



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

Announcement of Audio/Video Recording
Public Comment

A regular meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra at 7:02 p.m.

Councilor Sciarra announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded. There being no one present for public comment, Councilor Sciarra moved to the next item on the agenda.

Roll Call

At 7:03 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 2 Councilor Karen Foster	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 1 Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. was absent.

Public Hearings
Tax Classification Hearing

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Tax Classification Hearing
Since it was not yet 7:05 p.m., Councilor Sciarra moved on to the next agenda item.

Updates from Council President and Committee Chairs

Updates from Council President and Committee Chairs
The next City Council Rules Select Committee meeting will be Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 6 p.m., Councilor Maiore announced. Public comment is encouraged.

The next Community Resources Committee meeting will be Monday, November 15, 2021 at 5 p.m., Councilor Nash advised. Members will be having a 'big picture' discussion of zoning. Office of Planning and Sustainability (OPS) Assistant Director Carolyn Misch will review recent zoning initiatives, provide a brief update on the resilience plan and share details of initiatives to be introduced in the near future. Member of the public are welcome to ask questions. This is an opportunity for people to offer ideas and make suggestions to improve the city's zoning.

Recognitions and One-Minute Announcements by Councilors

Recognitions and One-Minute Announcements by Councilors
Councilor Sciarra thanked everyone who participated in the biennial election Tuesday and congratulated new councilor-elects and those re-elected. She especially thanked and acknowledged everybody who ran. It was a very spirited and active election cycle, which is wonderful for their community and wonderful for democracy, and it was excellent to see that level of participation. Knowing what it takes for someone to put themselves out there, she said she has nothing but the deepest admiration and respect for anyone willing to make that level of commitment to the community.

Councilor LaBarge thanked City Clerk Pam Powers and her staff, Assistant City Clerk Amy Zielinski, Jennifer Larkin and Terry Yusko and all of the election workers that helped at the early voting and polling locations on election day November 2nd. She congratulated Council President Gina-Louise Sciarra for being elected as the 45th mayor of the great City of Northampton, saying she will see her on January 3rd for the swearing in of all elected officials.

Councilor LaBarge thanked all 1,060 residents in Ward 6 who voted for her to represent them as city councilor, pledging to do her job and be there for them. She also thanked candidates who ran for positions in the city, congratulating those who won their seats. Now that elections are over, it is time for all of them to come together to preserve equity and their progressive values. They need to build safety and respect and dignity for all.

	<p>Councilor Foster first echoed the congratulations and gratitude to those who ran. The Northampton Kiwanis Club will be installing their first free library at the Jackson Street School on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. She let the community know that, coming soon to an elementary school near them, will be a wonderful free library.</p> <p>Councilor Dwight echoed the gratitude and gracious thoughts relative to the candidates, citizens and those participating in the election. It is worth noting that by 91% - which in his book is by acclamation - the City of Northampton voted to support and allow continued research for establishing a municipal light plant in the city. He has never seen such unanimity reflected in any vote and thinks it is unprecedented. It may be that a very gentle message has been sent to Comcast, he ventured. He thanked everyone who took the time to understand a rather complicated question and then speak so clearly and unequivocally.</p> <p>Councilor Maire thanked their fair city for coming out for a municipal-only election. She let Ward 7 residents know that there is a convenient location for COVID and flu vaccinations at the Elks Club on Spring Street. She encouraged people to take advantage of this location, which can be accessed from the city website.</p>
<p><u>Communications and Proclamations from the Mayor</u></p>	<p><u>Communications and Proclamations from the Mayor</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Public Hearings</u> <u>Tax Classification Hearing</u></p>	<p><u>Public Hearings</u> <u>Tax Classification Hearing</u> Councilor Dwight moved to open the public hearing. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent. The hearing was opened at 7:12 p.m.</p> <p>Councilor Sciarra read the legal notice. Joining them as proponents are Principal Assessor Marc Dautreuil and Finance Director Charlene Nardi, she advised.</p> <p>Mr. Dautreuil asked if all nine councilors had seen at least one of these presentations before. After all nine indicated that they had, he delivered a Powerpoint presentation.</p> <p>As stated, per Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.) Chapter 40, Section 56, the city council and the mayor must decide the percentage of the tax burden to be borne by each class of property, basically, whether to have a split or a single tax rate, Mr. Dautreuil presented. He is a strong proponent of the single tax rate himself.</p> <p>By the Property Classification Act of 1978, city officials must split the tax rate among residential commercial, industrial and personal property.</p> <p>One of the most important factors in deciding whether to go with a split rate or a single rate is knowing the distribution between the property classes. Northampton has traditionally had an 80/20 split between residential and commercial/industrial and personal property. They are now under 20%. Most communities with a split rate have at least a 70/30 split and a lot of commercial property that is heavily industrialized.</p> <p>Since 2018, Northampton's percentage of commercial/industrial/personal property has actually gone down. There was a fairly large decrease between 2020 and 2021, partially because of closures of businesses due to COVID-19 and partially because the City Council passed an order exempting personal property valued at less than \$2,500 from taxation.</p> <p>Mr. Dautreuil showed a slide depicting how the total tax levy of \$70,106,847 was divided between the various classes of property.</p> <p>They have had a steady increase in property values and a large increase from last year to this year, mainly in the residential section, he reported. The value of homes skyrocketed in large part because of a lack of homes for sale and a large demand. They have a lot of folks moving to Northampton from larger cities with more disposable income and that does drive</p>

