/suicide, trial preparation for a human trafficking case, a large series of breaking and entering cases, child abuse cases and a multi-state investigation into child pornography.

The department currently has one vacant police officer position. Although technically having just one vacancy they have a number of people in the police academy so they are not currently on the street. It takes five to six months to complete the police academy and then four months of field training with a partner before recruits are actually ready to fill a vacancy. The city puts a lot of work into recruiting and retention. On a national level there is disinterest in becoming a police officer. At the same time last year, the unemployment rate was low. They really want to attract great candidates so they put a lot of effort into modifying recruitment and hiring efforts.

As some may have heard since it's related to the current budget, they are slowly transitioning to hybrid cruisers. They have two and hope to have more coming. They have done a lot of community outreach and fundraising drives but have had to reduce community outreach because of the pandemic. Last year they were recognized by IACP. IACP did a mini documentary and Northampton was chosen as a featured partner in its leadership film series. They were a selected department to highlight their exceptional work and the film was shown at the annual IACP conference in Chicago. The film was entitled, "Leading the Way; Responding to the Evolving Needs of Our Community." Two officers received awards from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for their work in identifying and apprehending impaired operators.

Specific to the budget, police are requesting an increase of \$193,579 with the largest amount, \$140,042 in Personnel Services (PS) for contractual salary increases. On the operational side, they have requested an \$8,072 increase for training and a \$45,465 increase in the vehicle line item for the difference in cost for hybrid cruisers. Northampton spends about 6.21% of its General Fund on police spending, putting it in the middle among similar communities.

Councilor Nash thanked Chief Kasper for her words at the start of her presentation. These are difficult and challenging times, especially for her particular department, he acknowledged.

In her narrative, she mentioned that the training budget cannot meet the ever-increasing demand for training in areas of de-escalation, implicit bias, use of force, etc. He asked her to speak to what this program would more ideally look like, since it reflects the concerns of many. Councilors and the Mayor's office have been inundated with phone calls and emails related to the requested budget increase so he is exploring where some discussion may be possible, he related.

She knows those training topics are incredibly important to their community; they are incredibly important to her, Chief Kasper responded. It is training she has been seeking for years and continues to seek. She has posted on social media some of the work they are doing. Fair and impartial policing, systemic racism, de-escalation, etc. are the types of trainings they need to be doing. These jobs are complex and they need to be up on everything. They can look at their list of training topics, it is a long list. They go over in training costs almost every year.

If there's one thing they know from everything going on in the world, having trained, competent, educated police officers is incredibly important and having ongoing, consistent training is how to get it done. As far as training, 'one and done' is not the way it works, she stressed.

Councilor Nash expressed his understanding that the city invests considerable resources in officers. He is wondering how much of this training takes place at the police academy before officers come to them.

The Massachusetts Police Training Committee (MPTC) has woven all of these issues into its curriculum, Chief Kasper confirmed. Providing a foundation is absolutely critical and important, but it needs to be supported over time. Yes, it's in the academy, but that doesn't mean they don't still need to train people over a multi-decade career, she suggested.

Councilor Nash mentioned that \$140,000 of the \$200,000 increase is for staff. How many staff would it represent if they removed that portion of the budget? He asked.

If she had to make cuts to the budget she would need to sit down and figure out where that cut would be, Chief Kasper said. A vacant position is about \$60,000, not including health insurance costs.

Two officers approximately, Councilor Nash concluded.

Councilor Thorpe expressed his understanding that the increase is only to maintain level services, not to hire new police officers. Chief Kasper confirmed this is correct.

Councilor Thorpe asked about the department's efforts to recruit minorities and other people of color.

The best department reflects the community it serves, Chief Kasper observed. It is incredibly challenging. Early on, they looked at where they had been recruiting and it was largely from colleges with criminal justice programs. In looking around at the department, they saw that many of their officers did not have criminal justice backgrounds, so they decided not to limit themselves to people with this educational background. They made changes in the recruiting process and materials as "we want to reflect what we want to attract." They have tried to create an environment where people feel good coming in and a sense of equality and positive culture.

Councilor LaBarge said she has received 237 emails and her phone has been ringing all day. All she has been hearing are calls to reject Mayor Narkewicz's proposal to expand police funding of nearly \$200,000. She thinks there is some miscommunication as to what exactly the money is being used for. Reading aloud from a public comment, she asked about the frequently-repeated charge that the increase "is justified as necessary to mitigate the COVID-19 crisis and 'enforce compliance with social distancing.'" Will a portion of this money be used to ticket people who aren't wearing masks? She asked.

Mayor Narkewicz asked if he could respond since he has been receiving the same emails. First of all, they are not expanding the number of officers, he asserted. The quote is actually

taken from the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund revenue narrative and is related to the need for hiring police details at the Locust Street transfer station during the COVID-19 emergency. The quote is related to costs of the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund and is not part of this increase. He wanted to clear that up because he is being cited as saying this as justification for the increase to the police department when in fact it was for something completely different.

The budget was put together prior to the health pandemic and the increase has absolutely nothing to do with mask compliance, Chief Kasper confirmed. Police have written zero citations for masks, she stressed. People are in a learning curve and don't know [the rules]. They are not doing that kind of enforcement right now; they are working on education and providing people with the tools needed to keep everyone safe. \$140,000 of the \$193,000 budget increase is for contractual step raises, the next biggest chunk is for hybrid vehicles and \$8,000 is for training.

Councilor Dwight thanked Chief Kasper. The issue is less about financing and subsidizing the department based on the budget and is more a global reaction to how they police and how they are policed in this country, he suggested. He thinks they're going to hear a rather loud and clear anxiety. Unfortunately, a lot of the global response to police action in Minneapolis and other places has been projected onto her department. Her department is not infallible, no departments in the city are, but she has established a culture of progressive policing. For some people that isn't going to be even close to enough and there is going to be a call for decommissioning police departments. Coincidentally, it comes at the same time as a budget review and universal forced imprisonment of citizens compounded with the very overt killings that are being charged as murders and are technically sanctioned lynching's by a police department. Combine that with massive job loss and a pervasive agita and anxiety and you have a perfect storm. For better or for worse, her budget and her department has become a focal point for this discussion. He appreciates her making those distinctions but honestly doesn't think most of the people calling for defunding really care about those distinctions. He has worked with her on trying to recruit and expand diversity and expand the quality of officers in her department and she has done an amazing job that he is afraid is not going to be appreciated or realized. He is not asking a question, he is anticipating how this conversation is going to go. They have had these conversations before, and they always come up in difficult times. He appreciates her calmness and her serenity and sincerity. He wants her to understand that they are all going to struggle through this in some way. There will be a conclusion and he doesn't know what it will be but he can promise everybody that it will be wholly unsatisfactory because what most people are asking for is a significant cultural change on so many levels. This is just the needlepoint manifestation that they're focusing on. So be it. There it lies and there it shall be, he pronounced. He will participate and have these very difficult conversations with everyone that's required.

In response to a request, Chief Kasper clarified that step raises are incremental raises over a set number of years recognizing a person's experience and the fact that they get better over time. Salary scales usually have from eight to 10 steps. It is a small negotiated amount set by contract.

Councilor Sciarra asked what a small percentage is.

A first year officer earns \$49,317. The next step above that is \$51,044. Step increases are usually around 2.5 or 3%. The city sits down at a table and negotiates contracts with the union.

Councilor Sciarra asked if there are situations under which step increases are not fulfilled, such as during economic crises.

Even during an economic crisis, one party cannot unilaterally change the terms of a contract without impact bargaining, Mayor Narkewicz explained. Impact bargaining did occur in the course of the recession during his tenure as a City Councilor but has not happened since he took office as Mayor, he said.

The term of the current contract is from FY2020 to FY2022. It went into effect July 1, 2019 and is a three-year contract

Councilor Quinlan thanked the chief for her presence and echoed the comments of Councilors Nash, LaBarge and Dwight expressing appreciation for her work. In response to a question from him, Chief Kasper confirmed that the five people in the police academy are listed in the budget at starting pay of \$49,317.

For many years, the Northampton Police Department lagged behind surrounding communities in compensation, Chief Kasper related. City officials have tried to take the money they were spending on retraining people into salaries in a way that would improve retention. Now they are more or less equal to similar departments of the same size.

Regarding the request for new vehicles, the police department website lists 18 marked vehicles, 15 cruisers and two trucks and a van crime scene vehicle. It seems to him that replacing 33% of the vehicles in the patrol fleet at one time is a lot. He is wondering if that shouldn't be flattened out somehow. Shouldn't they be buying one or two every year? Is there a reason to be replacing a significant percentage in light of the fact that the city is facing significant budget shortfalls?

They rotate in three new marked units every year, Chief Kasper clarified. Unlike other vehicles, their patrol cars run 24 hours a day. They are uniquely driven unlike cars at home. If they get too old, they cost a lot of money in maintenance. The former chief really worked to get a car cycle in place and it's been effective. She understands they're in a budget crunch. This is the cycle they've been on in order to reduce those other costs.

Each year they actually buy five, but only three of them are marked cruisers. The department has other vehicle needs such as a vehicle for the animal control officer, unmarked cars, etc.

He understands the city negotiated raises but it is tough to look at the raises in light of the fact that people in Northampton are losing their jobs, Councilor Quinlan commented. He said he just wanted to voice that so people facing unemployment know that they're thought of.

Councilor Maiore said she is very grateful for the highly-trained nature of the Northampton police and was grateful to see Chief Kasper's statement in response to the murder of George Floyd. To all of those who reached out to them, she really appreciates living in an engaged community, she confirmed.³³³

A lot of them are feeling very raw, she noted. They know this problem of racial bias and the murder of people of color by police is not new, but she is wondering if there is something new they can do about it. This is less a statement about what's going on with the Northampton police and more about saying there are structural changes they have not made and that's why they keep coming back here. Because of the low crime rate in their city and their relatively well-funded, well-staffed and highly-trained force, she actually thinks Northampton is extremely well-positioned to serve as a model to other communities by taking a lead in researching and experimenting in alternatives to policing that would complement their force and trying to make changes proactively before they have an incident here. She thinks that there's an opportunity here. She knows Chief Kasper made this budget in earnest, but she doesn't think it reflects that opportunity. She knows the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus has put out guidelines about community involvement in policing and looking at alternatives to policing and citizen review boards, "I think we really need to take this moment to reexamine where we're going here." Minneapolis police received extensive training so she doesn't think training is enough.

