



**Committee on Community Resources
and the Northampton City Council**

Committee Members:

Councilor Garrick Perry

Councilor Jeremy Dubs

Councilor Deborah Pastrich-Klemer

Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg

Meeting Agenda

Date: January 22, 2024

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Northampton, MA

The January 22, 2024 Community Resources Committee organizational meeting will be held in hybrid format. The public can follow the committee's deliberations by attending in person or joining the virtual meeting by phone or computer. The meeting will be recorded for later broadcast and uploaded to the Northampton Government Video Archive on YouTube.

Live public comment will be available in person or using telephone call-in or video conferencing technology.

"Jurisdiction. Matters affecting the community including economic development, local business, tourism, the environment, the arts, planning, zoning, sustainability, land use, housing and affordability, among others"

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CALLING IN OR JOINING THE MEETING:

[PUBLIC MEETING LINK](#)

For telephone call-in, call:

+929 436-2866 US

MEETING ID: 854 1685 2657

PARTICIPANT ID#: #

PASSCODE: 053416

1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call

2. Announcement re: Audio/Video Recording

This meeting is being audio/video recorded.

3. Election of Chair

4. Election of Vice Chair

5. Public Comment

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting

A. Minutes of November 20, 2023

Documents:

[11-20-2023_Community Resources Committee.pdf](#)

7. Updates and Announcements from Committee Members

8. Items Referred to Committee

None

9. Set Meeting Schedule and Format for 2024 - 2025

Documents:

[Community Resources 2024 - 2025 Meeting Schedule.pdf](#)

10. New Business

11. Adjourn

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Committee on Community Resources and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Chair: Councilor Garrick Perry

Vice-Chair: Councilor Marissa Elkins

Councilor Alex Jarrett

Councilor Rachel Maiore

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 20, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers

212 Main Street, Northampton, MA

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call.** At 5:30 p.m. Chair Garrick Perry convened the meeting. Present were Councilors Garrick Perry, Chair; Marissa Elkins, Vice Chair, Alex Jarrett and Rachel Maiore. Also present were state Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
2. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Perry announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
3. **Public Comment**
None.
4. **Minutes of October 16, 2023**
Councilor Elkins moved to approve the October 16, 2023 minutes. Councilor Jarrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by voice vote.
5. **Updates and Announcements from Committee Members**
None.
6. **Program Topic: Legislative Overview with State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa**
Update on Action at the State Level/Discussion of Priority Local and Regional Issues

Representative Sabadosa gave a legislative update. November 15th having passed, they are ending the first year of the session and moving into the second and won't be having any more formal sessions until the first Wednesday in January, she reported. It is a quiet time for major pieces of legislation but a busy time for smaller pieces so she is happy to report that legislation requested by Northampton regarding liquor licenses passed the Senate today. The House changed the legislation a little based on how the home rule petition was sent to them, but Northampton is getting seven additional liquor licenses to be distributed in the community. They hope to get the bill to the governor's desk by the end of the year. A few more pieces of

legislation Northampton has requested are moving through the process, including expanding the number of Forbes Library Trustees and a bill involving the Northampton Housing Authority (NHA). The housing authority is leaving its management agreement with Hilltown properties and becoming the property owner of affordable housing there. This is being done for many reasons but mainly because there was no ability to hire an executive director in the hilltowns.

