



Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.
Councilor John Thorpe*

On-line Zoom Meeting

Meeting Date: April 1, 2021

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during the City Council Meeting as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 8:51 p.m., Councilor Sciarra called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Gina-Louise Sciarra (Chair), Marianne LaBarge (Vice-Chair), Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. and John Thorpe. Also present from the City Council were William H. Dwight, Alex Jarrett, Karen Foster, Rachel Maiore and Jim Nash. Also present were Mayor David Narkewicz, Finance Director Susan Wright and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
3. **Approval of Minutes of March 4, 2021**
Councilor Thorpe moved to approve the minutes of March 4, 2021. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.
4. **FINANCIAL ORDERS**
 - A. **21.219 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$6 Million for Radio System Upgrade**
Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

As briefly described earlier in the meeting, this has been a major inter-agency project, Mayor Narkewicz reiterated. The city has equipment that has aged out and in many cases is no longer either replaceable or serviceable, meaning staff must buy components on eBay and elsewhere. They knew they needed to make an investment but wanted to do it in a strategic and thoughtful way, so they brought in a consultant to look at topography, tower locations and some of the existing impediments to communications, including newer buildings with poor service with some of the older radio equipment. It is a major investment but will ensure reliable communication between departments and equipment that is supportable going forward. Staff are reviewing bids on the project now. The borrowing authorization is expected to be utilized over two fiscal years because of the project's scope. He thanked Emergency Dispatch Director Kelly Schuetze for taking the lead on the project and commended the other departments that participated as part of the interagency working group. The upgrade is of major importance to dispatch since all communication goes through the City Council Committee on Finance Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2021

dispatch center after hours. It will allow city departments to have reliable communication and sufficient channel capacity, especially for major events such as the Hot Chocolate Run.

Councilor LaBarge asked about towers.

The city has some towers and repeater devices necessary to reach outlying areas of the city such as her ward, Mayor Narkewicz explained. Part of the project is looking at where they have gaps. This is a science; consultants are able to look at the community and topography and map out where they need towers and repeaters in order to have reliable communication throughout the city.

If they are making an investment, they want to make sure they don't have six different departments investing in different equipment that isn't inter-operable. It is an important part of the city's infrastructure.

Councilor Nash expressed his understanding that if the city had a Cahoots-type program or resilience hub it would be part of this network. Mayor Narkewicz confirmed that it would.

Councilor Quinlan said he had a question from a resident as to whether there was any exploration of using satellite technology instead of wiring.

Mayor Narkewicz said he would have to ask consultants the satellite question. He knows they use some satellite technology for getting communication up to the water treatment plant. He doesn't think they are talking about a wired system. There are satellite dishes on the towers, he noted. He said he could get more information for 2nd reading

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

B. 21.220 FY22 CIP - An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$450,000 for Hotel Bridge

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

This is probably one of his favorite projects in this year's capital plan, Mayor Narkewicz shared. The Hotel Bridge in Leeds was constructed in 1881 and is a beloved bridge, he related. Because of deterioration over the years it first had to be closed to road traffic and eventually couldn't even sustain foot traffic. The Leeds Civic Association has been a proponent for restoration of the bridge to reopen it at least for pedestrians. It has many challenges because it is such an old bridge and is over a body of water, complicating renovations due to the coatings and paint on the bridge.

Director LaScaleia has been working diligently with the Leeds Civic Association. They hired an engineer who has come up with a solution they believe will allow them to reopen the bridge to pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The borrowing would allow them to take the engineered designs, go out to bid and finally take down the jersey barriers.

There is such valuable history with the Hotel Bridge, Councilor LaBarge commented. Her husband and his family of eight lived on Water Street, and they used that bridge every day; her husband rode his bike over it. Their family has tons of pictures of the Hotel Bridge. Trucks used to drive over it to the Tatreau's store. Her husband is so happy about the restoration and she is in full support of this, she said.

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Councilor Maiore said she is thrilled about this. She feels very fortunate for all the work the Leeds Civic Association and Leeds residents have done. The fact that people have worked for years to open it back up to bicyclists and pedestrians shows how beloved the bridge is. When she first moved here, it was closed to vehicles, but artists would set up canvasses there. It is a huge part of the Leeds village identity. So much great history has been shared with councilors because of this, she added. She didn't realize it was built from a kit and that parts were made in Canton, Ohio and put together in Northampton. There are only 27 like it in the whole country. It is such a focal and historic point.