the market higher. Commercial property was fairly stagnant and in fact was down a little bit. The hospitality industry was definitely hurt by COVID-19 but big box retailers, grocery stores, construction businesses and the industrial sector was not hurt at all.

New growth is the main contributor to an increase in taxable properties within the city, Mr. Dautreuil continued. The city had a lot of new growth last year. Construction was not hurt by COVID-19. They also had a city-wide cyclical inspection this year that picks up small additions such as porches.

Total new growth was \$63,319,160 split evenly between residential and commercial property with new tax revenue of \$1,099,854 generated. He mentioned some of the most significant developments and construction projects contributing to this increased value, including the Syncarpha Solar PILOT and Village Hill residential and commercial development. A huge storage facility on Easthampton Road added more than \$5 million.

\$70,129,409 is the levy limit for FY2022. The \$2.5 million override approved in FY2020 will be factored into the tax rate this year.

As stated, he and the mayor are proponents of the single tax rate or a factor of one, he reiterated. A factor of less than one would shift the burden of the tax levy to commercial/ industrial and personal property tax payers and lower the tax rate to residential homeowners. If they had a factor of more than one it would do the opposite; that is, raise the tax rate to homeowners and lower the rate to the commercial side of things.

Mr. Dautreuil showed Northampton's FY2021 tax rates in comparison to surrounding communities.

The factor of one will result in an estimated FY2022 tax rate of \$17.89 per thousand for all property classifications, an increase of \$0.52 cents from the FY2021 tax rate of \$17.37, he presented. Most cities with a split rate have a heavy industrial base such as Holyoke, Westfield, West Springfield and Agawam. He pointed out that their economies are not as stable as communities with single rates, such as Northampton, Longmeadow or Amherst.

If they were to split the rate, the lowest the residential rate could go is \$15.80, raising the commercial/industrial and personal property tax rate to \$26.84. This would lower the average residential tax bill by \$736, in turn, increasing the average commercial tax bill by \$5,428 and the average industrial tax bill by \$6,809.

Of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts, 240 - or about two-thirds - have a split rate, 104 with rates that favor the residential and seven with rates that favor the commercial. With 80% residential property and 20% commercial/industrial, the City of Northampton is just not designed to support a split tax rate. If they ever did decide to split the tax rate it is extremely difficult to revert back to a single rate because folks don't like getting their residential taxes raised.

He briefly reviewed limited mayoral options; namely, the residential exemption and small commercial exemption that are possible ways to give folks some type of a break. Both options offer only small pros in exchange for a larger number of cons, he cautioned. The residential exemption would lower the taxes for a little less than a third of taxpayers while raising the tax rates on two-thirds of taxpayers, hurting middle class taxpayers as well as upper class. It would also increase the overlay reserve to allow people to appeal their status. Non homeowners do not see any benefit and folks living in rental units that tend to be assessed at higher values could actually see their rents go up.

