



## **Committee on City Services and the Northampton City Council**

### Committee Members:

*Chair: Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge*

*Vice-Chair: Councilor Karen Foster*

*Councilor Rachel Maiore*

*Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.*

### Meeting Minutes

Date: July 6, 2021

Virtual Meeting

#### 1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

At 4 p.m., Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge (Chair) called the meeting to order. On a roll call, Councilor LaBarge, Councilor Karen Foster (Vice Chair), Councilor Rachel Maiore and Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. were present. Also present was Animal Control Officer (ACO) Shayla Howe and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler

#### 2. ANNOUNCEMENT OF AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING

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

#### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There being no members of the public present, there was no public comment.

#### 4. MINUTES OF MARCH 1, 2021 AND APRIL 5, 2021

Councilor Maiore moved to approve the minutes of March 1, 2021 and April 5, 2021. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

#### 5. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE - ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER SHAYLA HOWE

Ms. Howe informed councilors that she was hired in July of 2015. As the Animal Control Officer (ACO) for the city, she does most everything with animals that are loose or abandoned – i.e. - cats and dogs. She also handles wildlife and livestock and does quarantines, rabies testing and barn inspections. It is a very varied position.

Councilor LaBarge asked if she is also the ACO in Williamsburg.

Ms. Howe said yes; she started in Williamsburg way before she started in Northampton, in 2012 or 2013. As of a few months ago, she tried to resign but they don't have anybody else to fill the position so they've asked her to stay on until they find someone. It's a very limited number of hours. She works for Northampton full-time and for Williamsburg in her spare time - nights, weekends, etc.

In his discussion of a potential new animal control facility, the Mayor mentioned that she has to travel to Amherst. Councilor LaBarge said she was told Ms. Howe had been going to Hadley.

That was true, Ms. Howe clarified. Back in 2015, they were dealing with just Amherst so she would drive back and forth all the time. There was only one ACO for Amherst and she would take the majority of care of the dogs. When she was not available, Shayla would have to go there. As of last year, they were able to get a contract with Waggin' Tails in Hadley, but they were not able to renew the contract. So, as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, they have not had anywhere to bring Northampton's animals.

Waggin' Tails stopped taking in dogs June 13<sup>th</sup> of this year. She had only started taking them there last summer under a one-year contract with the facility. Waggin' Tails took both dogs and cats. After Amherst, she had nowhere to bring animals for a while. During that time, she used vet clinics as she could and personally fostered animals and gave them out to other people to foster as well.

Councilor Maiore asked what challenges she is facing and how she sees an animal control facility helping those.

The main challenge is getting a facility, Ms. Howe confirmed. They never have a contract that's going to last and they're really begging/pleading with other businesses to board their animals. It makes it very difficult when they have 30 cats at Florence Animal Clinic and two dogs in Hadley. If Northampton had a facility she would just be going to one facility to feed and care for the animals and would have a single location for supplies. The other thing is having another ACO. She does this full-time and they could use another full-time officer. She expressed her understanding that the city just created a part-time ACO position. There is currently no one to fill in for her, she explained.

Councilor Foster said she really hears the need for a facility. She is sorry the contract with Waggin' Tails in Hadley ended. She hadn't realized that. She must be feeling the pressure. As they discussed the proposed facility on Chapel Street, some councilors were concerned about night-time care.

As at any ACO facility, at night the animals are not attended, Ms. Howe advised. They tuck all the animals in and leave them. That's pretty common at vet clinics as well.

Right now since they don't have a kennel facility, they actually have two dogs in the police station and they just have to stay in crates. The officers take them out as best they can when she's out of the office. In the future, she could see getting a dedicated volunteer crew or hiring a per diem worker to feed the animals on weekends. She suggested Belchertown and Southwick as models of comparable facilities whose operations she admires.

Councilor Foster said she would imagine there'd be a number of people interested in volunteering.

Councilor Quinlan asked the schedule of her and the part-time ACO.

She is M-F and on call after hours and on weekends and holidays, Ms. Howe said. The police department does respond to a lot of her calls and, as long as they can handle the call, they don't call her in. She thinks it would be good if the ACO had a set schedule and was on call from 5 to 7 p.m. with other on-call hours handled by another employee.

Councilor Maiore said she knows animal control was once *not* housed under the police department. She asked how she feels about animal control being moved to another department.

Ms. Howe said she doesn't think it would make a huge difference. She thinks the police would still respond to calls when the ACO is not on duty. If they look at other areas, once there is a kennel the animal control officer is usually based out of the kennel. It's kind of a mobile position since she spends a lot of time in her cruiser. If she had a place where all the dogs were it'd be a lot easier.

The position has been housed in the police department since she's been there. Before, it was not a staff position; it was a contracted service run by Nancy Graham. She had one employee under her. She sometimes came into the police department to read logs but the majority of time she worked out of the van or at her home office.

Councilor LaBarge said she knew Nancy Graham well because she showed dogs. She rented an office in Westhampton with Ken Robs. She had a really good system going on there.

Councilor LaBarge said she had great concerns when dogs are left by themselves at night. She asked what happens when a dog is under stress. Do facilities have surveillance cameras? She asked.

She would hope they would, Ms. Howe said. She has eight dogs and has surveillance cameras on every one of them. They would not leave a dog that was sick or under stress; they would go to an animal clinic. It would only be for healthy dogs. There's a place for outdoor activity, she added.

She said she believes the police department would be able to go in and check on them if need be if she saw something on the camera. Her schedule is 35 hours but she normally works 40.

Councilor LaBarge expressed her understanding that the mayor is working tirelessly to build a new facility and said her hope is that this will be successful in the near future. As a dog lover, she's just so worried about dogs being left by themselves at night. She agrees the position should be separate from the police department.