She referred to a quote from Chief Kasper earlier this year saying she had begun discussions about strengthening and building new partnerships with members of their community and looked forward to opportunities to do that. She said she'd like to know what that looked like to her and where that was reflected in this budget.

She has said for years that she thinks at the heart of the issue of police/community relations is 'the missing link' of sitting at the table and listening to each other, Chief Kasper responded. The problem is, they have not found successful ways to do that and have been met with some difficult resistance when they have tried. They have tried to work with outside parties to facilitate conversations. She wanted to have a conversation about race but it was just going to be protested so the facilitator had to cancel. This is the challenge in their community; they are willing, they have said that. She is not just a person of words, she is a person of action. She has been answering the phone all day as well explaining why they've done what they've done. It has been really challenging for them to be successful in Northampton. She hasn't found success at being able to sit at a table that's open to the community and share perspectives without being met with resistance, she reported.

One of her fears is cutting their police department down. This [community involvement] is always

the work that gets cut. There are emergencies on the street that have to be tended to and that distracts them from this other work they want to do.

Councilor Maiore said she did not mean to put this all on the chief in terms of solutions. She thinks they need to think about how they want to approach law enforcement as a community. That may need to come from outside the police with funding for it reflected in the budget.

Councilor Foster acknowledged that, like everybody else, she has received quite a few communications from constituents. Looking on this Zoom call she sees many, many names of neighbors, people she knows and people probably attending their first City Council meeting. She thinks that is really amazing, and she really wanted to honor how much activism is there and the pain of people of color and communities of color that have historically been targeted. Here in Northampton, she thinks they have an incredible opportunity with a chief who gets it and a chief who is open to and interested in exploring these issues.

She mentioned a conversation she had with the chief about concerns related to the recent protest. The chief spent quite a while talking to her and explaining that her intention with her department was to deescalate as much as possible. She recognizes that what they're looking at here is the criminal justice system and policing and criminalizing behaviors like mental health and addiction. This is really a big, societal issue. She sees training and action from the police department as targeted toward responding to incidents the best way they can. She wanted to name that she recognized the complexity of all of this and it is not a simple solution. She posed several quick questions from constituents about residency and whether the department accepts military surplus items.

When asked how she chooses which trainings to offer, Chief Kasper said they do their best to vet trainings by speaking to people who have attended them. Some such as mental health training and fair and impartial policing are established curriculum. To a certain extent, if it's a popular, national, well-recognized training, they tend to think it's going to be a great class. There isn't really an evaluation system, and it is very difficult to measure the impact of great training, she acknowledged.

If there is any way she can be helpful in building police/community relations, sign her up, Councilor Foster volunteered.

Chief Kasper said she would not forget the offer.

Councilor Jarrett thanked Chief Kasper for her presentation, her response to the death of George Floyd and the list of 13 items the department is doing. He feels very confident that, as a police department, they are doing a really good job at moving in a progressive direction. Last fall, he got to participate in a ride along and meet some of the officers and that was very illuminating as well. He asked what percentage of calls she would consider mental health or addiction issues. He is thinking about the program in Eugene, OR where one in five calls are responded to by mental health responders.

Lieutenant Kerouac did a lot of work partnering with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) years ago on a grant to figure out what percentage of calls have mental health involvement, Chief Kasper said. When it was being tracked years ago, it was around 20 to 25%. They have had an internship program where they had a social worker doing follow up services. She would love to have a program. Currently they have domestic violence advocates. They go through the log and when they see domestic violence cases, they provide follow-up support and connect people to resources. She has been a long-time advocate for that.

She mentioned calls they respond to where they know a person's behavior will escalate if they don't receive services. They don't want that, but there's just not a lot of resources out there. She would love to have a full-time mental health outreach worker – a civilian – who can provide services and connect people with other resources. But social services in their community are overtaxed as well. The challenge of their work is that it's immediate. A lot of people in crisis can't wait until the next business day. Those sorts of services are absolutely critical and she would love to see that addition to the city.

Councilor Jarrett asked if she had an idea of the percentage of calls related to addiction.

Chief Kasper said she would not be comfortable giving an estimate. They definitely encounter people struggling with addiction and their DART officers try to provide follow up services.

Councilor Jarrett observed that the crime rate for major crimes has been declining. He asked how that translates into the need for her force. He referred to the potential argument that, if the crime rate is declining, they do not need as many officers.

The crime rate has fluctuated for years and is certainly impacted by the economy and joblessness, Chief Kasper noted. She has a lot of concerns about what's going to happen now. They're looking at a lot of unemployment and people losing jobs. The nice thing about having a lower crime rate is that they can get to some of this important work.

Councilor LaBarge said she agreed with what she heard from Councilors Maiore and Foster. She feels it is really, really important that they all come together. They need to show the many people of color within their community that they all want to work together. She thinks they need to sit down and get a community advisory commission with people of color.

Councilor Sciarra addressed the audience to acknowledge their interest in making comments and asking questions. She is eager to get to the public comment section, she assured. She feels their frustration and knows they want to speak. They have two more departmental presentations.

Councilor Maiore reiterated her belief that they need to look outside the police department. There are lots of ways to lower the crime rate, such as investing in housing and jobs. She said she would be interested in hearing what the Mayor has to say about funding those types of services.

Mayor Narkewicz said he certainly agrees. He thinks Northampton has been working on investing in housing and has allocated significant amounts of funding through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Community Preservation Act (CPA) programs to support affordable housing. The city has also dedicated significant resources to support local social service organizations and provide programming – fuel assistance and housing assistance. It comes down to resources. They are definitely committed to focusing on all of those areas because a lot of the responsibility otherwise falls on the police as the cracks in the social safety net open wider and wider. They have whole agencies that have left Hampshire County. They don't have a job training center, mental health offices or an unemployment office here anymore. They have seen all these agencies lose funding and move away. Often the police end up being on the front line instead.

Councilor Sciarra commented that there is certainly interest on the part of the City Council and the larger group on this call in having a forum where they can come together and talk about these issues as a community.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Jon Davine presented the Northampton Fire Rescue budget. He took over as chief March 13, 2020. As they can imagine, the department has been engaged in constant pandemic COVID-type work since then. It is starting to slow down a little bit, but they are planning for the fall and assuming it's going to be worse. To date, the ambulance service has transported 191 COVID patients so they have been transporting some very sick people. About two hours ago they did another one. The budget this year is a level services budget with three vacancies. Some older firefighters have retired at the upper end of the pay scale so replacing them with entry-level staff resulted in some savings. They are not adding any positions. They have 68 sworn positions and two civilians, an administrative assistant and firefighter/mechanic.

They were moderately busy last year. Firefighters responded to 7,395 calls. They responded to 84 fires, including 23 structure fires, and had a fire loss of over half a million dollars. 70 to 74% of the department's calls are usually EMS, and last year was no different, with 4,596 EMS calls. Call volume dropped down a little with the stay at home order.

Their folks work 24-hour shifts and average 19 to 20 calls each 24 hours.

Councilor Quinlan started by paying the chief a compliment. He has a friend who works in fire rescue in another city. He was recently in Northampton's station and noted that all of the people there were exercising and that their guys take physical fitness very seriously. He was impressed

with his team's commitment to being prepared. At City Services Committee, Chief Davine talked about the budget the day before the override vote. He asked whether he has candidates to fill the vacancies.

They made a conditional offer yesterday to a candidate from Easthampton who is currently a full-time firefighter in Florida and looking to come back to the area, Chief Davine advised. They will not be able to fill the other two vacancies because two members are out on injury and awaiting the retirement process. He won't be able to fill those vacancies until those folks actually retire.

Chief Davine responded to questions about minority recruitment and department response times. Response times are well within the national standard, he assured. Response times to Leeds and outlying areas are a little longer while response time in the city center is a lot faster.

Councilor Dwight noted Chief Davine came on around the same time he did, and the culture in the department was vastly different at that time. The department has gone through remarkable changes. 22 years ago, all responses were fire responses. It became very clear that fire safety had improved to the extent that fire calls were going down and that one of the more critical services with a better return was emergency medical response. He appreciates the fact that he is chief because, aside from all his hazmat training, he has a deep understanding and knowledge of the challenges facing the department. Their conversations at budget season used to be about fire department overtime, and that's no longer an issue. Councilors no longer have the panicked feeling that NFD is going to come in with an enormous overtime transfer. He is saying this for folks who don't understand how this department has evolved into the professional crackerjack system that it is. Hopefully most folks will never have to experience their good work, but when and if they do, he said he hopes they understand and appreciate the commitment he and his department have made to the community.

Councilor Sciarra added her thanks.

CENTRAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Councilor Jarrett disclosed another conflict of interest. As a member of the Pedal People Cooperative, he can't participate in the Central Services budget because Pedal People has a pre-existing contract with Central Services. He said he was going to turn off his video.

Director David Pomerantz referred to the budget narrative describing his department's myriad functions and activities. He asked them to keep in mind that 36 custodians, supervisors and maintenance staff also provide custodial services in the schools but are not listed on the Central Services budget page.

Director Pomerantz presented the FY2021 Central Services and Parking Maintenance budgets. Parking maintenance, parking revenue, parking lots and garages are all under Central Services. Since March 17th, they have basically had custodians in city buildings and to a lesser extent schools doing security, some maintenance and restocking and cleaning offices where essential personnel have been working. It was heating season when city operations were shut down so they have had to monitor energy management systems. They have continued heating, cooling and electrical work on an as-needed basis. With warmer weather now here, they are starting to ramp up outside maintenance and landscaping on both schools and city buildings. Maintenance and landscaping activities on the garages and parking lots are also slowly ramping up. With no parking and the downtown being relatively car-free since March, it has been a great time for parking maintenance staff to get in and do line striping and maintenance in the garage as needed. When the city stood up the homeless shelter at the high school, eight public school custodians volunteered and rotated shifts to keep that facility disinfected and clean for the month-plus it was in operation.

