

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON NEWSLETTER

41st Silver Chord Bowl

The 41st Silver Chord Bowl was Sunday, February 9th. Mayor Sciarra and Smith College President Dr. Sarah Willie-LeBreton introduced collegiate a cappella performers from six acclaimed groups from around the Northeast.

Northampton High School's very own Northamptones kicked off the event, performing "Where To Now St. Peter?" by Elton John, "My Oh My" by the Punch Brothers, "Human Heart" by Jacob Collier, Coldplay and We Are KING, "I Want You Bop" a mash-up of MmmBop by Hanson, "Always Be My Baby" by Mariah Carey, "I Want You Back" by Jackson 5,



"Linger" by The Cranberries, and "Good Vibrations" by The Beach Boys.



We are incredibly grateful for Smith College's partnership in supporting the arts in Northampton. Thank you to Brian Foote and the Northampton Arts Council for making this event a reality every year!

Want to keep up with the Northamptones or see where they're performing next? Check out their page [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 3 for an updated timeline of the Picture Main Street project.



Mayor's Office

210 Main Street, Northampton
(413) 587 1249
mayor@northamptonma.gov

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Northampton to Celebrate 375th Anniversary in 2029: Join the Planning Committee!

In 2029, the City of Northampton will proudly celebrate its 375th anniversary—a milestone that showcases our community's rich history, vibrant culture, and bright future. To ensure this momentous occasion is one for the history books, Mayor Sciarra is excited to announce the formation of the Northampton 375th Anniversary Committee. This committee will play a vital role in spearheading the celebration, including brainstorming event ideas, planning activities, fundraising, and bringing the community together for this once-in-a-generation opportunity. Are you a

Northampton resident passionate about our city's past, present, and future? Do you have skills in event planning, fundraising, or community engagement—or simply a desire to get involved? The Mayor is calling on enthusiastic individuals to help make this celebration a success. Your involvement will be crucial in honoring 375 years of Northampton. If you are interested in participating, in any capacity, please tell us about yourself by completing a brief application, [linked here](#).



Fire/Rescue Secures Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant

Northampton Fire/Rescue has been awarded an \$18,569.91 grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Department of Fire Services (DFS). This funding, provided through the Commonwealth's Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program, will be used to enhance firefighter safety by purchasing new fire helmets, extrication gloves, and structural firefighting gloves for all personnel.

Additionally, the grant will support the acquisition of a floating pump to assist with brush and wildland fires, as well as new self-contained breathing apparatus bottles for Scott Air-Paks. The department extends its gratitude to the Healey Administration, Fire Marshal Jon Davine, and the entire DFS staff for its support.



Message from Police Chief John Cartledge

- We currently have two recruits in the Holyoke Police Academy and one in the Boylston Academy.
- Four officers have successfully completed the Field Training and Evaluation Program.
- Officer Ryan Tellier has been promoted to Sergeant and will begin his new role on the 11am-7pm shift starting March 3rd.
- A swearing-in ceremony for Captain Corey Robinson and Sergeant Ryan Tellier will take place in the NPD Community Room on Friday, February 28th, at 4pm.
- Mark your calendars! The next "Chat with the Chief" will be at McDonald's on Thursday, February 20th, at 8am. I hope to see you there!

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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: Rough Updated Timeline

- Late Spring 2026 - The construction contractor will be selected by MassDOT.
- **PHASE 1 - 2026:** Work will begin with the replacement and upgrade of water and sewer lines, progressing block by block. New lines will be installed, and once each segment is in place, water will be transferred to the new system. This process will continue along the length of the street, similar to the gas line replacement work Eversource has conducted over the past year. During this period in 2026, some islands on the street may also be removed.
- **PHASE 2 - 2027:** Curb line work will begin after water line installation. Curbs will be relocated block by block, starting on one side of the street before transitioning to the other. Street grading will occur during this

phase, with street and sidewalks remaining open except for temporary sidewalk detours around short building segments as new sidewalks are installed. Regular, coordinated communication with business owners will take place ahead of planned sidewalk detours. Through traffic will continue with adjustments to lane alignment as needed.

- **PHASE 3 - 2028:** A final paving of the street, including pavement striping will happen. Sign installations and landscape plantings will also take place, along with other miscellaneous closeout items.