The House recently finished several large pieces of legislation, many of which will have a significant impact on Northampton, including tax reform, Rep. Sabadosa continued. Gun reform has taken up the most oxygen leading to 11 listening sessions throughout the Commonwealth followed by four different drafts of the bill. The goal is to update their laws and have some of the strongest gun laws in the country. The bill took a lot of wrangling to get sufficient votes and to get everybody on board. It passed back in October after which the House moved on to long-term care. They saw during the pandemic how difficult and stressful it was to maintain long-term care facilities and then experienced the closure of three nursing homes in western Massachusetts. This led to panic in the hospitals because they can't release patients from the hospital unless they have a place to go. Lawmakers are trying to make it a little easier for DPH to understand when a nursing facility is in financial crisis so it can step in sooner and doing a trial run around the pre-authorization that is generally required to get people out of the hospital and into long-term care beds to make it easier for hospitals to release patients. In the spring, the legislature has made a commitment to looking at health care more broadly. The Senate recently passed a pharmaceutical price reduction bill which the House may take up. The House is also looking at trying to prevent the consolidation of hospitals and maintain community hospitals. They may all have noticed the need for this as seen by the increase in urgent care facilities since it is more difficult to get in to see a primary care doctor and because many primary care doctors are no longer in private practice. This is particularly poignant in western Mass where wait lists for new patients to get in to see doctors can be hundreds of patients long.

On the financial front, legislators are now headed into consensus revenue conversations to figure out the state of the Commonwealth. Right now it is not amazing. They are presently about 350 million off their benchmark for revenue. They are hoping the holiday sales season will be a good one and that they will see a little more spending. The problem right now is that they have not identified just one thing wrong and can't pin-point what is ailing their economy. What's interesting is that Massachusetts is the only state in New England that is off its benchmark. They are going into consensus revenue hearings and will base the budget off that. What they are comfortable saying now is that they're a little worried that there might be cuts in the coming year. She doesn't like to be the bearer of bad news but she does like to be realistic.

She said she is happy to answer questions or engage on any of those points.

Councilor Jarrett asked for a brief overview of proposed tax reform.

Tax reform is a very large package and really one of the governor's priorities, Representative Sabadosa confirmed. She feels they really need to do some form of tax reform in order to make the commonwealth more competitive particularly around helping some of the most vulnerable with things like the earned income tax credit, deductions for dependents, the rental tax deduction and senior circuit breaker for seniors who pay rent or a mortgage. These were things agreed upon before but stymied because of being in an economic development bill. As they may recall, there was a great announcement about 62F - the Massachusetts General Law requiring the Department of Revenue to issue a tax credit if state revenues hit a certain point - a tax law from 1984 that nobody remembered which required them to send money back to taxpayers. Revenue reached this threshold because of the amount of federal funding received. Because of

that, they shelved a lot of the economic development bill and waited for the next fiscal year. They got all the tax reforms through but the governor asked for several others which were some of the least progressive in that they were directed to business. About \$700 million in tax breaks went directly to residents and others were competitive business taxes.

Reforms include the single sales factor tax which makes bookkeeping easier for businesses and lowering the capital gains tax. When Silicon Valley Bank almost imploded over the summer, it really shrunk the venture capital market in Massachusetts which drives a lot of their biotech industry. The short-term capital gains rate plays a pivotal role in businesses deciding where to locate and whether to hold buildings or sell them so she can see the governor's point in saying that the rate plays a role in the state's competitiveness.

In residential tax reforms, Massachusetts is one of 10 or 12 states that has an estate tax. Massachusetts had the lowest threshold for residents paying the estate tax of any other state besides Oregon. New York has a threshold of \$5 million, Vermont, \$3 million and Rhode Island \$1.9 million while they were asking descendants to pay taxes on \$1 million or more. Massachusetts now has a \$2 million threshold instead of \$1 million. They were trying to get a little more in line with other states.

Councilor Jarrett asked about the housing bond bill and how she sees it affecting Northampton or this area.

The housing bond is really difficult to predict right now, Representative Sabadosa advised. It is safe to say that the legislature plans on changing it significantly. The hearing will be in January. There are 29 individual pieces of policy within an enormous bond bill and individual bills are all before different committees in the legislature. Her hope is that it will have a significant impact on Northampton. They brought Edward Augustus, the Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities (formerly DHCD) out to see some of the projects in Northampton. The Prospect Place project just got a \$2 million grant for the green energy it will be using. She is hoping the bond bill will include local projects as well as anything that makes it a little easier to build affordable housing.

Councilor Jarrett asked if there will be opportunities for Northampton residents to advocate for this bill and Representative Sabadosa said absolutely.

