



**Roll Call**

NORTHAMPTON  
Northampton, MA

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
212 MAIN STREET  
NORTHAMPTON

A special meeting of the City Council was called to order by City Council Vice President Gina-Louise Sciarra. At 7:01 p.m. on a roll call the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Bill Dwight	Ward 4 Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Ward 1 Councilor Maureen T. Carney	Ward 5 Councilor David Murphy
Ward 2 Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell	Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 3 Councilor James Nash	Ward 7 Council Alisa F. Klein

At-Large Councilor Ryan O'Donnell was absent.

**Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**

Councilor Sciarra announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.

**Public Hearing Concerning the FY20 Budget**

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Councilor Sciarra asked if there was any general public comment. There being none, she read the legal notice for the public hearing on the FY2020 budget.

Councilor Sciarra explained the procedure she would use in conducting the hearing. She noted that, although some may be present to discuss school collective bargaining, this hearing is for the FY2020 budget. Those contract negotiation have gone to mutually-agreed-upon mediation and are not in the City Council's purview, so councilors will not be able to respond to specific questions on that topic. The heads of the five largest departments in the city will make presentations, after which she will entertain questions and comments from councilors and the public.

**Councilor LaBarge moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Bidwell seconded. The motion passed 8:0 by voice vote (Councilor O'Donnell absent).**

**FY2020 Budget Review with Department Heads**

School Superintendent John A. Provost presented the budget for Northampton Public Schools (NPS).

According to its usual process, school administrators began work on the FY2020 budget in December of 2018, Superintendent Provost related. This February, he brought forth a recommended budget with an emphasis on six focus areas of district improvement:

- ❖ bringing effective practices of elementary schools to the secondary level
- ❖ supporting innovation so that schools can be more adaptable to student interests and workforce demands
- ❖ adding support services to meet the needs of the changing population
- ❖ enhancing math and arts education
- ❖ providing adequate administrative support and addressing some quality of experience factors for students, faculty and staff

Based upon feedback from the School Committee, he fleshed out those budget concepts and proposed a fully-developed budget in March. The only significant change the School Committee asked for at that point was that he stretch a little further in increasing the hourly and daily rate for daily substitutes.

He came back to the committee with a \$30,743,780 request reflecting all district

improvement focus areas and an adjustment in hourly rates for subs from \$11 to \$13 instead of the \$11 to \$12 increase originally proposed.

In addition to budgeting for district improvement areas and making an adjustment for hourly subs, administrators had reserved funds in the budget for wage increases that were expected due to collective bargaining. The budget represented a \$1,039,645 increase from FY2019, translating to a 3.5% increase.

The budget vote was postponed in March to the April School Committee meeting. At that meeting, he proposed \$203,000 in cuts to proposed district improvement measures and the School Committee added additional cuts of \$11,000. The School Committee then approved the original request in the amount of \$30,743,780. The reductions were used not to reduce the bottom line but to go into the salary reserve account for wage increases.

After that, the Mayor agreed to increase the budget by an additional amount of \$300,137. This also went into the reserve account for wage increases.

He offers this chronology to explain that some of the items listed in the budget on the website have actually been eliminated and that the actual request is not the \$30,743,780 approved by the School Committee but \$31,043,917, which includes the additional funds promised by the Mayor after the budget was passed. With that, Dr. Provost offered to entertain questions.

Councilor LaBarge noted that the city did a city-wide compensation and classification study. She asked if that had been done in the School Department.

He can answer part of that question but must defer the rest due to collective bargaining, Dr. Provost said. The schools have done a study for non-represented employees. That part he can speak about but the other part is confidential.

Councilor Dwight commented that there's been a lot of emotion associated with these discussions and the opposing forces of budgetary constraints and the need to provide decent salaries and accommodations with the primary objective being what is best for the end user – the student. What's been lost in a lot of the conversations has been the constraints, he observed. He thinks this is the fifth or sixth season of this kind of conversation and he understands the emotions that come into play. The frustration manifested in these conversations is very localized without greater consideration of the external influences that actually affect their bottom line. He often equates it to pulling up to a gas pump, seeing ridiculous prices and spending an hour and a half yelling at the pump. The gas pump doesn't have any agency in those decisions, he pointed out.

In some ways, he feels like that gas pump and he knows the Mayor and City Council do as well. They are the receiving board of those legitimate complaints. He is presuming the superintendent shares the same concern about pay parity/equivalency across the state and that his best aspiration is to have the maximum amount of money available for those who do the work. He asked if that is wrong.