The Central Services budget shows a two percent (2%) increase for FY2021 on the Personnel Services (PS) side, strictly due to salary and contract-related increases, he presented. There is no increase in operational expenses for FY2021. Right now, two custodial positions on the city side are open. With the senior center closed, they transferred the second shift custodian from the senior center to the police department. (Although the senior center is closed to the public, five or six staff members still work there, he reported.)

On the Ordinary Maintenance (OM) side, for utilities, the city just entered two-year contracts with

new suppliers for both natural gas and electricity. Central Services solicits bids every two years. Figures listed include both supply and distribution/transmission costs. The rates are a touch higher than the last two-year contract. This year, the city is using Constellation for electricity and Spark Energy for natural gas. They have not burned oil in any city building for seven or eight years. When he came on, the city started doing a conversion to natural gas and they are now oil-free across the city.

STREET LIGHTS

About three years ago, the city did a major street light conversion project in which it converted 2,000-plus existing street lights to LED fixtures and bulbs, Director Pomerantz reminded. Before that, National Grid provided maintenance on an annual basis. Because of the resulting savings and longevity of the fixtures, street light costs are down to \$125,000 a year. This is not all energy costs since, when they did the LED conversion, the city had to absorb the cost of maintenance and now has a multi-year contract for maintenance/repair. About \$25,000 of the line item covers maintenance but the city has slashed street light costs by 50%.

He explained the distinction between the Repair/Maintenance (R/M) line item and R/M Buildings line item. R/M Buildings is work done internally while R/M is for contracted services. The city is coming to the end of a three-year contract for removal of trash/recycling. Procurement agents were going to go out to bid this spring for a new three-year contract but because of the COVID situation and the transporter reducing its contract, they are going to do a one-year extension with the vendor and go out to bid for FY2022.

He went on to describe other expenses in detail, including multi-year contracts with a host of vendors for maintenance and inspection services for items such as fire extinguishers, elevators, photocopiers and printers.

In the Parking Maintenance budget - similar to Central Services - cost increases are due to salary adjustments. They are not increasing positions. The division has one maintenance position that covers downtown work and is part of the city's contribution to the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) system. The person deals with street sweeping, tree trimming, etc.

Under Ordinary Maintenance (OM), trash removal is provided through the Pedal People contract. The city is in the second year of a three-year contract with Pedal People. The contract covers picking up trash from trash receptacles and putting them in the various compactors and containers in the Armory Street and Masonic Street lots. They will be signing a new five-year contract for disposal of trash in those parking lots.

Under Technology Services, Parking Maintenance now has 36 of the green multi-space pay-by-plate systems around town. They have eliminated many of the parking meters. Because of their credit card capability there are monthly data costs for those systems.

Site improvements covers random maintenance done by parking services – painting, crack sealing and miscellaneous equipment and supplies.

Equipment parking and parking garages covers maintenance on parking machines, computer equipment for the parking garages, security cameras in garages and work needed on the gate system and pay stations.

Energy management and renewable energy projects also come out of Central Services. They are doing a number of capital projects this summer involving energy. They will be doing system and envelope assessments of city buildings to prioritize energy reduction projects to meet the Mayor's recent directive for net zero energy use by 2050. They will survey seven city buildings this year to identify everything from insulation issues and window problems to necessary heating and cooling system upgrades. Energy and Sustainability Officer Chris Mason has been extremely busy with Green Communities work. In addition to grant money, the city gets extensive rebates and incentives from National Grid for lighting conversion projects. The department has put up a solar system at the senior center to complement the work of the geothermal well system for heating and cooling. The senior center will now be generating electricity, and that project will be coming on line in the next two to three weeks. Lastly, they are working on solar canopy systems, one project for the Roundhouse parking lot and the other for main fire headquarters.

Councilor Sciarra said she wanted to take a moment to celebrate his department, referring to the tireless work it has been doing since they've been in this crisis.

"I have to say, your presentation is a little dry," Councilor Dwight commented appreciatively. If COVID and other ensuing crises hadn't happened, his department would probably get a lot more acknowledgement because it is where 'the rubber meets the road' when it comes to climate resiliency and climate change. The significant reductions in energy consumption that have been achieved in municipal buildings are through his department and under his aegis. "You have modernized antique buildings and lowered our [carbon] footprint significantly," he acknowledged. The community should appreciate that its objective toward 2050 - which was the burning issue pre-March - is in the hands of this department. It deserves recognition for this contribution. "Every person who works in your department is devoted to the same mission," he observed. He thinks it's worth a little applause.

Director Pomerantz fielded questions and comments. Among other things, Councilor LaBarge asked about upgrades to the bathrooms at Ryan Road Elementary School. In particular, she asked about renovations to accommodate a student in a wheelchair who needs to be assisted with a Hoyer lift

Director Pomerantz said he is certainly familiar with the project. They did some initial designs and ran some initial estimates on doing the work. Based on its cost, they are weighing the project against other building needs. It is still a project to be looked at but there is no firm construction schedule for it at this point.

In response to a question from Councilor Thorpe, Director Pomerantz explained that 'Compliance and Accommodation' is an old budget line item that has been in the budget for years. It is used for additional supplies or items that don't fit into the standard budget. It sounds regulatory and legal but it is not.

Councilor Maiore thanked him for the well-run shelter at the high school. Director Pomerantz said it is a pleasure to work with emergency services on a regular basis.

Chief Davine amended his presentation to say that he had one minority firefighter.

Public TestimonyPublic Testimony

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment. Over the next three hours, 73 speakers gave testimony. For a full transcript of their comments, please see the recording on the government archive page of youtube. Highlights of each speaker's remarks are transcribed below.

Ghazah Abbasi said she is really grateful to her council members who are exploring alternatives to police. The police is basically an institution that, at this point, is just killing black people. She feels like all of her council members already know this but are still sympathetic to expanding the budget of the police in the middle of a global crisis in which the police continue to kill black people and kill protesters on the street who are protesting police killings of black people. She had to say she was very surprised. She cited some specific statistics: the United States has the largest population of incarcerated people. From 1980 to 2015, it went up from 500,000 to over 2.2 million. The U.S. has 5% of the global population but more than 20% of the world's prisoners. It doesn't want to do anything except imprison its own people and generate profits for certain corporations. Across the U.S., all of their public money is going into funding gigantic killer corporations that are profiting off of black death. Is this legalized system of white supremacy something they want to uphold? There are massive racial disparities in policing. African Americans are only 12% of the population at large but are 34% of the prison population. They are incarcerated at five times the rate of white people and black women are incarcerated at two times the rate of white women. 32% of the children who are arrested are African American. As they know, cops kill black American children. The Minneapolis Police Department implemented training on mindfulness and implicit bias and none of it worked. Body cameras don't work.

Sakiya voiced her objection to giving money to the police department and shared her personal experience with the Northampton police. In January, one of her housemates tried to commit suicide. The cops came and pounded on their door at 4 a.m. She answered the door in just a robe and didn't open the door. They didn't tell her it was a mental health call and didn't announce they were police until almost a minute into the conversation. She opened the door and tried to back away. Two men charged into her house at 4 a.m., grabbed each of her legs and pulled her naked down the stairs. They finally let go but only because her housemate was holding her back and screaming. They went to her housemate's room and, "they didn't even f***ing do anything!" They didn't even move him into a recovery position. "Don't give them money; don't give them more training, please just get rid of them." The officers' names were Nicholas Limoges and Kevin Cook.

Tom Gregg noted that the dramatic attendance tonight is a product of a sustained community effort to defund the police; it is not a reactionary thing caused by the events of the past week. Two years ago, there was a very well-attended public hearing about the police budget and the expansion of access to riot gear. There are a lot of reasons why he doesn't think police should have their budget expanded. He echoed what other councilors said about the necessity of hybrid cars during a global pandemic. In looking at the budget, it looks like senior services was cut by 25%. Given that senior citizens are so vulnerable, that really scares him. He can definitely confirm that the community is not asking for more comprehensive training and better technology. Much of what this community represents is a sustained vision towards a future that does not need police officers. Amherst has a volunteer team of trained street medics. This is about the \$200,000 and also about something that is really, really huge that a lot of people believe in.

Mimi Odgers of Ward 6 said she is here to speak in favor of reducing the budget for the Northampton Police Department. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery followed by numerous acts of police brutality across the country and numerous forms of violence inflicted on black and brown people should cause Northampton to rethink and re-shift what policing means and looks like in their community. She is angry and terrified at the militarization of police across this country. She has heard firsthand accounts and seen multiple videos of police using violence against peaceful protesters. They have not had the same type of violence in their city yet but she urged them to start to look at other, better practices already in place across the country. For example, instead of police officers responding to calls related to mental health, they can shift to a model that relies on mental health professionals doing so. She pointed to Eugene, Oregon's program Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets (CAHOOTS). A model like Cahoots insures that a person in crisis does not feel threatened by the presence of police officers in uniforms with guns, tasers and batons and doesn't wind up incarcerated due to possible charges related to the encounter but instead receives services provided by area

nonprofits. She recommends that the city create a panel to study how to reduce the need for police officers and institute an oversight board for the police department. Any increase in budget for the police department should be shifted to other areas, especially to their schools, which is the #1 reason people supported the override. As for the current budget, in looking at it, she sees a line item for police department supplies at \$92,537 with no transparency as to what those supplies include. Uniforms and office supplies have their own line items. She asked if the supplies line item means weapons.

The Fire Department has a supplies line but it is listed as \$20,000, she noted. This appears to be a huge discrepancy between first responder departments and, as a taxpayer, she would like to know what NPD is buying with her tax dollars. She closed by saying she personally has never had a negative experience with any member of the police department. However, in the current moment, every municipality should take stock of what currently is and how they can make it better. Every community should take stock of how much they invest in police compared to how much they invest in the residents most likely to be policed. She does not want to live in a city where the police have riot gear and military weapons.

