



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

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

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

Meeting Date: September 5, 2019

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

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 7:33 p.m. Councilor Murphy called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members David Murphy (Chair), Maureen Carney, Marianne LaBarge and Gina-Louise Sciarra. Also present from the City Council were Dennis Bidwell, William H. Dwight, Alisa Klein, Jim Nash and Ryan O'Donnell.
3. **Approval Of Minutes From The Previous Meeting**
 - A. **Minutes of August 15, 2019**
Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of August 15, 2019. Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed 4:0 by voice vote.
4. **Financial Orders**
 - A. **19.126 An Order To Appropriate Transportation Infrastructure Enhancement Funds \$6,157 For Burts Pit Road Reconstruction**
Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

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

By way of background, those familiar with Uber and Lyft and other ride share networks may know that the state collects a fee on those trips and, through the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and an apportionment formula, apportions it back to cities and towns where rides originate, Mayor Narkewicz explained. Cities and towns earn 10 cents per ride. This tells them there were over 61,000 rides that either terminated or originated in Northampton in 2017.

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State officials contacted them in late 2018 and said the city needed to tell them what they were going to use the funds for. Since they knew about the Burts Pit Road project at the time they designated the money for that project.

The awarded contract price for Burts Pit Road was \$1,409,272.50. The budget was structured to use \$912,725.88 from bonds, \$265,089.62 from Stormwater enterprise funds for drainage improvements, \$225,300 in state funding and the \$6,157. Administrators are going back to make sure the money is properly appropriated. Northampton will be getting another infusion of these funds from 2018 and they have been discussing potentially using it to enhance the city's bike share network.

They allocated this year's ride share revenue to the Burts Pit Road project because they had a deadline for designating it to a project, he reiterated.

Councilor LaBarge said she had a conversation with Finance Director Susan Wright to ask how the money is going to be used on Burts Pit Road. Residents are having a serious problem with speeding now that the road is reconstructed, she reported. She knows the city has a solar-powered speed detection sign, and she asked if the money could be used for that purpose.

They could look into that type of treatment, but this money has already been spoken for, Mayor Narkewicz clarified. The Police Department recently received some grant money, and residents may have seen the speed sign at the Route 10 entrance to the city on the Mill River Bridge. This money can't be used for that because it was already allocated to the Burts Pit Road project, he emphasized.

Members asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor Bidwell pointed out that, according to the math, the revenue represents 167 rides a day. He said he likes the idea of money being earmarked to smaller projects where it can really make a difference, particularly anything to do with the city's bike share infrastructure.

Ride share revenue went up to \$8,300 for 2018, Mayor Narkewicz said.

Councilor Klein said she didn't think the \$6,157 was in the original pavement memo so she wondered if it was used to offset another cost and allow them to do something else.

When the pavement memo was drafted, administrators were using estimates and had not yet received actual bids, so some changes occurred, Mayor Narkewicz noted. He will make a note of it for future paving memos, he said.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

B. 19.127 An Order To Authorize Intermunicipal Agreement For Young Adult Empowerment Collaborative Of Western Mass

Councilor Murphy read the order.

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

The order is for another intermunicipal agreement for a project initiated by Hampshire Hope, Mayor Narkewicz said. Hampshire Hope participants are forming a youth advisory committee with a youth representative from each of the Hampshire Hope partner communities. Members will focus on youth in terms of outreach and prevention efforts. 'Young adult' is defined as 16 – 24, he said.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

C. 19.129 An Order Authorizing The Lease Of The Senior Center Roof For Solar Panels

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

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

Northampton residents Morey Phippen and Brian Adams both received sizable inheritances and wanted to do something with the money above and beyond the amount needed to allow them to live comfortably, so they formed an LLC and have been quietly going throughout the valley putting solar photo voltaic arrays on non-profits. (He referred to PV arrays at the Survival Center, Grove Street Inn and Amherst Food Pantry.) All throughout the valley they have been giving solar systems to non-profits to help cut their energy costs.

Under the proposed arrangement, the donors own the system for the first six years and the city or recipient gets the benefits of a 50% reduced energy cost. After six years, the donors gift the array to the organization and the recipient not only gets the array and energy savings but also the Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SREC's; now known as SMART) credits. The six-year funds are poured back into the solar project.

He had a conversation with Phippen and Adams about whether they would be interested in doing a similar arrangement for the Senior Center. The Senior Center is a LEED-bronze building and is a high electricity user because it requires a lot of energy to operate the geothermal heating and ventilation system. The installation will be just under a 30 kilowatt array and will reduce energy use by the building, he confirmed.

It is a win/win/win for the donors, the city and the planet. He commends them for doing it and for offering this opportunity to the city and the Senior Center. Because it involves the city giving them control of the roof they have to do a surplus arrangement similar to when the city surplused the cap on the landfill to Ameresco to install a solar array.

Councilor LaBarge asked why the array is not just being given to the city.

This is the model the donors created in order to be able to continue the work, the Mayor replied. If the city were doing it itself, it would have to pay for equipment and installation, maintenance, etc. The opportunity to have someone else pay for the installation, maintain it, run it and still get a reduced energy rate is ideal, he indicated. It is essentially a free system.

Councilor LaBarge asked what if the system has problems after six years?

The arrays have a 15-year warranty, Mayor Narkewicz said.

Councilor Bidwell added his own appreciation for Morey Phippen and Brian Adams. It really is a remarkable thing they've chosen to do and has had quite a dramatic impact on the organizations benefitted, he noted.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.

5. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.
None.

6. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor Sciarra moved to adjourn. Councilor Carney seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

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