Councilor Quinlan thanked Councilor Maiore and Councilor LaBarge for the local and personal history and Planning Board Chair George Kohout and other residents who sent emails advocating for the project.

Mayor Narkewicz said the #1 question he gets asked is why it is called the hotel bridge. There used to be a hopping hotel, he confirmed. He suggested the possibility of getting a plaque to commemorate the bridge's history when it reopens.

Councilor Sciarra said it was really lovely to get so many emails with so much context around this order and to see how much it means to people.

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

C. 21.221 FY22 CIP - An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$685,000 for DPW Vehicles

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

Mayor Narkewicz shared his screen with the page from the capital plan describing the project and reminded councilors of the city's replacement plan for vehicles and equipment to avoid escalating repair costs. He cited the ages of various pieces of equipment.

These are strategic investments in the fleet, he presented. Director LaScaleia keeps a very close inventory of her vehicles and works with mechanics to identify maintenance costs. They try to replace vehicles on a regular basis, particularly mowers because the city's fields and rail trails have expanded so significantly over the last several years, particularly with the addition of Florence Fields.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

D. 21.222 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$500,000 from Capital Stabilization to Arch Street Bridge Repairs

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

All of the city's bridges are registered with the state and inspected on a regular basis, Mayor Narkewicz advised. Often in recommending maintenance, the city is responding to such inspectional reports. The state closed the Clement Street Bridge until the city could make repairs and workers previously made repairs to the Pine Street Bridge, he reminded.

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The Arch Street Bridge is a triple span bridge located near the intersection of Main and Arch Street in Leeds. MassDOT inspects the bridge on a regular basis and has identified a number of needed repairs, some structural and some regarding the control of water. City officials have worked with an engineer to design repairs. The bridge was built in the 1850's and is considered a dry-lade masonry bridge. It is an old bridge subject to state inspections and a number of repairs are needed, he concluded.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

E. 21.223 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$25,000 from Cemetery Perpetual Care for Cemetery Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

This is part of an ongoing multi-year commitment made in a prior Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Mayor Narkewicz reminded. The city did a master plan for its historic cemeteries and has been doing a lot of work primarily in the realm of historic preservation. They have been working very closely with the Historical Commission and Sarah LaValley. They have been successful in securing some state grants and are using city funds to supplement these. They are continuing to work through the historic master plan, working on the highest priority gravestones. The plan lays out a multi-year commitment to the city's cemeteries and calls for investing \$25,000 each year from trust funds to enable the parks and cemetery division to work on these projects.

High winds recently knocked over some of the most brittle headstones, he reported.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

F. 21.224 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$1.8 Million Free Cash to Various Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

Some of the projects indicated are perfect for paying for with Free Cash, Mayor Narkewicz advised. One of the things they use Free Cash for is one-time investments that are too large to pay out of the operating budget but not large enough to bond for. Proposed projects cross multiple schools and departments.

Councilor LaBarge asked about the nurse's office renovation at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS).

They have been doing a lot of work internally and need to do a fairly major renovation of the nurses' office, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. The work includes plumbing but doesn't involve an expansion of the footprint of the building. He said he could try to get more information.

Councilor LaBarge said she is just concerned about the amount of money - \$206,000.

He knows there are a lot of ADA compliance issues. He thinks the bathroom in the nurse's office is not now ADA compliant or accessible by wheelchairs.

Councilor LaBarge asked if this similar to what is occurring at the Ryan Road School where they have young children in wheelchairs and have to use a Hoyer lift to put them on the toilets. She's been very vocal about that.

All he can tell her is that the facility folks at NPS did not resubmit that project this year, Mayor Narkewicz said. He thinks they are looking at other ways to engineer it. He said he could check with the folks there to get the back story. The facilities directors have been busy working on air filtration and other issues because of the pandemic.

Councilor Jarrett asked if he knew what sidewalks were included in the sidewalk appropriation.

