



## **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: November 1, 2018

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

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 8:09 p.m., Councilor Murphy called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members David Murphy, Maureen Carney, Marianne LaBarge & Gina-Louise Sciarra. Also present from the City Council were Bill Dwight, Jim Nash, Ryan O'Donnell, Dennis Bidwell, and Alisa Klein.
3. **Approval of Minutes From the Previous Meeting**
  - A. **Minutes of October 18, 2018**

Councilor Carney moved to approve the minutes of October 18, 2018. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed with 4 Yes, 0 No.
4. **Financial Orders**
  - A. **18.192 An Order To Establish A Tax Classification For FY2019**

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Members have heard from the Finance Director, Principal Assessor and Mayor, Councilor Murphy noted. He asked if any members had any questions or needed any additional information.

Hearing none, Councilor LaBarge moved to positively recommend setting a tax factor of 1.00; Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion passed unanimously with 4 Yes, 0 No.
  - B. **18.193 An Order To Authorize Supplemental Appropriation From Water Stabilization Fund For Storage Building At WTP**

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

This is a project the city has been working on over several capital improvement programs, Mayor Narkewicz advised. It is essentially to build a structure for storage for the Water Department; i.e. - a 36 by 72 foot building with five garage bay entry doors and one heated bay for a specialized vehicle. Beyond that, it is an unheated structure.

City officials have gone through the design and permitting process. The challenge has been that when it has been put out to bid, the amount appropriated has not been enough to satisfy the cost. City Council has appropriated \$352,000. Administrators are also allocating a little over \$41,000 in an insurance settlement received after the storage barn burned as part of an arson fire on Prospect Street. They need an additional \$332,972 to carry out the project.

The request is for two readings as the contractor has agreed to hold the bid until tomorrow. Also, workers want to get the slab poured before frost.

Councilor Carney asked if the structure was put out to bid as a pre-fab or pre-manufactured building.

It was, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. The city still has to do a design and hire a contractor to build it. The project was put out to bid on three separate occasions and each time the low bid exceeded the amount appropriated. He thinks they have done their due diligence and are not going to be able to do the project for the amount allocated.

Councilor Klein wondered if whether it would be less expensive to renovate the Prospect Street building rather than build a new structure was looked into.

The shed that burned was in pretty rough shape to begin with, Mayor Narkewicz noted. Essentially, they are trying to consolidate equipment at the Water Treatment Plant rather than store it at separate locations. Long-term, the city is looking to dispose of the Prospect Street building altogether so it was not their intention to invest in new storage space there, he added.

Councilor Klein asked if there was any pushback from the neighbors.

There are no neighbors at the Water Treatment Plant, Mayor Narkewicz clarified. The plant in Haydenville is not even visible from the street and there are no homes near it so that was not an issue.

Councilor Dwight asked the amount of the bid received. Mayor Narkewicz said it was \$632,000, and \$726,800 is being allocated. They typically build in a 10-15% contingency, he explained.

Members asked questions and offered comments

Councilor Murphy called the motion to a vote, and it passed with 4 Yes, 0 No.

**C. 18.194 An Order To Suspend Parking Fees On Certain Days**

Councilor Murphy read the text of the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Sciarra seconded.

This is a recurring order/request, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. Many neighboring communities do the same thing. The Mayor's office is 'trying to be friendly to business owners and shoppers,' he said. The motion passed unanimously with 4 Yes, 0 No.

5. **New Business**

A. **18.173 An Ordinance To Amend Chapter 312-36 Of The Code Book (To Increase Fees In E.J. Gare Parking Garage)**

Councilor Murphy read the text of the ordinance

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the ordinance to the full City Council with a positive recommendation. Councilor Carney seconded.

Mayor Narkewicz referred to his detailed memo. The City Council increased the hourly rates in the primary surface lots close to Main Street to 75 cents an hour and increased Main Street parking to \$1 an hour, he reminded. The fees in the parking garage have not been increased for 19 years. The increase is to match the Main Street parking rate, he presented.

This .75 increase will effectively make up for the .25 per hour loss due to credit card transactions. The city has made and will need to continue to make significant investments in the garage for capital improvements. Over the last three fiscal years, the city has made almost \$650,000 in infrastructure repairs/upgrades. Money that is raised above and beyond operating costs will go into a receipt reserved account for capital improvements, he advised. The increase is estimated to raise about \$200,000 in additional revenue. He has spoken to the owners of Thornes Market and they are supportive of the change, he added.

He was present the last time the fee was raised (from 30 to 50 cents an hour) and the room was filled with people who were very upset about how they were going to destroy the downtown business economy, Councilor Dwight related. Certainly a reasonable time has passed; who knows, once the word gets out, maybe there will be more opposition, he speculated.

The city had a pretty comprehensive parking study that recommended administrators take a look at garage rates, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. Here they have a multi-million dollar covered structure with a walkway to Main Street and are charging less than for parking on Main Street and Masonic Street, he pointed out.

The parking study recommended that the city do away with the free hour and the Mayor has made clear that that free hour will remain, Councilor Sciarra noted.

Councilor Klein asked if there is any movement to change the fee structure for long-term parking in the garage.

They are going to take a look at the leases although they didn't do that as part of this, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. They did adjust lease rates in the last three or four years so that has happened more recently than 19 years ago, he reminded.

Councilor Murphy called the motion to approve the ordinance with a positive recommendation to a vote, and it passed 4 Yes, 0 No.

6. **Adjourn:** At 8:30 p.m. Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn; Councilor Sciarra seconded. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

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