



## Committee on Community Resources and the Northampton City Council

### Committee Members:

*Chair: Councilor Deborah Klemer*

*Vice-Chair: Councilor Garrick Perry*

*Councilor Jeremy Dubs*

*Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg*

### Meeting Minutes

**Date: November 17, 2025, 5:30 p.m.**

**Council Chambers**

**212 Main Street, Northampton, MA**

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call.** At 5:30 p.m., Chair Deborah Klemer called the meeting to order. Present were Councilor Klemer, Chair; Councilor Garrick Perry, Vice Chair and Councilor Jeremy Dubs. Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg was absent. Also present was state Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
2. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**  
Councilor Klemer announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
3. **Public Comment**  
There was no general public comment.
4. **Minutes of September 24, 2025**  
Councilor Dubs moved to approve the minutes of September 24, 2025. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Rothenberg absent.  
  
Councilor Rothenberg arrived at 5:32 p.m.
5. **Updates and Announcements from Committee Members**  
None.
6. **Program Topic: Legislative Overview with State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa**  
Councilor Klemer recognized Representative Sabadosa.

State representatives are at the end of the first year of the session, so house rules require them to finish business by next Wednesday, Representative Sabadosa reported. On the agenda this week, they are taking up the Bright Act, a bill that is going to use some fair share money and bonding to fund public institutions of higher education and so important for community colleges, state universities and, of course, UMass. The House will

also be taking up the closeout budget. She is really excited about several provisions in that, perhaps not super relevant to councilors. One is provisions around the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust; specifically, trying to protect individuals within that trust, which is having some financial difficulties. She found out today that a provision which will help protect the security of people going through the name change process added by her and Senator Comerford made it into that bill, so it will help the trans community and victims of domestic violence who want that information impounded and protected and not published in the newspaper. Here in Hampshire County, their registry of deeds has done a tremendous job making sure it is easy for folks, but it's not consistent throughout the state. Otherwise, the closeout budget is just making sure the state is paying all its bills end of year and filling gaps.

They know there are going to be significant changes to Medicaid which came through in federal government. There's going to be funding in this bill to deal with some of the extra bureaucracy they know will be needed to keep people on that program. Changes start to go into effect January 1<sup>st</sup> and roll out over a couple of years, so they are trying to be as proactive as possible in the Commonwealth.

They are also taking up a resolution to rescind all prior calls for an Article V convention, she shared. The state provides a way for states to convene to make amendments to the constitution, she explained. At this point, representatives feel that would be a dangerous thing. Rescinding all prior calls will make clear that they're not participating in a call for a constitutional convention to amend the U.S. Constitution.

Meanwhile, hearings are continuing for legislation. They are at the tail end. With 78 bills filed, it has been a lot of work getting through all those hearings. Many bills are in Ways and Means in 3<sup>rd</sup> reading at this point. And, they are already preparing for the FY2027 budget. The Governor will release her budget in January, then they will begin the round of Ways and Means hearings before going into the House budget in April and the Senate budget in May. This really is the time to start advocating for priorities for the FY2027 budget, she noted. They expect it to be a tighter budget. The state is not in recessionary territory, but they know the 'Big Beautiful Bill' passed in January is pushing more costs onto states. They know they will have to pick up more costs from Medicaid and that more administration costs of the SNAP program will fall to the Commonwealth. The way the bill is phased, it doesn't all happen on day 1 but happens over a period of time.

They also understand there are rising costs and rising needs and are trying to meet them as best they can. That was a snippet of the work, but she would be happy to delve into details.

Councilor Dubs noted that the City Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of an Act Establishing Medicare for all in MA. He asked if there are any updates on that or thoughts on how it is going or the probability of it passing in Massachusetts.

Representative Sabadosa said she appreciates the resolution because it's a bill that she filed. It matters that Northampton is supportive but they need other communities to be supportive as well. It's a tricky bill this session because the bill is very prescriptive about the financing and the federal landscape is changing for Medicaid payments.