There is a lot of work going on around Pine Street and looking at sidewalk connections there, Mayor Narkewicz said. As they go out to bid for other paving projects they will be looking at including sidewalks as part of those too. Inevitably when they redo streets, they do major stretches of sidewalk. He doesn't think they have a specific list.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

G. 21.225 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$150,000 from PEG Access Fund to IT Services Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

This is ongoing maintenance to the cable network. As part of the city's contract with Comcast, funds are allotted for capital improvements to the system. A big chunk of the money goes directly to Northampton Open Media (NOM). The PEG fund is used for a maintenance and strategic replacement program.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

H. 21.226 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$115,000 from Parking Receipts Reserved for Parking Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

The three projects are to be paid out of parking receipts, Mayor Narkewicz confirmed. Garage maintenance is a recurring funding stream. The parking garage is a maintenance project in progress forever because it is a moving, flexing structure in need of ongoing maintenance such as inspecting ceiling joints, looking at the exterior of the building, checking elevators, lighting, etc.

The fleet of Leafs have a battery life span. The existing replacement strategy is to let them go out to the end of that life span (seven years) and then trade them in. People often suggest leasing electric vehicles because of the technology involved and the necessity of replacing the batteries.

Councilor Sciarra asked why the city doesn't lease the vehicles. Mayor Narkewicz said he could ask if this has been explored.

Councilor Jarrett said he has a neighbor who has a Leaf and he did some research for him on replacing the batteries. A dealer will charge \$15,000, but there are independent repair shops including one in Massachusetts that will replace batteries for about \$5,000, he volunteered.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

I. 21.227 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$215,000 from Sale of Land RRA Account for NPS Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

This is a series of school projects administrators will fund using the proceeds of the sale of a former school, Mayor Narkewicz explained. Another order councilors will see later proposes using the proceeds of the sale of a water department building for reinvestment in water department projects.

The proceeds can only be used for capital projects so, in the case of older school buildings, they typically push the funds back to the schools. One of the things they've been trying to do with the capital plan over time is slowly catch up on deferred maintenance.

Councilor Nash said he is not sure in his time on the council he has seen money spent from this account.

Mayor Narkewicz said it actually has been. When they sold the former Feiker School to Nonotuck they used the proceeds to pay for roof replacement at a couple of schools. Similarly, when they sold the Florence Grammar School they used the proceeds towards school projects.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

J. 21.228 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$94,575 from Sale of Land RRA Account for Florence Fields Recreation Area

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

This is another use of proceeds from the sale of land, Mayor Narkewicz presented. Often when Planning Director Wayne Feiden brings forth open space acquisitions, a small lot is sold. These are some funds from those types of sales which they are trying to utilize to finish some unfinished parts of Florence Fields, including a playground. The city already applied for and received four or five PARC grants for Florence Fields so they were unsuccessful in obtaining more state funding. The project has received some

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Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and there has also been private fundraising for specific projects associated with the fields.

Councilor LaBarge asked what land was sold that they are using proceeds from.

Mayor Narkewicz said he could get that information. Seconds later, he shared that Director Feiden just informed him by text that it was Burts Pit by Woods Road.

Councilor Maiore said she is really thrilled about this. Florence Fields is a place her family goes several times a week. She asked when he thought construction would begin. Also, she asked if the land past Crimson and Clover is city-owned.

Mayor Narkewicz said he would have to check. He knows Recreation Director Ann-Marie Moggio is eager to get started and probably has playground catalogues out already. He knows she wants to get this going right away to hopefully get it in place this year.

Residents regularly ask her about it. She has a lot of good news coming out of Ward 7 tonight, she commented.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

K. 21.229 FY22 CIP - An Order to Appropriate \$424,000 from Sale of Land RRA Account for Water Line Replacement

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor LaBarge moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Quinlan seconded.

A recurring theme tonight is taking money from the sale of land and pushing it back into capital projects, Mayor Narkewicz reiterated. The former water department building on Prospect Street was purchased by Congregation B'nai Israel. The proceeds will go back into water line replacement which is always a recurring item in the capital plan when big projects are planned. Water line work is happening on Damon Road, Atwood Drive, Winter Street, etc., and this will help support some of those projects.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

L. 21.230 An Order to Reprogram Funds to AOM Fire Suppression and Leeds Elementary Parking Lot Repaving

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor LaBarge seconded.

As often happens with capital projects, some come in lower than projected and have tailings left over while others cost more than expected. Administrators are taking tailings from three separate projects and moving them to an ongoing Academy of Music (AOM) fire suppression project. They are also taking leftover funds from the chimney repair at Leeds Elementary School and moving them to parking lot paving there.

