



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair
Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III
Councilor Jim Nash*

Online Meeting via Teleconference

Meeting Date: November 9, 2022

Time: 6 p.m.

Virtual meeting

The November 9, 2022 Finance Committee meeting will be held by remote participation.

The public can follow the committee's deliberations by watching the meeting live on Comcast channel 15, live-streaming it on YouTube or joining the virtual meeting by phone or computer. For the live YouTube link, please see Northampton Open Media's website:

<http://northamptonopenmedia.org>. Live public comment will be available using telephone call-in or video conferencing technology beginning at 6 p.m.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CALLING IN OR JOINING THE MEETING

[PUBLIC MEETING LINK](#)

For telephone call-in, call:

+929 436-2866 US

MEETING ID: 836 7181 5001

PARTICIPANT #: #

PASSCODE: 421131

- 1. Meeting Called To Order And Roll Call**
- 2. Announcement That Meeting Is Being Audio/Video Recorded**
This meeting is being audio/video recorded.
- 3. Public Comment**
- 4. Approval Of Minutes From The Previous Meeting**

A. May 5, 2022, May 11, 2022 And May 31, 2022 (FY2023 Budget Hearing)

Documents:

[05-05-2022_finance committee minutes.pdf](#)
[05-11-2022_finance committee minutes.pdf](#)
[05-31-2022_finance committee minutes.pdf](#)

B. Minutes Of September 21, 2022

Documents:

[09-21-2022_finance committee minutes.pdf](#)

5. Format Of Finance Committee Budget Listening Session (Follow-Up Discussion)

6. Municipal, State, And Federal Funding Possibilities For Funding A Potential Climate Crisis Director Position In The City Of Northampton

7. Financial Orders

None.

8. New Business

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

9. Adjourn

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Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III
Councilor Jim Nash*

Virtual Meeting
Meeting Date: May 5, 2022
Time: 6 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 6:13 p.m. Chair Rachel Maiore convened the meeting.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Councilor Rachel Maiore (Chair), Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge (Vice Chair), Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III and Councilor Jim Nash. Also present were DPW Director Donna LaScaleia, City Engineer David Veleta and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Maiore announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
4. **Approval of Minutes**
Councilor Moulton moved to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2022 meeting. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.
5. **Public Hearing To Alter The Lay Out Of Winter Street**
Councilor Moulton moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote. The public hearing was opened at 6:15 p.m.

22.076 An Order to Alter the Layout of Winter Street

22.076 An Order Authorizing the Acquisition of Easements to Alter the Layout of Winter Street

Councilor Maiore read aloud both the order to alter the layout of Winter Street and the order to authorize the acquisition of easements.

As some may know, they have had a couple of really serious water main breaks on Winter Street that have caused quite a bit of damage, Director LaScaleia reported. What they have been working on since the last event in 2018/2019 is a plan to improve the utilities in the roadway. Among other things, they need to improve the water main and actually separate the combined sewer and stormwater system they found when doing their utility survey. Presently, Stormwater flows into the sewer system, which is not desirable and actually a violation of the city's permit. When doing any kind of reconstruction, they always look at the technicality of the roadway. The order before them is a little bit of housekeeping from 1910 to take a very small section of land at the end of the street which was never formalized as part of the public way. It is a

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 5, 2022

very small owner unknown parcel but is right where they need to make some drainage improvements. From a legal perspective, the city needs to take this action in order to have the legal right to reconstruct this roadway in the way that will most benefit this neighborhood. The city cannot enter onto a property to make improvements unless it has the legal right to do so, she noted.

Councilor Maiore asked if any proponents or opponents wanted to speak.

Christopher Nieboer said he is one of the sons of Fred and Rose Nieboer of 29 Winter Street and stated that, as he understands it, they have adverse possession over this entire owner unknown parcel. His family has maintained the property ever since they've owned it for the past 58 years. It's been their primary source of parking for their residence and has been maintained by adding gravel, grass and plants (azaleas and lilac bushes) and mowing it for 58 years.

The Nieboers would like to suggest adding the parcel to their taxable land area. They are not adverse to having drainage over the parcel as long as it does not interfere with their usage.

His brief understanding of Massachusetts law is that 'notorious and open use' of a vacant parcel over a period of 20 or more continuous years grants them ownership, Mr. Nieboer explained. He said he spoke to Roger Green at the DPW over the summer and he assured him that the city had no intention of taking ownership of the property. He found out about this hearing today because a sign was stuck in the yard this morning and he ran into Ward 1 Councilor Stan Moulton today on site.

As the son of Fred and Rose Nieboer, he objects to the city taking this property as they have adverse possession over it according to Massachusetts state law, he reiterated. He's personally maintained it as long as he's been old enough to mow (and rake and shovel), he added.

Nieboer said the name of the DPW employee he spoke to is Felix Harvey; not Roger Green.

Councilor Maiore raised the question of whether the city met the legal notification requirement for tonight's hearing. Mrs. Krutzler said she thought the legal notice was required to be sent to owners of record only and not abutters, in which case, since the parcel's owner is unknown, no notification was necessary.

Kathryn Basham said when she first moved in it was unclear who owned the property but very clear that the Nieboers took care of it. She was the owner on the block who took the hardest hit with the water breaks in 2007 and 2019, suffering \$40,000 worth of damage with the most recent break. She has a very strong interest in trying to support the efforts of the DPW to repair the street, she shared.

She asked if the DPW is planning to widen the street or stay within the parameters of what they have now. The schematic design was somewhat confusing, she said.

There are no plans to widen the street, Director LaScaleia advised. The 70' by 33' section will be laid out as part of the street as intended in 1910 and then just used to improve the drainage so it can be disconnected from the sewer system.

Councilor LaBarge said she is a little concerned hearing from the resident in regard to taking care of that property for so many years and the legal aspect involved.

Occasionally it happens that folks are using or maintaining something as in this case, Director LaScaleia acknowledged. The DPW is making an attempt to improve a poor utility situation on Winter Street that's actually caused severe damage to several households, she stressed. Part of the effort is water main improvement and part is sewer and drainage improvements, she elaborated. This is how they need to engineer the street in order to improve it.

Nieboer noted that he is a mechanical engineer himself and knows that there are always multiple solutions to any problem. At the time plans were being developed, he was told by Felix that they would be involved and told what was going on. As far as drainage, there are a myriad of other solutions engineering firms could come up with, he asserted. They have maintained the property and, according to Massachusetts state law, adverse possession is granted when one person makes open and notorious use of another person's property over a period of 20 or more continuous years, he reiterated. They've done it for 58 years.

Councilor Nash asked if the claim for adverse possession is for the entire property or just a section of it. If the claim is for the entire property, it would include part of the street.

Ms. Krutzler brought to councilor's attention paragraph #5 from a memo from City Solicitor Alan Seewald, Esq. dated January 31, 2018 re: Procedures for Laying Out Ways which reads as follows:

"If at the hearing "no person interested objects" the council may proceed to lay out the way within twelve months of the hearing. If there is an objection from an interested party, the council must hold another hearing with statutory notice set forth in the preceding paragraph."

Regarding drainage alternatives, Director LaScaleia said they have actually examined several drainage alternatives and what they are proposing is the least costly to the city. The city has very tight windows for construction, she added. It is their hope to get through this process, put the project out to bid and construct it. Delays in this process are actually going to delay the project. They may lose the ability to do this in a timely manner.

Councilor Moulton asked Director LaScaleia her reaction to the Nieboer's offer to take ownership of the land but give an easement to the city to be used for drainage.

Director LaScaleia said she thinks this is more of a question for the city solicitor. Councilor Maiore agreed they need to consult the city solicitor.

Councilor LaBarge moved to continue the public hearing to May 11, 2022 at 6 p.m. with the city solicitor attending. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

Councilor Maiore said she would invite the solicitor to the meeting on May 11th.

6. Financial Orders

A. 22.071 An Order To Approve \$50,000 From Short Term Rental Impact Fees To Affordable Housing

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

They just wanted to allow an opportunity for more feedback, Councilor Moulton reminded. The overwhelming response in the last four months has been very positive, so they certainly should give it a positive recommendation, he agreed. **The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

7. Review of Future Meeting Schedule and Dates

Councilor Maiore said they would put this item on the next agenda.