Dr. Provost said 'no.' As Councilor Dwight mentioned, this all takes place in the context of much larger forces, he agreed.

One of the things he looked at before coming upstairs is the cherry sheets to see if there had been any changes. As far as he can tell, Northampton is still scheduled to get a \$200,000 decrease in state aid for education. He is asking for a \$1.3 million budget increase in the face of a decrease from the state. He does that on behalf of the students and staff who work for the district, doing so humbly knowing that the city is being cut on one hand while he is advocating for more funds on the other, and that the city is the only body that can make up that difference.

Massachusetts as a state that has decided that, rather than progressive taxation, it will revert to regressive systems more and more extensively, putting greater pressure

on communities and their property values, Councilor Dwight observed. In addition, the city is expected to fund unfunded state mandates by taxing property in Northampton. He referred to South Hadley, which is facing a \$1 million cut to its school budget. In this community, the Mayor has laid out a long-term plan for how the city will continue to fund school services. At some point, they are sure to run up against the fact that they will be unable to fully fund programs and services and will have to appeal for an override. South Hadley is going to function differently; they're not going to move for an override to offset these things. South Hadley is facing \$1 million in cuts. He asked what \$1 million in cuts would look like for Northampton.

Dr. Provost reviewed the \$200,000 in cuts already made: a Director of Equity, 504 Coordinator, math teacher at the high school, ESL teacher at Bridge Street, something to provide bathroom equity for female students, air conditioning, etc. Take that list and multiply it by five and that's what \$1 million looks like, he presented.

Councilor Dwight asked if further cuts would include staffing reductions among teachers.

The two main pieces of the workforce are ESP's and teachers, Dr. Provost affirmed. A cut of that magnitude would have to come from that area. Administrative staff is already basically decimated; they've got no associate principals at the elementary schools and there is very little support in the central offices. "I imagine if I had a million dollar problem it would land mainly on the teachers and ESP's," he concluded.

Dr. Provost recited cherry sheet figures for state aid for education from FY2019: receipts \$10,137,367, and charges - \$3,127,322, for net revenue of just over \$7 million. For FY2020, the cherry sheet shows \$10,060,528 in receipts and charges of \$3,257,215, for net revenue of \$6.8 million. That's a reduction by his math.

Councilor Klein asked about the variance in funding levels for the elementary schools and the process for determining the budget. How does the school department gather information from all levels in the schools and bring school personnel into the budgetary process? She asked.

There are two drivers of the differences among the elementary schools, the primary one being size, Dr. Provost explained. In two of the schools there are two classes per grade level and in two there are three classes per grade level. The other piece is the difference in wages from the top to the bottom of the salary scale.

With regard to the process, it begins with the administrative team in December. He gathers budget requests from the principals that come from their department chairs based on conversations with teachers. Administrators work on the budget until February, when a month-long public comment period begins. During this period they have a joint meeting of school councils made up of parents and faculty from each of the schools. Then, they have feedback from staff and members of the public. Typically, they get anywhere from 50 to 100 comments on budget proposals and make changes based on feedback.

Councilor Klein asked if he could share what he heard as a priority from personnel in the schools from that part of the process.

"More money in wages," Dr. Provost confirmed. That was clearly the priority. That's why they came up with \$200,000 in cuts but said to the School Committee, 'we are cutting the budget but please don't cut the bottom line;' leave the money in wages.

The school councils were supportive of the budget proposals. The one dissatisfaction members expressed was that there wasn't funding for more community engagement, parent outreach and evening activities for faculty.

She has received a tremendous amount of calls, Councilor LaBarge said. Why is it that every time they're short of money in the school department, the threats come that we're laying off teachers? She asked. In looking at the budget, she said she

doesn't see too much of a shortage of clerical employees. She's hearing from people about assistants and assistant directors throughout the city. "There's problems here," she asserted. She is hoping he as superintendent can put some time and thought into it so they don't have to lay off teachers but can find money in other areas. She respects teachers and thinks what they're asking for is pretty good. She is hoping they can work together and reach a compromise.

Councilor Nash expressed his understanding that there was a savings of \$750,000 in money coming back into the district because they were able to educate some special education students in the district.

The school had \$726,000 in special education funds that became available for students who were being educated out of district and returned to being educated in district. It is generally more economical to educate students in district, since out of district placements can range from \$50,000 for a day student to \$250,000 for a residential program, Dr. Provost observed. Of that, \$127,000 was already used in the context of those students' changes in placements. Often in bringing a student back into the district, they have to add teaching services to the budget. The school department also had a circuit breaker increase this year because in a prior year it had been paying a penalty, so this year it has an additional quarter million in circuit breaker funds. There were also reductions within the budget itself as two ESP positions were reduced and that added to the money available.

