



Joint City Council and School Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

On January 29, 2026 a joint meeting of the Northampton City Council, Northampton School Committee and Trustees of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) was held via teleconference. The meeting was called in accordance with Northampton Charter §7-2 Annual Budget Policy.

At 6:38 p.m. Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra called the meeting to order, welcoming those in attendance. A roll call was taken by Laura H. Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council. Present were:

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, School Committee Chair
Alena Bartoli, Ward One School Committee Member
Anat Weisenfreund, Ward Two School Committee Member
Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe, Ward Three School Committee Member
Michael Stein, Ward Four School Committee Member
Amy Martyn, Ward Five School Committee Member
Cindy Mahoney, Ward Six School Committee Member
Valerie Reiss, Ward Seven School Committee Member
Tiffany Jewell, School Committee Member At-Large
Robbie Saner Sullivan, School Committee Member At-Large

Aline Davis, Ward Five City Councilor
Jeremy Dubs, Ward Four City Councilor
Deborah Klemer, Ward Two City Councilor - Council Vice-President
Laurie Loisel, Ward Three City Councilor
Rachel Maiore, Ward Seven City Councilor - Council President
Gwen Nabad, Ward One City Councilor
Garrick Perry, City Councilor At-Large
Meg Robbins, City Councilor At-Large
Christopher Stratton, Ward Six City Councilor

Also present were: School Superintendent Portia Bonner, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) Board of Trustees Chair Michael Cahillane and SVAHS Trustee Julie Spencer Robinson.

SVAHS Trustee Richard Aquadro was absent.

Mayor Sciarra took a moment to recognize the utter horror of what they are seeing in Minneapolis and to lift up the remarkable spirit and amazing fight of the people of Minneapolis. Last year at this meeting, she noted that the first 10 days of the presidential administration had been stressful, anxious and disturbing with the battery of executive orders coming through. What they have seen actually happening over the last few weeks has far

exceeded her worst possible imaginings. It is a very hard emotionally on all of them. In terms of the task before them, it is remarkably hard to project and make decisions in a time of such uncertainty. However, as she reflects back, it is very much how it has been the past six years, either because of the pandemic or because of the president.

She had the privilege of being at the state of the Commonwealth address last week at the Statehouse. "There's no other state that I'd rather be doing this work in than Massachusetts," she avowed, and no city other than theirs where she'd like to be doing this work.

Mayor Sciarra presented a detailed financial forecast including projected revenues and expenses for fiscal year 2027. (See Powerpoint presentation entitled, "City of Northampton, FY2027 Financial Trends and Projections, Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, January 29, 2026.") Among other things, she reviewed the following topics:

- Budget Process
- Current FY26 Revenues
- Current FY26 Expenditures
- Financial Indicators and Comparative Communities
- Review of Revenue and Expenditure Trends
- Fiscal Cliff(s)
- Reserves
- FY27 – FY31 Fiscal Stability Plan
- Revenue and Expenditure Projections for Fiscal Year 26
- Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Calendar

She began by describing the budget process governed by M.G.L. Chapter 44 and the Northampton City Charter, which begins with the joint meeting of the City Council, School Committee and Trustees of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) taking place tonight and concludes with adoption of an operating budget by the City Council following a required public hearing.

Mayor Sciarra showed a list of FY2026 General Fund (GF) revenue sources, noting that the city's main source of revenue is local taxes with 67.36% of revenue coming from real estate, personal property and motor vehicle excise taxes and 13.8% coming from the state, the next greatest revenue source. The third biggest source of revenue is charges for services (11.88%) such as parking and emergency medical, while all other sources represent less than 2%.

Next, the Mayor gave a breakdown of the percentage of taxes from various sources with the largest being real estate. Real estate and personal property taxes combined represent 92.8% of total tax revenue, both of which cannot be increased by more than two and a half percent (2.5%) by state law.

She reviewed terms and definitions related to the tax levy and presented a chart showing how levy is calculated. New tax revenue available for use in the FY2027 budget is \$2,868,065.

State revenue makes up 13.8% of total revenue. "We are seeing a continual decrease in annual state revenue," she reported. It was 14% in FY2025, 14.5% in FY2024 and 15% in FY2023. State aid includes Ch. 70 school aid, Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA), charter school tuition reimbursement, PILOTS for state-owned land, reimbursement for veterans' services, offsets for incoming school choice

students, etc. UGGA was slashed in the great recession, and a recent MMA report found that, 18 years after that reduction, it is only just getting back to its FY2008 level in this year's budget.