The small commercial exemption reduces taxes paid by owners of properties occupied by small businesses but increases commercial and industrial rates. It benefits landlords far more than actual business owners and again, would require an increase in the overlay reserve.

In summary, he and the mayor recommend a single tax factor for a rate of \$17.89 per thousand.

Councilor LaBarge asked if this would be the right time to offer a split rate with so many businesses having gone under and trying to get back onto their feet and homeowners who have lost their jobs. "I find it to be not the right time to do this because of the economy and what has happened to the city of Northampton," she opined.

In the best of economies he wouldn't recommend splitting the tax rate, let alone right now, Mr. Dautreuil responded.

Councilor Maiore said she is curious about the closing of the Coca Cola plant and whether that had a significant impact this year.

If everything goes as planned and they close in FY2023 they won't likely see this reflected on their tax rolls until FY2024, Mr. Dautreuil advised. They are the biggest industrial tax payer and it is a loss of 230 jobs. It is significant, he acknowledged. That being said, they still have to pay taxes on it until they sell the property. Hopefully someone buys it soon.

Seeing that Northampton is not traditionally an industrial city, it will have less of an effect. Smith College is such a stabilizing force on the tax base. Despite the tax breaks Smith College may get, it is still by far highest tax payer in the city.

Similar to Councilor Maiore, she was thinking about development at Village Hill which for years has been a very reliable source of new growth, Councilor Foster noted. Village Hill is largely developed now. She asked if there are larger projects he can think of coming to fill that void.

There are still 53 affordable housing units to be built in Village Hill, Mr. Dautreuil pointed out. When he did the new growth calculation only about eight were built. There is still a great deal of new growth from Village Hill and Emerson Way. He is not aware of larger building projects on the horizon, although it is something he could speak to the building and planning departments about. The condos on Hawley Street where the Catholic church is located is the biggest project he knows of.

The 53-unit development at Village Hill is getting closer and closer to occupancy, Councilor Foster commented. It's looking fantastic.

Councilor Jarrett asked what the overlay reserve is.

Part of it is used to fund abatements when folks have an issue with their value, Mr. Dautreuil said. He is not 100% sure what else it gets used for.

Councilor Sciarra recognized Board of Assessors Chair David Murphy in case he had anything to add.

If they adopt the single tax rate, he sees that there will be a 3% increase in the tax rate, Councilor Jarrett observed. He expressed his understanding that this does not reflect the change in valuation. He asked if the principal assessor knows the percentage of increase in the average single-family tax bill based on the home's value.

Mr. Dautreuil said the average single-family home value went up by about 6%.

Compared to previous years, Councilor Jarrett said it certainly sounds like people will be seeing a higher tax bill.

Yes, market value went up significantly and the tax rate went up less than expected because of how high the values went, Mr. Dautreuil agreed. They expected the tax rate to go up \$1.11. Because the values went up so high, it drove down how high the tax rate went up. The tax rate went up partially because of the override approved in 2020.

Councilor Nash asked him to explain how taxes can increase by 2.5% but the overall rate per thousand is going up 3%.

Mr. Dautreuil explained the calculation of the new levy limit. City officials take last year's

levy, multiply it by .025, then add new growth and the \$2.5 million override. The overall increase includes the override plus adjusted new growth from the previous year.

Councilor Nash asked why it was a 'con' to shift the tax burden to higher value homeowners, and Mr. Dautreuil explained that the residential exemption does not just shift the burden to five or six filthy rich people, it shifts the burden to over two-thirds of the people in the city including a lot of middle-class and lower middle-class folks.

Mr. Murphy highlighted the actual growth in the levy. \$2.5 million was the override voted a couple of years ago, and the basic 2.5% increase was \$1.5 million. New growth alone contributed another million dollars of tax revenue, so when totaled, they are talking about another \$5 million on the levy. The fact that they are getting close to being a \$4 billion city is actually what tempered the tax rate. The tax rate is a relationship between the \$4 billion valuation and the \$70 million needed to be raised. Even though the levy went up \$5 million, the increase in property value is what kept the tax rate down because it is getting distributed across more valuable property.