As councilors may have noticed, they have been doing a lot of work at the AOM with the theater dark, including important safety upgrades. The theater previously didn't have a sprinkler system which limited the types of shows the theater could have. It's obviously sad to see the Academy dark during the pandemic, but they're trying to tackle some of these important projects that need to be done.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

M. 21.234 An Order to Accept DA Sullivan \$10,000 Gift to Fund Public Art Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a grateful and positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

Mark Sullivan approached the city several years ago and said his family business, DA Sullivan and Sons, was interested in making some recurring gifts each year for projects to help the city, Mayor Narkewicz explained. The family's donations have helped fund playground projects at schools, the accessible water fountain in the park and the technology lending program at the senior center, among other things. This is a project Arts Council Director Brian Foote has been working on. The city has been talking with the PVTA about doing art projects at bus stops, so DA Sullivan is graciously giving them this gift to be dedicated to public arts projects.

On behalf of the council, Councilors Sciarra and LaBarge expressed deep gratitude for the family's generosity.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

N. 21.235 An Order to Appropriate Marijuana Community Impact Fee \$2.6 Million to Various Projects

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

As the council knows from the discussion at its January meeting, he made a policy decision recently regarding host community agreements with folks in the cannabis industry, Mayor Narkewicz reminded. Heretofore, the city was collecting a three percent (3%) mitigation fee from marijuana retailers and using it to fund projects in and around the facilities. The city still has the ability to collect the fee but for a number of policy and social equity reasons he made the decision to drop the requirement that it be paid on an ongoing basis.

Over time they have been devoting these funds to key projects in and around areas where the facilities operate. A lot of work has happened in and around Conz Street, including repaving Conz Street, adjacent side streets and crosswalks. Other big projects have been on Pleasant Street as community impact fees were used to help fund some of the early visioning processes for this project. The city has been doing Pleasant Street in segments.

A portion of the funding will help finish the final piece of the Pleasant Street corridor revamping, which has included narrowing the street, adding bicycle lanes and street trees and otherwise improving the street-scape. NETA was hoping to be able to get a Valley Bike Share station somewhere on Conz Street. They

were not able to locate it directly across from NETA, but they will be putting it pretty close - at Salvo House - so it will fill a dual role of providing alternative transportation for people visiting NETA and Salvo residents.

The other project is the bus stop in front of the Talbot's plaza near Jack's Recreational Cannabis. There is currently a stop there but it is not handicapped-accessible. Jack Carney was excited to have some of these funds go towards that project.

The big project in terms of allocation is the community resilience hub the city has been working on for several years, Mayor Narkewicz presented. City officials have been assembling grants, doing design and visioning work, forging partnerships with other stakeholders and, most importantly, figuring out how to pay for the actual space to serve as the hub and for necessary renovations.

These funds are the remaining funds from the period when they were collecting mitigation fees in advance. He wants to get them out into the community and doing important work, including in some cases continuing transportation and traffic mitigation work. Similarly, the resilience hub project is critical on many levels for the downtown and local economy, for people living in and around downtown and for those at risk during climate crises. NETA is excited to see some of these funds be used toward this project.

He is asking for authority to move this money into the community resilience hub account with other funds being assembled for the acquisition of a site. He has tried to stress to people that the city still has the option of collecting the mitigation fee. The idea is to mitigate the impacts of retail marijuana operations to the city. Folks have talked about some of the other goals of the cannabis laws, including supporting people who have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, and the city remains committed to that. The city is also continuing to work on reducing barriers to getting into the industry. The resilience hub is an effort towards helping those who have been disadvantaged in so many ways, he concluded.

She thinks they are all excellent uses of those funds, Councilor Sciarra enthused. She thinks the resilience hub is one of the most important and innovative undertakings the city has taken up in her time. They heard a very strong endorsement of it this week from the Northampton Policing Review Commission (NPRC). She thinks this is just a spectacular use of these funds.

Councilor LaBarge quoted from an email from Ya-Ping, who wrote, "I think it would be wonderful if councilors could raise the issue of accountability to people of color harmed by the War on Drugs in decisions related to the Marijuana Community Impact Fee's usage tonight, as it seems non-equitable for money from the Marijuana Community Impact Fee to go to projects that are not accountable to Black and Brown individuals and communities who have been harmed by the War on Drugs."