One thing that's tricky is that, in order to maintain eligibility for federal education funding, schools have to demonstrate 'maintenance of effort,' Dr. Provost explained. They can't reduce the amount spent on special education. Some of the money saved in special ed had to be used for special ed purposes. School officials identified \$417,000 worth of positions that contributed to maintenance of effort and made cuts from items that weren't contributing to that effort, he advised.

Councilor Nash expressed his understanding that administrators can't just cut \$750,000 from the budget because they will lose eligibility for federal funds.

The schools needed \$408,000 for maintenance of effort, Dr. Provost confirmed. Administrators could cut any amount from general education, it is just special ed that is protected from reduction.

Councilor Nash asked about the transition coordinator, Innovation Pathway Coordinator and Twilight Academy, wondering if these were included in maintenance of effort. He expressed appreciation for the addition of these positions.

Dr. Provost reviewed the positions that contribute to maintenance of effort as follows: an academic and behavior support teacher for Bridge Street School, an academic and behavior support teacher for Leeds and a half-time academic and support teacher for Ryan Road school. All are part of a response and intervention program, he explained. One of the things money can be used for is early intervention services.

Other positions are a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) for Jackson Street School (.67 position), two MAT interventionists for JFK Middle School and a post-transition coordinator for the high school.

As the population starts to express some more extreme needs, the school has a number of students in the high school who continue to require services until age 22, he related. Programming and inclusion for them really means job site and community-based learning.

Other positions that are counted toward maintenance of effort include a special ed teacher at JFK, a student services clerk within the special education department and Twilight Academy. Twilight Academy is a new program for students who've dropped out and been reengaged. The good news is they've been able to reengage almost 80% of the kids who drop out of high school, the bad news is that almost 100% of those reengaged drop out again. They're learning that placing them back in the same

environment is not likely to lead to a different outcome. Twilight Academy is a program that runs after school and is available on an a la carte basis. They think it will be helpful for students to not have to be with their peers since there is a stigma involved in being left back. The majority of those kids are kids with disabilities, which is why the program qualifies.

As someone who works with youth, he thinks this is all really tremendous stuff that they're doing, Councilor Nash said. Twilight Academy and having somebody to work on transitions – that's tremendous; he is really glad Northampton schools are stepping forward to do that. When students' needs are being addressed, other staff have time to focus on what they need to focus on. Bravo, he commented.

As he knows, the City Council shares his reservations about the charter school funding formula, Councilor Bidwell volunteered. Reimbursement from the state – flawed as the formula is - is projected to go down quite dramatically at the same time as charter school sending tuition continues to go up. He asked if the superintendent could explain why \$313,000 of projected reimbursement is projected to go down to \$183,000.

It has to do with going from a five-year reimbursement formula to a three-year formula, Dr. Provost explained. Charter school reimbursement is based on the assumption that a district will always send more students than it did the year before because reimbursement is based on the difference from year to year. Therefore, if a district has a steady state or declining enrollment, its reimbursement is cut.

They all would like to see dramatic changes in this funding situation but in the meantime, Councilor Bidwell asked what the superintendent hears are the primary reason they lose students to charter schools and what the strategy is for addressing that and keeping students.

They did a survey of charter school parents a couple of years ago, Dr. Provost responded. The main reason parents cited was to have a sense of smaller community. He doesn't really have a good answer to that because there are certain reasons districts operate at the size they do. Having an engaging arts program and vibrant sports program requires a certain critical mass. However, there are things they can do to create a strong sense of community within the schools. One of the things they found was that most of the parents responding had never been enrolled in Northampton schools. "We think if they try it they might like it," he said.

Councilor LaBarge said she has some residents who have taken children out of the Ryan Road school to home school them. "We've got problems, there's no question about it." She asked what the school's rainy day fund is being used for.

They are using it for the shortfall in the budget, Dr. Provost advised. This year they are using about one million dollars of it. Next year they will be tapping into it and they expect to run out the year after that.

Councilor Sciarra expressed her understanding that Chapter 70 money is projected to be less. Charter sending tuition comes off the top of Ch. 70, doesn't it? She asked.

Ch. 70 money is actually projected to increase, Dr. Provost clarified. It is the combination of Chapter 70 and charter school sending and receiving tuition that is down.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment.

**Andrea Egitto, teacher chapter coordinator for the Northampton Association of School Employees (NASE)** said she had a question and a couple of comments. If taxpayers paid for a study about compensation, why would those results be required to be confidential? She asked. She said she knows the city released the results of a study done for city employees. She is confused about why the report about school employees is being claimed to be confidential.

