



Roll Call

*CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CONDUCTED AS AN ON-LINE ZOOM MEETING
Northampton, MA*

A special meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra. At 5:30 p.m. on a roll call the following City Councilors were present:

At-Large Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra	At-Large Councilor William H. Dwight
Ward 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.	Ward 5 Councilor Alex Jarrett
Ward 3 Councilor James B. Nash	Ward 6 Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Ward 4 Councilor John Thorpe	Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore

Ward 2 Councilor Karen Foster was absent.

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording

Councilor Sciarra announced that the meeting was being held via remote participation and audio and video recorded.

Recess for Committee on Finance Meeting

At 5:32 p.m., the City Council recessed for the Committee on Finance. The Committee on Finance adjourned at 5:42 p.m. The City Council reconvened at 5:42 p.m.

Financial Orders (on 1st reading pending Finance)

Financial Orders (on 1st reading pending Finance review)

20.148 An Order to Suspend Parking Fees on Certain Days - 1st reading

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the order in first reading. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Foster absent.

Councilor LaBarge moved to suspend rules to allow a second reading. Councilor Dwight seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote (Councilor Foster absent).

Councilor Jarrett moved to approve the order in second reading. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote (Councilor Foster absent).

20.148 Order to Suspend Parking Fees on Certain Days - 1st reading

The following order passed two readings:

**City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS**

In City Council, November 12, 2020,

Upon the recommendation of Mayor David J. Narkewicz

20.148 An Order to Suspend Parking Fees on Certain Days

Ordered, that

On the following days collection of fees for on-street and off-street parking spaces, excluding the EJ Gare Parking Garage, shall be suspended:

Thursday, November 19, 2020 to Saturday, November 21, 2020 (Yule Days)

Friday, November 27, 2020 (Black Friday)

Saturday, November 28, 2020 (Small Business Saturday)

Thursday, December 24, 2020 (Christmas Eve)

Thursday, December 31, 2020 (New Year's Eve)

Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.20.149 An Order to Extend 20.062 An Order Temporarily Suspending the Effect of Certain Ordinances - 1st reading

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the order in first reading. Councilor Maiore seconded.

When he first asked the council to approve the extraordinary provisions allowing them to make changes to allow outdoor dining the order was set to expire November 15, 2020 or upon the governor's lifting of the emergency order, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. Of course, as they know, the emergency order is still in place. While DPW workers will be removing some of the structures in the public way because of winter and concerns around snow, they have set up a number of 15-minute parking spaces for pick up for businesses trying to do take out. They have probably added 25 or so additional 15-minute spaces which will all become illegal on November 15th.

At a time when businesses need to return indoors and rely on take out, they don't want to have those spaces become inactive and want to maintain the flexibility to have additional spaces through the end of the year. They are asking to revisit the suspension at the end of March and may need to come back for an extension if they need to set up outdoor dining again in the spring. They don't know but for the time being want to keep it in place.

Councilor Nash said he supports the extension and thinks the mayor's office has done a terrific job working with businesses to figure out ways to accommodate their needs whether using the public right of way for outdoor dining or adding parking spaces for takeout. Usually the council takes a long view on parking changes, but, during this difficult time, allowing the mayor's office to respond in a much quicker way than usual to businesses' needs is paramount. They are handing authority back to the mayor's office on some of these decisions in order to weather this state of emergency, he acknowledged.

Insofar as this has been vetted once before when the initial order was put in place he wanted to reiterate the concern that this is not business space; it is public space, Councilor Dwight stressed. This is the city working with businesses to accommodate them during a difficult time. As everyone is aware, there has been considerable pushback from a number of entities concerned about the pressures COVID brings which sometimes has not been met with the understanding that this is the city working to try to help these businesses but at the same time recognizing that this is public space. It's not exclusive; it's not a mall and it is not designed to be a restaurant. It is designed to be a sidewalk where people can congregate, even people some don't like. They will continue to have ongoing conversations about how they envision the city of Northampton; he just wants to make sure that the loudest voices in the room don't always get their way. He wants businesses to understand that this does come at a cost. When the city gives up parking spaces, they are ceding that revenue and at the same time providing for businesses to weather these challenging conditions. He doesn't expect a thank you note but at the same time he doesn't expect someone to come and tell him they're not being business friendly.