Many of the tricks for how communities can adjust the tax rate are designed for other parts of the state such as the cape, he added. The last he knew, about half of the residents in Northampton live in rental property. The residential exemption actually raises the tax rate for properties they live in, thereby raising their rents.

That is absolutely true, Councilor Dwight confirmed. The residential exemption is applied on the cape and in some places in the Berkshires for very expensive second homes. Those are the two regions losing large amounts of population because people can't afford to live there. They are being priced out by the area's desirability as a second home community.

There is a shortage of rental availability and particularly affordable rental availability. They have the challenge of people using properties for Airbnb, which also puts pressure on rental availability. Because of the appeal of this community to COVID flight from urban centers, they are also seeing two and three family homes bought up for conversion to single-family residences, eliminating still more rental options.

Defaulting to his annual single-tax rate presentation, Councilor Dwight noted that one of the most telling graphs the principal assessor presented is the one that compares and contrasts communities in orange with communities in blue (those with a split rate vs. those with a single rate). The communities with split rates were at one time commercial giants. Holyoke itself was actually built around industry as a planned industrial city. When it was booming it was great to have those industries subsidize the community. When they decided to rip the heart out of that community, Holyoke has one of the highest commercial tax rates in the state which is why it has such trouble promoting commercial development to take the schools out of receivership.

Northampton started out as a farming community and county seat and is now a college town that relies heavily on its retail economy. Coca Cola being the largest industry is somewhat telling. Splitting the rate is not something that would help them in any shape or form and would in fact cause them harm. As Mr. Dautreuil mentioned, once the toothpaste is out of the tube it's hard to put it back because it is politically unpopular to raise residential tax rates.

When he first came on the council he was actually in favor of a split tax rate but has since decided it wouldn't make any sense.

In response to Councilor Jarrett's earlier question, Mr. Dautreuil said property bills will go up approximately 9%.

With regard to the impact of splitting the rate, it increases the burden on the commercial/industrial/personal property side, Mr. Murphy elaborated. When they increase the operating expenses of those properties, their commercial values go down. The impact of the increased taxes actually drops the value of the buildings being taxed so the return starts to decline. If they look at it, it is the beginning of the end for that portion of their tax base.

It creates a substantial increase on the commercial side because it is giving a break to over 80% of taxpayers. "Councilor Dwight is right; once you've done that there is never the political will to reverse it," he confirmed.

Director Nardi clarified that not everybody's tax rate will increase 8.6%. That is an average, so some will go up more and some will go up less.

Councilor Quinlan asked her to make the point that they are setting the tax rate starting in the third quarter of the fiscal year so bills for the first half did not reflect this change, the council president related. They are now implementing the override halfway through the year so the increase will be concentrated in the final two quarters. That's something for people to be aware of.

They are called quarterly tax bills but none of them actually reflect a quarter of the tax bill, Mr. Murphy agreed. The first two quarters are estimated and the last two make up the difference. It is the way the state mandates it be done.

If property owners want to file for an abatement, they need to do it within 30 days of the post date on the actual bill, he added. If folks have a problem with it, they need to take action right away. The statute says property owners have 30 days to apply and if they don't apply within 30 days, assessors can't even hear their appeal. The actual bills will be received in December.

Councilor Foster said she remembers that last year or the year before when bills went out, a lot of people were caught off guard in Easthampton. As a councilor she can certainly communicate with some of her constituents but she wondered if some kind of notice could be given by the city.

Easthampton's override was significantly larger than theirs and their tax rate went up significantly more than 52 cents, Mr. Dautreuil noted. They can put something on the website or in the newspaper. If there are any suggestions, he's all ears.

Mayor Narkewicz said they can certainly look at ways to work on that. He doesn't know if it will be a robo call or an Op Ed in the newspaper. This has been an issue even in years when there's not an override. The way the state makes them do this is very confusing. The January bill is always the catch up bill because the process of setting the tax rate is at the end of the calendar year. This isn't by choice that they're doing this; if there was a way they could spread it out they would. He can certainly look into ways of communicating that.

Councilor Sciarra opened the floor to public comment.