They are in good conversations with the chair of the committee to look at how to rewrite the financing system to better reflect current realities, she related. They all feel they are on a good slope to a single-payer system since the current one is absolutely not working. The conversation has become deeper and more complex. The other day they had what they called a Super Bowl of healthcare where the Health Policy Commission and other health care stakeholders came and talked about cost trends and where they're headed. The State sets a benchmark for rising health care costs, which she recalled as being 3.6%. "We're at a much, much, much higher rate so

we're clearly are not meeting benchmark," she pointed out. They're not finding solutions in their current system to keep the costs down and are looking at all options.

Councilor Perry said the last time she was here, she talked about the maternal health bill. He asked if it has had an impact.

The maternal health bill is definitely in implementation phase, Representative Sabadosa said. The Midwifery Commission is meeting with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and working on regulations to make sure certified public midwives are in place as the bill sets forth, and work is taking place on coverage for lactation consultants. Her piece of the bill was centered around pregnancy loss. DPH has launched a campaign called 'Count the Kicks' to help women determine if there are any problems with their pregnancy. Implementation work requires funding so they are trying to understand how they can continue to fund all this good work. The Fetal Mortality Commission is up and running, which she thinks will be generative of future legislation.

Councilor Perry referred to a movement to address marijuana sales, asking how folks are feeling about the ballot question related to that. Once those funds go away, he worries about how they will make up for that loss.

Representative Sabadosa said she is not as familiar with the ballot question. She knows it has something to do with THC levels. The House passed legislation around the Cannabis Control Commission earlier this year, changing the way it's configured because they have heard time and time again it is really hard to get an answer from it. They are trying to narrow it down, change appointing authorities and make it a little sleeker but hopefully easier to work with. One piece of that legislation she is glad passed was regulating previously unregulated beverages with a really high level of THC that don't fall under the CCC because they aren't marijuana but are made from hemp. For the first time that would be regulated. The Senate is going to take up its own version of the bill very shortly. That will go into conference committee, so it is a good time to weigh in.

If they get enough signatures on the ballot question by Wednesday, it will come before the legislature. The first round of signatures is just to determine if enough people in the Commonwealth are interested. She knows many people have strong opinions about it.

Councilor Klemer said she heard she had gotten them some money. (She mentioned \$50K.) The administrative assistant wondered if she was referring to the vacant storefront program. Representative Sabadosa said that was not her, it was the city applying proactively through a grant program. She is really glad to see communities going after these grants the Healey administration worked so hard for.

With SNAP, she mentioned that the Commonwealth has to pick up more administrative fees, Councilor Klemer noted. She asked if that is what is happening with other federal programs.

Representative Sabadosa said it is definitely what is happening with SNAP, but she doesn't know if she'd want to characterize it more broadly. The state is going to be taking on an administrative fee. It will be based on error rates so they don't really know what the cost will be. From the Commonwealth's perspective, it has long been an issue that they think there need to be more DTA (Division of Transitional Assistance) workers. Wait times are very long and caseloads are far too great. The number of people who qualify and need food assistance is increasing and western MA's numbers are stark and sobering.

Councilor Klemer mentioned that DHHS Commissioner O'Leary noted the largest proportion of new homeless are elderly.

Representative Sabadosa referred to seniors being forced from their homes because of not being able to afford taxes. The question to municipalities is how to keep senior citizens in their homes. The state needs to engage more with cities and towns to figure out how to come up with solutions, she acknowledged. They have done more around the senior circuit tax breaker, a refundable tax credit for seniors, and tried to increase the amount of the senior tax write-off. People have sometimes forgotten the need to center dignity and respect for seniors when talking about that.

Councilor Klemer pointed out that if people can age in place they have neighbors and community to check on them so it makes sense for them to stay where they are.

With the housing bond bill, Ward 1 Candidate Gwen Nabad wondered if she could tell them about the money set aside for preservation of public housing. She wondered how it was distributed and how they were determining which communities are getting it. There are still lingering issues that need to be addressed in public housing and she gets this question all the time. She wondered if it's too late or if there is something residents can do to take action.

Representative Sabadosa framed her response by saying she thinks the legislature is well aware that the need in public housing for capital improvements far outweighs the amount of money in the bond bill. (Needs were estimated at several billion dollars and the entire bond was several billion.) There is by no stretch enough to address everything, she stressed.

