

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON NEWSLETTER

Anat Weisenfreund Elected as Ward 2 School Committee Member



At the January 13th joint meeting of the City Council and School Committee, Anat Weisenfreund was elected to serve as the Ward 2 Representative on the Northampton School Committee until the next election in November 2025.

Anat Weisenfreund is filling the vacancy left by former Ward 2 School Committee Member Karen Foster-Cannon, who resigned in December.

"I am honored to have been selected to fill the current Ward 2 School Committee member vacancy. I look forward to working side by side with my colleagues to support our children in their most important work of growing and learning," Member Weisenfreund shared, "I look forward to working collaboratively so that our city's schools are strong, and places of joy, and reflect the excellence and passion of the many staff who have made the education and care of children their life's work."

More information regarding Member Weisenfreund's application and qualifications can be found in her [Statement of Interest](#) on the City of Northampton website. The recording of the January 13th joint meeting can be found [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 Valley Green Energy Pricing.



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Northampton Arts Council Announces FY25 Grant Recipients

Mayor Sciarra and the Northampton Arts Council announced the award of 31 Local Cultural Council grants totaling \$24,451 in support of art projects and programming in Northampton. Grants were awarded in the following categories: Dance, Literature, Media Arts, Multidisciplinary Arts, Music, Theater,

and Visual Arts. "I am pleased to continue Northampton's long tradition of support for the arts community," shared Mayor Sciarra, "I look forward to enjoying, along with our residents, the outcome of these exciting projects." [Read more!](#)



Annual Street Lists

The City Clerk's Office will be mailing out Annual Street Lists beginning February 15, 2025. Please respond by March 1, 2025. A self addressed envelope will be included. However, you can return postage free by emailing your response to cclerk@northamptonma.gov or

bringing it to the City Clerk's Office, 210 Main Street, Room 4. There is also a drop off box right in front of City Hall that will be accessible through March 15th.



Dog Licenses

Dog licenses are now available for the 2025 licensing year. Please visit the City Clerk's [webpage](#) for more information about how you can order a license for 2025. The previous year's license will expire on March 31st and owners will have until April 30th to renew a license without a late fee. Late fees start on May 1st and will be \$20 in addition to the licensing fee. There is no change in the annual

fee for licenses. Altered dogs are \$10.00 and unaltered dogs are \$20.00. Fees are waived for pet owners over 70 years young. Only pets with a current vaccination can be renewed. Please be sure that you include the most up-to-date documentation from your vet showing when the vaccination expires.

[Read more!](#)



Valley Green Energy Pricing Update

The Valley Green Energy Standard Green price (13.994 ¢/kWh) is lower than National Grid's new Basic Service price (14.672 ¢/kWh), which goes into effect on February 1st. Valley Green Energy is an innovative

GOOD NEWS!

The Valley Green Energy price is lower than National Grid's new Basic Service price!

VGE STANDARD GREEN 13.994 ¢/kWh <small>+ 10% transmission service charges</small>	NATIONAL GRID'S BASIC SERVICE 14.672 ¢/kWh <small>Residential electricity supply price</small>
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Valley Green Energy cannot guarantee future savings compared with National Grid's Basic Service price.

ValleyGreenEnergy.org

aggregation effort between Northampton, Amherst, and Pelham, to provide a consumer-friendly regional electricity program. Valley Green Energy cannot guarantee future savings compared with National Grid's Basic Service price. For questions or more information about this program, please contact the Climate Action and Project Administration Department at 413-587-1018.

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"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](#).



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.

Picture Main Street: Climate Impacts

One of the core goals of the Picture Main Street project is to build resiliency from the climate crisis. The resilient aspects of the project fall into three core groups:

- Cooling our downtown
 - The addition of 36 trees will create a cooling canopy to help offset the heat that is typically elevated in downtowns. These trees - more than double the existing amount - will be planted in a more sustainable manner, with increased soil volume, connected trenches, and structural soil.
- Strengthening infrastructure
 - Portions of the current infrastructure underneath Main Street is over 100 years old, and no match for the extreme weather caused by climate change. Replacing these utilities during a major construction project such as this one, which is largely financed by state and federal dollars, will save Northampton taxpayers millions.
- Reducing our carbon footprint
 - Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to our carbon footprint. Reallocating dangerous and inconsistent vehicle lane space will increase accessibility for rolling, walking, and biking, minimizing our reliance on motorized vehicles.



