

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON NEWSLETTER



Mayor Sciarra Selected as 2024 Elected Official of the Year by the American Planning Association - Massachusetts Chapter

The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-MA) announced that it has named Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra as the 2024 Elected Official of the Year, honoring her steadfast leadership and commitment to thoughtful, community-driven planning.

This distinction recognizes the significant strides Northampton has made in sustainability, climate resilience, and social equity with work on an interconnected set of initiatives. Working closely with members of the Northampton community and building on the important work begun by her predecessors,

Mayor Sciarra has established the Department of Climate Action and Project Administration (CAPA), created a climate-focused stabilization fund, advanced affordable housing projects, moved forward plans for a Community Resilience Hub, and shepherded the Picture Main Street project. Each of these efforts has been instrumental in translating the city's Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan into actionable outcomes, with the Picture Main Street project, in particular, showcasing her commitment to community input on safe, accessible, and inviting public spaces which are critical for our local economy and our environment. [Read more here!](#)

Newsletter Sign-Up



Would you like to receive the City of Northampton's newsletter as soon as it's available? Simply fill out a quick sign-up form, and each issue will be sent straight to your inbox once it's published! Complete the sign-up form, [linked here](#).

See page 2 for information about the temporary closure of City Hall.



Mayor's Office
210 Main Street, Northampton
(413) 587 1249
mayor@northamptonma.gov



City Hall Closing Temporarily for Asbestos Abatement

City Hall will be closed beginning December 2nd for a minimum of four weeks to undergo asbestos abatement and insulation installation. During this time, employees from City Hall departments will either work remotely or from temporary locations outside of City Hall. Email

is the best way to reach any of these departments during this time. If you'd like to visit one of the temporary locations, please call or email the office to make an appointment.



Mayor's Office/License Commission - Temporary Location

Police Station, 29 Center Street, Northampton
mayor@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1249

Office of the Auditor - Temporary Location

Senior Center, Computer Lab/Workshop
67 Conz Street, Northampton
kfisher@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1205

Planning & Sustainability - Temporary Location

Senior Center, Computer Lab/Workshop
67 Conz Street, Northampton
planning@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1266

City Clerk's Office/Registrars of Voters - Temporary Location

Memorial Hall, Central Services Office
240 Main Street, Suite 3, Northampton
cclerk@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1224

Office of the Assessor - Temporary Location

Memorial Hall, Central Services Office
240 Main Street, Suite 3, Northampton
assessor@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1203

City Council

lkruzler@northamptonma.gov
citycouncil@northamptonma.gov
Ph: 413-587-1210

Book Discussions For All

Forbes Library has book groups for all ages and interests including groups for middle grades, mysteries, nature and environment, social justice, literary fiction, women's history, and presidents. Books are available to borrow through the library and new members are always welcome.

Visit the [Forbes Library Book Discussion Groups page](#) or stop by the library to learn more.





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Message from Police Chief John Cartledge

Next month, we're sending two officers to the Use of Force Summit, an important opportunity for advanced training. Our four new officers are doing well and continuing their progress in the Field Training and Evaluation Program. Additionally, we're now accepting applications for the 2025 Citizen Police Academy, which starts on February 1, 2025. Applications are available online or in our lobby at 29 Center Street. Lastly, we are proud to partner with the Hadley Police Department and Hampshire Probate and Family for "Operation Deck the Halls," supporting local families in need this holiday season.



Sponsor a child or family in Hampshire County by visiting our [Facebook page](#) for more details!



Want to join a city Board or Committee?

Have you ever wanted to get involved in your local municipal government but didn't know how? Check the latest vacancies and fill out the application form on the city website at northamptonma.gov/192/Boards-Committees or stop by the Mayor's Office for a paper application.

When will Picture Main Street Construction Start?