Ya-Ping is aware that the community resilience hub *intends* to benefit people of color and poor people, but if they are not included in decision-making, it is likely that good intentions will not have the impact desired, Councilor LaBarge continued. Ya-Ping is suggesting that use of the community impact fees be guided by a board of black and brown residents who have been impacted by criminalization/racist policing policies.

She herself thinks the mayor is on track with doing this, Councilor LaBarge shared.

This is the brick and mortar piece of the resilience hub and there is obviously a lot of work to be done on programming, Mayor Narkewicz responded. One of the city's major partners in the project, Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV), just got a grant from the Beveridge foundation and is intending to hire a resilience hub community organizer. The organizer will be working with people in the community to figure

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out the needs the hub can serve. The programming piece of it is a whole other process that will happen working with stakeholders, he assured.

It is important to note that there will be no further community impact fee revenue, so there will be no further decisions regarding its use, Councilor Dwight pointed out. Northampton is the only community in the state that has discontinued imposition of the fee. Establishment of the fee was out of an excess of caution but, in point of fact, it was usury because no other business in the state is forced to pay an impact fee. In this case, no blanket fee will be asked of future applicants so there will be no more money to oversee, he stressed.

Mayor Narkewicz referred to SJC court cases pending which may have some impact. Judges were a little gobsmacked by the fees being charged, he shared. There are no more fees coming in, he confirmed.

Councilor Thorpe thanked Councilor LaBarge and Councilor Sciarra for their comments and said he echoed those sentiments. He reiterated that he is a member of the resilience hub committee but stated that he has no financial interest in the project and believes he can vote on it objectively.

Councilor Nash said this may be his favorite financial order of all time. "It's us putting our values on the line," he observed. Thanks to the mayor's leadership, they have been working on this for several years. He mentioned the convergence with the recommendations of the policing review commission. Here they are putting aside money to make the bricks and mortar piece of this possible.

As the Ward 3 city councilor, he appreciates the equity pieces with the other three items in the order as well, he continued. He expressed approval of bringing one of the community's wonderful amenities to a public housing complex, saying he thinks Salvo House is a terrific location for a Valley Bike Share station. Similarly, he applauded completing the Pleasant Street corridor and making the bus stop at Talbot's plaza handicapped-accessible. The bus stop will improve pick-up and drop-off at the Bridge Street School and provide a convenient location for people coming from UMass and wanting to get off downtown. "I can't like this financial order enough," he enthused. He offered to vote on it twice.

Councilor Jarrett said he is also pleased to see the money going toward these items but asked about the justification for spending community mitigation funds. The mayor has stated there have been no major impacts of these facilities so he asked how they are justifying spending the funds on the emergency hub. He stressed that he isn't asking because he doesn't want to see it happen. He wants to see it happen, he just wonders if there are risks to spending it this way if it is not justifiable.

Mayor Narkewicz said he has tried to do a lot of work to make sure he understands the justification and has spoken to the city solicitor about it. He wants to make sure they are hewing to the appropriate use of those funds, he assured. He has also been in close contact with the two retailers who have paid the fees, particularly around the resilience hub which is largely coming from funds paid by NETA. NETA's community representative, Leslie Laurie, has said they are very supportive of this project so he doesn't feel like they're in any legal jeopardy doing it. He feels it is such a critical project for downtown on so many levels. Obviously, downtown has borne the brunt of traffic and other issues related to the facilities' presence. He guesses he is probably stretching a little bit but he thinks it's such an important stretch and a once in a generation project that they need to just go for it. He has talked to the folks at NETA and there's not going to be any objection from them. He feels quite confident in doing this, he concluded.

With regard to accountability to those who use the services, Councilor Jarrett asked if the mayor could describe how the community resilience hub will be accountable to homeless people and people experiencing acute and chronic stress.

Mayor Narkewicz reiterated that this is the bricks and mortar piece of the project. An ongoing group has been talking about it conceptually. It is one of the reasons CAPV is taking the step of hiring a community organizer. The honest answer is those pieces haven't been worked out yet but they are definitely part of the process. Once they find a site, they will work with stakeholders to develop that process.