Want to learn more about Picture Main Street? Visit our page [here!](#)

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Municipal ADA Improvement Grant

The City of Northampton has been awarded a \$95,000 Municipal ADA Improvement Grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability. These funds will go toward vital accessibility improvements at City Hall, Memorial Hall, and the Municipal Building, helping to make our city more inclusive and welcoming for all residents. A huge THANK YOU to the Northampton Disability Commission and Central Services for their unwavering commitment to making our city buildings as accessible as possible. Their hard work and dedication are making a real difference! This

grant is part of a statewide initiative that awarded over \$4.9 million to 59 municipalities, helping communities move closer to the vision of the Americans with Disabilities Act: an accessible, inclusive world for everyone. Stay tuned for updates as we move forward with these exciting upgrades!



Youth for Youth Mini-Grant

Youth for Equity and Action (YEA), a club at Northampton High school sponsored by the Department of Health & Human Services, received a Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) "Youth for Youth" mini-grant on sharing decision-making power with youth. YEA focuses on centering youth voice in decisions that affect their lives, and making a positive change in Northampton Public Schools (NPS) and the community as related to health equity. YEA plans to use these funds to support their work on growing and supporting restorative practices in NPS to improve the protective factor School

Connectedness. The CDC states, "School Connectedness is beneficial to all students, but not all students benefit equally. ...youth from racial and ethnic minority groups, and youth who identify as LGBTQ+ often feel less connected at school." Restorative Practices is about building authentic relationships and repairing harms which inherently build a strong community and school climate/connectedness. This is one of YEA's main strategies to combat the teen mental health crisis.



Consumer Reports Available Through Forbes Library

Looking for a new home appliance? Check out reviews and comparisons free from Forbes Library on their website.

[Read more!](#)



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ARPA Updates

We are excited to highlight the International Language Institute of Massachusetts (ILI) in this newsletter edition. ILI is an internationally recognized language learning center which provides language classes to the community, as well as English classes for international students and free English classes for immigrants and refugees. ILI brings cultural exchange opportunities to our city and does so much to help welcome new immigrants and refugees to our area, while providing them with English language classes to help them thrive. Thank you for all you do, ILI!



The city provided ARPA funding to support ILI's classroom remodel and HVAC improvements. These improvements will increase air quality and classroom learning experiences for all ILI students and teachers. Keep an eye out for news of the second phase of their remodel, in which they plan to offer community programming.

There are so many ways you can get involved with the work ILI does. Please visit their website or reach out to them if you are interested in taking a language class, looking into their language classes abroad, hosting an international student, volunteering as a tutor, or providing a tax-deductible donation to help support their free English classes for refugees, or their many other wonderful programs. Visit their website [HERE](#).



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Division of Community Care (DCC): Emergency Response, Lasting Impact

The Division of Community Care (DCC) is a pioneering public health-led initiative in the City of Northampton, designed to provide an additional response for community members who need immediate help with personal challenges.

The DCC launched on September 5, 2023, and operates with a person-centered, trauma-informed approach, grounded in the belief that everyone's humanity is interconnected. The DCC responds to calls for those experiencing emotional distress, challenges meeting basic needs, conflict, houselessness, substance use concerns, and other difficulties. It also receives referrals from social services, providers, community-based organizations, municipal departments, and local businesses. Through restorative practices, the DCC works to reduce disparities and risks individuals face, promoting equitable health and social justice outcomes. These efforts aim to minimize intersections with the criminal justice system, address gaps in care, and alleviate burdens on healthcare and