8. New Business

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

None.

9. Adjourn: There being no further business, Councilor Moulton moved to adjourn. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Contact: Rachel Maiore @rmaiore@northamptonma.gov or (413) 923-4318



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III
Councilor Jim Nash*

Virtual Meeting
Meeting Date: May 11, 2022
Time: 6 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 6:05 p.m. Councilor Rachel Maiore convened the meeting.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Rachel Maiore (Chair), Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge (Vice Chair), Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III (joined at 6:08 p.m.) and Councilor Jim Nash. Also present were DPW Director Donna LaScaleia and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Maiore announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
4. **Approval of Minutes**
Councilor Nash moved to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2022 meeting. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed 3:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Moulton absent.
5. **Continuation of Public Hearing To Alter The Lay Out Of Winter Street (from May 5, 2022)**
Councilor Maiore opened the continued hearing.

The city solicitor is requesting that the hearing be continued as some discussions are still going on between him and the property owners, Councilor Nash reported. He would recommend continuing to the next regularly-scheduled meeting, but it is the budget hearing, so he is proposing to continue to June 8th.

Councilor Nash moved to continue the public hearing to Wednesday, June 8th at 6 p.m. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

There may be a way to resolve this so another public hearing is not needed, Councilor Nash added.

Kathryn Basham asked what the implications of the continuance are for the timeframe of the DPW's project. They were anticipating the DPW was going to move forward with the bid process. Residents of the street are already into the third year since the last water break, she reminded.

The DPW director sent her photos of the last water main break and it was pretty harrowing, Councilor Maiore commented. It looked like New Orleans. She did say they are ready to move. The DPW director is very aware of the time pressure and the implications of waiting too long, she assured.

Sarah and Will Freedberg of 18 Winter Street said their house was one of those impacted by the flood in 2019 and the water main break on Christmas Eve in 2006. There were two water main breaks, which is one of the reasons they were all hoping to get this resolved sooner rather than later. The first was when their house was being built and it flooded out their cellar. The city did pay for that.

In 2019, they weren't home but their neighbors the Ryan's let them know what was going on. They had a couple of inches of water in their cellar and a couple of inches of sand and salt came into their front yard, which is her garden. In addition, they had a secondary flood when the DPW fixed the street after the water main break since they didn't quite grade it properly. A small lake formed in front of their driveway and they got flooded the next time there was a thunderstorm.

They definitely would like to have this resolved as expeditiously as possible and hope the city and the Nieboers' can work something out without lengthy litigation. History repeats itself and they have had too much history of repeat flooding on Winter Street, Mr. Freedberg said. Another year with the infrastructure in its present condition would be setting them up for more damage and ultimately more cost to the city.

[Councilor Moulton was experiencing some technical difficulties and had to exit briefly.]

The Northampton Conservation Commission is holding a public hearing tomorrow, May 12, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. on a Notice of Intent for drainage improvements on Winter Street, Councilor LaBarge advised. The scope of work includes disconnecting storm drains from the sewer system and installation of a gravel Stormwater spreader.

The motion to continue passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

6. Meeting schedule

May 24th and May 25th are the City Council's FY2023 budget hearings, Councilor Maiore noted. They will first convene as a full council before recessing for the Finance Committee to conduct the hearings.

She proposed setting the Wednesday after regular City Council meetings as regular Finance Committee meeting dates for a tentative schedule as follows: June 8th, June 22nd, July 20th and August 24th. Members agreed on the dates and a start time of 6 p.m.

7. Scope and responsibilities of the Finance Committee

Councilor Nash said he thinks the best thing to do is to reflect on the process they're involved in right now. The mayor has sent them an administrative order relative to the budget in that it has to do with creating a new department. The budget will roll out and councilors will get their budget books next week. Under the council's new rules, the timeframe for approval is a little more compressed than in the past and he think it's good to be thoughtful about that. The FY2023 budget could be finalized June 2nd, which is earlier than usual. As they're going through, he suggested collectively witnessing 'what's working.' They have a new mayor and new rules and his sense is that it is changing some of the timelines. With regard to the recent introduction of the Department of Community Care (DCC), this is a direction they wanted the mayor to go in and they're seeing the realization of that directive, he commented appreciatively. He encouraged fellow councilors to take note of how changes that have been made have played out and what future changes

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 11, 2022

they may want to see. He thinks having this discussion is really beneficial and the fall is when they are going to want to start digging into other issues that relate to the budget.

Councilor LaBarge said she received a phone call from a former police officer in Ward 7 very concerned about where the money for this new department is coming from.

There is also some confusion about the new process for considering financial orders and why the council is voting to send items to the consent agenda rather than voting to approve them at the time of first reading, she noted.

Councilor Nash agreed it is confusing and suggested the possibility of calling it something other than 1st and 2nd reading since the orders aren't actually 'read' the second time. He threw out the terms 'introduction' and 'consideration' as possible alternatives to 1st and 2nd reading.

"We're using old terminology with a new process," Councilor Moulton agreed. "The terminology needs to be clarified."

Councilor Maire said she would put 'scope and responsibilities' back on the agenda in the fall. In earlier discussions, Councilor LaBarge suggested having the Finance Committee take up discussion of the Stormwater fee structure. Barring the establishment of a free-standing committee for this purpose, she thinks this is an excellent idea. Another specific idea was keeping Finance Committee members apprised of the impact of Coca-Cola's departure on water and sewer rates, Councilor Moulton added.

Councilor LaBarge said she thought they could be in a recession. Councilor Nash agreed with Councilor LaBarge around concern about the city's revenues. It's important for them to be really tracking these things as they consider budgets coming forward, he suggested. He appreciates the updates from the finance director and thinks the mayor's office will be letting them know when there are shortfalls.

8. Structure and Line-up of Budget Hearing - Departmental presentations

Members discussed the format for the upcoming budget hearings and the order of presentation for the departments scheduled to present. These will be special City Council meetings so they won't need to have public comment in the beginning, Councilor Nash noted.

Councilor Moulton offered to facilitate by making note of recurring questions from the public during public comment to present to department heads after the presentations.

Councilor Nash said he is comfortable with the idea of councilors having the opportunity to ask questions of department heads and then opening the floor to public comment. Questions from the public will then be tracked by Councilor Moulton and directed to the mayor at the conclusion of public comment.

Councilor Maire said she wasn't planning to limit the comments in terms of scope but is comfortable with limiting individual comments to three minutes.

Councilor LaBarge said she thinks the biggest issue will be the school department. She got 22 emails today just about the schools.

Regarding the order of presentation, Councilor Nash said he and Councilor Maire would decide the 'batting order' with the idea of making the first night the easier night.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 11, 2022

Councilor Maiore asked if Councilor Moulton could report back about the process of the ARPA committee.

Councilor Moulton said he's happy to report to the Finance Committee. The ARPA committee is the mayor's advisory committee which will be making recommendations on the \$4 million dedicated to direct community impact. All ten members are community members except him and Councilor Foster. They have met twice and their immediate task is to schedule and hold some listening sessions in the community. They are talking about having them in community centers like the schools and public housing projects and making them about the kinds of projects that would provide help and relief. Parallel to that is the task of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be issued this summer.

Councilor Nash requested that updates from Councilor Moulton on the ARPA Committee be a running agenda item.

9. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

None.

10. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

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Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III
Councilor Jim Nash*

Virtual Meeting
Meeting Date: May 31, 2022

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during a special City Council Meeting (FY2023 Budget Hearing) as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 6 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 6:04 p.m. Chair Rachel Maiore convened the meeting.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were Councilor Rachel Maiore (Chair), Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge (Vice Chair), Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III and Councilor Jim Nash. Also present were City Council members Jamila Gore, Karen Foster, Garrick Perry and Alex Jarrett. At-Large Councilor Marissa Elkins was absent on roll call but joined at 7:38 p.m. Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Finance Director Charlene Nardi, DPW Director Donna LaScaleia and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler were also present.

Councilor Maiore announced that the meeting was being audio/video recorded.

3. **Public Hearing on FY2023 Budget**
Councilor Maiore introduced the hearing by reading the legal notice.

Councilor Nash moved to open the public hearing. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote. The public hearing was opened at 6:05 p.m.