This is a **working schedule with a broad outline that is subject to adjustments and flexibility once a contractor is selected and things progress.*

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Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan

The City of Northampton is developing its 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan to guide how Community CDBG funds will support affordable housing, homelessness services, public infrastructure, and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents over the next five years.

The final remote session will be Monday, February 24th at 6pm. This meeting will address priorities and the Citizen Participation Plan, which outlines how residents can engage in the process. Join via Zoom: [Click here](#) | Meeting ID: 257 704 6101 | Passcode: 125956

Can't make this meeting? No problem! Complete the Community Needs Survey no later than Friday, February 28th at 2pm by [clicking here](#).

School Vacation Week Fun at Forbes Library

Looking for something fun to do during school vacation week? Forbes Library has you covered with free special activities:

- West African Drumming Workshop with the Wendell Warriors (ages 12 and up) - Saturday, February 15th at 1pm
- Jules Murray Presents: Sing with Your Baby - Tuesday, February 18th at 10am
- Wildlife on Wheels Presented by Forest Park Zoo! - Thursday, February 20th at 10:30am
- Special Toddler Storytime: Read and Eat with Grow Food Northampton! (1.5-3-year-olds and their caregivers) - Friday, February 21st at 10:30am
- Kids' Gaming Club (ages 7-12) - Friday, February 21st at 4pm

Visit forbeslibrary.org for more information!



Parks & Recreation Department - Year-Long Activities

Whether you're a kid or an adult, there's always something fun to get you moving, make you feel great, and help you meet new friends! Dive into swimming at the Aquatic & Family Center at JFK Middle School, get your heart pumping with water fitness, shoot some hoops, bump a volleyball, take a yoga class, try your hand at knitting, and so much more!

For the kids, don't miss out on T-ball sign-ups, school's out programs, swimming lessons, and of course, summer camp registration coming up! We're also bringing you adult softball leagues, tennis, and more exciting activities soon.

For all the details, head to www.northamptonma.gov/recreation or call 413-587-1040. Let's get active and have some fun!



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ARPA Updates

This weekend, many of us will tell our family and friends how much we care about them. This can be a difficult time for those who have experienced loss. We are happy to feature Empty Arms in this issue. Empty Arms provides support to families experiencing pregnancy or infant loss through support groups, one-on-one support, and other resources for those who are navigating one of the most difficult times in their lives. Thank you to Empty Arms for providing support and resources to our community!

The city provided ARPA funds to assist Empty Arms in creating a fundraising plan to meet the increased demand for services during COVID. If you or your loved ones are in need of support due to pregnancy or infant loss, you can



reach out to Empty Arms at 413-570-0811 or at their website [HERE](#).



We are also excited to share information about thier annual Syrup Stampede fundraiser. This event features a 5k walk/2k run followed by a pancake breakfast with local maple syrup. This year, the event will be held on Sunday, April 6th starting at 10am. The Syrup Stampede is family-friendly and promises to be a fun-filled celebration. Join in the walk/run or just eat pancakes! Mark your calendars to show your support. More information for the event can be found [HERE](#).

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.



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City of Northampton Appoints Donaven Gibbs as the New Director of the Division of Community Care

The City of Northampton is pleased to announce the appointment of Donaven “Don” Gibbs as the new Director of the Division of Community Care within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Don brings a wealth of experience, leadership, and dedication to the role. Throughout his tenure, he has played a critical role in expanding the DCC’s efforts to provide compassionate and community-centered care, and we are thrilled to see him apply empathy and commitment in his new role as Director.

The Division of Community Care (DCC) is a pioneering, public health-led initiative designed to provide an alternative first response for community members in need of immediate support during personal challenges. The division focuses on non-police crisis response and community-based support services to enhance public health and safety in Northampton.

Donaven Gibbs has worked in the human services field for over 12 years and provides both knowledge and a skill set that is crucial to the success of the Division of Community Care. After graduating from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Don started his career with Behavioral Health Network where he served as Program Director. After six years he transitioned into a role at the Center for Human Development as an Outreach Supervisor until 2023. [Read more!](#)



We want to hear from you!