Also, the cuts the superintendent referred to are things that never existed, she stressed. They were cuts of figurative positions, not actual positions in the school. "Our district has been adding fluff into the budget for at least five years as this council and the Mayor has raised the school budget by around 3% each year," she said.

The largest cost to the budget is employees but employees have never seen the same increase that the city gave the school district; those increases were given to add things to the budget, she maintained. Those increases were at the expense of employees, she claimed. It was only after the outrage that surrounded the current budget that those figurative positions were cut.

No one in NASE wants to see cuts to the school, she continued. Between the school's rainy day fund and city stabilization fund there is enough to pay the small amount they need. The difference in bargaining positions is about \$280,000 by her calculation, she asserted. She is not a mathematician and nobody from the city is willing to give her that figure. NASE offered an over \$800,000 give back in sick day retirement benefits. Union representatives offered to take this out of the contract and give it back to the city. "The money is there . . . and yet the School Committee and our city is saying the money's not there," she insisted.

She implored councilors to find out and release the results of the compensation study. If taxpayers paid for it, it should be released, she contended.

As clarification, Dr. Provost said the study is confidential from the City Council but not confidential from NASE. "You've already seen it," he asserted.

Sam Hopper said she was wearing her parent hat and was actually really thrilled that they are getting additional tiered support at Bridge Street next year. Her daughter is in a Cohort and her Cohort needs more supports. One other thing that came out of the all school councils meeting is that they need more supports at the middle school and high school level, she added. Several cuts have been made already. "We don't have all the supports we need," she reported.

Jenny Fleming Neis of Ward 4B identified herself as the parent of four daughters who went through Northampton schools and the grandparent of a child at Bridge Street School. She pleaded with councilors to be visionary about teachers and the schools. "Our teachers should be jewels in the crown of the city. I don't think we really show the teachers how we value them by the compensation that we give them," she said.

#### **Department of Public Works**

DPW Director Donna LaScaleia presented the FY2020 budget for the Department of Public Works (DPW). She proposed to speak about the department's responsibilities as well as the recent reorganization of the DPW relevant to the budget. With more than 120 employees and large-scale responsibility for infrastructure, it is not enough to just run DPW operations; they recognize the need for restructuring. Over the past year, the DPW has undertaken multiple initiatives to increase efficiency and services.

The department has consolidated its engineering staff from its location on Prospect Street to Locust Street, consolidated water operations staff to the treatment plant and, most notably, consolidated forestry operations to join parks and cemetery staff at Spring Grove Cemetery. Historically, the Highway Division at the DPW was one division, with the Highway Superintendent overseeing streets, fleet maintenance, forestry, parks, cemeteries, sewer collection, Stormwater and solid waste operations. This diffuse operation required oversight of more than 50 employees with massive responsibilities for maintenance and operations of various areas.

Restructuring within the DPW has accomplished several goals. All the engineers now work together in one location on Locust Street. All water department staff work at one location at the water treatment plant, and the building on Prospect Street can be surplus or repurposed. All cemetery and park staff work at one location at Spring Grove Cemetery with a new Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries superintendent. Most notably, the highway operation has been contained to a more manageable level with

a superintendent who can focus on that division's specific responsibilities. She thanked the Mayor and his staff for their support, noting that this is the backdrop for the FY20 budget.

The DPW's General Fund budget in 2020 is broken into four divisions: Administration and Engineering, Snow and Ice, Highway Maintenance and Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries. Within these four divisions the DPW maintains 150+ miles of paved and unpaved roads, 85 miles of sidewalks, 38 bridges, 30+ signal-controlled intersections, more than 150 vehicles and pieces of specialized equipment, 10,000 public shade trees, 225+ acres of athletic fields and parks, four cemeteries and 11+ miles of bike path.

She proceeded to review highlights of each division's budget.

**ADMINISTRATION AND ENGINEERING.** This area saw no significant changes from the previous year, she reported. This department captures engineering and clerical support for department operations, including a city engineer who creates, reviews and stamps plans, a dedicated traffic engineer to support transportation improvements and a modest Ordinary Maintenance (OM) budget to maintain the building at 125 Locust Street.

**SNOW AND ICE.** This captures the required overtime for plowing, contractor assistance if needed and salt used to treat the city's roadways.

**HIGHWAY DIVISION.** Councilors will see decreases in Personnel Services (PS) and OM in the Highway Division because some salaries, employees and operational responsibilities have been shifted to Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries.