Cora Segal of Northampton commented that, as someone who has feared for her safety in Northampton, she has never felt safe turning to the police and has always felt the best care and protection from her neighbors and community members. They need to take action by starting off with rejecting this proposal and defunding the police. Even if Northampton is a model of so-called progressive policing, she reminded people that, under this model in December of 2018, the NPD had a planned trip to Israel to work with Israeli defense forces to gain surveillance and counterinsurgency tactics. We need material changes, defunding and ultimately abolishing the police.

Danielle Amadeo, who identified herself as a resident of Ward 3 and member of the Northampton Arts Council (NAC), recited the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade and Nina Pop. She says their names because she would like to invoke them into this meeting, she explained. She is on the call to address the police department budget but before she does so wanted to call attention to some work in the arts and cultural sector tied to emergency relief for folks in their community. The NAC under the leadership of Executive Director Brian Foote has raised \$40,000 and allocated that in emergency relief to artists through the award of over 100 grants. She cited this as an example of work happening outside of police and emergency response that provides direct support to the community in times of need. She would like them to think about using that as a potential model for the way in which other human service departments might provide immediate aid to members of their community. When thinking of transforming the mission of the police to one of community outreach, education and service, she'd like to think about ways to value and pay police to reflect those services. She asked councilors and the mayor to go back to the police department budget and consider implementing impact bargaining and rethinking giving raises to their police at this time of global crisis.

Mac Godinez said she is here to demand that the City Council reject the increase to the Northampton Police Department and move to fully defund the police and redirect funds to social services, housing resources and other areas that foster public health. Like police departments across the nation, the Northampton police disproportionately arrest black people, actively working alongside the anti-black system of mass incarceration which plagues our country. She has never once in her life needed police to keep her safe. Every single time it has been loved ones, kind strangers and community members who have kept her safe. It is not only possible but imperative to fund and build strong and trauma-informed social services, community grievance councils and accountability programs to take the place of the inherently anti-black and white supremacist institutions of police and prisons. They will be paying attention and holding them accountable, she warned.

Aspen Bey of Ward 5 said she is here to say she does not support the funds allocated toward police in the budget. She also finds that they have been very violent in their responses. She has many people in her life who have had experiences like the one described with the Northampton police. She does not think that is under progressive policing at all. She has had friends who have been violently arrested when having mental health crises. She thinks they as a community can move toward trauma-informed mental health organizations rather than police officers who are untrained to deal with things like mental health, homelessness, economic stress and all the things that affect their community.

Ashley Ginsberg, an Amherst resident who lived in Northampton from 2011 to 2019 and went to high school and middle school in Northampton, said she was at the protest Monday. She reminded those present that a budget is a reflection of their values as a community. She is frankly shocked that there are things they have not spoken about in this meeting. She has been on since 5 p.m. and has not heard a single reference to the fact that the police maced peaceful protesters Monday. They took a knee for a photo op and then they turned around and maced young people, she charged. She said she would like to know why Chief Kasper and Mayor Narkewicz are no longer on this call. She would love to see her here answering these questions. She would love to hear about Eric Matlock who sued the Northampton Police Department for \$700,000 because he was dragged from the steps of the police department in 2017. If people are truly concerned, why are they not funding Tapestry, why are they not funding mental health shelters and wet shelters, etc. She yielded the rest of her time to people of color. She said her personal experience with police has been excellent but, as a white person, she has no idea of the experience of the rest of their community.

Northampton resident **Dana Goldblatt** said she wanted to pick up what Ghazah was saying about the Minneapolis police. They have implemented every single reform Jody Kasper was bragging about – implicit bias training, de-escalation training, psychological testing – and this is what they got. And every single study says that’s because none of it works. Sending an ‘armed paramilitary organization’ to do things like install car seats, hand out masks and put on birthday parades is ‘officially insane,’ she asserted. “We don’t need an armed paramilitary to do those things.”

They need to defund them a lot. They are sucking up resources from Tapestry, housing, etc. The reason they deal with the homeless is because instead of housing the homeless the city pays the police to deal with them. It is cheaper to house the homeless. Because they’re not doing that, they pay the police to handle them. They pay the police to handle mental health instead of paying for mental health treatment. “You can stop it today in Northampton,” she exhorted. Cut the police budget by 25% and give that money to organizations like Tapestry, and they will see an improved society with less disorder and less crises, she asserted. Then when people come to Northampton, they won’t see an armed paramilitary parading down the street in bullet-proof vests, which is about as clear a sign as possible of endorsing white supremacy. “It’s wrong,” she insisted.

Northampton resident **Emily Coffin**, a licensed clinical social worker, said she joined others in denouncing the fact that the chief has left. The chief said she’s been trying to connect with the community, and here we are. It’s not on her terms and it’s not with her power and that’s why she left, she claimed. The mayor has said the police are filling social service cracks and that is exactly the problem. The fact that he said that shows that he does not understand the problem. Police trigger a fight or flight response; nobody makes good decisions when faced with a gun. Our front line for social problems should not carry guns. If they scale back the police department, they will leave room for social services and community organizations to fill the gap. If no one steps down, there is no gap to fill. We are defaulting to police to solve the problems because that is where the money and the power is. We need to put power and resources elsewhere, and the first step is the police handing over those resources to the people more equipped to solve those problems. We told you two years ago not to buy them riot gear. When Eric Matlock got arrested, we told the city that we do not want the police to solve these problems. “This is a fight that we’ve been fighting for years’ and the city has had time for abolishing the police and finding other ways. Step back, police, she demanded.

Annie Ricotta of Great Falls, MA, said it was shocking that it took almost four and a half hours for anyone to mention the minors being maced by the police. Every time he goes through downtown Northampton cops are harassing houseless people, and the money that cop is getting paid could go toward supporting the people being harassed instead of criminalizing them for being homeless. He thanked Councilor Dwight for ‘mansplaining’ this incredibly painful situation in the most dismissive terms possible. It’s nice that he can acknowledge the historical moment that they’re in and the desperate need for deep structural change while conceding that he has neither the courage nor the imagination to take part in it, he said. Chief Kasper multiple times offered up the notion that training is the method to address some of the serious concerns that have been expressed about policing but failed to name a single specific benefit aside from an idea, which is far too nebulous and vague to be satisfactory. On top of whatever soft power training the NPD has participated in, they have also trained with the disgraced former sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio, who has bragged about his tent-city outdoor desert prison by calling them

concentration camps.

Jody Kasper is weaponizing the low-hanging fruit of this pandemic to say that joblessness is going to lead to an increase in crime and therefore a sustained relevance for the police, but the amount of money being requested for salary increases alone could significantly benefit more important and proven responses to joblessness and other problems, he continued.

The chief mentioned trying to have conversations with the community about race and other issues. The reason those conversations have not been successful is because they don't want there to be police. "We don't want reformed police, we want no police." The time has come to think boldly and imaginatively about a future without police, he stressed.

Liz Walber of Ward 3 stressed that, although she is working tonight, she is speaking as an individual and not a Northampton Open Media (NOM) representative. The conversation they heard between councilors and the Northampton PD chief has been from the inaccurate vantage point of progressive outsiders watching human rights atrocities occurring elsewhere. But on Monday, the NPD maced a 15-year old protester near the end of a peaceful protest in their city. This problem is and has always been here as well. It is surreal to hear the justification for an increase in the police budget sandwiched by the DPW, superintendent of public schools and Central Services all explaining how they are going to finesse the cuts to make up for COVID-19. It is appalling that the police department will receive a budget increase while providing no essential services to address the most important health crisis in modern history. Policing has nothing to do with public health and the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless more black people across the country at the hands of police officers exemplify that the police are in fact a danger to public health and the very existence of black communities. Giving the police new hybrid cars at this moment would be an embarrassment, a travesty and an official announcement of the City Council that they are not listening. It would officially become a meme about their city. To be frank, Pedal People do more good for their community on bicycles.

It is a familiar mistake by public officials to look to the police for leadership to solve this issue. The police institutionally **are** this issue. The only fix to the issue is abolishing the police, a Band-Aid would be simply disarming and a budget increase would be pouring salt on the wound. She trusts independent agencies like Tapestry Health to help Northampton residents with issues like addiction rather than the police. Councilor Maiore said she would like to see Northampton be a model for this moment. But councilors need to be aware that this model is unprecedented. This is a very brave stance that all 500 people who have signed in are taking, and they are taking it together for a reason. This cannot be like the response to police violence under the Obama administration with more money to police departments. That obviously didn't work because here they are again. Now is the time for municipalities to align themselves with the people over police and police unions that are tearing their country apart. "I'd like you to look at the numbers of people in this chat right now and sees that **this** is the meeting at the table." Additional funding does not work, they do not need an advisory board to meet with the police. The people are here right now.

Northampton resident **Veronica Douglas** said she was here to speak against the increase in the police budget. On Monday she witnessed Northampton police pepper-spraying children at a peaceful protest. Was that progressive policing? No, it is unacceptable. She demands that the council not only cease to attempt to increase the police budget but decrease the police budget by half. If pay raises and hybrid cars are so important the police should cut the pepper spray budget to fund them. Why spend money on hurting children when you could spend that same money on helping children? She asked rhetorically.

Ward 3 resident **Annie Wood** said that in the time she has lived in Northampton she personally has witnessed two incidents of police brutality; one related earlier by Sakiya and the other on Monday when police pepper-sprayed children protesting police brutality. She is also a shelter worker and has seen many incidents of frankly disrespectful, rude and aggravating behavior that was not trauma-informed towards her clients. No amount of shallow photo ops, hugging protestors, sensitivity training or internal reviews will put a Band-Aid on this. They need to defund the Northampton Police Department. She has frankly found the entire council's response out of touch and condescending this entire meeting. She asked that they all seriously consider what they are being asked for here. Defund the Northampton Police Department and reallocate their budget toward things that really matter.