While state aid does not even keep up with inflation, assessments the city is required to pay to the state have increased. Not only does it not maintain its low percentage, but state aid is actually decreasing.

The third largest source of revenue at 11.88% is charges for services such as parking, departmental fees for programs or services, revenue from inspections by the health department, building and fire department and revenue to SVAHS from sending communities (a direct pass-through to SVAHS).

She reviewed other miscellaneous sources of revenue (a little less than 2%) such as interfund investments and shared services and interfund transfers from Enterprise Funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, including indirect charges for a portion of employee health insurance costs.

Reserves and gift funds represent 1.49% of revenue and include the Smith College Gift Funds (\$166,666), the NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund (\$350,000) and \$1,403,757 from the Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF).

Contributions from licenses and permits, fines and forfeits and federal revenue are 1.13%, 0.59% and 0.14%, respectively, she reported.

Total projected revenue for the current year (FY2026) is \$130,026,682.

Accordingly, FY2026 Budgeted Expenses equal \$130,026,682. As always, education is the largest share of the city's expenditures at 43%, with \$55,946,917 budgeted in FY2026. The next biggest expense (20%) is for employee benefits; i.e. - health insurance and retirement, at nearly \$26 million. Departmental expenses are grouped in their state-designated categories, such as public safety and health and human services.

Debt service is their 5th largest expense at \$5 million. This is an important point since people have talked about debt and asked whether the city should be taking on more debt, Mayor Sciarra reminded. Debt service is paid from the General Fund GF), so if it increases, it decreases the amount of GF revenue available for schools and other city services, she pointed out.

Expenditure totals and percentages don't tell the full story since these are limited to direct expenses, she noted. When indirect expenses are included, education accounts for 56.51% of the overall budget.

Comparison of Key Financial Indicators

Mayor Sciarra continued by showing key financial indicators for Northampton in comparison to 11 comparison communities.

At \$13.67, Northampton's residential tax rate is the 3rd lowest among its comparison communities. Longmeadow has been the highest and had the highest tax rate in the state but its neighbor, East Longmeadow, recently surpassed it with a residential tax rate of \$19.43 per thousand.

Northampton's commercial tax rate is also the third lowest among comparison communities, while Holyoke's is the highest at \$38.15. The five highest commercial tax rate communities with all those with split tax rates, she pointed out.

Despite having the 3rd lowest tax rate, Northampton has high home values. While the tax rate has gone down, home values have gone up, so Northampton has the 2nd highest home values in this group, behind only Amherst.

Housing inventory in Massachusetts remains very tight, and property prices in Massachusetts have increased over 50% since the start of the pandemic, she shared.

The average single-family tax bill is \$7,801. Northampton ranked higher within the group because of its higher home values but is significantly below Longmeadow and Amherst.

Their residents are really feeling the effect of high property values, she acknowledged. When councilors hear from constituents struggling with increased taxes, she asked them to please tell them the city has some options for older residents and those with less income. She mentioned senior and veteran tax work-off programs.

Mayor Sciarra showed the growth in average single-family tax bills over the last four years (FY2023 to FY2026).

With regard to new growth, their continued and fairly consistent strong new growth shows people are interested in investing in Northampton, she continued. The new growth value is added to their levy increase. Northampton has fairly reliable new growth.

Revenue Trends

Mayor Sciarra showed main revenue sources aside from real and personal property taxes as a percentage of overall revenue, then discussed trends in different categories of revenue, such as new growth, local option cannabis, hotel/motel, meals, motor vehicle excise, etc.

Mayor Sciarra showed a slide depicting investment income from FY2007 to FY2026. As talked about before, prior to the fiscal stability plan, the city's reserves were very low, so there was less money to earn interest on. Before FY2023, the city averaged \$200,000 per year. In FY2023, the treasurer moved city reserves to higher interest-bearing instruments. This coincided with the account having unprecedented one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in it, greatly increasing the balance earning interest. The lighter green bar visible from FY2023 on reflects the amount of interest from ARPA funds.