**FORESTRY, PARKS & CEMETERIES.** This division is responsible for maintenance of fields, parks and cemeteries and supports 2,400 participants in organized sports, 128 organized teams and 2,500 beachgoers at Musante Beach. The department is a seven-day a week operation April through November. The city planted 297 trees in 2018 and 857 since 2016. Northampton received Tree City USA awards 12 years in a row and three Growth Awards from the Arbor Day Foundation. The net change in personnel for the two departments combined is the addition of two full-time positions: the new superintendent for Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries (FPC) and a foreman for the dedicated tree program.

Moving from the General Fund to enterprise accounts, the Water Division is responsible for operating and maintaining 150 miles of water mains, 5,000 valves, 1,400 hydrants, three reservoirs and two wells for drinking water, a water treatment plant and 39 acres of watershed. When she presented utility rates in March she reminded them it's necessary to be mindful that over \$2 million in debt service is part of this budget for construction of the water treatment plant in 2006. This loan does not fall off the debt schedule until 2028.

In the sewer enterprise, the DPW operates and maintain 5,000 sewer and drain manholes, 110 miles of sewer lines and treats 4.5 million gallons per day of sewage at the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) on Hockanum Road.

Councilors will see that an Other than Ordinary Maintenance (OOM) expense - cash used for capital projects - has decreased as they anticipate \$15 million in WWTP upgrades to be funded through an NSRF loan. The 'Other' budget has increased because of the transfer of money to stabilization for capital projects.

The Solid Waste Enterprise operates two transfer stations and a capped landfill and provides oversight to the third-party operation of a 3.1 megawatt solar array and gas to energy facility. One item of note is that they now have a full-time waste reduction coordinator who oversees the operation of the reuse center on Glendale Road and organizes events such as Hazardous Waste Collection Day and repair workshops.

Finally, the \$2 million Stormwater utility operates and maintains 120 miles of drain

pipes, 5,000 catch basins, 350 outfalls, 150 culverts, six miles of channels and ditches, a flood control pump station and two levee systems.

Councilor LaBarge thanked Director LaScaleia for her presentation. She asked about vacancies and whether some of those listed have been filled since the budget book was printed.

"A lot has changed since this budget," Ms. LaScaleia confirmed. In the Highway Division, she had four vacancies and has filled two. A mechanic and equipment operator position are still open.

In response to another question from Councilor LaBarge, Ms. LaScaleia said the FPC Division has 16 total positions and one vacancy. The water enterprise has 23 positions with five remaining vacancies. It is very challenging to fill vacancies there because of the licensing requirements.

Residents are asking about positions, Councilor LaBarge explained.

Many positions are allocated to several different budgets i.e. – a portion of her position is allocated to the water enterprise. It can appear that the DPW has more vacancies than it actually does because some positions are shown in multiple budgets. Folks can look at the FTE column to see how many positions are actually involved.

He is impressed she was able to do this, Councilor Dwight observed. The consolidation is brilliant and long needed. It is worth noting that this type of consolidation; i.e. - categorizing, or making silos more distinct in some respects – results in savings and - he assumes - greater morale. It is a long-about way of saying thank you – good job.

With regard to the DPW facility on Prospect Street, he asked if she is suggesting it is available for surplus.

Ms. LaScaleia deferred to the Mayor.

Mayor Narkewicz confirmed that they are looking at potentially surplus that building down the road. They need to make sure to get a storage facility built to move equipment presently stored there indoors.

Councilor Bidwell said he hears wonderful things about the morale and the pride and professionalism of the department and he commended LaScaleia for her leadership. No one is ever happy about roads and pothole repairs. He has two grouches on his ward who have grudgingly acknowledged the DPW's timely and very professional response to some drainage issues. Even some tough critics out there are grudgingly acknowledging the level of responsiveness. He offered congratulations.

Members asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor Nash asked about the 14% increase in expenditures for 2020.

The 14% is a result of the consolidation of Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries (FPC) and Highways. Part of that 14% is the addition of two high-level positions: the superintendent overseeing FPC as well as a foreman for the tree crew.

Councilor Klein said she consistently has extremely positive experiences working with LaScaleia and her staff. She finds them to be responsive and clear and to come up with needed information very quickly. "The breadth of what you do is always astounding to me," she added.

Councilor Klein said she thinks the consolidation is brilliant; it's efficient. She said she is curious about why the snow and ice is its own division.

Snow and ice is tracked separately because municipalities are required to isolate the

expense of clearing the roads since this is the only thing they are allowed to deficit spend, Finance Director Susan Wright explained. Snow removal operations uses staff from all divisions.