Shelby Dean, an Easthampton resident who lived in Northampton up until four months ago, echoed those calling for a decrease in the budget for the police department. She would like those funds to go to public services. As somebody who lived in public housing in downtown Northampton for two and a half years, public housing desperately needs funding. She would never live there again and would never live there with a minor child. She thanked the DPW and Central Services for being incredibly clear and transparent with their budgets and honestly on top of things with the crisis they have going on economically. Speaking directly to Councilor Dwight, she said she was really disappointed with him for not representing the voices of their community who are clearly asking for very specific needs for a long time and for 'just the clear disrespect for the people' not participating in the public comment when they have an unbelievable, unprecedented turnout of people who want to express what they want.

Alisa Klein thanked councilors for their service and thanked everyone from the community who had spoken. Their words mean a lot and it is really nice to know so many people are in solidarity around reducing the budget of the police and defunding the police. She would like to take a look at what they call public safety or policing; it is actually public terrorism for many in their country and community. Current-day policing everywhere is actually a threat to the safety of people of color in particular but to all members of society. This is not a commentary on the integrity or lack thereof of their local police department, it is an articulation of the very tangible and brutal effects that systemic racism in their society, and as such, in their governmental and societal institutions, has on people of color. Police are the institution in their society authorized to use force in their communities - supposedly as needed - but police are the institution that very visibly and tangibly expresses the systematic and societal racism that is rampant throughout all of their systems and structures. Police behavior and actions are a tangible expression and symptom of racism that is expressed through violence against people of color and, at its worst, the murder of people of color. Why not reduce the possibilities of that racist violence to be inflicted? It behooves them to rethink what true public safety could and should look like. The scope of policing has become overly broad and deeply misguided. Policing is the 'go to' for addressing the houseless, people who ask for money downtown, people with mental illness and behavioral issues, etc., all things that should have other prevention and response resources in place. Criminalizing students, poor people and houseless people is not what these folks need nor is it humane or effective. Having worked for two decades on issues related to interpersonal violence - that is, sexual and domestic violence - she has had person after person contact her to ask about alternatives to calling the police. They want the violence to stop, they want their family member or loved one to get help, they want help for themselves, but they do not want to engage with the police. Very rarely in her 20 years doing this work has she known individuals and families who are dealing with family violence to actually want to call the police. They just haven't had other resources.

Northampton resident **Emily Hunerwadel** echoed what's been said and pointed out again how ironic it is that Chief Kasper would say they've tried to open up a dialogue when they then left this meeting. It was mentioned that the police are relevant because there is going to be an increase in unemployment so therefore there's going to be an increase in theft. But they're not increasing the budget for unemployment or other human services the same way they're increasing the police. It doesn't make any sense that they would treat the symptom but not the cause in their society.

Sophie Maki of Ward 3 said she is also calling to support defunding the police. She is deeply disturbed by a budget that increases funding to the police during a time when there are so many budget cuts in other departments. She commented appreciatively on the fact that councilors and others are naming systemic racism as an issue but noted they also need to be talking about systemic solutions. She doesn't want cops trained on mental health because she doesn't think cops should be giving mental health care to people. It's deeply inappropriate for someone with a gun to be providing mental health care. Instead, she wants systemic solutions such as defunding the police and focusing on other creative solutions that are alternatives to policing. This can mean investing in housing, investing in health care, investing in rental support and other social services. To ask to defund the police is not radical, especially at this time when they are in the midst of a global pandemic and there are many cuts across the city budget. Reduce the funding for the police and ultimately, they need to abolish the police.

Woody Woodger, Greenfield, claimed that for Chief Kasper not to be here is 'an act of cowardice.' Abolishing the police should be the end goal of where they move socially. Many of the movements she's suggesting that the police could make are refuted in a Guardian article. The

article states that the Minneapolis police implemented training on implicit bias, mindfulness, de-escalation, etc., created tighter use of force standards, adopted body cameras, initiated community dialogues and early warning systems and yet had the same issue. Policing is not a matter of moderation or changing how policing happens; policing is a force of violence, it is the violent arm of the state and is used to keep people, specifically people in minority groups, in a marginalized space so the ruling class can continue to hold power.

Alex Western – recent Northampton High School graduate – said he heard a lot of things from Jody Kasper about things she’s doing that didn’t seem accurate. The Northampton police website says they have four cops who are non-white - two black, one Latino and one Asian - out of 65 officers, which is clearly not diversity. Even though Northampton is 95% white, it is still under-representing those communities proportionally. Beyond that, she was asked how she vets training and she said they just go and find out. Theoretically, even if they do progressive policing and have a valid police system, they are still supporting the national network of unjust police work like the Maricopa County jail and, by going to those trainings, they as a city are supporting and enabling that oppressive structure. By going to Israel for training they are enabling globally human rights violations. Even if their city individually does not do those things, their police system is enabling those things. It is something they need to take very seriously. He doesn’t want his tax money going to support a national and international system of oppression.

Felix O’Connor of Ward 3A said that, considering they are still in the midst of a global pandemic alongside a national uprising calling for the defunding of police, he thinks a budget proposal that leaves the police budget untouched is downright irresponsible. Any comments tonight by City Councilors, the Mayor or the police chief on the death of George Floyd are empty words without engaging in a true reflection on the nature and structure of police work as a whole. There was a time before police; there are proven alternatives to policing. For example, there are cities that have deployed social workers rather than police that have been very successful. Chief Kasper mentioned that social services in this city are overtaxed and that alternatives like this would be expensive to implement, so she’d like to thank her for the excellent suggestion as to where the funding for the police could be better allocated, although as previously mentioned, she is no longer here. Reform does not do enough to get to the issues present at the root of policing.

Jonathan Goldman – Northampton resident in Ward 6, formerly democratic state committee member for the Hampshire/Franklin/Worcester senate district and chair of the Northampton Mayor’s Youth Commission – said he wanted to point to 1) what it means to be someone who is elected to represent people, and 2) what they can do in this moment. As he has talked to city councilors, state representatives and senators across the state, he has heard this constant response of, “We hear you; what is the issue you want us to tackle?”

One thing he learned from being in an elected position is that it is their responsibility once elected to turn back to the people they represent and propose legislative solutions to their problems. He would love to hear and give an opportunity to all of the city councilors to share whether there are various ordinances they are thinking about and would like to implement. He thinks a lot of people would like to hear what action people can really implement in this moment. The other thing to think about is how they can bring in those voices. On Saturday when the next action will be, it would be great if they could bring any ordinances or anything else any of them are envisioning, he suggested.

Esther Daube-Valois, Ward 5, referred to the comments about trying to improve community/police relations. As much as people in Northampton would like to claim they are a progressive paradise where there is no evidence of racial bias exhibited by their police force; that is absolutely not true. In 2017, Eric Matlock was pepper-sprayed and then dragged off the steps of the Northampton Police Department for peacefully protesting his child being taken away from him. In 2013, Jonas Correa was arrested outside of a city bar simply for filming a police officer who was questioning his friends. Correa was maced by the officer, then tackled and arrested. Both of their lawsuits claimed there was excessive force used against them because they were black. Matlock’s case is still ongoing as he is seeking \$700,000, while Correa was awarded \$52,000 in 2016. This money should not have been spent compensating a preventable incident. These two men were able to get the monetary sum they deserved because of the monetary situation they were in. If they search Northampton, MA police on Youtube, the videos that come up portray their city as a racist and unsafe place. There are videos of Matlock and Correa’s arrests as well as other videos of people being pulled over and questioned for no apparent

reason other than their race. A video uploaded three days ago shows three Northampton police officers not wearing masks or wearing them incorrectly during the protest on Monday. "This is our reality, we can't hide behind the promise of being progressive and non-discriminatory." Please do not approve the increased funding.

Eddie Gory, Ward 6, who stated he/she uses they/them pronouns, said they are here to strongly urge the City of Northampton to defund the police department. They are really disappointed in city councilors here tonight who have repeatedly suggested - especially Councilors Dwight and LaBarge - that their own constituents are merely angry without having a full and nuanced understanding of this issue. Clearly the people here tonight have expressed a deep understanding of policing. "I take issue with the idea that Northampton is capable of so-called progressive policing," they asserted. Chief Kasper was not even able to provide them with any data-driven information about why their style of policing works or why they even go to specific trainings. There are data-driven trainings they could look to. They urged the city to reject this budget increase for Northampton police and to take bold steps to show them they're the innovative leaders Northampton needs right now. Otherwise, frankly, they can expect this opposition to grow.

Montague resident **Breyer Lake** said she is here to ask the City Council to deny Mayor Narkewicz's budget and defund the police. It is frankly insulting that they would even consider increasing the budget at this time with black and brown people putting their lives at risk calling for massive systemic change. There are so few jobs Chief Kasper listed that could not be done by someone without the authority to restrain, arrest and mace teenagers. With the repeated framing of Kasper as a victim by all of them, they show how ill-equipped the police are to even consider the impact they are having on the community or take responsibility for the violent system that they stand for and uphold. They are past the point of reform. They say they want money for training, but, as Chief Kasper admitted, they can't even predict the usefulness of any given training and have no means to evaluate them. If they don't know if they help, and through Minneapolis they know that they don't, why would they funnel money into them instead of into the community? There have been volunteers giving each other independent aid during this time because the needs of their people are so far from being met right now. Many councilors are pointing out that they are projecting what they see other police departments do, but they know full well why they're here. She asked how they can stand to pay these people \$60,000 at entry level. She would love for police not to exist at all so Northampton can serve as a model for her town.

Ward 1 resident **Franny Choy** said that, like so many others, she is here to demand that they reject the proposal to expand police funding and instead severely decrease funding to the police. As a reminder, the police are a violent, racist organization that has direct, historical roots in slave patrols. As many have said, those funds should be redirected to community-led, restorative social services and invested in alternatives that grow their humanity rather than terrorizing black people as well as people of color and other marginalized folks. On May 7, the Northampton City Council passed a resolution denouncing anti-Asian, anti-Asian American and xenophobic discrimination. In that resolution, the council invoked a 2016 resolution it passed declaring its commitment to being a 'safe and accepting community' that believes in the rights of people to lead lives of peace and dignity free from fear, harassment and violence. To pass a resolution like this and then not only do nothing to back it up but to actually give the cops more money is an insult to the lives of black people murdered by the police this year and in many years prior. If they do choose not to decrease funding to police but instead to increase it, she asks that they retract this resolution. She knows that the influence of the chief and the [inaudible] are strong but she is asking them to be accountable to the people they represent and not to the people who simply have the easiest access to their ear. She thanked others on the call.