Councilor Maiore explained the format she would use in conducting the hearing. Department heads will make presentations, councilors will be given the opportunity to comment and ask questions, and then public comment will be accepted. She mentioned that comments should pertain to the subject matter of the hearing and asked speakers to please limit comments to three minutes.

CENTRAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Councilor Jarrett disclosed that as a member of the Pedal People Cooperative he cannot participate due to a conflict of interest as Pedal People has a pre-existing contract with Central Services. He said he would be turning off his video, although he might pop in to ask a question unrelated to the contract.

Central Services Director Pat McCarthy gave an overview of departmental responsibilities. Central Services oversees grounds, maintenance, heating, cooling, plumbing and electrical, security, fire detection and protection, custodial, renovation, construction and capital programs for city and school buildings. The City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2022

department maintains approximately 792,000 square feet of facilities including City Hall, the municipal building, Memorial Hall, main and Florence fire stations, the senior center, James House, the Academy of Music, six schools in the Northampton Public School district and DPW facilities. It operates the municipal mail delivery system, manages the city and school facilities office and custodial supplies program, solicits and secures natural gas and electrical supply contracts for municipal and school buildings and houses the energy and sustainability officer. It also oversees maintenance and capital improvements for the E.J. Gare Parking Garage (approximately 168,000 square feet) and Gothic Street parking structure (52,000 square feet) and coordinates upgrades to city streetlights.

Since former Director David Pomerantz's retirement in February, he has spent the last several months becoming familiar with both the Central Services and Parking Maintenance budgets, Director McCarthy related. Both fiscal year 2023 budgets are straightforward with no major changes.

As far as Central Services Personnel Services (PS), there are no changes to the number of staff, he reported. There are presently three full-time and one part-time vacancy comprised of 2.5 custodians and his previous position as Project Facilities Coordinator. There is a small increase for the internal hire of a new department administrative assistant. Overall, there is a two percent (2%) increase in PS basically related to COLA increases.

OM for the most part has remained level with some line item reductions to offset other line item changes, he continued. Increases in the following line items are related mostly to utility increases: electricity, gas, Stormwater, grounds and architectural/engineering. Electricity has increased by \$40,467 to accommodate the increased cost of electricity, which is due to the volatility and upward trend in the current energy market. Staff are presently reviewing existing electrical supply contracts which are expected to expire in November of 2022.

Gas is being increased by \$4,819 for the same reason. Present contracts are good until December of 2023. The cost of water increased, so they have adjusted the FY2023 water and Stormwater budgets accordingly.

The grounds budget was increased by \$6,000 due to the increased cost of keeping the main campus clean and increases in grounds-related materials. Lastly, architectural/engineering services increased by \$10,000 to cover costs related to upcoming projects; i.e. – the proposed dog kennel, 33 King Street, the resilience hub, etc.

For parking maintenance, payroll will increase by \$26,253 due to changing an existing part-time position to full-time, he advised. The employee was previously partially paid through the Tax Collector/Parking Enforcement budget but is now paid out of parking maintenance. The overall OM budget has actually decreased by \$24,568 to offset other line item changes. The only three increases are in electricity (\$8,006), gas (\$416) and trash removal (\$5,000).

The OOM budget was increased by \$15,000 for increased costs in parking equipment related to what's known as the Parkeon Pay by Plate system.

Capital projects in the schools include energy management system upgrades at JFK Middle School, ventilation and greenhouse gas emission reductions work at Leeds and Jackson Street schools and the purchase of an electric maintenance van. City-side capital projects include the parking lot expansion at main fire headquarters, ventilation upgrades at the DPW, heating system upgrades at the municipal

building and the purchase of a hybrid city maintenance vehicle. They are also buying a new electric skid steer.

Members asked questions and offered comments.

Mayor Sciarra said she's exhausted from listening to director McCarthy outline everything Central Services does. She thanked him for all his work.

With regard to the ventilation upgrades mentioned, Councilor Nash said he knew a portion has to do with energy efficiency and meeting climate goals but he wondered how much actually relates to COVID.

The Locust Street administration building is in sore need of ventilation, Director McCarthy responded. It is going to be an ERV (Energy Recovery Ventilator) so it is going to be energy efficient. It is directly related to COVID too, he confirmed. The ventilation work at Leeds, Jackson and Bridge Street schools are actually part of greenhouse gas emission reduction projects.

Councilor Moulton thanked Director McCarthy for the detailed presentation. He said he didn't quite understand his mention of a study of the city's electricity contract later in the year.

Central Services solicits and secures natural gas and electricity supply contracts for municipal and school facility operations, the director clarified. They are presently under separate contracts with an electricity and gas supplier through each utility - National Grid and Eversource. They buy electricity from the supplier at a set rate under contract. They are trying to be proactive as they look towards November to see if they can lock in figures now that will be potentially better than later in the year.

Councilor Foster asked if there is maintenance or electricity costs associated with EV chargers. She also asked about the possibility of adding fast chargers.

Central Services does pay for the EV chargers as well as for recharging electric bikes, Director McCarthy confirmed. Workers are putting extra EV chargers in the Roundhouse parking lot and at the main fire station with the expansion of its parking lot. He would have to rely on Chris Mason to answer whether they are the trickle or fast chargers. One of the EV chargers at the fire station will be a pay-to-use meter.

Councilor Foster asked where charges for clean-ups of camp sites, included disposal of sharps, is reflected in the Central Services budget.

In both budgets this charge comes under trash removal, Director McCarthy said. They may end up taking it out of another line item next year.

Director Nardi said she thinks they have also used the grounds and maintenance line item for this expense.

In response to a question from Councilor Maiore, Director McCarthy said the rule of thumb is that costs associated with buildings are charged to Central Services.

Councilor Jarrett asked how the custodians are divided up.

A full-time custodian works second shift at the police station and another works full-time at the senior center, McCarthy said. A part-time custodian takes care of the JFK pool on the weekends. There is no

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2022

dedicated custodian for the fire department but custodians assigned to other buildings go over there during the week.

There being no more questions, Councilor Maiore introduced the next department.

FIRE/RESCUE

Chief Davine clarified that the custodian mentioned by Director McCarthy takes care of central dispatch on the second floor; firefighters do all their cleaning and maintenance in house. He presented an overview of the FY2023 budget, which increased slightly from last year, as follows.

The Fire Department operates out of fire stations on Carlon Drive and Maple Street in Florence which house four fire engines, one rescue vehicle, one ladder truck, a command vehicle, a boat and five staff vehicles, so maintenance costs are pretty significant. The department employs 68 full-time sworn firefighters, one full-time mechanic and one full-time administrative assistant, and those numbers will not change next year. He currently has two vacancies. They hired four firefighters at the beginning of May who are finishing up their training this week and will be heading out to shift. There is a potential applicant for one of the vacancies who hopefully will start in the next couple of weeks but he has an upcoming retirement which will create the second vacancy.

The department runs four shifts: A Group, B Group, C Group and D Group, each of which are assigned 16 personnel. Members work 24-hour rotating shifts. Minimum daily staffing is 13. The groups regularly staff one fire engine and one ambulance in Florence and two fire engines, two ambulances and a command vehicle at headquarters.

Last year was a record year for their department with the highest call volume they've ever seen. They answered 7,645 calls for service, including 5,701 EMS calls and 52 fires for an average of 21 calls each 24-hour shift. 55% of the time last year they had multiple calls for service at the same. One thing they have noticed and are keeping an eye on is their mutual aid to other towns. Last year, the city provided fire mutual aid 22 times, but they went out of the city 400 times for ambulance mutual aid, representing a pretty significant increase. They have never seen mutual aid numbers for EMS that high. When they leave the city to answer calls in other communities, it obviously increases their costs for equipment and fuel and causes increased wear and tear on their vehicles.

They also had to call for EMS mutual aid 88 times, which is pretty high for Northampton. Running three ambulances 24/7 they very rarely need that much assistance but when they're leaving the city and get a call, they have to call for help too.

As call volumes increase, obviously costs increase too. Equipment and operating costs have increased significantly over the last couple of months. Some vendors have told them to prepare for a 10 to 20% increase this year. They ordered a brand new ambulance in July of 2020 and still have not received it due to part delays and other circumstances beyond their control. They are expecting the ambulance to finally arrive in June.