In response to a question from Councilor Klein, Ms. LaScaleia discussed the use of overtime to handle snow removal. Overtime is available to employees within the NAME union - equipment operators and truck drivers with commercial driver's licenses. The DPW runs three shifts Monday through Friday from late November (after Thanksgiving) through April 1<sup>st</sup>. Weekend coverage is paid on overtime. A typical shift is 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. If it is snowing before 7 a.m. or after 3 p.m., an employee is there on overtime unless he or she is a dedicated second or third shift employee there for his or her regular shift.

In a typical snowstorm, the DPW has about 65 folks working. They have about 150 miles of roadways to clear in addition to sidewalks, parks, etc. she pointed out.

In response to a question from Councilor Klein, Ms. Wright explained that they deliberately under-budget Snow and Ice since the total expenditure fluctuates so much from year to year. In order to deficit spend, cities and towns can never appropriate less than was appropriated the year before. Administrators always anticipate using \$100,000 to \$300,000 of Free Cash to supplement Snow and Ice.

Councilor Sciarra noted she also has a constituent who she has struggled to please for five years and this year she got a glowing e-mail about the DPW. "Clearly, everyone is doing extraordinary work," she confirmed.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment. There being none, she thanked Director LaScaleia.

#### **NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT (NPD)**

Police Chief Jody Kasper presented the FY2020 Police Department budget. The department handled 38,700 calls last year, including 353 calls for domestic violence, 709 arrests, 536 motor vehicle accidents of a serious nature, 83 OUI arrests and 45 overdoses, eight of which resulted in deaths. In addition, the number of calls involving people in crisis or with mental health issues are in the thousands, she reported. These often don't necessarily result in an arrest but take a lot of time.

Staffing levels are remaining the same with no increase in full-time staffing. A high-ranking officer - Dorothy Clayton - is retiring this year. This creates a domino effect as they move throughout the building making promotions and is resulting in significant leadership changes within the department.

The department added one additional crossing guard in front of Jackson Street School. Principal Gwen Agna requested it for a particularly dangerous crossing. Training costs increased slightly. ALERT training - training for active shooters in schools - was just completed at a cost of \$18,800.

In the OM budget there was an increase in police supplies. They looked at the five-year average and based the request on that number. Ammunition costs are going up because the state has changed the rules around fire arms training. Also, there are new equipment requirements for recruits.

\$305,360 in OOM is the cost of vehicles. Vehicle expense is calculated by adding 3% to the base prices of vehicles from last year. Extra equipment such as radios and cameras is included in this cost. Ford is offering a hybrid version of the Ford Explorer which will be available in September.

All the water leaks in the police station are repaired; there are no more leaks, and the shooting range is up and running, she reported.

Given the fact that a lot of the conversations with department heads are about personnel, one of the challenges police have faced for a while is retention, Councilor

Dwight observed. He asked what she would ascribe the loss of retention to.

Last year the department lost eight officers, four of them to other municipal departments, Chief Kasper reported. There is a salary differential and they are going to communities where they are doing less work for more money. The standards they have for officers here in Northampton are very high. It is a busy and challenging department. Also, some people are just leaving the field. People don't want to be police officers anymore, and there are 50% less applicants nationally. She knows that herself as they used to have a couple thousand people lined up for tests. People just don't want to get into this field anymore and people in the field are questioning whether it is a good life choice for them.

Councilor Dwight said he always feels like they are subsidizing training for other police departments, including the state police. He believes from what he has heard regionally they're considered to be one of the superior police departments. To some extent, Northampton is subsidizing the education and training of quality police officers that they can't retain, he suggested. The catchment area for recruits used to be larger too, he added.

NPD has a new academy going in June 10<sup>th</sup> and a soon-to-be recruit who graduated from Northampton High School, Chief Kasper shared.

Councilor LaBarge expressed her understanding that not many police officers live in Northampton, and Chief Kasper confirmed that is true. Former Police Chief Sienkiewicz used to express frustration with losing officers to the state police given the high cost of bringing them in and training them, Councilor LaBarge related.

It is harder for her to swallow when they lose officers to other communities such as Belchertown, Wilbraham and Agawam, the chief noted. The state police is actually a different job.

Members asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor Klein said she understands there has been an increase in calls to the department but is curious about the content of the calls. She said she was quizzical about what percentage of the calls the chief looks at critically and deems to be not necessarily appropriate for armed law enforcement to be responding to.