Ward 3 resident **Alix Alto** echoed everything that had been said before her and strongly opposed the proposed increase to police funding and echoed sentiments demanding that they decrease funding to the police. Chief Kasper vehemently styled herself as a proponent of step raises. She also is a public employee represented by a union and she is one of thousands in their city right now on a furlough pending a layoff because that literally is what everyone has to deal with who is not a cop. Northampton police are racist antagonists who do not serve their community in any way, shape or form. Personally in her own anecdotal experience she, like many other people here, has also seen Northampton police harass and hassle houseless people on their streets.

She personally also was subjected to cops trying to intimidate their way into her apartment on a

bad tip of a crime that was not committed, and she's a white woman in Northampton. If Northampton wants to tout itself as a progressive utopia or, better yet, actually just **be** a safe and equitable city, she urged them strongly to reflect the exceptionally clear desires and demands of their constituents. She ended by urging councilors to not only deny the proposed increases but to defund the police and reallocate that funding to resources that actually serve this community.

Ward 1 resident **Amelia Chalfant** commented that a disbanding of the police as many of them are calling for requires sustainable, safe and strong alternatives, which is why they are proposing these alternatives to the policing system. She wants to talk about a potential framework of restorative and transformative justice practices as a productive way to envision stronger communities without the need for a police force. These practices come from black, indigenous communities that do not have the option to call upon the state to respond to violence. These practices at their core are based on strengthening communities and valuing community response instead of police presence. Restorative and transformative justice practices seek to address harm without creating more harm. Many people have given examples of their police inflicting further harm in order to protect them. These are not merely ideas, these practices have been used across the country to build more just and trusting communities. They are using schools in Chicago as an alternative to punishment and they've been proven to reduce continued violence and conflict as students build community and empathy. Transformative justice in particular seeks to move beyond instances of harm and transform the conditions which allow the harm to be perpetuated in the first place.

She understands this budget also needs to meet the needs of this city as it continues to respond to this pandemic. The practices that she has mentioned are already in place in other parts of the country. There are ways to strengthen their community to meet its needs and build trust. Not only does she call on them to reject this budget and redistribute these funds to social services, but she also wants Northampton to support how it can best support its community and eventually abolish police.

Sarah Weber, Ward 1, said she is here to express her disapproval of the budget allocated to the NPD. She'd also like to echo what Emily said about how their police chief pointed out that a rise in unemployment correlates to a rise in crime which necessitates a need for police. She wondered why the response to poor people stealing food is criminalized when the root causes should be addressed. The responsibilities that police take care of are essential such as responding to emergencies, but policing as an institution has a racist history and continues to be racist as evidenced by the murders of black men and the incarceration of far more people of color than is proportional to the U.S. population. There are ways to respond to these emergencies without police. Protesters nationwide are calling for police to be abolished. Defunding police will not happen overnight; there will likely be a transition but it has to start somewhere. Strong, well-resourced communities make police obsolete and she hopes they can be one of those communities.

Olive Sunder, Northampton, commented that some people on this call have stated that the Northampton police are not doing their jobs well or are not good at their jobs. The police here **are** doing their jobs. The job of the police - structural descendants of slave patrols - is to protect whiteness, capitalism and private property. Migrant and incarcerated black and brown labor is the very foundation that capitalism is built on and will forever be vilified. Some of the people she loves and cares about the most in this valley are escaping U.S. violence and imperialism in the northern triangle of Central America. They come into this country and live every single day of their lives in danger of the police here. How can you have progressive police if their job will always be to enforce the border and enforce deportation?

Jake Meginsky, who identified himself as a lifelong western Mass resident and resident of Ward 3, echoed a lot of the things that have been said. He has waited five hours to say clearly to city councilors, "Reject this budget and do not increase funding to the police department by nearly \$190,000." He would also like to echo the notion that this is not simply about finding ways to deliver reform or training. Additionally, while there is an immense amount of justifiable anger and grief over the recent police murders, he would say the over 700 people who came and went over the course of the evening showed up because there is in fact a sustained movement to divest from policing in Northampton. He would like to know the number of people who came and went throughout the night and wants it entered into the record. He would think if they all showed up at City Hall this would have gone very differently. It was unclear from the beginning that they had a

moment to speak and what the protocol would be and he hopes that's made clear to residents and community members who show up tomorrow. He believes in the power of a police-free future. From his perspective, a world without policing is a world where law is not enforced through the punitive use of force and justice is enacted in a restorative way. If they define policing as part of a social relationship made up of productive practices and interventions that they all agree are for the common good, then he believes there are alternative structures and professionals that can more effectively deliver those interventions. He does not believe the current model of policing protects them from violence. Additionally, the roots of this policing model as has been said is closely linked to the capture of people escaping slavery and the enforcement of a racist, capitalist, violent and post-colonial structure that they have a clear responsibility to dismantle, not just acknowledge. He's talking about a gradual process of reallocating resources and responsibility away from the police and towards emerging, community-based models of safety, support, intervention and prevention.

Brian Zayatz, Hadley resident, commended councilors on their ability to continuously misunderstand the things that their constituents are asking of them. Their demand is pretty simple – they are asking for a defunding of the police. They are not here because they're angry; they're not angry - they're bored; they've been here for five hours. They are here because they are organized. They are going to abolish the police, and [councilors] have the ability to do so now peacefully.

Samantha Reidle, who identified herself as a white trans woman and journalist who resides in Ward 3, echoed a lot of the things said. Most crucial is how reprehensible the response from the council has been. To believe that this is somehow an isolated incident because they are feeling very strongly about George Floyd in particular or that this just coincidentally lines up with COVID-19 and them being stuck at home – that's insulting; it's insulting to every single person here and it's insulting to the black people who are dying around this country. Councilor LaBarge is one of the council members who was at the first council meeting they went to in 2018 when they were having this conversation about the police department wanting to expand its collection of riot gear. Excusing that as just being a routine budget item, this is ludicrous. Police are not equipped to deal with the systemic problems facing the valley with regards to drug crime. Douglas Branford in 2018 was allegedly using heroin in Pulaski Park. Police officers responded and pulled their weapons on him. When he took out a knife and held it to his own throat saying that he had nothing to lose because he had three warrants out on him, they pulled their guns on him. That was their initial response to try to stop a suicidal person. The way they got him to surrender was to bring out a 40mm not-less-lethal gun. This is not the way they need to be solving problems in society. For all of them to sit there and tell them that they don't know any better and that they are coming from a place of emotion is insulting to every single person, and they need to do a lot of soul-searching right now.

Ward 2 resident **Jamila Gore** said she agreed with every single person who spoke before her, especially Emma who talked about the history of the police and how it's a systematic form of oppression against people of color and especially against people of African descent. She is a person of African descent. If you are not a person of color, she doesn't think you can speak on whether the police are biased on a racial basis; she doesn't really think you have the authority to talk about that. It was sad to hear Dr. Provost apologizing for asking for a 5% increase in the school budget. She is surprised there are so many people on this call and glad that people in this community [inaudible].

Sammy Cunningham, Ward 3, said she is calling to provide some testimony to ask the city council to veto this budget and to divest in police services in order to invest in social services, specifically mobile crisis. She works with the local homeless community. She was on call for a substance abuse emergency where a Northampton police officer responded. They were very verbally abusive to the homeless person who was experiencing the substance abuse crisis. Many police officers were holding this person, who had a physical disability, very roughly. Thankfully she was involved and was able to help deescalate. The police only succeeded in escalating the situation and creating a much more unsafe situation. She is really glad Mimi Odgers talked about Cahoots in Eugene, Oregon. It is a mobile crisis service that actually responds to people who are having mental health issues and effectively supports them. She thinks Northampton could really learn from this. The crisis contract with Community Support Options (CSO)...this is not a call about CSO, but she wanted to say that crisis services in Northampton and surrounding areas are incredibly ineffective. We could really be moving this money towards a service that supports

people in need, including the homeless and people with mental health and substance abuse issues. She thinks they should veto this budget increase, divest in police and invest in social services, specifically mobile crisis social services.

Daniel Cannity, a western MA native and resident of Northampton since early 2019, related a personal experience from March 2014 when he participated in a Michael Brown protest in Northampton. While there, he was followed by a police officer with his hand on his weapon for 10 minutes. It took his white friends to stand to the right of him in front of that police officer before he left. He didn't start any problems because he didn't want to be shot. Chief Kasper has talked about training and how great it is. He thinks that it is really wonderful except that it doesn't work because he is still followed by police when he walks through Northampton, the town he lives in. When he walks home from work, he gets followed through Pulaski Park by officers that are standing outside. If that is supposed to be something training fixed, why hasn't it been fixed in the five years since he's been here? That's unacceptable. So if they're putting money towards training, his big question is why. He asked them to think about what they're attaching to their budget increases, where that money is going and to make sure there are measurable improvements before they approve more let alone the continuation of those funds. He asked all of them to think closely and carefully about what they intend to do because "we will all be watching."

Jamila Gore re-established her connection. She commended Northampton High School for organizing the March that took place on Monday. She was shocked they had to protest while being in the presence of police in riot gear and had to deal with tear gas. She also was saddened that Superintendent Provost was apologetic in asking for a 5% increase in the budget for Northampton schools. That's where they need their money to go right now; to schools, to health services, to mental health services, to social services and to housing. They need to focus on the issues here in their community like addiction and domestic violence. She lives right across the street from where the murder/suicide was last winter. Those are the issues that cannot be solved by bringing in police that often escalate issues like that. She is really glad to see so many people on this call and it is from years of being organized against these kind of things that happen in their community. This is not an overnight issue for most of the people on this call.