Councilor LaBarge said she is going to support the request. She has noticed some of the 15-minute parking spaces downtown. They need to think about what's coming down the road with COVID-19. Chicopee has an uptick and is going into full remote control. She thanked the mayor's office and councilors for helping out businesses the best they can. Talking to a doctor today, he said he and his wife don't go into restaurants but they do order, pick up food and go home. "This is needed. I think we need the 15-minute spots because of the COVID-19."

Councilor Quinlan added his voice to the chorus of support for the change. In terms of logistics, he asked if the cement barriers are being removed.

The city has already been in contact with all of the businesses that currently have cement barriers set up in the public ways and they know that the DPW will be removing those in the next few weeks, Mayor Narkewicz advised. They've already scheduled it and some businesses have already taken their tables in. They let businesses know the timing with well over a month's notice. Snow is not imminent, he noted.

Councilor Quinlan asked if the spaces intended to be used for short-term parking will be cleared

20.149 An Order to Extend 20.062 An Order Temporarily Suspending the Effect of Certain Ordinances - 1st reading

as part of snow removal.

Parking is always one of the top priorities for snow removal downtown and one of the reasons plow trucks push all the snow to the center of the street, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. All of the city's parking areas will be given high priority in a snow emergency; particularly clearing parking for the resumption of business.

He confirmed that the order applies to downtown Florence as well as the central business area. The mayor's office will be working with businesses that want additional 15-minute spots for food pickup.

Councilor Jarrett said he is also in support but wanted to echo some of Councilor Dwight's concerns around the use of public space. Specifically, following up on the question he had when the order was put in on June 4th, he asked if a person could take off his/her mask to eat or drink if they got takeout and went somewhere where they were socially-distanced. He thinks with the governor's new order the question has actually been answered with a no. He asked the mayor if he had gotten any clarification on this question.

Mayor Narkewicz said it was a little bit of a gray area. The challenge is that the outdoor dining areas are required to be actively managed and monitored by a staff person. By mid to late summer the health department created mask-free zones on the lawn in Pulaski Park so people who wanted to sit and take off their mask could. Generally speaking, the interpretation has been that if someone is walking and needs to take a sip of water they can lift their mask up to do that. He guessed he would have to get clarification now that they have moved into wintertime. They have tried to create some leeway by creating the mask-free zone in Pulaski Park. He would have to check with the health director and get back to him.

There being no further questions, the motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote (Councilor Foster absent).

Councilor LaBarge moved to suspend rules to allow a second reading. Councilor Dwight seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote (Councilor Foster absent).

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the order in second reading. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote (Councilor Foster absent).

The following order passed two readings:

**City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS**

In City Council, November 12, 2020,

Upon the recommendation of Mayor David J. Narkewicz

O-20.149 AN ORDER EXTENDING THE ORDER 20.062 ENTERED ON JUNE 4, 2020

WHEREAS, on June 4, 2020, the Northampton City Council entered Order 20.062, which suspended the effect of certain ordinances in order to facilitate use of public property for outdoor dining in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Order 20.062 expires by its terms on November 15, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor desires to extend the Order so as to expire on March 31, 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Northampton City Council orders as follows.

Ordered, that

Paragraph 6 of Order 20.062 shall be amended by striking the phrase "November 15, 2020" and inserting in its place the phrase "March 31, 2021." All other provisions of said Order shall remain in full force and effect.

	<u>Rules suspended, passed two readings and enrolled.</u>
<u>New Business</u>	<u>New Business</u> None
<u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) & Study Requests</u>	<u>Information (Charter Provision 2-7) and Information Study Requests</u> None
<u>Motion to Adjourn</u>	Upon motion made by Councilor Quinlan and seconded by Councilor Dwight, the meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m. The motion carried unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Foster absent.
	Attest: _____ Administrative Assistant to the City Council