Also, with the DART program, the department is gaining experience with multi-disciplinary teams responding to certain types of calls. There are models in other countries of such teams, she noted. She wondered if police officials have been thinking about those kinds of things and whether they are applicable to Northampton.

She really likes the co-responder model of a mental health clinician responding with an officer, Chief Kasper agreed. Similar models have mental health professionals nested within the department itself. She would love it if a team of social workers was available to respond to people in crisis.

"Is it appropriate for the police?" Chief Kasper asked rhetorically. "Sometimes not, but there's no one else to do this job."

The department does have a co-responder. They have a volunteer mental health professional who rides around and provides follow-up services to try to reduce future calls, she related. She is open to that model for the future, but it costs money. The city would have to pay a social worker.

Councilor Klein asked about career incentives, working out of class and stipends. . .

For out of grade pay, Chief Kasper explained that the person in charge of a shift is usually a lieutenant. If a sergeant has to serve as shift commander, he or she gets a small increase in pay. Educational incentive – known as the Quinn bill at one time – is an incentive program with flat rates depending on the degree held. Stipends are

paid for various specialized work such as crime scene services, detective work, etc.

Councilor Nash asked if Chief Kasper would publicly address the issue of how much money is being spent at NETA.

It is zero, Chief Kasper stressed. Officers are there 16 hours a day. It is paid for by NETA as an outside detail.

Councilor Dwight expressed his understanding that the bill was \$350,000 in a recent quarter.

Councilor Sciarra asked Chief Kasper to talk about training.

She would describe them as well ahead of other communities, Chief Kasper said. They do around 500 to 600 hours of training every month. In addition, officers are required to complete 40 hours a year of annual training as determined by the state licensing agency. The open data portal is a source of more detailed information.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment. Karen Foster asked about the statement that it cost \$50,000 to \$75,000 to train a new officer. She questioned using money to train new officers as opposed to using it to increase pay for existing officers if officers are leaving the department due to pay differentials.

She has no control over the cost to train new officers, Chief Kasper pointed out. The training cost is the cost of the police academy, the officer's salary for going through the training, the stipend for the training officer and new equipment. The department has four that just graduated from the academy, five going in in June and one that was hired, worked eight days and then left.

#### **NORTHAMPTON FIRE RESCUE**

There being no further questions, Councilor Sciarra introduced Northampton Fire Chief Duane Nichols. Chief Nichols presented Northampton Fire Rescue's FY2020 budget, starting by citing statistics. Last year, call volume crested 7,000 calls for a total of about 7,200 calls. The number is up from calendar year 2017. The department continually sees a call volume increase, with the majority being because of EMS. There is about a 70/30 split with 70% EMS calls and 30% fire calls.

Fire officials finished renovations to the ladder truck; they sent it to Florida, got it back, got it operating and have had no problems with it. He thinks they have added about 20 years to the life of the vehicle. The department purchased turnout gear last year so every sworn member got a new set of turnout gear. They are now able to rotate gear and clean it after fires before wearing it again.

Chief Nichols offered kudos to Dave Pomerantz of Central Services for the energy upgrades completed last year. These have taken away the uneven heating in the building.

The budget has seen a slight increase, going up \$207,000 in PS/OM. The city was able to settle contacts with two unions so the budget actually reflects contract negotiations. Other than that, there are slight increases in OM. The collection rate of the third party billing agency is 96%, which is excellent.

All other increases on the personnel side are contractual in nature and driven by collective bargaining.

The fire department is fortunate that it doesn't struggle with retention - the three people lost in the past year are all due to retirements. The department staffs three ambulances 24/7 and averages 21 calls a day. 50% of the time they have two or more calls going on in the city.

Now that EMS constitutes 70% of calls, Councilor Dwight asked if the trend toward fewer fire calls is continuing.

The increase is mostly EMS, Chief Nichols confirmed. When he entered the department 30 years ago they had some pretty big fires out there. They aren't seeing those now and that's a great thing. They catch fires in the early stages so they don't grow and don't grow as big.

They have a lot of service agencies in town and, as Chief Kasper said, this puts a demand on their service.

Councilor Murphy thanked Chief Nichols because he remembered that, years ago, overtime was an issue and morale was an issue. The department has become much more stable in the time he has been there.

Chief Nichols in turn thanked the Mayor for his support.

Councilor Klein said she noticed they only had three or four women but Chief Nichols said they actually have seven. "We're probably on the high end as far as other departments," he commented. EMS is a big draw.

Members asked questions and offered comments. Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment. There being none, she introduced Central Services Director David Pomerantz.