Councilor Elkins requested an update on sustainability and environmental issues.

The Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy (TUE) has had some drama this session with the House and Senate holding separate hearings, Representative Sabadosa reported. The chairs are now speaking to each other, working together and trying to report out bills. What they report out exactly will be anybody's guess, but it's a very good sign. They've talked about being ready to do an omnibus bill at some point because it's harder to do standalone bills.

In the supplemental budget, they put in a budget line to facilitate bringing transmission lines for hydro-electric power down from Quebec, she added. They are expecting an environmental bill to come forward because it is something that happens every five years. There should be at least two opportunities to affect climate policy in the next year of this session.

Councilor Jarrett said he saw an article about changes needed or coming to MassSave.

She has filed legislation around it out of frustration with calls she gets from constituents, Representative Sabadosa confirmed. Unlike rebates for regular employees, rebates for self-employed people are based on gross income rather than net, so she has filed a bill to fix that. She has heard a ton from TUE committee members about MassSave and so wouldn't be surprised if something about it ends up in an omnibus bill.

Councilor Maiore commented that her experience with community action has just been incredible. She heard that the governor is planning some cuts to community action or consolidation.

The legislature agreed with her, Representative Sabadosa assured. The governor vetoed funding for community action but they restored it. They also restored rate increases for the Head Start program.

Councilor Maiore said that was good news. To her, community action is a model of what good government looks like in terms of helping folks.

Councilor Maiore asked the representative's perspective on home rule petitions; namely, what she thinks about how many they throw at her.

She is one of the top 10 legislators with the most home rule petitions, Representative Sabadosa allowed. Some of them are challenging but she thinks a lot of the legislation they file is putting a stake in the ground as far as their values. She thinks that sometimes these petitions and legislation she files are placeholders for when the subject comes up. She doesn't think they are a bad thing and doesn't mind doing the work around them as long as it's understood that not every one of them passes.

Discussion continued, with Representative Sabadosa fielding questions about ranked choice voting, lowering the voting age to 16 and prospects for more state aid for the arts and entertainment industry. She shared information gleaned from an event this morning that attendance at local venues is down 25-30%. She thinks there has been somewhat of a mindset shift about how and when people go out. The Mass Cultural Council has started a campaign about culture being part of health care because it encourages leaving the house and spending time with other people.

A bill she's spending a lot of time on this session is one around the privacy of health data not covered by HIPAA. Data shared on cell phones can be sold or shared without permission and they are seeing it being sold very very cheaply, she related. A retailer was able to find health data about veterans such as whether they had Alzheimers for 22 cents. The bill (H386) will allow MA residents to opt out. They are happy for any and all support.

Councilor Elkins invited her to share links if a councilor signing onto a Zoom meeting to express support would be effective.

Councilor Perry thanked Representative Sabadosa for coming and expressed his hope that this could be something that happens fairly regularly.

Councilor Maiore said she feels well-represented and very lucky to have this kind of access to their legislators.

Representative Sabadosa facetiously mentioned for the record that tomorrow is Councilor Maiore's birthday.

7. **New Business**

None.

8. **Adjourn.** There being no further business, **Councilor Elkins moved to adjourn; Councilor Jarrett seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.**

Prepared By:

Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant

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City Council Committee on Community Resources Meeting Schedule 2024-2025

Note: All meetings start at 5 p.m. in Council Chambers unless otherwise posted.

January 22, 2024 (Organizational Meeting)	TBD (Meeting falls on MLK Day)
February 19, 2024 (President's Day)	TBD (Meeting falls on President's Day)
March 18, 2024	March 17, 2025
April 15, 2024 (Patriot's Day)	April 21, 2025
May 20, 2024	May 19, 2025
June 17, 2024	June 16, 2025
July 15, 2024	July 21, 2025
No August Meeting	No August Meeting
September 16, 2024	September 15, 2025
October 21, 2024	October 20, 2025
November 18, 2024	November 17, 2025
December 16, 2024	December 15, 2025