Gwenevra Lodi-Nabad of Northampton asked if this will impact low-income properties such as Habitat for Humanity properties and increase their values in the same way,

It will not, Mr. Dautreuil asserted. As long as there is a rider in the deed identifying it as affordable housing, they will assess the home at its sale price, which is usually significantly lower than market value. They can only raise the assessed value by very low percentages.

There being no further comments, **Councilor Dwight moved to close the public hearing. Councilor LaBarge seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent. The public hearing closed at 8:03 p.m.**

<u>Resolutions</u>	<u>Resolutions</u> None.
<u>Presentations</u>	<u>Presentations</u> None.
<u>Consent Agenda</u>	<u>Consent Agenda</u>

Councilor Sciarra reviewed the items on the consent agenda, offering to remove any item for separate consideration upon request. **Councilor Dwight asked for removal of 21.341 the appointment of Mi Belitsky to the Arts Council. He moved approval of the consent agenda with the removal. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.**

The following item was approved as part of the consent agenda:

A. Minutes of October 21, 2021

21.341 Appointment of Mi Belitsky to the Arts Council

Councilor Dwight moved to approve the appointment of Mi Belitsky to the Arts Council. Councilor Foster seconded.

Councilor Dwight said his concern is not about the candidate but derives from the recent decision by the Arts Council to cancel the biennial exhibit. The action seems to have been taken without a clear understanding of the rules of Open Meeting Law (OML), and that worries him. He stressed the importance of all candidates as they move onto their appointed committees having at least a comprehensive knowledge of the purpose and intent of the OML, which is to establish transparency and provide the public with an opportunity to know ahead of time what items will be voted on. This way, if they have an opinion, they can at least witness the discussion if not participate in public comment. That was not the case in this instance, which is antithetical to the very intent of the OML. He cited deliberation outside of an open meeting as a related problem, nothing that 'this body' (the City Council) works very hard to abide by the terms of the OML.

He acknowledged this is asking a lot of volunteers but noted that state-mandated laws are critical to conducting their governance with transparency. He would ask that Mi Belitsky be advised of these rules before being inducted into this committee since it would be unfair to have this expectation of them without providing them with the necessary information and knowledge. He will be approving the appointment with that caveat, he advised.

Mayor Narkewicz said he appreciated the concern Councilor Dwight raised. The City Clerk does provide every new board member with information on the OML and ethics law, he confirmed. He did hear the concerns raised by Attorney Newman with regard to that particular meeting. It is an issue that came up even before that in School Committee.

It is a misinterpretation of the OML that it is necessary to list whether there will be a vote on an issue, Mayor Narkewicz clarified. The law says the agenda needs to list all topics anticipated to be discussed. Whether the board decides to take a vote on something related to the discussion point is not in itself a violation of the OML. It recently came up with a School Committee discussion that the item was not listed on the agenda as a vote, but discussion was clearly listed, so members of the public knew there would be a deliberation. The OML does not require you to list all possible actions; it just requires a list of all the items to be discussed, which he thinks Attorney Newman has since acknowledged. He did not actually file a complaint upon reviewing that decision, he pointed out.

The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.

<p><u>Recess for Committee on Finance Meeting</u></p>	<p><u>Recess for Committee on Finance Meeting</u> The City Council recessed for Finance Committee at 8:12 p.m. The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:21 p.m. The council reconvened at 8:21 p.m.</p>
<p><u>Financial Orders (On 1st reading)</u> <u>21.350 An Order to Establish a Tax Classification for FY2022 - 1st reading</u></p>	<p><u>Financial Orders (On 1st reading pending Finance Committee review)</u> <u>21.350 An Order to Establish a Tax Classification for FY2022 - 1st reading</u> Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the order in first reading. Councilor Foster seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent. <u>See minutes of November 18, 2021 for second reading.</u></p>

Financial Orders
(On 2nd reading)
21.342 An Order to
Appropriate
Senior Center Gift
Fund Money to
Financial Aid Fund
– 2nd reading

Financial Orders (On 2nd reading)

21.342 An Order to Appropriate Senior Center Gift Fund Money to Financial Aid Fund – 2nd reading

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the order in second reading. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.