The federal reserve has cut interest rates six times since September of 2024, and the interest rate on the SOFR account has dropped from 4.92% in 2024 to 3.73% now. They cannot assume it will remain at the historic high since it is a highly-volatile revenue source. They have added \$1.9 million of revenue to the current budget from this source to support increases in the Northampton Public Schools (NPS) and Northampton Fire Rescue (NFR) and will be pushing it a bit more the next year.

She showed a slide reflecting state aid as a percentage of the city's budget followed by a chart representing state revenue vs. assessments. In FY2015, it was 15.11% and has dropped to 12.58% this fiscal year. Over 25 years, revenue has grown from \$14 million in FY2002 to \$16.4 million in FY2026, but any increase has been offset by increased assessments, she presented. As the MMA has highlighted, there is increasingly more pressure on municipalities to make up the difference, she observed.

The city received the governor's budget last week with the cherry sheet, so she will talk about what they expect for projections based on it.

Expenditure Trends

Debt service as a percentage of the General Fund (GF) budget is 3.9% in FY2026, Mayor Sciarra reported.

At \$15,590,671, employee health insurance is 12% of the FY2026 budget, the 2nd highest expenditure after schools. Each year, the amount of the insurance increase is always one of the biggest budgetary unknowns as premiums are not set until the end of February/early March. The city uses the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), which has not seen as large an increase (double digit) as the Hampshire Country Group Insurance Trust (GIT).

All city employees except teachers participate in the Northampton Retirement Board's contributory retirement system. The city is at 75.1% of funding, and the retirement system is targeted to be fully-funded by 2037. Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is a future liability for the city not yet required by the state to be fully-funded. City officials reduced the contribution to OPEB in FY2025 and FY26 to direct more money towards the schools

The Mayor showed a slide depicting education spending. Expenditures for education grow steadily and have seen larger increases in the last few years. She showed a chart with the increases from FY2023 to FY2026, reflecting an overall 32% increase to the NPS budget in this period. Total city education spending on the two school districts, including employee benefits, is \$74,145,885.

Mayor Sciarra showed the significant impact of charter and school choice sending tuition on the budget. She also showed a chart showing the percentage of net school spending set by the state and a chart illustrating required net school spending vs. actual school spending.

Reserves

Mayor Sciarra reviewed the importance and general uses of reserves and showed a slide with the balances of the six stabilization funds as of December 31st as follows:

- \$6,338,166 in Undesignated Fund Balance/Free Cash
- \$4,917,279 in General Fund Stabilization Fund
- \$4,194,137 in General Fund Capital Stabilization Fund
- \$1,502,236 in General Fund Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF)
- \$2,294,600 in Climate Change Mitigation Stabilization Fund
- \$704,580 in Special Education Stabilization Fund

She showed a chart depicting Free Cash balances from FY2015 to FY2026 with an orange bar reflecting the amount represented by ARPA funds. The balance in this account has been higher since the pandemic. The Division of Local Services' (DLS) latest best practice recommendation is that a municipality have a Free Cash balance each year that is 5 to 7% of its General Fund budget. As Northampton has needed to direct more of its money towards schools, they have not been able at this point to change their policy to meet DOR's best practice and remain with a 3 to 5% policy.

Free Cash is significantly less this year and is projected to be less next year because they have pushed revenue projections. Once certified, per city financial policies, Free Cash is used to contribute to stabilization funds, fund capital improvements and pay for other one-time uses. She reviewed a slide explaining the reasons for higher Free Cash balances since the pandemic.

The Mayor showed a chart depicting the city's Free Cash balance from FY2022 to FY2026 as a percentage of the city's operating budget. While in FY2023 it was over 15%, this year, it is once again under 5%.

In FY2012, the city was down to almost no reserves, with only \$253,811 on account. Since then, with careful budgeting and management practices, the city has gradually built up its reserves.

Mayor Sciarra showed the balance of the general stabilization fund as a percentage of the budget in comparison to other communities, noting that it is currently at the lower end.

She also talked about the DLS slide inadvertently misrepresenting Northampton's stabilization funds because it includes enterprise funds, which many communities do not have.

Mayor Sciarra went on to discuss the FSSF and the purpose and benefits of the fiscal stability plan, showing the percentage increases to the NPS budget before and after the plan was adopted. The timeline shows that prior to FY2014 when the fiscal stability plan was created, the percentage increase to NPS fluctuated widely and averaged 2.1%. Since FY2014, budget increases have stabilized and, in the last four years, increases have collectively equaled 32%. Average budget increases from 2014 on have been 4.82%.