Monthly and sometimes weekly price increases and equipment delays are frustrating and difficult to budget for so it has been challenging. They are going to try to lock in some long-term contracts at a lower price, so they are doing their due diligence and are hopeful.

In response to a question from Councilor LaBarge, Chief Davine said the department's total budget is \$6,653,149. They had six vacancies at the beginning of May but have filled four of them, he clarified.

Councilor LaBarge asked how COVID-19 affected his department

The last time he looked, the number of people transported who were COVID positive was over 600, Chief Davine said. Now it is probably over 700. He is proud to say that, throughout 2020, only six department members came down with COVID and it was mostly those in the office. With the new Omicron variant, several more people came down with COVID and right now, he has one firefighter out with COVID.

Other than transporting sick people, they were lucky in that they didn't have a bunch of folks get sick and have to miss work.

Councilor LaBarge thanked the chief for the department personnel who went down to the senior center to help administer shots.

Councilor Nash asked for an update on the ladder truck.

The mechanic was able to locate a part out of state for the ladder and get it working so they did operate it up at Smith Voke. They are going to continue to bring in Hadley and Easthampton when a ladder response is needed. They were happy to get it working since they are trading it in for the new ladder so it has to be operational.

DPW

The Pedal People Cooperative has a financial interest in decisions made regarding the Locust Street transfer station which the DPW oversees, so he will be recusing himself but may come in at the end to ask questions unrelated to the Solid Waste enterprise budget, Councilor Jarrett disclosed.

The DPW's General Fund (GF) budget is separated into several divisions: Administration & Engineering, Highways (streets and fleet maintenance), Snow and Ice and Forestry, Parks and Cemeteries, Director LaScaleia presented.

Within the GF, the DPW maintains more than 150 miles of paved and unpaved roadways, 85 miles of sidewalks, almost 40 bridges, more than 30 signal-controlled intersections, more than 150 vehicles and pieces of specialized construction equipment, more than 10,000 public shade trees, 240 acres of athletic fields and parks, four cemeteries all of which are active burial grounds with more than 20,000 monuments and more than 11 miles of bike paths. As items of note, the department has contractual obligations to employees belonging to one of three unions so, on the PS side, they will see some increases related to these contractual obligations. Also, there are slight increases in overall OM primarily due to the rising cost of gasoline and diesel. They are paying about double what they were paying last year for diesel and close to double for gasoline, so that is a really significant expense. They are also seeing substantial increases in the price of electricity, propane and oil and, across the board, goods and services.

In the Highways OOM section, the road improvements line funds the purchase of asphalt to patch potholes, repair trench cuts, etc. The price of asphalt has risen by nearly 30%, leading to a considerable increase given the city's use of 2,000 to 3,000 tons of asphalt annually. The Roadway Markings line pays for roadway markings; i.e. - all the paint they see on pavement everywhere: double yellow center lines, left and

right turn arrows, etc. They will be putting out a contract within the next few weeks to restripe the entire city, including about three-quarters of a million linear feet of markings.

For enterprise funds, they talked about water and sewer revenue, operations and capital projects in detail during the rate setting process, she reminded. The DPW operates and maintains very expansive and complex water and sewer systems. The water treatment plant in Williamsburg flows nearly four million gallons of drinking water a day through 160 miles of water mains and related equipment, and the sewer system includes more than 110 miles of sewer lines in addition to seven pump stations and the waste water treatment plant (WWTP) which is undergoing significant renovation. For FY2023 they have submitted level-funded budgets in the water and sewer enterprises and utility rates remain unchanged.

They are nearing completion of the \$10 million Phase 1 of the WWTP project but this time next year they will be starting Phase 2 which will cost in the neighborhood of \$20 million. They are also engaged in engineering design for a couple of significant projects on the water side: improvement to their reservoirs and improvement of the water transmission main that runs to the city limits. It bears repeating that, with the imminent closure of Coca-Cola, they will be looking at reductions in revenue starting early next calendar year. They have engaged Tighe & Bond to look at utility rates and make some recommendations for how to best move forward. The capital needs of the system remain the same regardless of Coca-Cola's presence in the city, she pointed out.

Like water and sewer, the Stormwater and solid waste enterprises are similarly level-funded.

She publicly thanked the men and women of the DPW who work every day to provide essential services to the city and said she appreciated the council's ongoing support of its operations.

In response to questions from Councilor LaBarge, she confirmed that they have quite a few vacancies throughout the department. There is ongoing recruitment to fill these vacancies but one of the challenges is that they require a commercial driver's license (CDL) and licensure to operate specialized equipment. There is currently a little over 15 vacancies.

Councilor Moulton said he counts five vacancies among the 16 positions in the highway department. He asked her to speak a bit more to the impact of this on the ability to get the work done, prioritizing the work and morale.

Vacancies are one of the biggest challenges now, Director LaScaleia acknowledged. The volume of work never lets up so they have to prioritize based on safety first and foremost. Over the years, there has always been some level of vacancy. They have never achieved what she would consider to be full staffing but this is a particularly trying time. The way they deal with it is with overtime. Ultimately, getting a job done is about man hours. Employees tend to stay late or work on weekends and holidays to backfill what they would typically be doing in a 40-hour week. She does need to be careful not to overwork the remaining staff. It is particularly difficult during the winter so she is extremely hopeful the situation will move towards resolution as it gets later in the year. She can choose to contract out some of the work but this is not preferable particularly in this inflationary environment. She tries to contract out common sense things as a stop gap. They appreciate people's patience as they work through a backlog of work orders.

In response to a question about recycling, the director reminded councilors that she had to insert a line item in the budget (\$110,000) a couple of years ago to begin paying for recycling. Shortly after, everything

shifted and they are now back to receiving revenue for recyclables. Right now, there is no expense and a limited revenue stream associated with recyclables, she confirmed.

Councilor Maiore asked about progress on the cold storage facility approved in the budget several years ago.

As context, some years ago there was discussion of building a brand new DPW facility, but city officials transitioned away from that idea to the concept of adding cold storage to get DPW vehicles out of the weather, Director LaScaleia reminded. The cold storage facility at the water treatment plant in Williamsburg is functioning beautifully. In 2019, Mayor Narkewicz proposed two additional cold storage buildings: one at Spring Grove Cemetery and one on Locust Street. The DPW has done significant design and permitting since then. No money is reflected in this budget for those projects and they are still in the permitting stage.

Councilor Nash expressed appreciation for being kept so well-informed about DPW activities.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DHHS)/COMMUNITY CARE DEPARTMENT (CCD)

Councilor Maiore welcomed Health Commissioner Merridith O'Leary, Deputy Health Commissioner Michelle Farry and Department of Community Care (DCC) Implementation Director Sean Donovan.

Commissioner O'Leary thanked councilors for being such faithful stewards of the city's fiscal resources. Not having been part of the hearing process in past years, what she learned tonight is what a vital role the council plays in making sure they allocate their resources properly with a view to their community values.

On May 19th, the City Council approved the mayor's first administrative order restructuring the health department to be the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), she recounted. The mission of the DHHS is to protect, preserve and promote the health and well-being of all Northampton residents, particularly the most vulnerable. Members achieve their mission by providing and supporting accessible, high-quality community-based health and social services, community engagement and advocacy, development of health-promoting policies and regulations, disease and injury prevention, emergency services, culturally-competent health promotion and health education services.

Under the DHHS umbrella, there are six divisions including environmental health, public health nursing, emergency preparedness, substance use prevention, public health excellence and the newly-developed Department of Community Care (DCC). The DCC will be a well-supported branch of the department due to access to other department resources (i.e. - nursing, Hampshire Hope and DART administrative staff) and better-poised to access grant resources.

One of her first tasks as commissioner was to develop a FY2023 budget inclusive of the DCC. With that in mind, she has come up with an FY2023 operating budget of \$1.868 million, \$1.7 million of which is for personnel services (PS). Of the \$1.7 million, \$1.1 million will come from the general fund and the remainder from grants. The significant increase in PS comes from: 1) salary increases for increased roles and responsibilities, 2) overtime and 3) seven new positions created for the DCC; in particular, Implementation Director, Peer Outreach Coordinator, three peer outreach workers (referred to as community responders), a full-time social worker and a program coordinator/administrative support staff.