He is basically trying to assemble the capital at this point. None of those decisions have been made, but that will be part of designing the operational aspects of the hub.

Councilor Jarrett asked if the council could have a presentation on the status of the community resilience hub and all the progress that's been made, and Mayor Narkewicz said definitely.

That would be timely, he agreed. They are in the middle of a fairly intense site selection process right now so it might be in conjunction with bringing something forward around that. They have been continuing to work with a group of stakeholders and other agencies.

Councilor Jarrett asked if the bus stops on Pleasant Street and Conz Street would also see improvements. When he's ridden the bus to Holyoke, he sees that many more people get on and off at these stops near NETA than they did before. The PVRTA incurs costs beyond the fares it collects, so he wondered if a contribution to the PVRTA would be appropriate and if increased ridership might be considered an impact.

Part of him wants to push back a little because some of the folks operating marijuana shops are very large corporations who appear to be making a great deal of money while others are just trying to get started and are the equity applicants they don't want to burden. He doesn't know if they have the ability to charge some applicants and not others if there are identified impacts.

Mayor Narkewicz said he doesn't know about those specific bus stops. PVRTA generally maintains the infrastructure and the city works on accessibility issues in and around it.

The impact fee is very 'squishy' and is currently the subject of litigation in multiple communities with some cases at the Supreme Judicial Court. He doesn't have a clear reading on it. There are bills filed to try to get the legislature to better delineate this whole area.

He doesn't have a clear answer to the future of community impact fees, he indicated.

Councilor Maire thanked the mayor for being a champion of equity in the emergence of the cannabis industry. She echoed what Councilor Jarrett said about vetting [plans for the resilience hub] in the community. There is so much promise here she wants it not to be derailed by some of the same mistakes sometimes made in designing large projects.

She thinks more is needed than making hub users part of the discussion; she thinks they need to be part of the decision-making around the services offered. She hopes the process will be very public so they can create the best service possible with such an investment.

Councilor Nash said he is really interested in learning more from Councilor Jarrett about the possibility of better bus stops on Pleasant Street. Now is the time to look at that. He is ready to jump in and advocate for more effective bus stops.

Councilor Dwight commented that they were straying a little far from the agenda item. He asked councilors to stick to the subject of the facility.

There being no further discussion, the motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

O. 21.237 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash \$400,000 to Animal Control Facility

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

Mayor Narkewicz recited some of the history of the endless quest for an animal control facility. When any animal control officer (ACO) in the state, including Northampton's ACO Shayla Howe, picks up a lost dog, a dog suspected of rabies or other animal they have to have a place to shelter them while looking for the owner, sometimes for purposes of quarantine in the case of suspected rabies. Dogs come into their custody for all kinds of reasons. Communities have to have a facility to keep them safely while the ACO is trying to track down the owner.

They have been doing a series of work arounds while they have been trying to figure out how to create a proper up-to-code kennel for a city the size of Northampton. The state has very strict requirements for kennels in terms of sanitation, drains for cleaning, a place for outdoor run, etc. He has toured new ones built in other communities. They partnered with Amherst for a little while and had an intermunicipal agreement with them which has since expired and have also partnered with veterinarians. More recently, the city has had an arrangement with the new Waggin' Tails daycare and boarding facility on Florence Road at old Heritage Farm. Unfortunately, COVID caused the owners to close it and basically put it on the market.

They have been trying to find a location for a facility. Councilor LaBarge can tell them about a really exciting community meeting held several years ago. They had a proposal to site a kennel on the former gravel pit land in conjunction with a dog park being built. They held a big community meeting with a bunch of neighbors and heard quite strongly from residents of Glendale Road that they did not want it on Glendale Road. They have been done a series of site selection processes over the past two or three years where they have gotten far along on some sites and for whatever reason, they have not panned out. He mentioned another former gravel pit and a former Moose Lodge in Ward 1 as some of the sites that had been considered.

They finally have identified a parcel they think would be appropriate on former state hospital land. He has been studying the Acts of 1994. When the state hospital closed, a number of parcels were meted out to different organizations including the city, including a parcel on Burts Pit Road designated as a community garden and parcels deeded to the housing authority for affordable housing. A parcel was given to the city which the city used in part to create Ellerbrook Field. A subparcel of it was specifically delineated in the act for use as a municipal facility.

