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Planning & Sustainability Director Wayne Feiden to Retire After a 33-Year Career with Northampton, 25 Years as Director Assistant Director Carolyn Misch Named Interim Director

NORTHAMPTON - The City of Northampton's Planning and Sustainability Director, Wayne Feiden, has announced his retirement, effective June 30, 2022, after serving Northampton's municipal government for more than 33 years, including 25 years leading the department.

"I cannot overstate the impact Director Feiden has had on Northampton," shared Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, "His expertise and guidance across five Mayors and a third of a century place Wayne among the most influential government officials in Northampton history. Northampton owes Wayne endless gratitude for his approach to conservation, climate change, and housing of all kinds and for putting people and equity at the center of planning government projects. Wayne must be counted among the rare Americans who built a career putting public service over self in service of a vision of a better community for everyone. I will miss Wayne terribly. I'm envious of my predecessors, who had the pleasure of working with him for their entire terms as Mayor. While I am sad to witness the culmination of Wayne's unparalleled career, I am grateful for the template of excellence he has provided for us all as we imagine what comes next in this department."

Director Feiden began his career in the City of Northampton Planning Department in 1988 as an Environmental Planner, becoming Senior Planner in 1991, and advancing to Principal Planner in 1993. He was named Director in 1997. Concurrent with his duties in Northampton, Director Feiden taught planning and economic development courses as a Lecturer of Practice at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and as an Adjunct Lecturer at Westfield State University. Director Feiden is active in his field, regularly leading or serving on strategic planning projects in other parts of the United States and around the world, prolifically publishing scholarly articles, accepting professional fellowships and residencies, and achieving many honors and awards for excellence related to his work. Most notably, Director Feiden was named to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners and was awarded a Bellagio Center Residency and five other international fellowships to four continents.

Many of Northampton's most visible and successful accomplishments over the past four decades benefited from Director Feiden's influence. Feiden enjoys a nearly peerless ability to

attract millions of dollars in federal, state, and other financial investments to the city. He served as a change agent to bring planning, equity, environment, climate change, and sustainable transportation to the forefront of the city's agenda.

Director Feiden's work led the city to earn gold-star LEED for Cities Certification, helped Northampton receive the first-ever 5-STAR Communities award for sustainability, and the highest "Commonwealth Capital" score under that former Massachusetts measure of sustainability efforts, among many recognitions. Under his tenure, Northampton has become one of the most livable and sustainable small cities in New England, with a strong focus on social equity, affordable housing, resilience, and sustainability.

A sampling of Director Feiden's many accomplishments in Northampton include:

- Quadrupled the amount of permanently protected open space (now over 25% of the city).
- Quadrupled city-owned paved shared-use bicycle paths (now 12 miles).
- Created bicycle infrastructure from the regional ValleyBike to bike racks to bike repair stations.
- Added grant writing and project management to Planning and Sustainability's charge to make the pie bigger (and reduce city battles over limited resources), bringing in many millions in grant funding.
- Created a limited development program to add affordable and market-rate housing to conservation purchases.
- Moved the city from a 1972 master plan that focused on suburban and strip development to the Sustainable Northampton Plan, which focuses on walkable, bikeable, and sustainable development.
- Reformed 1974 regulatory systems that made downtown development, affordable and attainable housing, and healthy development patterns very difficult to one that encourages sustainable development, including zoning reform, adding the first wetlands protection, historic district, and central business district ordinances.
- Stewarded redevelopment at the former Northampton State Hospital with legislation, planning, and regulatory programs.
- Initiated the Picture Main Street and Pleasant Street Complete Streets programs to make the system more walkable and bikeable and encourage experiential businesses that draw people downtown.
- Initiated a program of developer paid sidewalks and traffic mitigation to supplement city-wide complete streets efforts.
- Merged former Mayor Narkewicz's focus on day shelter for people experiencing homelessness and climate-driven resilience hub needs into a single integrated project.

Director Feiden received a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources with distinction from the University of Michigan Ann Arbor and his Masters in City and Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Reflecting on his career, Director Feiden remarked, "In municipal strategy, smart planning, sustainability, and equity are the desired outcomes of a long vision endorsed by the community in the Sustainable Northampton planning process. My goal has always been what is fair and right for Northampton and I've been sincere in my willingness to collaborate on the specific

path to get there. I always listened to the community in designing every solution, and then worked to communicate the resulting final approach to everyone. Any given plan or idea can be modified in service of achieving the ultimate ideal.”

In retirement, Director Feiden intends to fully indulge his love of travel and to continue consulting in worthwhile planning projects across the globe. He looks forward to spending more time with his wife and daughter and biking around town on a ValleyBike Share bicycle.

Mayor Sciarra has named Carolyn Misch as Interim Director of Planning and Sustainability. Misch has worked with Director Feiden for 22 years, and was named Assistant Director in January of 2020. She has collaborated on or led every major comprehensive planning project, zoning regulatory change, and paradigm shift during her tenure. In following common city process, human resources will post the position and conduct an open search for a new Director of Planning and Sustainability.

For more information, contact the Mayor’s Office at 413-587-1249 or mayor@northamptonma.gov.