All positions other than the implementation director are vacant and will be posted in the very near future.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2022

Three positions will be shared by the DCC and DHHS: the Public Health Technology Manager, whose salary is 30% from DHHS and 70% from grants, a Grants Manager (funded 20% by the GF and 80% by grants) and the DCC Program Coordinator, where 60% of salary is GF and 40% grants. Seventy percent (70%) of Deputy Commissioner Michelle Farry's salary also comes from grants.

The overall OM budget is \$166,000, with the biggest increase being for contractual services. The DHHS will be contracting with a software company for \$82,000 to help build out its health information exchange data base, contracting with a vendor to assess dispatch data to identify calls for the DCC and contracting with trainers to help build special skills and create a training curriculum for DCC peer outreach workers.

The DHHS has a total of nine vacancies, including the seven for the DCC, and administrators have set benchmarks for hiring. They will hire right away for the program coordinator and in July-August they will advertise for the community responders and outreach coordinator. They are currently advertising for vacant director positions for the Substance Use and Public Health Excellence divisions.

In addition, a public health nurse - Vivian Franklin - is leaving and there will be upcoming vacancies for DART coordinators.

Councilors asked questions and offered comments.

Councilor LaBarge asked if, after the new department gets off the ground, Commissioner O'Leary would be working with councilors to help resolve problems in their wards with agencies that operate residential programs in the community.

Commissioner O'Leary said it is definitely her intention to sit down one-on-one with councilors to hear what they perceive as community needs once she is settled in. It is not her role to fix agencies that might be defunct but she will hopefully be able to act as a conduit to provide additional resources, she clarified.

One of the things he feels is important in staffing the DCC is providing competitive salaries so that they attract top candidates, Councilor Moulton volunteered. He wondered what metrics were used to determine the salaries listed in the budget and if the commissioner feels they will be competitive.

This is something that keeps her up at night, Commissioner O'Leary admitted. She doesn't set the metrics; rather, Human Resources has developed and applies a grading system for new positions. It is her job to write the job description and they see where it falls for grading. Sometimes the grading system relies on special skills, training, education, work experience, etc. For community responders, they're not looking for a real litmus of those experiences but are looking for people with lived experiences and will provide the training needed to do the job. She is afraid that if they don't get support from HR in regards to pay equity they will be setting the DCC up to fail. She thinks with the Mayor and council's support in advocating for pay equity they can meet the necessary salary standard.

Councilor Nash said he is wondering where HIV fits into all of this. His godson is saying HIV is through the roof in Boston and he's wondering if they are seeing that here.

The state Department of Public Health has a whole HIV division and Northampton doesn't actually get the numbers of Northampton residents infected with HIV. They do partner with agencies which do harm reduction and one of the focuses is HIV and other blood-transmissible diseases. The substance use team's

philosophy is all about harm reduction. HIV is not so much siloed but is grouped together under their harm reduction umbrella.

He asked if they are seeing an increase in the area.

Region 1 which is Western Mass does have an increase, Commissioner O'Leary confirmed. It's not granular data so she doesn't have numbers just for Northampton.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) takes the lead around HIV but the local health department incorporates a lot of discussions around harm reduction and safe injection practices, Deputy Commissioner Farry added. She cited a partnership with the UMass School of Nursing to train emergency department personnel to talk to substance users being treated about safe practices for injecting as an example. Hepatitis A, B and C is also a big talking point.

Councilor Nash said he is glad to hear it's on their radar and that everybody is on the same page about getting information out there.

Councilor Elkins joined at 7:38 p.m.

What she wants for the DCC is for it to grow at a reasonable rate, Councilor Maiore volunteered. She said she wanted to check in with Director Donovan to make sure he feels like the budget as presented allows it to grow at a reasonable rate without being slowed down.

He doesn't know if they would be at the point of actually expanding the department without working closely with Deputy Commissioner Farry and Commissioner O'Leary so he's very grateful for the way they've been working together so quickly and so rapidly, Director Donovan responded. He feels really good about where they're at although there are still unknowns. He feels like they have a big task ahead of them but they're not building the DCC from scratch since they will be sharing a wealth of information and expertise. "It's a big task ahead, but we have the tools we need to move forward," he asserted.

Councilor Foster asked what ideas Commissioner O'Leary has/funding she may be seeking for prevention initiatives.

Behavioral health-related issues are at the forefront of where she wants to invest their time and resources, Commissioner O'Leary responded. Her vision is to start at the root and help children when they're at formative ages. The past couple of decades have seen a huge shift in behavioral health-related diseases that they really didn't see 30 years ago. She really wants to focus on that in the first year when she's instituting programs.

The DCC has incredibly broad community support and enthusiasm, Councilor Foster noted. She expressed her faith that, by this time next year, they will be calling on assistance from DCC responders. It's really something to see the broad community support for this work.

Councilor Jarrett asked if the role the DHHS will play in the resilience hub is reflected in this budget.

It is absolutely something they are talking about as they are discussing the budget, Commissioner O'Leary said. Part of her vision is that they actually have office space within the resilience hub for community responders.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2022

The city is committed to creating the home for the resilience hub but they are not the lead agency to operate the facility; Community Action is the lead agency, Mayor Sciarra reminded. They are hoping to eventually have a home for the resilience hub which will have space for the DHHS and DCC, she confirmed.

Councilor Nash said he just wanted to say how exciting it is to be talking about all this new programming.

As no members of the public were present to ask questions or comment, Councilor Maiore announced that the public hearing would resume tomorrow night (June 1, 2022) at 6 p.m.

4. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

None.

5. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The Finance Committee meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Contact: Rachel Maiore @rmaiore@northamptonma.gov or (413) 923-4318



Joint Meeting of the Committee on Finance, Committee on Community Resources and the Northampton City Council

Community Resources Committee Members

*Councilor Garrick Perry, Chair
Councilor Marissa Elkins, Vice Chair
Councilor Rachel Maiore
Councilor Alex Jarrett*

Finance Committee Members

*Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III
Councilor Jim Nash*

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Date: September 21, 2022

Time: 5 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 5:02 p.m. Chair Rachel Maiore convened the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Community Resources.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were Finance Committee members Councilor Rachel Maiore, Chair; Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge, Vice Chair (absent on roll call but joined shortly after), Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III and Councilor Jim Nash. Also present were Community Resources Committee members Councilor Garrick Perry, Chair; Councilor Marissa Elkins, Vice Chair (not present on roll call but joined at 5:14 p.m.), Councilor Alex Jarrett, Councilor Rachel Maiore, Office of Planning and Sustainability (OPS) Director Carolyn Misch and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.

Councilor Maiore explained the procedure she would use in conducting the meeting, i.e. - allowing presentations followed by questions and answers and then public comment. She will table any other agenda items tonight including approval of the minutes because of time constraints, she said.

3. **Items Referred To Committee**
 - A. **22.167 An Order to Appropriate \$500,000 In CPA Funds For 10 Hawley Street Rehabilitation Project**
History:
- Referred to Finance Committee and Community Resources - 9/1/2022

She is there to answer questions about the general process, OPS Director Carolyn Misch said. As background, almost two years of work has gone into the project and several iterations of the application have gone before the Central Business Architect Committee (CBAC) for review of demolition. There is a permit process for removal of a historic building within the CBAC district and the CBAC standard for review requires the committee to evaluate multiple parts of an application, she explained. The CBAC found there was not enough detail about the building's replacement in the initial application and so voted not to approve demolition but left the door open for the applicant to reapply.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

Through the process of evaluating demolition, the applicant pulled back to rethink the project and look at potential means of saving the building, she continued. At staff's suggestion, they decided to look at the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a means of funding to offset the cost of restoring the building. Based on the numbers, staff knew early on that it would be very hard for the applicant to put forward an application for reuse of the building without some form of outside support since renovations were so expensive and knew it was an important building from the city's perspective.

The CBAC request for demolition is on hold until the determination is made of whether CPA funding will be approved to help preserve the building, she reported.