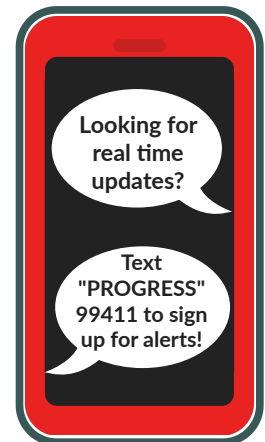
The city is still awaiting a month-to-month projection for the construction timeline. However, we do have an update on what to expect in the Fall of 2025. The project will be advertised and bid with mobilization to start thereafter. Active construction will likely commence in the Spring of 2026.

In the meantime, check out our comprehensive [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) document](#)—chances are it has the answers you're looking for! If not, please reach out to the Mayor's Office with any additional questions.



"POP... Pardon Our Progress" Updates

The POP communication system is live. Text "PROGRESS" to 99411 to receive updates, alerts, & essential information leading up to and during the Picture Main Street project. For more info, visit the Picture Main Street webpage [linked here](#).





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Construction Updates

- Work on the Pulaski Park Stone Dust Walk Repairs is expected to begin this week
- A permanent pavement patch will be installed on Lyman Road in the coming weeks as part of a sewer repair project

Last week the Highway Division

- Repaired potholes on Florence St., Nutting Ave., and Terrace Lane
- Rebuilt catch basins on Hatfield St. and Locust St.
- Patched pavement cuts on Hatfield St. and Locust St.
- And much more!

Visit the city website or check out our [interactive construction map](#) to learn more!



ARPA Updates

This issue, we're excited to highlight Manna Community Kitchen, which received ARPA funding to continue the meals delivery program that began during the pandemic. Manna provides high quality, healthy meals to individuals facing food insecurity. This important work helps ensure that no one in our community goes hungry. Thank you, Manna!

We also want to take a moment to share information about their annual Thanksgiving meal, which they provide free of charge to families who are struggling to put food on the table during the holidays. This meal brings the community together each year to give thanks for good food and good company. They anticipate serving around 1,500 people this year! The meal will take place at Edwards Church from 12pm to 2pm (pick up and delivery also available).

They are still looking for volunteers and donations. Please visit the link below to see what is needed and how you can help! Monetary donations and donations of winter coats and men's underwear are also accepted.

Sign up to volunteer [here](#)



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Q&A with Mayor Sciarra



Q: What is the Undesignated Fund Balance (aka Free Cash)? How is it generated? How does the city use it?

A: The Undesignated Fund Balance is generated from three sources. Funds remaining and unspent from the prior year's fund balance, revenues that come in above projections, and any unspent amounts in departmental budgets. This balance is offset by any deficits the city may have, such as uncollected funds from grant reimbursements and Chapter 90 (funding for street improvements).

Northampton's revenue projections are based on best financial practices as recommended by the Division of Local Services (DLS) and the Government of Finance Officers Association (GFOA). For example, we use a five-year historical average of revenues and a cautious growth projection, taking into account the current economic climate and its potential impact on local revenues.

DLS, as of 2022, recommends setting "a target balance for free cash certification as a percentage of the general fund budget, [such as five to seven percent](#)." That target is higher than [DLS' previous "best practice"](#) recommended target of [three to five percent](#), although the City of Northampton has kept its policy at the smaller range for its target.

Annually, the certified Undesignated Fund Balance is used according to the [city policy](#) and the [recommendations of the Department of Revenue](#). Our policy divides the Undesignated Fund Balance into three equal parts. One-third is divided and transferred into four special purpose stabilization funds, one-third is directed toward the next year's Capital Improvement Program Plan, and the remaining third stays in the Undesignated Fund Balance to address emergencies and unforeseen needs during the year.

The larger increases in the certified Undesignated Fund Balance over the last two years in Northampton, and across the Commonwealth, were generated from American Rescue Plan Act revenue loss one-time funds (FY2023) and a rebound in local revenues (FY2023 and FY2024) following the pandemic.

As a non-recurring revenue source, DLS recommends that the Undesignated Fund Balance should be restricted to paying one-time expenditures, funding capital projects, or replenishing other reserves. Using it to support the operational budget is not recommended.

