



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: February 8, 2022
Time: 5 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 5 p.m. Councilor Rachel Maiore called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Councilor Rachel Maiore (Chair), Councilor Marianne LaBarge (Vice Chair), Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III and Councilor Jim Nash.
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Maiore announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
4. **Public Comment**
There being no general public comment, Councilor Maiore moved to the next item on the agenda.
5. **Second Quarter Financial Report**
Presentation by Finance Director Charlene Nardi.

Finance Director Nardi presented the revenue and expenditure reports for the General Fund and enterprise funds for the second quarter of FY2022, highlighting significant findings.

For General Fund highlights, with estimated annual receipts of \$250,000 and actual year-to-date receipts of \$465,177.26, hotel/motel tax has already exceeded estimated revenue by 186%, Director Nardi presented. Similarly, estimated annual receipts for meals tax revenue was \$500,000 and, halfway through the fiscal year, the city has already collected \$366,426.88, or 73%, so that revenue too is trending above projections. Adult marijuana too was budgeted at \$1.1 million and the city has collected \$650,292.75, so collections have reached 56% of the amount estimated. The mayor's office is keeping an eye on this as more and more retail shops come on line since the city's market share may change, she reminded. This is much lower than the revenue seen two years ago, but they are hoping this is where receipts will level off.

In looking at parking revenue, the city collected about \$691,000 for the second quarter, much improved from the \$361,000 collected last year at the same time but still not back to pre-pandemic levels. It is running at about 70%, so this revenue is rebounding but not quite as quickly as hotel/motel and meals.

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Ambulance services was budgeted at \$1.9 million and has already reached \$1.4 million, so they are ahead of projections there. This has been a significant source of revenue for the city for the last few years for all the reasons they are aware of, she continued.

In Charges for Services, Director Nardi said they noticed that building inspector services are down and said they believe this might be because of supply chain issues.

Enterprise fund revenues are tracking pretty much as expected. Water is down a bit from last year, sewer and Stormwater are up about \$100,000 and \$120,000, respectively and solid waste is about the same.

As far as General Fund expenditures, in looking at departmental budgets, she generally looks at the percent used to make sure nothing jumps out at her as exceeding 50%, Director Nardi explained. Everything looks good and is tracking as expected, she reported. Noting that the DPW highway division has only used 36% of its personnel services budget and 31% of its ordinary maintenance budget so far, she pointed out that the majority of construction projects generally take place in the spring, accounting for the lower expenditures in the fall/winter months.

Similarly, at 12%, the Snow and Ice account is surprisingly low, but at the end of December they've only just started the winter, so the number will look entirely different by the end of April and March. On the flip side, worker's compensation insurance and contributory retirement are already 99% expended because these are paid in lump sum payments at the beginning of the year. When she looked at this, everything looked really good with revenue and expenditure accounts tracking as expected, she concluded.

The last piece - enterprise expenditures – are also looking good. "We're looking really good with our revenue and expenses," she observed.

Director Nardi fielded questions and comments from councilors.

6. Financial Orders

A. 22.016 An Order Authorizing A Five-Year Contract For IT Services Department Equipment And Software, Referred By City Council - 2/3/2022

The Finance Committee discussed item 22.016 An Order Authorizing a Five-Year Contract for IT Services Department Equipment and Software along with the charge from City Council to consider if there is a "socially responsible" rubric that could be applied to this decision. Present to speak to the order were IT Director Antonio Pagan, Procurement Officer Joe Cook, City Solicitor Alan Seewald, and Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra.

City Solicitor Seewald reviewed the city's ordinance allowing them to disqualify doing business with entities in the nuclear arms industry. He shared that enactment of this ordinance required a Home Rule Petition and a Special Act of the Legislature. Procurement Officer Cook spoke to the Commonwealth's process for assessing qualified vendors by weighing a business's "Skill, Ability, and Integrity", where integrity in this case has to do with honoring terms of contracts, not "socially responsible" practices. Director Pagan fielded several questions about the proposed dashboard camera system.

The following members of the public spoke to 22.016: Ashwin Ravikumar of Amherst, Elliot Oberholtzer of Holyoke, Ya-ping Douglass of Turners Falls and Northampton residents Amy Coffin, Dana Goldblatt, Rachel Weber, Dan Cannity, Lemy Coffin, Amy Bookbinder and David Kris. All raised concerns about the City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for February 8, 2022

order and asked that City Council not approve the five-year contract order. Thoughts shared by members of the public:

- Less police and less surveillance result in less harm
- Concerns about data security and data sharing between law enforcement agencies and corporations
- Approving the order would be an expansion of surveillance in our community
- The system could be used to target immigrants and people of color
- The city should divest from harmful companies and consider a human rights impact study around vendors
- The proposed vendor is on a UN black list, and lacks integrity
- Do we even need dashboard cameras? What is their value and efficacy?

During deliberations Finance Committee members agreed that coming up with a socially responsible rubric was a complex endeavor and not possible in the timeframe allowed. A motion to send the order back to City Council with a neutral recommendation failed (2-2) with Councilors Maiore and LaBarge opposed by voice vote. A motion to recommend that City Council not proceed with a contract until there is a community forum on dashboard cameras was approved (3-1) with Councilor Nash opposed by voice vote.

7. **New Business**

-Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.
None.

8. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor Nash moved to adjourn. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

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