



Committee on City Services and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Chair: Councilor Karen Foster
Vice-Chair: Councilor Jamila Gore
Councilor Marianne LaBarge
Councilor Garrick Perry

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 6, 2023
Time: 5 p.m.
Via Teleconference

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

At 5 p.m., Councilor Karen Foster, Chair, called the meeting to order. On a roll call, Councilor Foster, Councilor Jamila Gore, Vice Chair; Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge and Councilor Garrick Perry were present. Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler was absent.

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

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There being no members of the public present, Councilor Foster moved to the next item on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF JANUARY 3, 2023

The minutes of January 3, 2023 were not linked to the agenda, so Councilor Foster moved to the next item on the agenda.

4. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

A. 23.234 Appointment to Disability Commission, referred by City Council - 1/19/2023
Disability Commission

Amy Sugihara, 110 Morningside Drive, Florence

Term: February 2023-June 2025

To fill a vacancy

Councilor Perry said he had a lovely conversation with Amy. She's been a volunteer at All Out Adventures and she talked about how that has really helped her connect with this community. She's only been here for a year. Her husband works over at Hampshire and she feels like this will give her a chance to give back and become more entrenched in the community.

He believes she's attended every meeting of the Disability Commission so far except for one. When asked what she thought she could bring to the committee, she said communication with the public. She said she had noticed that sometimes someone in public comment would ask a question and that it would take a while for someone to get back to them and she thought tightening up that process would help everyone feel heard and make the city feel more accepting and open to people with disabilities.

It's great finding someone who has just moved from another area who already feels like this is a great fit for them, he commented.

With that being said, **Councilor Perry moved to positively recommend the appointment of Amy Sugihara to the Disability Commission. Councilor LaBarge seconded.**

Councilor LaBarge confirmed that Amy has attended every meeting and has had concerns about people who have spoken and have not gotten answers back in a timely manner.

Councilor Foster also endorsed Amy's appointment, saying she is one of those people who has an idea and gets things done. Amy was actually the person who reached out to Councilor Maiore last spring about spearheading the 'No Mow May' campaign, she shared.

She disclosed that, although Amy is a volunteer at All Out Adventures, there is no reason she cannot act impartially on her appointment.

The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

B. 23.236 Appointment to Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board, referred by City Council - 2/2/2023
Elected Officials Compensation Advisory Board

Deborah Henson, 118 Franklin Street, Northampton

Term: February 2023-November 2024

To fill a vacancy

Councilor Foster explained that since this was just referred by City Council last Thursday, they can discuss and deliberate but must wait to take a formal vote until after seven days have elapsed.

She was the councilor assigned to interview Ms. Henson, Councilor Foster said. Although she didn't get a chance to speak to her over the weekend, Deb had reached out to her, Councilor Moulton and Councilor Nash earlier about her interest in serving on a city board or commission. She is an attorney practicing in another state and has been pretty heavily involved with the city being one of the chief proponents behind the campaign to save St. John's Cantius Church. She was also her constituent briefly before re-precincting. If she were to make a motion, it would be to positively recommend her.

Councilor LaBarge agreed that it was a very good appointment, pointing to all the research Ms. Henson brought to bear in the discussion around preserving the church.

A vote on the appointment will appear on the next City Services Commission agenda, Councilor Foster confirmed.

5. Role of City Services in board and commission appointments (as a follow-up to Select Committee discussion)

She attended a recent Select Committee to Study Barriers to Serving on City Boards and Commissions meeting to discuss the role of the City Services Committee in volunteer board appointments, Councilor Foster reported. As a follow-up, she thought it would be a good opportunity to discuss the role the City Services Committee currently plays in appointments and whether they want to make any changes to this role. An idea proposed in the Select Committee discussion was whether City Services Committee members want to consider reaching out to the chairs of committees to seek their input on candidates, she shared.

Councilor LaBarge pointed out that the mayor goes through all the applications for a position and makes a selection and City Services is not involved in that process. It would be nice if the whole committee was able to see the people who applied, she suggested.

Part of the discussion in the Select Committee was about communication and the fact that applicants do not have access to a lot of information about the committee's role or expectations for new members or updates from the mayor's office throughout the application process, Councilor Perry said. He mentioned Human Rights Commission (HRC) Chair Megan Paik's project to develop a handbook for the HRC to familiarize candidates with the history and purview, priorities and expectations of that commission and how it could serve as a template for other boards.

He suggested the idea of having a roundtable or sending out an invitation to committee chairs to see what kind of candidates they are looking for that. He doesn't know if that is currently part of the process, he said.

Her understanding is that chairs are not contacted as a matter of course, Councilor Foster said. When City Services was looking at an appointment for the Community Preservation Committee, she did reach out to the chair for that and does not believe anything precludes them from doing so.

Councilor LaBarge said she liked the idea of doing a roundtable with the chairs.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Commissioner Merridith O'Leary is not available for their March meeting but the Assistant Commissioner is going to come to update them on the Department of Community Care, Councilor Foster said. She suggested looking at having a roundtable with board and commission chairs for their April meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Councilor LaBarge repeated her interest in having the DPW Director come in to talk about vacancies at the DPW.

A. Exploring ways to support expanded public participation in meetings

The governor's order allowing remote meetings extends to the end of March, Councilor Foster reminded. Her guess is that it will be extended, but she thought City Services could discuss whether there are additional ways the city can promote public participation. For example, they know some members of the public don't have access to the technology or know how to use Zoom to take advantage of remote participation. She thought they as a committee might be able to come up with ways to support members of the public who don't have their own devices or know how to use video conferencing programs.

Councilor LaBarge said she thinks meetings should be held in council chambers when they have subjects of particular interest. She said she thought Forbes Library and Lilly Library also offer training on computer programs.

Councilor Perry said he thinks they ought to think about having different hubs throughout the city where the public can access government meetings, such as public libraries and the cable access studio. He mentioned the resilience hub as a possible location for such a site. Councilor Foster said she would also like to investigate the Fire Department. Other places mentioned were the Senior Center, Police Station, High School and the Center for New Americans.

Members divided up the sites and volunteered to contact them for additional information. Councilor Perry agreed to reach out to Forbes and Lilly Libraries and the High School. Councilor Gore said she would contact the Fire Department and Senior Center and Councilor Foster said she would contact the Police and IT departments.

7. **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Councilor Perry moved to adjourn. Councilor Gore seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Prepared By:

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