Matthew Welter of O'Connell Hawley, LLC said he was there to present information about the firm's history and involvement in Northampton and to answer a couple of questions raised at the last City Council meeting. O'Connell is a western Massachusetts-based development firm whose history in Holyoke goes back to 1879. The company has been a long-time owner of affordable housing in Northampton, having owned Michael's House with 112 affordable units since 1982. The company's average hold period in Northampton is 20 years, so they are long-time stakeholders who recognize the importance of affordable housing. In the context of what they're trying to do here, he realizes there may be some misconception about their role in the greater Northampton community. He is here to essentially answer any questions on design elements and construction and on how they've reached their ask.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rather than having the public ask questions directly, she has put Councilor Moulton in charge of writing down questions and he will list and address them to staff after public comment, Councilor Maiore advised. She is not planning on timing the comments but will wrap them up if they go on too long.

Director Misch said she had information about different types of projects (i.e. - public/private) that have been funded by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Councilor Maiore opened the floor to public comment

Jackie Ballance of Florence said she is very excited that the city has opened up this discussion to the residents at large and that they are listening to public input. There have been elements of public input all along the way but the idea of giving the developers half a million dollars changed everything. She knows people on both sides of the issue and is just glad the city is listening.

When she first came to Northampton in the 1970's, someone gave her directions by telling her to go down Hawley Street to the Polish church and make a left. If someone uses a building to give directions, "that makes it a landmark." she asserted. She wondered why the city can't give the building landmark status. Why can't the city give the developer half a million dollars, take ownership of the building, and develop it itself? She suggested.

Councilor Elkins arrived at 5:14 p.m.

Pamela Hunter of Sheffield Lane, Florence, said she is very concerned by the proposed grant to the O'Connell firm to repair the St. John Cantius Church. This is a private building and it seems their money basically would be used to help this corporation sell fairly expensive condos. She is very sympathetic to the parishioners and people in this neighborhood who want to preserve the church, so one question she has is, isn't there any other way to give it historic preservation or landmark status without using CPA funds?

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

She reminded members that, in 2015, CPA funds were denied to repair the Union Street jail, also a real landmark and historic building. One of the members at the time said it was not 'CPA-worthy.'

She doesn't see a public benefit to the use of this money. Since the gentleman said O'Connell is involved in affordable housing, she is also concerned about why this isn't affordable housing. She does not think it is a good use of CPA funds at this time because there is no specific public benefit to the use of the building.

Claudia Lefko, 40 Valley Street, said she wanted to make three points: 1) there is no question in anybody's mind that the city believes in historic preservation because the city voted in the CPA several years ago. What they don't agree on, perhaps, is exactly what is worth preserving. Some of them are trying to preserve vernacular houses in Bay State and on Williams Street - houses that have historic significance to the neighborhood - while other people are trying to preserve more magnificent structures. It's not a question of not believing in historic preservation; the city and the public are generally behind it.

2) It is not clear how many want to preserve the church. The statistic often cited is the change.org petition with all the signatures in support, but that petition was circulated before the CPA entered the conversation. There doesn't seem to be any way to measure how support is going since the introduction of CPA funds.

3) She thinks everybody is trying to come up with a solution here. Save St. John Cantius had \$50,000 and hired people to create and offer proposals to O'Connell. It's not like she wants to demolish the building, what she doesn't want is to spend her extra tax dollars to save it.

Like Jackie, she is asking why they can't come up with a different solution. Given the sentiment that nobody wants to demolish the building, can the city, the Planning Department and the City Council bring O'Connell back to the table with the stakeholders - the people who don't want to spend the money, the people who want to save the church, the city and O'Connell? She asked.

In light of the comment Pam Hunter just made about the Union Street jail and previous comments about the Look Park fountain - two projects that were denied - **Mac Everett, 40 Valley Street**, said he is concerned about setting a precedent. A lot of historic buildings in Northampton are privately-owned such as all the old Victorians on Elm Street. He feels giving O'Connell money sets a precedent for giving funds to private individuals for historic preservation. They also have the incredible St. Mary's church sitting there which will probably be a candidate for historic preservation. The city gave CPA money to First Churches but they have AA meetings, total community access and other activities that provide a public benefit. He thinks there needs to be more benefit here.

Can they make even three units affordable housing? That would go a long way for those of them who want to see more public good in this project. They know there are more affordable housing projects in the pipeline such as the Bridge Road project and one from Habitat for Humanity, etc. That's where housing is really needed in Northampton.

He would love to see them just sell it back to the city for the resilience hub.

CPC Chair Brian Adams, 9 Hayward Road, said he was here to answer questions. With regard to the precedent issue, he thinks they addressed that there is no precedent by the fact that CPA funds were denied for the old jail and Look Park. The CPC evaluates projects on an individual basis, he stressed. The fact that they are in this case recommending public money for O'Connell does not mean that they will

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

recommend money for any private entity that comes along. They do their due diligence by evaluating projects on a case-by-case basis. To reiterate what the city gets out of this, the city gets a historic preservation restriction in perpetuity for the building and assurance that O'Connell will conform to the Secretary of the Interior's historic preservation restrictions and hire a certified historic preservationist to guide them every step of the way.

Darcy Sweeney, Florence, echoed what Mac said about the city having a higher standard than simply historic preservation; the city should be pushing for affordable housing as well. This is a big theme of the city; it should take every opportunity it can to ensure that affordable housing is part of any project. It is discouraging to see the development that's happening being out of the reach of average people.

Deborah Henson, 118 Franklin Street, who used to live at 83 Pomeroy Terrace right around the corner from the church, thanked councilors for their diligence in studying this matter. She is happy all agree they love historic Northampton treasures. She thinks the support for preserving this wonderful building is not just reflected in the 1,600-plus petition signatures but more so in the people who wrote to the CPC: 48 in support vs. 13 opposed. The Historical Commission and CPC are given this historic preservation role, she pointed out. They have worked very diligently in reviewing the historic structures report, asking questions of the builder and accepting extended public comment. It seems to her that their making this recommendation for the use of CPA money is pretty important for the City Council to think about. They're the ones in charge of this; let them do their job, she urged. She would give them a lot of credit for the work they've done. She hopes they will support preservation in this way.

Gerritt Stover, 55 Fairview Avenue, the owner of a unit in the historical Old School Commons, said he was involved both in the state passage of the CPA Act and in drafting the Central Business Architecture ordinance decades ago, and in trying to save this beautiful building. In almost any CPA-funded project, there is usually some sort of benefit to private individuals; for example, a land conservation project usually involves the purchase of land or a conservation restriction from a private landowner. For projects preserving individual houses, the individual homeowner gets a financial benefit. He appreciates the arguments about preferring affordable housing but thinks O'Connell has a pretty strong point in that this property sat there for 10 years and nobody took a gamble on it until they came along. It took a lot of financial calculations, structural studies and feasibility studies to get to this point so he thinks it is pretty hard to argue there's an alternative use out there that people who own the building and the city can agree on. Lastly, most of the alternatives uses that have been proposed would take a lot more than \$500,000 whether it be the resilience hub or affordable housing. Let's keep the church standing and enjoy it, he urged.

Elaine Jandu, Hubbard Avenue, reiterated what Deborah, Gerritt and Mac Everett have said. She feels as though the CPC has done so much extra work to prove that the city of Northampton should be willing to support CPA funding. They went through so many extra hoops to get where they got to make the decision. She expressed surprise at the fact that there's a question even though the Historical Commission and the CPC approved it. She thinks the city should step up to the plate a little bit because O'Connell really did put in extra work by preparing structural reports, etc. She really believes strongly the city of Northampton should support the CPA funding.

Regarding the affordable housing piece, Director Misch screen-shared a map of downtown showing all the affordable housing units within a half mile and quarter mile of the church. The city has 660 units of deed-restricted affordable housing for people earning 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) within a half mile. Within a quarter mile, they have just under 200 units of affordable housing. The largest portion of affordable housing within the city is located within half a mile of downtown. The city is also investing

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

additional public money (\$2.5 million) to develop a space and services for a hub/resilience center providing support services for people at the very lowest income levels in their community. The city has set aside space behind City Hall for additional affordable housing so even more affordable housing is coming in this downtown area.

"We not only need affordable housing, we need housing at all different income levels," Director Misch pointed out. The proposed units are small units - slightly over 800 square feet - making them more accessible for people of lower income ranges, probably between 120% and 150% of Area Median Income (AMI). This kind of housing is something that's not being built a lot. They have more units coming on at the very high end of the range and they have a good strategy in place to continue to develop subsidized affordable housing at the lower end of the range. This middle range is important to support downtown; it provides housing for people who potentially work downtown or don't need a three-bedroom home.