She believes this slide illustrates the greatest benefit of the FSP. She briefly showed the fiscal stability plan worksheet.

PROJECTIONS

As far as projections, with the \$2,018,432 Proposition 2 and ½ increase and preliminary new growth estimate of \$875,000, financial officers know they can raise an additional \$2.9 million in revenue to support the FY2027 budget.

Based on the governor's budget, state aid shows a net decrease of \$333,547 for FY2027 since an increase of \$411,400 is offset by an increase in assessments of \$715,248.

As a preliminary projection, revenues are projected to increase by \$3.55 million (\$3,553,093), she reported. Of this, \$2.9 million is real and personal property taxes, with the balance achieved by pushing local revenue projections, including tax title and interest on taxes, which they don't usually rely on.

These projections are aggressive and carry with them some risk, she acknowledged.

Projected known increases in expenditures are \$4,855,489, she continued.

They are planning a larger than 4% increase for the schools this year and have removed all capital spending from the operating budget. Since estimated revenue as discussed is only \$3.55 million, this leaves a gap of \$1.3 million.

Mayor Sciarra concluded by reviewing concerns, such as the uncertainty of some federal funding. NPS receives an estimated \$1.5 million in entitlement grants. Schools have been told that \$119,000 in Title II, III & IV grants will be eliminated. Non-school city departments receive about \$2 million in federal grants. They are also concerned about Medicaid reimbursement dropping.

In addition to these factors, there is continued economic uncertainty.

She finished by reviewing the budget calendar.

At 8:14 p.m., the Mayor announced a 10-minute recess. At 8:24 p.m., the joint meeting reconvened

DISCUSSION

Following her presentation, the Mayor entertained questions and comments.

School Committee member Michael Stein thanked her for the presentation, saying he had a few observations and two questions. On the slide about the operating budget, he was struck to see the \$350,000 in the special education stabilization fund shown, which means they are treating funds set aside for unbudgeted costs as budgeted operational money. It is likely that the remaining \$150,000 is also being used for planned or budgeted expenses. Seeing it on the slide talking about the operating budget presumes they are planning to use it.

\$59 million, or 45% of the operating budget, goes to support NPS, which is unsurprising since it is the single largest city service by every metric. He referred to a slide saying that actual spending is \$16.9 million above net school spending. He would love to know if they could actually operate the schools at net school spending if they cut \$16.9 million.

Many municipalities are facing budget deficits, but they are facing budget surpluses each year, he observed.

All of the percent increases presented are restricted to the portion of the NPS operating budget that comes from the local appropriation. Their actual operating budget is larger and includes federal money that flows directly to the schools. Percentages here matter and are emphasized a lot but there are a lot of caveats that he thinks would be helpful.

With respect to debt service, he expressed his understanding that the \$5 million and change budget line item for FY2026 represents 3.9% of the GF operating budget. His understanding from conversations around the geothermal bonding is that a significant portion of the current debt service retired this year and \$1 million is coming off.

- 1) How much is the debt service dropping year over year if they include the new geothermal bonding talked about, and where can they see the details of bonds and related projects being serviced by the operating budget? He asked.
- 2) For the budget process going forward, an earlier slide described the Mayor and Finance Director as working with department heads to maintain services and identified needs. The overwhelming majority of this work goes on behind closed doors without a lot of transparency. He wondered if the mayor could share more about her approach to weighing the various needs of the city and making budget decisions in accord with the city's values.

Mayor Sciarra said the process she and Finance Director Nardi follow with department heads is parallel to the process the superintendent follows with the schools. Director Nardi meets with department heads and she meets with her and department heads individually. Generally, her directive to department heads is to keep the budget increase as low as possible (2.5%). They are often stripping out things. She will 'nickel and dime' budgets as much as she can.

Director Nardi said the budget book does talk about the debt although it doesn't actually list the associated projects. She was planning to talk to the mayor about adding more of the detail that has been requested.

Mayor Sciarra said she agrees net school spending would not be remotely sufficient.

Councilor Davis asked her to clarify what she said about removing capital projects from the budget.

Mayor Sciarra explained that some capital used to be built into the operating budget but it has been stripped out. It is a recommendation to have some capital built into the budget so that had been the practice.

Councilor Nabad asked when they will know about Free Cash for FY26. Why can't they discontinue the capital stabilization fund and put it somewhere else and what are the rules about Free Cash and its use? She asked.