There being no more questions, Councilor LaBarge thanked Ms. Howe for coming.

## 6. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

### A. 21.291 Appointments to Various Committees, referred by City Council - 6/7/2021 Energy & Sustainability

**Ashley Muspratt**, 15 Franklin Street, Northampton

Term: July 2021-June 2024

*Reappointment*

Councilor Maire moved to positively recommend reappointment of Ashley Muspratt to the Northampton Energy and Sustainability Commission (NESC) to the full city council. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**Board of Health**

**Cynthia Suopis**, 19 Ford Crossing, Northampton  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

**Laurent Levy**, 4 School Street, Northampton  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

Councilor Foster moved to positively recommend the reappointments to the Board of Health (BOH). Councilor Maire seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**Transportation & Parking Commission**

**Diana Day**, 44 Berkshire Terrace, Apt. 2, Northampton  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*To fill a vacancy*

Councilor LaBarge interviewed Diana Day. She read her statement. According to Ms. Day, her family relocated to Northampton in January of 2021. They were looking for a vibrant city with great schools, outdoor activities and cultural activities for everyone in their family and Northampton has exceeded their expectations in every way. Community is very important to her.

She has always been involved in community activities, including for a youth organization and serving legal clients pro bono. She worked as an attorney representing state and municipal government. Through that experience, she learned how satisfying it can be to work on issues that make a difference in the community. She considered the highlight of her career when she discovered the cause of a series of fatal accidents on a section of highway and brought it to the attention of the community. Through her litigation experience she learned that she had an interest in highway design.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the appointment of Diana Day to the Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC) with a positive recommendation to the full city council. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**B. 21.295 Appointments to Various Committees, referred by City Council - 6/17/2021**

**Agricultural Commission**

**Stan Zawalick**, 538 Sylvester Road, Florence, MA  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

**Councilor Maire moved to recommend the reappointment of Stan Zawalick to the Agricultural Commission. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

**Disability Commission**

**Jeremy Macomber-Dubs**, 20 Hampton Avenue, Apt. 301, Northampton, MA  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

**Linda Kakos**, 220 Rocky Hill Road, Florence, MA  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

Councilor Quinlan moved a positive recommendation for the reappointments to the Disability Commission. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote

**Northampton Housing Authority-Board of Commissioners**

**Maureen Carney**, 13 Church Street, Northampton, MA  
Term: July 2021- June 2026  
*To fill a vacancy*

Councilor Quinlan disclosed that Maureen Carney was a supporter of his in his previous campaign for election and gave a contribution to his campaign as well as being a wonderful adviser. He really admires Maureen a lot. It says to fill a vacancy but they chuckled about the fact that she used to be the labor representative to the Northampton Housing Authority. She's really passionate about it and really looking forward to it. Because of her previous experience and her experience on the council she will bring a unique perspective, he suggested.

Councilor Quinlan moved a positive recommendation. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**Council on Aging**

**Gerriann Butler**, 46 Autumn Drive, Florence, MA  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*Reappointment*

Councilor Quinlan moved to positively recommend the reappointment of Gerriann Butler to the Council on Aging. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**Anne Romano**, 351 Pleasant Street, Unit 6, Northampton, MA  
Term: July 2021- June 2023  
*To fill a vacancy*

Anne Romano volunteered regularly at the senior center some years ago and then her job took her away, Councilor Maiore related. Her office is based in Hartford. She went remote and is not being asked to come back and she now feels like she can volunteer regularly again in the community. She found it incredibly gratifying to work with seniors. It is heartening to think that this transition to remote employment may shake out some more community volunteers.

Councilor Maiore moved to positively recommend the appointment of Anne Romano to the Council on Aging. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

**Planning Board**

**Corinne Coryat**, 26 Bedford Terrace, Apt. 2, Northampton  
Associate Member  
Term: July 2021-June 2024  
*To fill a vacancy*

Councilor Foster said she had a great conversation with Corinne, who is an interesting applicant to the Planning Board. Ms. Coryat is a legislative aide to Natalie Blais. She originally applied to the Agricultural Commission because her background is agriculture-related but she didn't meet the requirement of owning agricultural land so Court in the mayor's office recommended the Planning Board. She is versed in infrastructure and government language and is really interested in serving in local government. She recognizes the impact of day-to-day decisions.

**Councilor Foster moved to forward the appointment of Corinne Coryat to the Planning Board with a positive recommendation. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

7. **New Business**

City Services will have the month of August off unless it is a dire emergency Councilor LaBarge reminded. They need to think about who they would like to bring in for the month of September. Talking to people over the weekend, a lot of people wish they would have Chief Jody Kasper in.

Councilor Maiore said she got a call from someone from Hampshire Heights who was talking about the housing authority. Now that the mayor is appointing more people, it would be really nice to have someone from the board or someone who works with public housing or the housing authority in. Her constituent asked a lot of questions she didn't know the answer to. She thought there was a real disconnect between the housing authority and the city. They talked in a larger way about whether there was a way for housing residents to feel more plugged into the larger community.

Councilor LaBarge said she liked that idea and Councilor Foster said she thought it was a great suggestion.

Members discussed whether to invite a board member or the director and decided to invite a member of the board. Members decided to move the September meeting to Tuesday, September 7th @ 4 p.m. due to the Labor Day holiday.

8. **Adjourn**

There being no further business, **Councilor Quinlan moved to adjourn. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.**

*Prepared By:*  
*L. Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council*  
413.587.1210; [krutzler@northamptonma.gov](mailto:krutzler@northamptonma.gov)