The follow order passed two readings:

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council _____
October 21, 2021

Upon recommendation of the Mayor

21.342 An Order to Appropriate Senior Center Gift Fund Money for Financial Aid Fund

Ordered, that

Up to \$3,600 in Fiscal Year 2022 from the Northampton Senior Center Gift Fund be used to provide financial assistance to seniors to attend fee based programs offered at the Senior Center, provided that each participating senior meet financial aid guidelines established by the Senior Services Director and that such assistance be limited to no more than \$180 per person per year.

Passed two readings and enrolled.

21.343 An Order to
Surplus City Land
for Affordable
Housing and a
Community
Resilience Hub off
Crafts Avenue –
2nd reading

21.343 An Order to Surplus City Land for Affordable Housing and a Community Resilience Hub off Crafts Avenue – 2nd reading

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the order in second reading. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.

The following order passed two readings:

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council, October 21, 2021

Upon the recommendation of Mayor David J. Narkewicz and Planning & Sustainability

21.343 An Order to Surplus City Land for Affordable Housing and Community Resilience Hub off Crafts Avenue

WHEREAS, Consistent with the *Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan, Open Space, Recreation, and Multi-Use Trail Plan, Housing Needs Assessment and Strategic Housing Plan, and Unlocking Opportunity: An Assessment of Barriers to Fair Housing*, the city has a comprehensive affordable housing program, including limited development, funding, regulatory incentives, and surplus of city land;

WHEREAS, Consistent with the *Climate Resilience and Regeneration Plan, Community Resilience Building Findings, and Mayor's Task Force on Panhandling*, the city has a program to create a Community Resilience Hub as a downtown facility with a coordinated program for frontline communities and any residents who face chronic and acute stress due to disasters, pandemics, climate change, and other social and economic challenges. It will serve the 1% (homeless and those with severe chronic stress), the 15% (below the poverty line), the 40% (housing-burdened and under chronic stress) and the 100% (those at risk of acute adverse events), by providing access to resource, a social network, and building social resilience;

WHEREAS, Downtown studio apartments are especially important to help transition people who are experiencing houselessness or who face extreme housing burdens;

WHEREAS, The city has made offers for the Roundhouse and for St. John Cantius Church and explored other options for a community resilience hub, while exploring a back-up option of developing a hub in a new building, potentially co-located with affordable housing;

WHEREAS, The city's property extending from the Puchalski Municipal Office Building to the Roundhouse bus station driveway to Crafts Avenue, to the southerly most parking spaces in the city hall parking lot potentially is viable for affordable housing studios and/or a community resilience hub;

Ordered, that

City Council declares this land surplus to city needs;

Further that the Mayor is authorized to transfer deeds, easements, and/or leases for the land for affordable housing and/or a community resilience hub, subject to restrictions and conditions that the Mayor imposes to accomplish these needs.



Passed two readings and enrolled.

Orders
21.351 An Order for District Heating and Microgrids - 1st reading

Orders
21.351 An Order for District Heating and Microgrids - 1st reading
 Councilor Sciarra read the order.

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

The order is somewhat self-explanatory, Mayor Narkewicz suggested. As some may know, there has been discussion related to the Picture Main Street project of planning for future infrastructure needs and one of the ideas that has been put forward is planning for the potential of a non-fossil fuel heating district. Smith College is working on a district heating project on its campus and Eversource, the city's gas supplier, is launching pilot projects. It seemed like a perfect dovetailing of interest in Northampton in looking at this heating source and projects Eversource is piloting.

The order is Northampton's way of enthusiastically volunteering to be part of such a project and offering its downtown Main Street as a potentially perfect pilot, he explained. Experts have testified before the Northampton Energy and Sustainability Commission (NESC) on geothermal heating districts. He understands the concept but having the actual utility company work on this pilot would be ideal as they themselves look to transition away from fossil fuels and toward geothermal networks. He believes it was enthusiastically endorsed by NESC, and Carolyn Misch is here representing the Office of Planning and Sustainability, which is one of the sponsors as well.

It is pretty cool the way this is all coming together, Councilor Nash commented. This idea was thrown out by people at the Picture Main Street forums. His first thought was that it was kind of pie in the sky but here they are entertaining partnering with, of all people, Eversource. Good public process always amazes him with the outcomes they can land on if they all work together. He thinks this is very cool and he very much supports it.