Free Cash generally is certified by DOR after the books from the fiscal year are closed sometime in November or December, Mayor Sciarra advised.

They *could* discontinue capital stabilization, but it's not advisable, Mayor Sciarra allowed. In FY2012, they were down to less than \$5,000 in capital stabilization. Capital projects are defined as being over \$10,000, so they wouldn't be able to fund any capital projects without it. It is important to have capital stabilization to maintain the city's infrastructure and fund the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). They are still acutely feeling the effect of deferred maintenance. They have 160 miles of roadway and increased funding for sidewalks. "There is so much that needs to be done." They would be less able to keep up with the city's capital needs without the capital stabilization fund, she pointed out.

As far as rules for Free Cash, the recommendation is that it only be used for one-time expenses. It is not considered a recurring revenue source. There are not actual restrictions by the state on its use, however.

Councilor Loisel said it was good to hear how far along they are on the pension funding schedule. She asked:

- 1) Does the city tax as high as is allowed for hotel and meals?
- 2) At the MMA, DLS representative Sean Cronin said something about the ability to shift the residential exemptions on property taxes from the lower to the higher end as being a powerful tool only the executive can use.
- 3) The balance of the circuit breaker fund and how much of it they're using,

Mayor Sciarra confirmed that Northampton does exercise the maximum local excise option for hotel, meals and cannabis.

Councilor Maiore announced that the 'chat' feature should only be used for technical issues.

Director Nardi said she is not familiar with the residential exemption. Councilor Stratton said there is a problem with it in that it doesn't cover rental properties. Director Nardi said she would get more information about it from the principal assessor.

Mayor Sciarra reported that the balance of the circuit breaker account is \$1,176,096. NPS received \$878,117 in FY2025 and carried it over to FY2026, as is the general practice.

NPS receives circuit breaker reimbursements and can carry them over for one year, School Business Manager Bobbie Jones confirmed. Extraordinary circuit breaker funds have to be spent in the same year in which they are received.

Councilor Robbins commented that the January 26th storm event was a horrible snowstorm for the city and has been awful to dig out of. She thanked the DPW for disappearing the snow. Everyone wants to know where it went.

She is curious about the additional costs for snow removal. 1) Will those costs come out of enterprise funds?

She thought she saw on the draft cherry sheet that the governor was going to fully-fund the circuit breaker, she noted parenthetically.

- 2) She asked if the Mayor had considered the midyear appropriation in thinking about what the schools need for FY2027.
- 3) She said it seemed as though there was a difference in the amount of reserves shown on the slides today from those seen last year. A lot of folks wondered how they were used.
- 4) Finally, is she fairly confident in the reserves and does she have an estimated projection of what the FY2027 costs for the redesign of Main Street will be to the city?

Director Nardi said they budget \$500,000 for snow and ice. The city doesn't get insurance anymore because they are allowed to overspend this account and have reserves to cover it. None of it comes out of enterprise funds.

The midyear appropriation was not factored into this presentation since that vote only happened late last week, Mayor Sciarra said.

Regarding the difference in the balance of reserves, they are always going to be different every year. Last year, they probably looked lower because city officials had already approved capital expenditures at that point.

Director Nardi confirmed that the CIP was presented in December last year. Reserves are all affected by orders presented to city council. Council just appropriated money for the geothermal and solar projects, so that affected the balance of the climate stabilization account, she noted. Last summer, they made an appropriation from stabilization for Memorial Hall repairs, she reminded. Those types of orders have impacted the reserves.

They do not have any updated estimate for the cost of Picture Main Street, Mayor Sciarra said. They had estimates for the underground infrastructure and are still waiting for 100% designs to be certified.

With regard to capital expenditures, Councilor Stratton said he thinks it's important to maintain clarity between the GF budget and the verb 'to budget.' It's not that they are not 'budgeting' for capital, they are not including it in their GF budget. They are budgeting for capital outside of the GF. Basically, because they view capital as a one-time expense, they are budgeting for future capital in the money they leave on the table by their overly-conservative estimates.

Mayor Sciarra said that, at this point, they are not being overly conservative with their estimates and are actually overall above the recommendation for revenue estimates.

Director Nardi noted they are not just 'leaving money on the table' in Councilor Stratton's words for capital but because they are trying to make sure they can afford their operating budgets in multiple out years as expenses increase.