2024 RECAP

- Engaged with community members 5,604 times
- Provided services to more than 754 individuals for the first time
- Welcomed 4,814 total visits to its community space
- From September to December, offered emergency housing and shelter navigation support 185 times
- Helped community members access long term resources 389 times



emergency department capacities. The DCC provides holistic, non-clinical support through its dedicated team of Community Responders (CRs), who are all highly trained members of the community, with lived experience and an unwavering commitment to support. CRs work directly with community members in need of support, offering immediate assistance and connecting them to long-term resources. [Read more!](#)

“Where Do We Go From Here? Freedom Dreaming and Reparative Action in the Age of Trump”

Please join Dr. Ousmane Power-Greene, Chair of the Northampton Reparations Study Commission, for a Martin Luther King Jr. Day lecture on the two century-long history of African Americans struggle for reparations

within the context of the legacy of the fight against enslavement, Jim Crow in the North, and more recent acts of racist violence. This event will be Monday, January 20th, from 11:30am-12:30pm at First Churches.

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Q&A with Mayor Sciarra

Q: How are property values set in Northampton?



A: The City of Northampton's Principal Assessor is Marc Dautreuil. He, along with his staff in the [Assessor's Office](#), are overseen by the Board of Assessors. Their responsibilities include approving valuations, vetting abatement applications, reviewing property tax exemptions, managing the overlay account, and providing new growth estimates during the budget process. The authority over these valuations rests with the Assessors alone, and cannot be influenced by the Mayor's Office or the City Council.

Assessors are responsible for determining full and fair cash valuations and for classifying all property located within the community as of January 1st each year. As outlined in MGL c. 59 §2A, 38, the Principal Assessor and Board of Assessors are legally required to value all property in the city at 100% of its full market value. The Assessors take into account data from arms-length (market value) sales, property inspections, and building applications and apply them using standardized procedures and statistical testing.

According to Massachusetts General Laws, assessments must undergo a recertification program every fifth year that is audited and certified by the Department of Revenue (DOR). Additionally, the city annually updates all real estate assessed values, which must be approved by the DOR each year. Values are adjusted annually to reflect market values as of the assessment date. Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) is a recertification year. The Department of Revenue has completed the evaluation and approved the values.

Since 2020, home values have increased on average 50% with the most recent sales between 2022 to 2023 increasing on average 12%. Therefore, Northampton values have increased in line with market trends over the last few years. This is the main factor in the rise of assessed values.

If you feel that your valuation is above true market value, please contact the Assessor's Office by calling 413-587-1200. All [abatement applications](#) must be filed by February 3rd at the latest.

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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Calendar Updates

Upcoming Events and Notices

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is Monday, January 20th. All municipal offices will be closed in observance of the holiday. City offices will reopen Tuesday, January 21st at 8:30am.



Building Beloved Community

Stop by First Churches on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 20th for a day of community! Receive the free tools and training you need to build and protect your community without violence, share a meal together, and join in song with the Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership, Congregation B'nai Israel, Unitarian Universalist Society, St. John's Episcopal & First Churches.



Ice Art Festival

The Downtown Northampton Association's Ice Art Festival is this weekend! Swing by Main Street on Saturday, January 18th to see some amazing ice artists in action. This event goes all day. Don't miss it!

Bombyx MLK Jr. Day Service Fair

Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity is holding a Martin Luther King Jr. Day Service Fair at 10am on Monday, January 20th at 130 Pine Street, Florence. Bringing together individuals with organizations and initiatives for meaningful acts of service.



[Read more!](#)

Silver Chord Bowl

In its 41st year, the Silver Chord Bowl is the oldest and most respected collegiate a cappella showcase in the region, hosted in John M. Greene Hall on the Smith College campus. This year's event will begin with a performance by Northampton High School's very own Northamptones, followed by six groups from colleges and universities around the Northeast.

- **When:** Sunday, February 9th – 2pm Showtime. Doors Open at 1:30pm
- **Where:** John M. Greene Hall is located on the Smith College campus, 60 Elm Street, Northampton.

[Read more!](#)