Councilor Sciarra asked if more needs to be done to participate other than enthusiastically volunteering.

He thinks this is certainly an opening, Mayor Narkewicz said. In eastern Massachusetts, Eversource has already identified a series of communities for one of the three pilots. They are contacting business and residential customers and have selected a large list of towns in their service area. He thinks they are planning three such pilots. This will get Northampton on their radar. It might be helpful if similar interest is expressed by other Western Massachusetts (MA) communities, so that may be a secondary part of the campaign. He thinks the utility is receiving a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. They are actively seeking customers in eastern MA. By trying to identify that there is potentially a really dense cluster of customers downtown, Northampton will hopefully attract their attention.

Councilor Sciarra asked if they should be encouraging people who live near downtown to be telling Eversource they are interested.

They certainly could if they wanted, Mayor Narkewicz said. At this point, they are just trying to get Eversource to consider a pilot here.

One of their pitches to them is that they will be providing them with an open trench, Councilor Dwight noted. Since Main Street is already being reconstructed, it will be a shovel-ready opportunity for use as a demonstration.

David Pomerantz was talking about microgrids with him 10 years ago, he added. This is a really exciting opportunity if they're favored with selection. "We can serve them while they serve us" by giving them an open trench in which to work and a community that's been committed to this concept for decades.

The beauty of micro grids is that they're more robust and not reliant on a larger system such as the whole northeast grid. If it's localized it's more responsive and more robust.

Councilor Jarrett said he thinks this is very exciting development. As a member of NESC they have been talking about this and have had a presentation on it. He thinks it's a great idea to decarbonize denser urban areas where individual electric heat pumps are not always practical. Only so many air-source heat pumps can operate in the same area because they run out of air to cool. They could do a resolution but he likes that this is an order that the executive branch is joining them in enthusiastically supporting. He wondered if in the future they might be able to operate something like this as a municipal enterprise.

Councilor LaBarge said she is very pleased Eversource is moving forward. She thinks this is great for Northampton. She confirmed the idea of clean energy was brought up many years ago.

The motion passed unanimously 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.

See minutes of November 18, 2021 for second reading.

<p><u>Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u> <u>21.349 Ordinance Relative to Parking on Meadow Street</u></p>	<p><u>Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u> <u>21.349 An Ordinance Relative to Parking on Meadow Street</u> Councilor Foster moved to refer the ordinance to Legislative Matters. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.</p>
<p><u>Zoning Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u></p>	<p><u>Zoning Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Ordinances</u></p>	<p><u>Ordinances</u></p>

<p><u>21.345 Ordinance to Delete Ward and Precinct Boundaries from Code Book and Maintain by Council Order - 2nd reading</u></p>	<p><u>21.345 An Ordinance to Delete Ward and Precinct Boundaries from Code Book and Maintain by Council Order - 2nd reading</u> Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the ordinance in second reading. Councilor Thorpe seconded.</p> <p>There will be a special meeting Monday, November 8, 2021 at 7 p.m. to approve updated language for the order defining ward and precinct boundaries, Councilor Sciarra reminded.</p> <p>The motion carried 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.</p> <p><u>The following ordinance passed two readings:</u></p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>CITY OF NORTHAMPTON MASSACHUSETTS</p> <p><i>In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-One</i> Upon the Recommendation of City Clerk Pamela L. Powers</p> <p>21.345 An Ordinance To Delete Ward and Precinct Boundaries from Code Book and Maintain by Council Order</p> <p>An Ordinance of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Northampton, City Council assembled as follows:</p> <p>SECTION 1</p> <p><i>Delete Chapter 33 Election Districts, Section 1 Division of Wards in its entirety.</i></p> </div> <p><u>Passed two readings, ordained and enrolled.</u></p>
<p><u>Zoning Ordinances</u></p>	<p><u>Zoning Ordinances</u> None.</p>
<p><u>New Business</u></p>	<p><u>New Business</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Motion to Adjourn</u></p>	<p>Upon motion made by Councilor Nash and seconded by Councilor Thorpe, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m. The motion passed 8:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Quinlan absent.</p>
<p>Attest: _____</p>	<p>Administrative Assistant to the City Council</p>