The City Council adopted zoning a year and a half ago that creates incentives to create units of this size. With respect to the types of historic preservation projects the CPC has funded over the years, these have included some private buildings beyond churches: i.e. - Smith Charities and the Sergeant House on Bridge Street. Valley CDC received money for preserving the Sergeant House although a portion of the award was for affordable housing. There are other examples of smaller-scale projects the CPC has funded that have been private. She stressed that the money proposed is for restoration of a building left by the church for over 10 years with no maintenance at all. It is not about providing support for deferred maintenance; it is really about whether or not the church can remain as a structure because so much needs to be done to protect it and it is so large. O'Connell will be there for the long term to make sure there is ongoing maintenance. In terms of the city using the money instead, the city did make an offer for the resilience hub but that didn't work for the private property owner. As mentioned, \$500,000 would not be the full amount of what would be required to renovate and reuse the building. In its package, O'Connell explains that it is just asking for support for the exterior of the building and that this will leverage support to bring the rest of the building into viable condition for reuse.

Councilor Maiore stated her intention to recognize Brian Adams if there was no objection.

Councilor LaBarge said she had concerns. The September 15th Daily Hampshire Gazette listed area property transfers from O'Connell Properties Inc. to 57 Suffolk Street, LLC as follows: 261 – 265 Maple Street, \$695,000; 265-1/2 Maple Street, \$695,000; 267 – 273 Maple Street, \$695,000; 57 Suffolk Street, \$695,000 and 70 Suffolk Street, \$695,000, for a total of \$3,475,000, she reported. She knows all about the church; it is a beautiful church. Looking at the request for \$500,000; the developer is making \$3,475,000. This leaves only \$25,000 they would have to find somehow, so they wouldn't have to take the CPA money. She was shocked to see this herself.

Director Misch said she did not see the real estate transfers she referred to.

As Mr. Adams mentioned, when applications come to the CPC, the CPC looks at the cost of a particular project and evaluates the request on its own merits so every property is different and unique in that regard, Misch stated. What property owners own in other communities doesn't come into play because it isn't part of the equation of what it costs to renovate the church, restore it and convert it into something that can be used in the long-term. That's what the CPC looks at and what the council is being asked to look at, solely the cost relative to this project.

Councilor Jarrett thanked Director Misch for talking about where this fits into the city's housing needs. CPA money is often used to leverage other funding and, other than funds put in by this applicant, they're not seeing any other funding here. Are there no other sources of funding? He asked.

Another potential source of funding is historic tax credits, but it depends on the revenue generated by the property, Director Misch explained. Typically you need a lot more revenue generated from the end use to make those numbers work. More importantly, the historic value from the Secretary of the Interior's standpoint is the sanctuary so, once that sanctuary has been carved away, they may not be eligible for those tax credits. She doesn't know about any other source of funding.

CPC allocations are often combined with other funding but the leverage can be private investment as well, she added.

In response to a question about whether the council can adjust the amount of the award, Ms. Misch said the council vote is up or down and no amendment is possible.

Councilor Moulton reviewed questions posed by the public: 1) Are there alternatives to CPA money that would come with the historic preservation restriction in perpetuity, and 2) Are there alternatives to some sort of historic or landmark status that would also result in preservation.

Director Misch said the short answer is no. Mostly what historic or landmark status allows is access to other funds, she clarified. A historic preservation restriction is the best tool for preserving the building.

Another question was, is there a way to get O'Connell back to the table to consider other uses for the building?

Before O'Connell applied for CPC funding, they were looking at all sorts of uses for the property including some combination of restaurant/bar use. Then COVID hit and the market kind of fell apart. It would take a very robust commercial entity to offset the costs of renovation, restoration and reconfiguration of that space. They looked at other uses and, because of market conditions, their focus shifted to housing.

The CPC voted to protect the building; they didn't vote on the inside use, she stressed. If O'Connell desired to shift gears and put something else inside, funding from the CPC does not preclude that.

Finally, on behalf of the public, Councilor Moulton asked her reaction as planning director to the suggestion that this is setting a precedent for CPA funds going to a private developer.

She thought Brian Adams answered that well in saying that they look at each project individually, Misch responded. This building and St. Mary's are at risk of being demolished because they are so hard to reuse and because of the neglect of the systems within the buildings. This is really about; is there a threat of the church being demolished. It is not an idle threat; it is a financial reality. She doesn't think this necessarily sets a precedent. These are very visible, local landmarks, so it's a different calculus.

Councilor LaBarge asked if Director Misch knew why the property owner wouldn't let the city buy the property for use as a resilience hub.

It's not any different from many other property owners they've approached about this; people are concerned about the impact of having that use in certain locations. It is very close to the buildings they've

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

already built so they wanted to make sure it was a compatible use with the town homes they have already invested money in and sold to other buyers. This has happened across the city when they've approached property owners about buying property for the hub; people want to make sure it's not going to disturb other investments on site.

There will be 10 apartments with one that will be handicapped-accessible, she confirmed.

Councilor Maiore asked what happens if they do not vote for this funding.

The CBAC has continued its hearing to see the outcome of the CPA application, Director Misch confirmed. The CPA process shows the applicant's due diligence in trying to find a solution without demolishing the building. They first came with a request to demolish the building then took a step back. She would think the fact that they've gone through this additional step would mean that they would bring this back to the CBAC saying that they've tried to make it work and shown that it doesn't work. The CBAC has the jurisdiction to approve demolition. Because of the changed boundaries of the Central Business (CB) district, the CBAC would not have review of this building for any new application.

Councilor Maiore asked why the church hasn't had landmark or historic preservation status up until now.

She doesn't think anybody has applied for that status on behalf of the church. The status doesn't guarantee that the building is protected.

Anyone can opt to put a historic preservation restriction on their property to bind themselves to certain rules. It becomes a benefit to the city in that the building will continue to be there and be part of the street-scape. The historic preservation restriction goes with the property

In response to a question from Councilor Perry, Director Misch expressed her understanding that the permanent preservation restriction is for 30 years.

Deborah Henson said she talked to Mass Historic. If Mass Historic is involved and the owner meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards then it becomes a perpetual easement, she clarified. If they do not meet those heightened standards, then it would only be a state restriction, which is for 30 years. The property owner has voluntarily opted to meet the higher standard.

"I think half a million to keep this building standing forever is a pretty good deal," she commented.

Claudia Lefko agreed it is a very difficult subject and that, no matter what the decision is, there are going to be hard feelings on both sides. That is why she is advocating for the planning department to try to mediate a win/win situation. The most obvious is for one or two of these units to become affordable units.

She and Mac have been living there for 43 years. In the 80's and early 90's, Ward 3 was the place where half-way houses were being built. Those are the very people who will now be displaced, who O'Connell doesn't want living in their gated community. They've always prided themselves on how they were a mixed-income neighborhood. "I find this very offensive honestly," she said.

Following secondary comments from **Jackie Ballance** and **Gerritt Stover**, Councilor Maiore gave Mr. Welter an opportunity to address some of the questions raised, including what consideration O'Connell has given to making some of the units affordable.

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

Regarding O'Connell's sale of property in Holyoke, all the tax id's described concern one property. It was sold for \$695,000 and was sold at a considerable loss, Mr. Welter advised. Although it may look like some kind of windfall was received, he can assure them it was operated at a loss for many years and didn't have any relevancy to this project.

As mentioned, O'Connell did look into historic tax credits. Part of the issue is that the sanctuary space and the knave is the character-defining feature of the church. His understanding is that as soon as they begin dividing up this interior space, they lose eligibility for historic tax credits. In concert with the fact that COVID changed the overall market for retail for the worse, they no longer have any confidence that retail or commercial use is going to be possible in the church.

Regarding low income housing credits, they are very familiar with these as they currently own 1,200 affordable housing units across the Commonwealth. The problem with low-income housing credits in this application is that they typically look to have some sort of density. The sweet spot is usually between 30 and 40 units and they're only talking 10 units, so the probability of success is very, very low.