Councilor Maiore asked how the number and diversity of their stabilization funds compare to other communities.

Mayor Sciarra referred to the slide in the presentation showing the comparison of stabilization funds as a percentage of the budget. For general stabilization, they were at the lower end but for all stabilization accounts they were at the higher end of the 12 communities, but not nearly as high as Amherst and Easthampton.

Councilor Maiore asked if they have more specialized funds.

Other communities have special education stabilization funds, Mayor Sciarra said. Most communities don't have a climate mitigation fund.

Director Nardi noted that many communities leave their reserves in Free Cash but the challenge is that Free Cash is not available year round.

Member Saner Sullivan asked if she knows of any other minimum aid communities in the area.

In the last few years, many more communities have tipped over into this status. It is a fairly significant number in the Commonwealth, Mayor Sciarra confirmed.

Councilor Davis said she believes the 'chat' feature violates Open Meeting Law since it can't be preserved for the public record. Some very meaty conversations were happening there, she noted.

Mayor Sciarra pointed out that not everyone has access to the chat, so it does not provide equal access to all participants.

Member Stein asserted that, just as members are allowed to work on a google document during a meeting, so a chat like this is also allowable. The constant attempt to shut down conversations when they're already so limited is frustrating, he volunteered.

He would request that in future presentations, the Mayor show what other reserve accounts other communities have. Over 200 municipalities are minimum aid either because of declining enrollment or relative wealth. The reason Northampton doesn't get more Chapter 70 aid is based on it's the relative income of its residents and its property values. It is a reflection of their relative wealth in comparison to other communities. In the last formula change, the state directed significant resources to other much poorer communities. Of comparison districts provided, Northampton is in a cluster with Longmeadow and Amherst. They spend almost as much as Longmeadow in net school spending and significantly less than Amherst. He thinks when they do these comparisons, they need much more data in order to draw conclusions.

Councilor Nabad asked what defines smart growth and how can they grow more. She also asked the deadline for spending ARPA funds.

Construction must be completed by September of 2026 and all funds expended by December 2026, Director Nardi said. All of Northampton's funds have been allocated, she stressed.

Councilor Stratton clarified that, with the Ch. 70 formula, there is an assessment against communities based on local property values and one based on resident income. Northampton has relatively high property values in the state context but relatively low income.

Free Cash certification expires at the end of the fiscal year and then can't be spent from until the new Free Cash certification in December. However, the end of the fiscal year is months away at this point, so he finds this rush to put money away into the stabilization funds strange. In the last three years, they both spent from the fiscal stability fund and put money into it. It strikes him as strange that they would put money in and take it out in the same year. What's the rush to put money in the stabilization fund now? Why do people feel it's so important to pass this financial order in January or early February rather than waiting to have the rest of their expenses figured out? He asked.

Using Free Cash for stabilization is one of its recommended uses, Mayor Sciarra pointed out.

Director Nardi said she thinks it is good practice to refill when they have been spending money out of a reserve. It is not intended to be a rushed process; it is part of their policy. It does not mean the money is gone.

She, Mayor Sciarra, Dr. Bonner and Dr. Linkenhoker had a meeting with the senator to advocate for changes to the school funding formula that would benefit Northampton. When DESE increased the foundation budget, the percentage split paid by Northampton simultaneously increased, so it did not work for their city. These are some of the things city leaders have been advocating for, she assured.

Using the chat for substantive comments is also interrupting, Councilor Maiore interjected. It is a way of speaking out of turn and unfair to the rest of the committee and the council.

Councilor Nabad thanked Councilor Maiore for pointing that out. She found those side conversations distracting and maybe emotional.

Councilor Stratton said it raises the question of whose meeting this is.

It is mine, Mayor Sciarra interjected.

Neither the Mayor or Director Nardi answered his question, he asserted. If this were a council meeting, there could be a little more insistence that questions be answered, not just talked around.

There being no further questions or comments, **Councilor Loisel moved to adjourn the City Council. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.**

School Committee Member Mahone moved to adjourn. School Committee Member Bartoli seconded. The motion carried unanimously 10:0 by roll call vote. The School Committee adjourned.

SVAHS Trustee Dr. Julie Spencer Robinson moved to adjourn. Dr. Bonner seconded. The motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote with Mr. Aquadro and Mr. Cahillane absent.

The joint meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

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