Northampton resident **Molly Smith** echoed what everyone else has said. As a white person she doesn't feel as if she has anything to add but as a disabled person she can say that the city is not meeting the needs of its disabled people and they can redirect funds that way. When she had surgery, she tried to go outside and tripped on the sidewalk because all the sidewalks are uneven. She knows they have a Disability Commission but she has yet to see a comprehensive plan for addressing the mobility issues people with disabilities face when they go out on their sidewalks and a comprehensive plan to make sure that snow is plowed. She doesn't understand why they are talking about increasing the police budget when they know police to be rather violent, racist, homophobic and transphobic when they could be investing that in both infrastructure and helping the community to grow during this time.

Erica Roper, current Somerville resident and former longtime Northampton resident, said she is a victim of brutality by Northampton police. She was held down and handcuffed naked when they came to her home for a well-being check. She wanted to show up here from the voice of folks who've been through this.

She knows the only issue on the table is the proposed budget and she does not support this increase. She hopes there is an opportunity for a true negotiation that involves the public, not just a hearing. She'd like to see more from the city to let them know that they're actually being heard.

Ward 1 resident **Patrick Waite** reiterated the previously-expressed sentiment that it is incredibly inappropriate for many of their elected officials to not be here since they've sat through the presentation on the budget to hear what the residents of Northampton are saying collectively and pretty much unanimously at this point. "We are calling for our councilmen and women to reject this proposed increase." On a personal level, as someone who has a beautiful black partner, he is terrified about what the police can do. He is terrified and it shakes him to his core. Speaking directly to those in the audience, he assured, "your voice has power."

Councilor Sciarra noted that Mayor Narkewicz is on this meeting and has been the whole time and Chief Kasper is watching the meeting, so she also is listening to everything being said.

“Don’t you dare pass this budget,” Deerfield resident **Ian Busher** admonished. Councilors might think police abolition is just a passing fad among young people, but it is a motivating force behind the biggest uprising in this country since 1968. “It’s time for you to pick a side,” he advised. He is appalled that elected officials maintain that Northampton is special mere days after children were maced. Increased unemployment does not lead to increased crime, it leads to increased missed rent payments. The chief doesn’t want more cops to stop crime, she wants more police to evict Northampton families from their homes. If they want to resolve this crisis, they need to stop paying cops to harass families, harass people who are black and harass people who are marginalized. At the very least don’t increase the budget for the police, he implored.

Irene Choi of Amherst said she wanted to acknowledge the historical context of how the police and the whole criminal justice system in this country is founded on anti-black racism. The origins of the police come from slave patrols. This is an institution that is anti-black to its core. She said she wanted to address this good cop/bad cop narrative. This is a progressive police force but to try to separate good cops from bad cops is to obscure the issue. They all take part in state-sanctioned violence and choose to take part in a criminal justice system that is built on institutionalized racism. She is asking to defund the police.

Jenny Landon, Ward 3, thanked everyone who shared their stories of police brutality at the hands of the Northampton Police Department. She thought that was incredibly brave. Chief Kasper is probably going to make the case that this budget increase is inevitable due to contractual budget increases from the union. Two years ago, it was so necessary to get this big increase for riot gear. Every single year there is going to be an excuse. We all just have to make a decision as to where we draw the line, and this is a good moment to do that.

Mattie Hamer, Ward 4, said he cannot think of a more blatantly insulting and inappropriate time to be increasing police department funding than during a worldwide period of protest by a massive number of people calling for widespread police defunding and reform after another in a series of countless murders of unarmed black people at the hands of racist and violent police. “You are all cowards, you are all push overs, you are all traitors to the people you serve, especially Chief Kasper,” he proclaimed. He said he was sure the chief wasn’t listening, but, if she is listening, he said he hoped she can’t sleep tonight after hearing of the disgusting behaviors of the officers whose salaries she protects against Northampton residents. This is shameful. This is not an isolated problem. It is a widespread, white supremacist organization of violent police. These are gangs of lethally-armed, legally-unaccountable inherently racist and violent police who are ‘just following orders’ and they have completely outlived their usefulness. There is this mind-boggling paranoia that police and police sympathizers have that so many of the roles police play in our community and society cannot be played by people who are not police, “and that is bullshit.” He referred to the widespread belief that if they take officers off the street, things would devolve into chaos. If you hold that belief, you are a bigot, a racist and a classist and you don’t believe in the power of an organized community, what you believe in is instilling the fear of death or incarceration into the hearts of people at the hands of police. He urged the council to vehemently denounce the Mayor’s budget proposal.

Rachel Koh, Ward 3 resident and professor at Smith College, said she is urging the city council and Mayor Narkewicz to make a plan to systematically decrease and ultimately eliminate the police in the City of Northampton. It is not enough not to increase the budget and not enough to do a one-year decrease in funding. They need a multi-year plan that culminates in the complete defunding of the police. She said she wanted to talk about why so-called progressive policing doesn’t work. She read aloud an excerpt from a New York Times op ed. article entitled “No More Money for the Police” written by Phillip V. McHarris and Thenjwe McHarris.

Joe Miken, Ward 3, uttered the words: “the history of police brutality, protecting property over lives, taking black and brown lives” and urged those present to “abolish prison industrial complex, abolish ICE, defund the police.”

Community-based practices are proven to work, he confirmed. He suggested options such as peer support systems for mental health issues and directing funds toward community supports like Grow Food Northampton, the Survival Center, Afiya and Northampton Recovery Community. He hopes they are able to decrease and eventually defund the Northampton Police Department. He echoed and agreed with everything people had said and thanked people for sharing their powerful statements.

Ward 6 resident **Claire Kuhn**, a licensed psychologist at the doctoral level who works as a public employee in the field of human services, said the thing that shocked her is that there was training done in Israel. Never in her mind would she request such an expensive training knowing it would result in less money for other services. It's selfish and she feels like it was an irresponsible decision. Moreover, there is evidence that training with exposure to violence and violent technology increases the likelihood that violence will be used. If there was to be any training, she would think they would want to learn from a country like South Korea where there is practically no crime at all. The idea of going to the place where they probably have the most violent police in western civilization is amazing to her. To use money toward decreasing problems, why not develop something like the community crisis response team that BHN crisis has developed in their area, she suggested. Team members have access to the radio so they can join in on crisis calls as needed. She is looking at moving if this is where the country and city is going. It is absolutely crazy to her that they would want to consider themselves as an advanced civilization when there is this level of violence and that there is training being used for increasing it. "It's an oxymoron," she asserted.

Northampton resident **Emily Hunerwadel** said she has never in her life been to a city council budget hearing, but now she is activated. "If this response to this meeting doesn't shake you to your core as an elected official, I don't know what will," she exclaimed. She pointed out what she referred to as the 'logical fallacy' of the chief's statements about training. The city has increased the budget for training but when asked how effective training is chosen, the chief basically said she didn't know. There is no formal protocol for selection or evaluation of training programs. As businesspeople investing, "you've made a bad investment and you should defund them now," she exhorted. Along with the macing of teenagers, the cops made fun of people of color who were sharing their experiences at the protest on Monday. As councilmen, they should be shaken to the core by the response to this meeting.

Jake Wise, Ward 1, asked if anybody had driven up and down King Street at 3 a.m. and counted the number of cop cruisers. He has. They're just sitting there. In the middle of winter he goes walking and the sidewalks are icy and he's thinking, where are this town's priorities? He's not from Massachusetts, but he has never lived in a place that is so self-congratulatory about how enlightened it is. He wanted to emphasize this and suggest humbly that it might be blinding some of them to what's going on and where they sit. His friend was chased down and beaten by police several years ago in Northampton because he was having a mental breakdown. The friend is now afraid to set foot in Northampton or drive through.

He thinks the model in Eugene, OR should be looked at. He understands the union contract doesn't allow the budget to be decreased with the current level of staffing. He wants to see a more systemic conversation. As a Jewish white male, the role of police he saw when growing up is they were guarding the synagogue as members were coming and going.

Mary Alice Jester stated that she lives in Easthampton but went through public school in Northampton. She personally does not believe that progressive policing works. She also wanted to bring up the fact that the people receiving these raises are people like Captain Robert Powers who at the protest Monday said "one bad hamburger at McDonald's does not make McDonald's bad." Chief Kasper was not specific when it came to funding for COVID. She knows two things money is being used for are raises and hybrid cars and she thinks that is completely inappropriate for their current time.

DL Grant said how proud she was of everyone here. She said she supported everything said and wanted the city council to defund the police and not increase the budget. She lives in Easthampton but was a resident of Northampton up to this past year and worked downtown at the Green Bean. She had an experience where she was working and helping people get sat and the police pulled up with multiple cruisers, jumped out and immediately pulled out their guns in the face of a houseless man who had a cat because they thought he was the man who robbed the bank down the street. "They're a joke, and you need to defund them." If Jody Kasper is listening, "your staff, your team, your fraternity of policemen are f***ing jokes and they deserve to be defunded."

Matthew Grimaldi, Ward 6, said he wanted to talk about how progressive policing is a paradox. Progressive means there's a future in some capacity to this organization. If the future of the police is not the eventual abolishment of the police because they have solved the problems for

which police are necessitated it means they are either a) ignoring those problems, or b) deliberately perpetuating those problems. The only logical conclusion of that is that they need to abolish them before they don't abolish themselves. What are some things they can do with the money used to defund the police? They can put in stop-gap measures. They can establish civilian review boards. They can use money to hire mental health professionals and addiction experts in place of cops. Finally, he would like to ask that council members make the decision right now to defund the police so they never have this problem again.

Amanda Hecht, Florence, said her problem with policing in general is they seem to demand respect rather than asking for it. She's an educator, and she's noticed that teachers that demand respect from their children do not build a good community. Teachers who give respect first to their students and classroom community can forge that strong and powerful community. They need to work first on solving systemic problems of poverty and mental health.

Ezekiel Baskin, who works in Northampton, said he agreed with pretty much everything said. With respect to the idea that the budget hearing is somehow not the appropriate place for this, this is the time in the year when the city council has the most power to do its job. This approval or veto of the budget is in some ways the most important task laid out for them as city councilors, he contended. He thinks it is vital that they veto the budget tomorrow so there is time to redraft it before the second reading. They have time to work on something else and the only way that time will be useful is by vetoing some or all of the budget tomorrow. This is the place where they as city councilors have power, have voice, and can use it to make real change.