The Housing Bond Bill was passed at the end of the last session and then the state's financial outlook changed. They've been working with HLC to see when they are going to release some of that money. HLC only very recently put forth a capital improvement program based on the bond bill. She has not yet received information about how they are going to distribute money to various authorities. She visited all of the properties and they are in desperate need of improvement. "We'll keep tracking it, but it's really slow," she allowed.

Councilor Moulton asked her assessment of where three home rule petitions recommended by the Charter Review Committee are in terms of closeness to the finish line: ranked choice voting, Vote 16 and non-citizen resident voting in local elections. The City Council earlier this year reaffirmed its support for all three.

They are closest to ranked choice voting, followed by Vote 16, then non-citizen [participation], Representative Sabadosa advised. The last of the three has had pretty significant negative feedback. A lot of folks say, 'you cannot do that.' Vote 16 has tremendous and wonderful energy behind it but is a harder lift. She thinks ranked choice voting will turn a corner. They got so close last session. They talked about how it worked so well in Easthampton. The challenge, of course, is that it lost at the ballot. They are trying to make the case that that wasn't the case in Northampton and voters here *did* say they wanted it.

Northampton in particular on ranked choice voting and Vote 16 has been very well-represented at the hearings, Councilor Moulton observed. He said he appreciates her support.

Representative Sabadosa agreed the Mayor's Youth Commission is passionate and eloquent. Their presence at the state house underscores the petition's importance, she opined.

Councilor Perry asked how councilors could help her in her efforts.

Representative Sabadosa encouraged everyone to attend the Chapter 70 listening session tomorrow in Greenfield. It would be great if people could attend in person or submit testimony. The Superintendent has submitted her testimony.

There is a hearing Wednesday in the Housing Committee for a piece of legislation that would ban algorithmic rent fixing, she added. That is where companies use technology to gather all the rents to advise landlords on rent increases and never raise prices below the minimum rent. It is a way to continually drive up rents.

And, she has a bill in 3<sup>rd</sup> reading around banning grocery store surveillance pricing. Massachusetts has long not allowed electronic price tags but that recently changed, and stores are now allowed by right to have electronic tags. They have seen stores experimenting with surge pricing then offering discounts based on the biometrics of the customer. They want to prevent that in Massachusetts.

Councilor Rothenberg thanked her for coming.

She hopes all councilors feel they can reach out at any point and view her as a resource to help solve problems for people in their community.

Councilor Klemer asked if there was anything else they should be aware of coming down from the federal level.

The continuing resolution ending the government shutdown only lasts until January, Representative Sabadosa reminded. Issues around healthcare are going to be significant. The first Medicaid change that takes effect January 1<sup>st</sup> will remove everyone from Medicaid who is a noncitizen regardless of their immigration status. It means 36,000 in MA will lose their insurance right out of the gate. That means busier emergency rooms, people waiting to get care for chronic conditions, etc.

And, even though SNAP is back and funded, if people are going through recertification, all of the work requirements and additional bureaucratic barriers are starting to be implemented. The new rule is starting to affect new applicants.

The big thing is housing. They are seeing higher and higher usage of the WRAP program, people falling behind on their rent or mortgage. She hopes they are all connecting people with those services as quickly as possible and trying to be as proactive as they can. They will not have all the tools but will make use of tools they have.

Gwen Nabad asked what the work requirements are and if volunteering qualifies.

Representative Sabadosa said she didn't believe volunteering would necessarily apply. She didn't want to say too much because she didn't want to misspeak. She said she would be happy to provide information in writing so she could share it with others.

She doesn't want to be fear-mongering, she stressed. There are a lot of bad things happening, but services still remain in place; it just means it will be harder to access them. As a state, they want to figure out anything they can do to make it a little easier to keep people on those services to the greatest extent possible.

7. **Items Referred to Committee**

None.

8. **New Business**

None.

9. **Adjourn.** There being no further business, **Councilor Perry moved to adjourn; Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call. The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.**

Prepared By:  
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