For more information on the importance of stabilization funds, and how they are maintained with the help of free cash, please check out the [FAQ published in May 2024](#).

Want to submit a question?

To submit your question for the Q&A with Mayor Sciarra, please fill out the submission form, [linked here](#). *Submitting a question does not guarantee it will be selected for publication.*



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Director of Prevention Attends PTACC Conference

During the last week of October, the Department of Health and Human Services(DHHS) Director of Prevention, Taylor McAndrew, was invited to Seattle, Washington, to participate in a panel at the National 2024 PTACC (Police, Treatment and Community Collaborative) Conference. This year's theme focused on "deflection" which encompasses ways public safety and public health can create pathways to community-based treatment and resource support, rather than reliance on the criminal justice system. For years, the city has promoted deflection pathways through the Drug Addiction Recovery Team (DART), and more recently through the work of the Division of Community Care (DCC). Both the DCC and DART are able to leverage the expertise of

trained community responders, in partnership with our public safety partners, to best meet the needs of our residents. Director McAndrew was proud to see how the city's approaches might inspire other communities to center community outreach and harm reduction in their own deflection programs.



Call For Applicants - Indoor Ventilation Grant Program

Improving the indoor air quality of your business can reduce the risk of exposure to viruses, COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. Healthier air means a thriving environment for your patrons, employees, and families. With the assistance of the Ventilation Task Force, the City of Northampton is pleased to offer grants to business owners for improving indoor air quality. Applicants must be the owner/operator of a business or venue that serves the general public in the City of Northampton. Applicable facilities include public businesses/services open to the public who serve vulnerable populations; child/daycare centers; gyms, yoga, or other fitness centers. Eligible applicants may qualify for funding up to \$10,000! **Deadline: January 15, 2025**

[APPLY HERE](#)

Vaccination Rates for COVID/Influenza

The DHHS has given a total of 2,578 COVID and Flu vaccines in the last three months:

- 1,240 COVID-19 vaccines
- 1,338 Flu vaccines



Vaccination rates for the City of Northampton are available at the [Respiratory Immunizations Dashboard](#) (last updated November 14th):

- 29.3% vaccinated against COVID-19
- 38.3% vaccinated against influenza

Vaccination rates for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are available on state's [Viral Respiratory Illness Dashboard](#) (last updated November 9th):

- 14.7% vaccinated against COVID-19
- 28.3% vaccinated against influenza

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City of Northampton Obtains a Perfect Score on the Human Rights Campaign's 2024 Municipal Equality Index for the Seventh Year in a Row

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra joined the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) to announce that the City of Northampton has scored a perfect score (100) on the 2024 Municipal Equality Index (MEI) for the seventh year in a row. The MEI is the nation's premier benchmarking tool designed to inform municipal officials, policymakers, and business leaders on how well cities across the nation embody LGBTQ+ inclusion in their laws, policies, and services. It has been published every year since 2012. At a time when hard-fought LGBTQ+ rights are critically at stake, the MEI and the rubric it provides for cities and towns across the country has never been more important. This perfect score represents Northampton's commitment to championing inclusivity, equality, and justice in a

time of unprecedented and dangerous anti-LGBTQ+ assaults and legislation occurring around the country. [Read more](#)



Northampton Reaffirms its Commitment to Inclusion and Sanctuary

The City of Northampton reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to being a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable community. These principles are foundational to who we are as a city and are enshrined in our laws, policies, and actions. Today, as always, we stand united in support of all who live in, work in, or visit Northampton, regardless of their immigration status, gender identity, or other protected characteristics. Northampton is dedicated to fostering safety and dignity for all members of our community. On November 14, 2024, the city became aware that U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) was reportedly in pursuit of a specific individual in Northampton. This action was carried out independently, and the Northampton Police Department was not involved in any way. The enforcement of federal immigration laws is outside the authority of local law enforcement, and Northampton has a long-standing policy of non-cooperation with such actions to the extent permissible by law. Northampton has no further information about this action by ICE.