Lachlan Thompson, Ward 5, identified himself as a trauma educator – a peer support specialist - and a survivor of police violence. He is calling on them to defund the police department. He would like to take the time to note the enormity of times survivors of police violence have spoken out tonight. "If that doesn't shake you to your core, I don't know what will." It shouldn't take people disclosing their trauma for this government to act. How would it feel to live under the terror of white supremacy every day of your life? Numerous studies have shown that those who witness and live in proximity to police violence score extremely high on PTSD disclosure tests. How can we justify the traumatization of our community? How can we continue to justify the targeting of black, brown and indigenous people? We know that restorative justice works, we know that transformative justice works. We have support networks like Tapestry. We know that this is possible, we just need to be courageous enough to defund the police and redirect those funds toward social work. If the Northampton police are so aggrieved by filling the cracks of social services, isn't the response to fund social services? Do the right thing to protect black, brown and indigenous lives.

Rowan Crocker, Northampton, said she agrees with the comments so far and does not want the proposed budget to the police department approved. She urged them to defund the Northampton Police Department and reallocate those funds to social services and alternatives to policing.

Laura Howard of Amherst echoed previous requests for the establishment of a citizen review board, defunding the Northampton Police Department and making that decision tomorrow as Ezekiel requested so they have time to redraft. The Minneapolis city council had discussions for abolishing their police department in 2019 but were not successful. She demands them to join them in their interest in defunding their police department and demands them to be bold and brave and realize that all of their constituents are watching them.

David [inaudible] said he lives in the hill towns but works in Northampton. His own police experience came when he was about 17 years old and two cars full of drunk, high drivers tried to run him off the road to kill him. When all three of their cars ended up crashing as a result, the police officer who responded tried to charge him with reckless endangerment. Police have never in his experience deescalated a situation or made problems go away. He has a proposal to make based on some of the comments – since police are saying they need a raise, go ahead and give them the raise, then when they have a shortfall, take the money set aside for training and train them to do something nonviolent and productive for the community. That way, as they go through this phase out plan, they will have a police force that's been trained to do other things. It's a win/win. The community saves money, etc. The Los Angeles City Council just proposed legislation to reduce funding to the police department by \$100 million and transfer that balance to social services. Are they going to be on the right side of history or the wrong side?

Jesse Hassinger – with wife Amy Francaes commented that, as downtown business owners and Ward 4 residents, he would like to echo some of the points brought up by Councilor Rachel Maiore and residents Alisa Klein, Tom Gregg, Amanda Hecht, Esther Daube-Valois, Ezekiel Baskin, etc. There are far better ways to support their communities, especially those underserved among them. Transferring Northampton police funds to other organizations and creating new and better groups to help these individuals needs to happen this fiscal year. Despite some of the name-calling done tonight, he hopes the true call for refusing the budget increase to the NPD comes through. They will be back tomorrow night to witness what they hope will be a refusal of the Northampton Police Department budget.

Amy Francaes, business owner and Ward 4 resident, echoed everything Jesse Hassinger said and thanked council members for being on this call until 11:20 p.m. and however much longer it goes.

Dana Osterling, Ward 2, said she agreed with and is in solidarity with the statements people made before her. She also joined this call to voice her strong opinion that the budget proposal for a \$200,000 increase to the police budget should be shut down. Her recommendation and hope as a resident is that that money could be reallocated to other services. She is also a state employee working in health care and provide services for many members of the community. Especially in such a difficult time in a pandemic and amidst an historical uprising, she thinks their community could be a model. They have so many people, including council members, who really care about this community and want to make it better. The way to do it is not through policing.

Bo Clark of Hadley, who identified herself as a Northampton High School alum and Cooley baby, said she agrees with everyone who has spoken before her and urges the council to reject the police budget, defund the police and divert the funds to departments that actually help the community and keep it safe. Northampton has always been touted as progressive while being extremely segregated and despite ample racism and racial profiling. They have seen the attitudes of many council members who truly believe Northampton to be so progressive and of Police Chief Jody Kasper that the Northampton police force participates in progressive policing despite well-documented incidents of excessive force, including the pepper-spraying of a minor at the weekend protest. These have happened under the guise of progressive policing. Los Angeles just today proposed a motion to slash its police department. If Northampton is truly progressive, let us lead the way in defunding the police and coming up with alternative creative solutions to community safety.

Hannah Mohan of Ward 7A echoed what others have said and said she would really like to not give the police more money during this pandemic and historic uprising. There is no reason to increase the budget – please don't.

Northampton resident **Tadea Martin-Gonzalez** said she has been fortunate not to have been subjected to police violence. Almost exactly a year ago, they came out to testify about why their schools needed to be funded and now here they are again with the override passed and their schools still struggling while some of the override goes to the \$200,000 increase in the police budget. In addition to being a graduating NHS student, she also sits on the Department of Education's Return to School working group. She is one of two student representatives and sits on a 16-member committee with five police chiefs. The demographics hardest hit by the coronavirus are also those least supported by their schools and most at risk of dropping out.

The police need to be fully defunded. She urged them to consider what could be done with just a fraction of the \$200,000 such as purchasing new textbooks, paying for increased mental health services within the high school and paying for calculators and other technologies that their ELO program does not currently have access to. There are so many things that their school simply doesn't have the money for. She stands with everyone in calling for defunding the police because, at the end of the day, it is their education system and other social services that will prevent the root causes of these crimes instead of violently just dealing with the symptoms.

Elliot Oberholtzer, Easthampton resident, said in his time in Northampton he has seen a lot of Northampton business owners using the police to enforce who they don't want inside and in the vicinity of their stores. The houseless people who spend time in Northampton are just as important a part of the community as the business owners. There is never going to be an effective conversation about what public space is and who gets to use public space in

Northampton as long as the police continue to be used to enforce a really violent and unequal relationship that way. When they talk about defunding the police, probably a lot of the pushback is going to come from business owners, and he just wanted to hold that up to the light.

Rafaella Wade, Florence, said she knows from a former colleague in the Northampton public defender's office that they are not receiving raises and are still awaiting news about possible layoffs. She just knows that it seems tone deaf to discuss wages as obvious and inevitable in this context. She wanted to support and express appreciation for the really traumatic stories and well-researched points of view.

Ali Meizels of Enfield, CT, student at Mount Holyoke College, said that, as a five college student, she would like to speak to her experience is as a college student in the valley. She believes restorative justice combined with the use of specialized unarmed community members is a far safer alternative to policing, especially on college campuses and especially in cases involving mental health. A police-free future is possible and they in the Pioneer Valley and five college community are more than ready for it. Please, please vote tomorrow to reject the proposed budget.

Ace Tayloe, Ward 3, echoed the majority of what has been said tonight. He thanked councilors for their patience and said he hoped they understand that a lot of people are speaking from a great deal of emotion and that any invective directed toward them can be filtered out. He brought out the police chief's yearly income is \$150,278. This is more than the mayor makes; in fact, the chief of police, captains and lieutenants all make more than the mayor makes. If the chief is really concerned about balancing the budget, he would encourage her to take a pay cut to prioritize the trainings she claims to so strongly support.

Franek Russe Renee [unintelligible], who identified himself as a queer, non-binary, Afro-Dominican living in Amherst, said he has been living in the area for almost a decade. He escaped New York City where he faced regular persecution from police forces which has unfortunately been brought back through his recent experiences in this area. He pursued his undergraduate and graduate degrees and has done everything western society told him to do to not only survive but thrive in this society and moved to an area that was quote/unquote supposedly a "utopian haven" for people like him. As he now looks to continue his career professionally and to buy a home, he's been looking at Northampton as a place he's always admired. His own trauma has been brought back by his own experiences with Northampton police being pulled over wrongfully last summer. He doesn't think these police need to get increased funding. They are hearing everything combining to say this is not what they need. He referred to the "surprising beautiful number from Los Angeles" that is only the first step in showing we can also be progressive, we can also defund the police, it is not unrealistic at all. He thanked his brothers and sisters, black, brown, Latinx, disabled, etc. "I hear you," he assured. He hopes the council members hear them and he hopes they see change. He hopes to become a proud resident of Northampton.

Bob Wilson, Ward 3, commented that, with the pandemic, this is a whole new format for this type of thing. He remembered all being packed into a room pushing back against the purchase of riot gear. He can't believe what a great effort everyone has made sticking on for five hours to tell their stories and being very rational and very prepared. He applauds them. He was very disappointed in the condescending tone they got from Bill and very disappointed in David for his condescending tone. Chief Kasper is just so tone deaf; that evaluation of training programs is just so unprofessional. He has zero faith in her ability to lead. There's no leadership in the way she responded today.

Jake Carroll, Ward 3, said he came in late because he was at the protest in Springfield. It was a beautiful protest with lots of people marching of different colors. It was emotional but it was under control until the police decided en masse to line up in front of the protestors for no reason. They were there for five hours and there was never any threat to them until they decided to escalate it. When he is around police he is nervous every time. He cannot imagine being black and fearing for your life every time you step out the door. If they really want to be progressive it's time to not just take baby steps but to really do something big and he hopes they can start with this budget tomorrow.

Lucy Sloan, Ward 4, thanked everyone for their highly-researched ideas. She wanted to throw in one last one which she hadn't heard - police officer liability insurance. She just wanted to throw

that out as a suggestion for where that money could go instead of to the police department.

Seeing no further speakers, Councilor Sciarra reminded all that they are not closing this public hearing, they are continuing it to tomorrow’s meeting at 7 p.m.

Karissa Rigali, Ward 1, thanked everyone for staying on tonight. It has really been powerful hearing everyone’s messages. She reiterated that she would like to defund the police department and redirect funding especially to social services and mental health services. She is hoping to redirect funding to more productive and effective change.

Councilor Dwight moved to continue the public hearing to June 4, 2020 at 7 p.m. Rachel Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor LaBarge absent.

<p><u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) & Study Requests</u></p>	<p><u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) and Information Study Requests</u> None</p>
<p><u>Motion to Adjourn</u></p>	<p>Upon motion made by Councilor Quinlan and seconded by Councilor Dwight, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with one absent (Councilor LaBarge).</p>