Central Services is overseeing 16 or so capital projects this summer, Mr. Pomerantz reported. He served on the Amherst Fire Department for 20 years, and Northampton is definitely looked up to across the northeast as a well-run, highly-effective department that provides exceptional service, he confirmed.

The difference between the FY2019 and FY2020 Central Services budget is approximately \$91,000, a 5.6% increase. The increase is mostly in Personnel Services due to contract negotiations and the addition of a full-time custodian for DPW facilities, Pomerantz explained. The DPW was using several private vendors and the city has now moved that in house and is reaping the benefits. They hired a young man who goes between four different facilities.

Central Services continues to split the cost of the mail courier, HVAC tech, city electrician and project coordinator between Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, Northampton Public Schools and the city.

With regard to the OM budget, both natural gas and electricity contracts expire this fall so they will be going out to bid for new contracts. They are budgeting for FY2020 based on an estimated increase in the distribution cost but decrease in supply cost. Re: electricity usage, in 2016, the city converted 2,100 city street lights to LED. It took an inordinate amount of time for National Grid to apply the new rate. They are showing significant decreases in spending for street lights in this budget. Also, due to the solar array they are generating an enormous amount of net metering credits. The array is generating electricity and generating revenue for the city as well.

Under repair/maintenance they are going to see a jump between FY2019 and FY2020. They are doing more and more construction and renovation projects in-house, which saves on minimum wages and bidding. He and Susan Wright decided to increase the repair/maintenance line for FY20. They also increased the engineering and architectural services line item.

Trash disposal is the same for FY2020 as for FY2019 and the previous five years before that. Pat Kennedy sold Alternative Recycling and switched to a different vendor (USA Waste). He has agreed to hold the price for a one-year extension on the trash contract.

The centralized bulk purchasing program for the city and schools continues and coordinators have added Forbes Library to some of the contracts. City officials saved a fair amount of money by doing bulk purchasing, he reported.

Chris Mason is hard at work with Green Communities applications. They are also moving along with the micro grid development at Main fire headquarters. (The city is looking at doing a micro grid and solar array, he reminded.)

With regard to parking, the budget shows a minimal 2.8% increase, mostly for PS. There is no change to staffing levels. Central Services will be bidding natural gas and electricity for the parking garages when it solicits bids for the rest of the city.

Pomerantz reviewed budget line items and explained the purpose of different accounts. Members asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor LaBarge asked how much the city has saved with the Glendale Road solar array, and Councilor Bidwell asked the savings related to the conversion of street lights to LED.

In response to a question, Pomerantz said Central Services does not have any electric vehicles but rather has fuel-efficient vehicles that meet green community standards. City officials are looking at putting two additional charging stations in the roundhouse parking lot as part of that renovation. Parking officers use electric vehicles – Nissan Leafs purchased in 2015, he confirmed.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment.

Mark Hamill, one of the founding members of the Northampton Community High-speed Network Coalition, addressed the council to advocate for funding for a municipally-owned broadband network. Back in February, the City Council approved Mayor Narkewicz's capital plan including money for the next two fiscal years for a study, he reminded. It is their understanding that this funding is part of the budget under consideration. He urged councilors to approve the budget with this funding. The city's demographics are projecting a rapidly aging population. To maintain its level of services, Northampton is going to have to attract entrepreneurs and businesses. By lowering the cost of doing business online in Northampton, a Northampton municipal network would be a key step in accomplishing this goal.

Alex Jarrett said he thinks the LED lighting is excellent and he is very pleased with the savings from that. He hears from a number of people about the color temperature of the lights. Having excessive exposure to blue light is a health concern, he claimed. He wondered what the increased cost would be of having a warmer temperature for the new lights.

When they replaced the street lights in FY 2017, they did extensive research on color and warmth, Mr. Pomerantz advised. Technology is changing so quickly that Chris Mason is now looking at a whole new array of spectrum lighting that can be installed.

When they issued the original bid, a lot of attention was paid to color temperature, Councilor Dwight confirmed. They got the warmest lighting that was allowed under the current grant status. They did the very best they could to allow for the purchase of these systems and reduce 50% of ambient light present with the sodium bulbs. They knew going in that technology would change but had to make a decision.

The lights were the best available to them at the time, Mayor Narkewicz said.

Councilor Sciarra thanked Mr. Pomerantz for his presentation.

**Councilor Murphy moved to continue the public hearing to tomorrow at 7 p.m. Councilor Dwight seconded. The motion passed 8:0 by voice vote.**

**Motion to Adjourn**

**Upon motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 p.m.**

Attest: Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Administrative Assistant to the City Council