[Read the full statement here.](#)



Fitzgerald Lake Fire Updates from Fire/Rescue Assistant Chief Matt Lemberg

"On November 1, 2024, Northampton Fire Rescue personnel responded to a reported large brush fire in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Over the course of the following eight days, firefighters from Northampton and multiple fire departments throughout western Massachusetts fought to contain and extinguish a very stubborn wildland fire. Personnel from the Massachusetts Air National Guard, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts State Police Air Wing, and the Department of Fire Services assisted crews on the scene. Homeowners along Marian Street, as well as Coles Meadow Road, provided access via driveways and backyards so that firefighters could cross the difficult terrain and bring resources in to help extinguish the blaze. In all, 52 acres of conservation land burned, and the fire was declared extinguished

on November 9, 2024. We would like to thank our mutual aid partners, outside agencies, and the residents of Northampton for their assistance. We would also like to thank the many businesses that donated food and water during the weeklong incident, including Wal- Mart, Turf Care Supply, Quality Restoration, NoHo Nutrition, LashCo Tree Service, Tandem Bagel Company, Stop & Shop, Big Y Supermarket, and River Valley Co-op. We would also like to thank the Spagnoli family for the refreshments they provided to our crews on scene."

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Grant

Northampton Fire/Rescue was awarded a Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency grant totaling \$6,500. This funding will be used to purchase equipment for swift water/shallow water emergencies, benefiting Northampton and its mutual aid partner communities. With the rise in flood situations, both in the city and surrounding areas, this new equipment will allow Fire/Rescue personnel to better respond for emergency calls for service. This equipment will also provide a safer working environment for Fire Department personnel.



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Calendar Updates

Upcoming Events and Notices

First Night 2025

First Night 2025 is seeking volunteers! There are multiple shifts available and volunteers receive a complimentary First Night button and hospitality (hot meal, beverages, bathroom, kitchen) at the private volunteer headquarters when not on duty.

Interested in helping out and being a part of the festivities? Fill out the form [here!](#)



Florence Holiday Parade

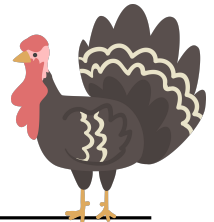
The Florence Holiday Parade is held every year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Stepping off from Trinity Row Park at 10am, the parade proceeds up Main Street and ends at the Florence Civic Center with a very special visit from Santa.



City of Northampton Office Closures

All municipal offices will be closed:

- Wednesday, November 27th after 12pm
- Thursday, November 28th (Thanksgiving Day)
- Friday, November 29th



Holiday Stroll

SAVE THE DATE! On Friday, December 13th from 5pm-8pm, the Downtown Northampton Association is hosting a Holiday Stroll on a closed down portion of Main Street from Masonic Street to Crafts Avenue. More details and information can be [found here](#) in the coming weeks.

SHOP LOCAL and Enjoy Free Parking!

Enjoy free parking at meters, kiosks, on-street spaces and off-street lots on the following days. Please note this does not include the E.J. Gare Parking Garage.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Saturday, November 23rd | Bag Day |
| Friday, November 29th | Black Friday |
| Saturday, November 30th | Small Business Saturday |
| Tuesday, December 24th | Christmas Eve |
| Tuesday, December 31st | New Years Eve/First Night |



Free Toy Exchange

Northampton High School Key Club is hosting a FREE toy exchange at Northampton High School! Donation day is Friday, December 6th, from 5pm-8pm. Shopping day will be Saturday, December 7th from 10:30am-12:30pm.



Bag Day - The Bag is Back!

Bag Day is happening tomorrow, November 23rd, and it's a fantastic way to kick off your holiday shopping. You can grab a bag at participating locations or Thornes Marketplace. With your bag in hand, enjoy discounts at over 70 downtown locations. This event is put on by the Downtown Northampton Association and the Daily Hampshire Gazette.