Both of these processes are extended so they would be looking at two to three years from pre-application to funding. As the condition of the church is deteriorating, they didn't feel time would be on their side.

They also looked at the housing development incentive program (HDIP); unfortunately, Northampton does not qualify as a gateway city so they were not eligible for HDIP funds. This was the kind of progression they went through in looking at alternative funding sources. For them, they made the value determination when they applied for the demolition permit that it was just not financially viable without some sort of public subsidy.

It kind of boils down to profit and affordability. Based on 2022 MA housing HUD income guidelines, they are targeting 120 to 150% AMI so they are within the band of workforce housing. They think they are delivering a product that is in very high demand and very low supply in Northampton. As a property owner of 112 units in Northampton, last year they paid \$200,000 in property taxes, so they appreciate the use of property taxes and how they get applied. They anticipate that, once built, these will be going on the tax rolls to the tune of \$35,000 to \$40,000 in annual taxes. He knows there is no direct mechanism for property taxes to pay down this money, but, if they were to assume \$35,000 per year, they are talking about a 14-year payback period and at \$40,000 per year it goes down to about 12 years. The property was not assessed at full market value when it was owned by the diocese but they intend to be assessed at full tax value.

Their budget for overall construction and soft costs is about \$4.5 million. They are intending to spend a lot of money to bring the property up to code. Essentially everything within the church needs to be upgraded. This is not a situation where they are expecting some kind of windfall that will offset the total cost of construction; this essentially allows them to break even and that's how they've approached it.

Eight (8) one-bedroom and two (2) two-bedroom units are proposed. The one bedrooms are targeted to rent for \$1,700 to \$1,900 a month and the two bedrooms for \$2,000 to \$2,400, within the range of 120 to 150% AMI.

Councilor Moulton asked Mr. Welter what he believes will happen if CPA money is not approved.

They have an active demolition permit through the CBAC and they would follow that through the ordinary course, Mr. Welter confirmed.

Mark Thaler, the consultant working on the structural report, commented that they do a lot of work with buildings that are marginal and need a lot of assistance. Most of them have some access to either historic tax credits or some sort of public funding. Unfortunately, churches are some of the most difficult buildings to try to renovate and make profitable. He has seen a number of projects in the past that have just floundered. The problem with the church is that you can't subdivide it into apartments and get the historic tax credits. This \$500,000 is really an investment in being able to see a building like this continue to function as an important part of the built community. From the standpoint of what makes a building historic, a lot of it has to do with that streetscape and the connection with the community. It is really an investment in making sure the architectural quality remains and is strong. It helps not only bring in tax dollars but helps the rest of the neighborhood remain intact and maintain its quality on an upward slope rather than declining in some way.

DISCUSSION

Committee members in turn shared their thoughts. To anyone who disparages the CPC, she really respects the time and commitment they have put into this, Councilor Maiore commented. She thinks they have done their job well. She is also impressed with the community outpouring to save the church. It is clear that the church is beloved. She is not personally concerned with the issue of precedence setting.

She referred to a letter **from Gerrit Stover** stating that it's not the recipient but the benefit to the community that matters. She hears that. She also sees some of the pros: tax revenue for the city, a historic preservation restriction in perpetuity, a historic preservationist working with O'Connell, and the church façade and its history being saved. Frankly, slightly less expensive housing units and more of them will be created if the church is not demolished.

She sees all of that but is still left with a feeling of discomfort around this. Other communities in Massachusetts have further restrictions on the use of CPA funds such as requiring the building to be one the public is able to walk through. She is still sitting with what is the public good. She hears practically that the money can be made back but thinks that, as stewards of taxpayer money, they have to think beyond that.

Councilor Jarrett said he values historic preservation and has been happy to support past recipients. These recipients by far have been ones where additional public benefits have been provided and it is not just the view from the street. Other projects have allowed for public access or for an additional public purpose in addition to historic preservation such as supporting a non-profit charity such as Smith Charities. The one exception is Michelson Galleries which was a much smaller amount and included a provision for payback if it was sold within a certain timeframe. The dollar amount matters here. The question for him comes down to priorities. Looking at applications for the autumn 2022 funding round, he really wants to be sure they can fund affordable housing in particular which is at a crisis point here in Northampton. He sees applications for the Crafts Avenue housing behind City Hall, Evergreen Road and Habitat for Humanity. There are also recreation, open space and other historic preservation opportunities that do provide additional benefits to the community such as the Northampton Community Music Center.

He is not feeling comfortable with a positive recommendation at this dollar amount. He would consider a positive recommendation at a lower amount or if an additional public benefit were added.

Councilor LaBarge said she is not comfortable voting on this. She has great concerns that the public would not have access going into the building at all. She is not comfortable even making a recommendation; she is going to do some more intensive research.

Brian Adams said the dollar amounts have come in for fall funding. The CPC is getting about \$1.4 million in project proposals of which around \$400,000 are affordable housing proposals, not including the \$500,000 for O'Connell. Adding O'Connell's award, it would be \$1.9 million, and they have somewhere around \$2.3 million to spend. If they fully-funded all projects, it would leave them around \$400,000 going into the spring round.

Councilor Maire said she is very disturbed about the idea of demolishing this building if there is a way to preserve it. She wished they had someone from the CBAC for the full council meeting since she might have questions for them as well.

Councilor Moulton noted that the amount of \$335,737 would be taken from a reserve exclusively for historic preservation. They heard from Sarah LaValley September 1st that there are not large requests for historic preservation competing for this, so that is money he is comfortable putting into a building that clearly should be preserved. Architecture is an artistic form and this is a building that is unusual in the Italian Romanesque-style so they should do everything they can to preserve it. It is the remaining \$164,000 that is at issue in terms of what competing uses are for that money.

He reiterated that the council is not able to reduce the amount. He agrees he would like to know more about the projects that have been submitted so he can weigh the \$164,000 against other applications that may be competing for that money. He said he is uncomfortable with the Finance Committee making a recommendation on this tonight.

Councilor LaBarge asked if Brian Adams could send councilors a list of pending projects.

The projects are listed on the CPC website, he said. He quickly reviewed applications received, including \$100,000 for Habitat for Humanity and \$100,000 for the Home Ownership Fund. \$450,000 is for new affordable housing requests, he stated.

Councilor Maire asked if the CPC considered funding a lower amount and Adams said no. Their funding has always allowed a project to move forward

Councilor Moulton pointed out that at one point O'Connell had requested \$830,000 and reduced that to \$550,000. He asked Mr. Welter if he wanted to address why that was done and if a lower amount would work for O'Connell.

The original application was for \$830,000, Mr. Welter confirmed. Based on competing projects from Valley CDC and Historic Northampton, there was some concern about the ability to fund both those projects without the city either having to finance or issue bonds. As a compromise, they offered to lower their ask to \$550,000, which was their bare minimum. That is the lowest they are comfortable accepting. They also were asked to push funding to FY2023 so as not to compromise any projects in FY2022. They compromised on two fronts: not requiring the city to issue bonds and not crowding out other applications.

Claudia Lefko said she brought up with Brian that the public knows very little about CPA money. However this turns out, she thinks one thing the publicity around St. John Cantius has done is opened up awareness

City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2022

about this source of funding. 107 Williams Street might have been saved by CPA money if only they had known, she said.

She is hearing from Finance Committee members that they are not feeling prepared to vote, Councilor Maiore noted.

One of the reasons he is uncomfortable voting is that they have lost Councilor Nash, Councilor Moulton said.

Councilor Perry said he is still forming his vote, but he opened the floor to a recommendation from Community Resources.

She is also still taking in new information but, at this time, she is inclined to support this and anticipates that is the way she will be headed, Councilor Elkins volunteered. She too has been assiduously reading her emails and the packets that have been delivered

Councilor Elkins moved to send the order to the full City Council from Community Resources with a positive recommendation. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion failed with two in favor and two opposed (Councilor Jarrett and Councilor Maiore opposed) by roll call vote.

Councilor Elkins moved to forward the order with a neutral recommendation. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

4. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

None.

5. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, **Councilor Elkins moved to adjourn. Councilor Jarrett seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. Community Resources adjourned at 7:06 p.m.**

Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion carried 3:0 with Councilor Nash absent by roll call vote. The Finance Committee meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

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