Representative Nagle and his aide at the time, Peter Kocot, carved out the facility. They have identified a parcel actually given to them by the state in 1994.

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The project was on a prior Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Mayor Narkewicz showed the location of the parcel. The structure is strictly for the ACO to care for, hold and feed lost animals until she can find their owners or work with local vets or adoption agencies to find them a home. It has pretty good separation from nearby houses and will be fenced in and secured. It won't be visible. He thinks they will be able to do a ton of solar on the building and around the site so it will easily be a net zero facility. It will have a small mini-split heating system.

He showed a schematic of the interior of the building. It will be a very basic, probably cinder-block building, probably about 2,000 square feet. He described the layout and some of the building's features.

The project still has to go through the Planning Board and other processes but they feel pretty confident that this could be a really good site, particularly with both ground-mounted solar and solar on the building. He thinks there will be plenty of shielding and screening. City officials have asked Berkshire Design to give them an idea of the cost based on the schematic. They are estimating it could be as much as \$750,000, so the amount of money previously appropriated is not sufficient. Before they go any further, they want to know if they have actual funding to do it. This has mostly been stymied by the fact that they haven't had the land to construct it on, but now they do. He is here asking them to supplement the already-approved funding to advance the project.

DISCUSSION

Councilor Dwight said it looks like a great project. As the mayor says, it's long overdue. He's excited about the location. It has been almost as difficult to locate as the emergency cot shelter long ago given some community resistance. He asked if it would require more staffing since, presumably, with a facility of this size and type, they wouldn't be able to rely on Shayla to both respond to calls and monitor the dogs.

It will not require more staffing, Mayor Narkewicz said. The ACO will work there during the day, feeding the animals, letting them outside and dealing with any veterinary needs they may have. They will only be outside when she is there. Overnight, the facilities typically have sound-activated cameras so if there is a disturbance it can be monitored by dispatch. It is a challenging job for one person, he acknowledged. They have a part, part-time animal control officer to back Shayla up and are looking at whether this part-time position should go to part-time. When she puts animals in the Amherst facility she has to drive there every day to feed them. It will make her life and work less complicated and provide a clean, safe space within the city limits that is centrally accessible.

It sounds like a much better solution for the humans and animals involved, Councilor Jarrett observed. He asked the mayor to describe the return on investment for having the facility. How long would it take to offset the cost of construction or, if having it does not save money in the long run, how much extra would they be spending?

Finance Director Wright said she believes the major savings is the staff time involved in making more than one trip a day to Amherst. It's really a time factor. Returning dogs to owners will be a lot more efficient. She thinks the real savings will be in the efficiency of the operation more than in the comparison of the cost of using other facilities. The two other facilities were temporary solutions and never intended to be long-term solutions, she noted.

Councilor Maiore said she supports this facility and she for one would support more staffing. She would love to see a staff person on call 24 hours a day. The policing review commission cited that 8.6% of the police's time is being used for animal calls.

Mayor Narkewicz acknowledged that this is one of the recommendations of the policing review commission. Shayla is a civilian, he pointed out.

Councilor Maiore said she agrees they need the facility.

Councilor Foster asked how many animals are typically in custody at a time.

Mayor Narkewicz said he thinks it's cyclical. They have some data which he said he could get. He thinks it is on average two to four but at times there may be more. He thinks there is space for six there now.

Councilor LaBarge said she is supporting this 100%. She thinks it needs to be out of the police department.

It is her neighborhood, and she thinks it is a fantastic site but she does want to caution them that there are houses on one side and across the street from Chapel, Councilor Foster volunteered.

Mayor Narkewicz said he is mindful of that. The people across the street aren't really going to be able to see into the building since it will be fenced in and will not have picture windows. They hope that it will be a fairly low-impact facility.

Councilor Sciarra gave a shout out to Shayla because she is truly remarkable. She understands she will often travel long distances to rescue animals in her spare time. Especially if there's going to be solar, she thinks it would be lovely if there were underfloor heating for the little paws, she added. The mayor said he would mention this to Director Pomerantz.

The motion passed 4:0 by roll call vote.

5. **New Business**

None.

6. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor Quinlan moved to adjourn. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 4 Yes, 0 No. The meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

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