Mayor Sciarra is inviting you to submit questions for possible inclusion in upcoming editions of this newsletter. Whether you’re curious about city projects, local policies, or just have a burning question about how things work in Northampton, we’d love to hear from you!

To submit your question for the Q&A with Mayor Sciarra, simply fill out the submission form linked [here](#). While we may not be able to publish every question, we’ll do our best to address a variety of topics that matter most to our residents.

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Q&A with Mayor Sciarra

Q: How does Northampton manage its debt and borrowing for capital projects while maintaining financial stability?



A: Each year, the city issues debt to finance capital projects including streets, city and school buildings, DPW and public safety vehicles, and enterprise projects. As part of the borrowing process, the city receives an updated Bond rating from Standard & Poor's Rating Service. The city's current rating is AAA stable, the highest rating. Our bond rating reflects the city's exceptional ability to meet its financial commitments, allowing us to borrow at lower interest rates and save money for the community. A copy of the rating reports from Standard & Poor's Rate Service may be viewed [here](#) on the website.

The city can either issue short-term debt or long-term bonds. When cash flow is limited, cities may rely more on short-term debt. However, Northampton does not have any short-term debt and instead issues long-term bonds annually. The length of bonds depends on the project's lifespan—typically, five years for vehicles and 10 to 20 years for street and building projects.

All principal and interest payments on bonds are called debt service and are part of the city's operating budget, meaning they must be covered by recurring revenue in the annual budget. To ensure financial stability, we are cautious about borrowing, especially given the constraints of Proposition 2 ½, which makes budgeting for all departments more challenging.

Bonding is reserved for major expenditures since it increases the total cost of a project or purchase due to interest. Depending on the project, the city may borrow within the levy limit or seek voter approval for a debt exclusion override, which exempts the debts from the levy limit. Debt exclusions are typically used for the construction of large facilities. The last debt-excluded borrowing was in 2012 for the Police Station, which will be paid off in 2032.

The city's previously approved debt service must be paid annually. Future borrowing is carefully planned to fund major capital projects in a timely manner while avoiding sudden increases in debt service payments that impact the operating budget. When borrowing, we consider interest rates, economic conditions, and the ability to support projects through reserves first to minimize additional interest costs.

The city's debt management policy sets a guideline that net direct debt should not exceed 10% of total general fund operating revenue. Additionally, levy-supported debt service should not exceed 5% of net general fund operating revenues. For FY2025, the city is at 4%, and 3.5% respectively of these guidelines. While well below our not-to-exceed percentage, an increase in that debt service would mean less general fund revenue for city and school operations.

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Calendar Updates

Upcoming Events and Notices

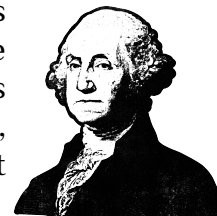
VINS Dog Show

Volunteers in Northampton Schools (VINS) is hosting its 17th Annual Dog Show on Saturday, March 1st from 12pm to 3pm at Northampton High School. Registration is required for dogs. Vie for the coveted title of "Best Fetcher", "Best Hair", "Best Smile", and more! For more info. and contact information, visit the [VINS website](#).



Presidents' Day - City Offices Closed

All municipal offices will be closed Monday, February 17th, in observance of Presidents' Day. Regular business hours will resume when offices reopen Tuesday, February 18th, at 8:30am.



Veteran's Benefits Event

Join local providers on Wednesday, February 26th from 4pm to 6pm at the Northampton Senior Center to learn about benefits and services for veterans and their spouses/ survivors. Connect with people and organizations ready to help. Registration is required. To register or learn more, call 587-1299 or email vetadmin@northamptonma.gov.

KidsBestFest 2025

KidsBestFest 2025 is a week-long movie festival for kids and their adults with free admission held during the winter school break at the Academy of Music Theatre. We show one movie a day and kick off the festival on Monday, February 17, 2025, at 11am, with doors open at 10:30am.

The Land Before Time
Mon. 2/17



Wicked
Tues. 2/18



The Wild Robot
Wed. 2/19



The Wizard of Oz
Thurs. 2/20



Detective Pikachu
Fri. 2/21



This event is FREE, please donations are accepted in order to keep it free! First come, first serve general admission. [Learn more!](#)