

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON NEWSLETTER

Back Porch Festival 2025



See page 7 for information about upcoming Digital Skills Workshops



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Forbes Library to Break Ground on Stage

Forbes Library will be breaking ground on a new outdoor performance stage later this month. Northampton-based H|A| Architecture designed the accessible, open-air, covered stage for the library’s west lawn. This project was selected by Mayor Sciarra to receive ARPA funds in order to support a wide variety of programs and events for the community, including concerts, children’s programming, and outdoor movies. “We have a long history of outdoor programming at Forbes. It began over a century ago with community singing events. This stage will be a wonderful addition to the library’s gathering spaces and enjoyed for years to come”, stated Lisa Downing, Library Director.



[Read more!](#)

Academy of Music Insulation

On Tuesday, March 11th, insulation, air sealing, and water mitigation measures began being installed at the Academy of Music. The project will be completed on Tuesday, March 18th. The city's Climate Action and Project Administration (CAPA) Department and Central Services Department used a combination of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program and utility incentives to fund the project. Air sealing in the attic will reduce the cost of heating and cooling the building while improving the durability of the roof. Drainage, vapor barrier, and spray foam in the basement will protect the 134-year-old building from water damage, reduce heat loss, and significantly reduce humidity problems. This is phase one of a long-term plan to improve comfort, health, and efficiency while reducing noise and carbon emissions from the building.



The POP Communication System is Live!



We're making it easier than ever to stay updated on the Picture Main Street project. Sign up today to receive real-time updates, important alerts, and essential information as we prepare for and carry out construction. Text "PROGRESS" to 99411 to get notifications straight to your phone. By

subscribing, you'll receive key details about road closures, construction schedules, detours, and other critical updates. For more information, visit the [Picture Main Street webpage](#).



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Northampton 375th Anniversary Planning Committee

Mayor Sciarra is excited to announce the formation of the Northampton 375th Anniversary Committee. This committee will play a vital role in spearheading the 2029 celebration, including brainstorming event ideas, planning activities, fundraising, and bringing the community together for this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

If you are interested in participating, in any capacity, please tell us about yourself by completing a brief application, [linked here](#).

Oxbow Author Talk at Forbes Library

Jonathan Moldover, author of *The Oxbow Since Thomas Cole: The Story of a Landscape, a Painting, and a Community*, presents an illustrated talk about the community that has developed on the Oxbow since the late nineteenth century, accompanied by video clips from the oral history project which was the basis of the book. Uncover how nature as well as political and business interests have changed the island, and the remarkable resilience of the Oxbow community. Attendees will discover why the island crossed the river and why the highway crossed the island. Join us for this free program at Forbes Library on Wednesday, March 26th at 6:30pm in the Coolidge Museum and streamed live.

[Read more!](#)



Want to Join a City Board or Committee?

Have you ever wanted to get involved in your local government but didn't know how? Check the latest Board & Committee vacancies, [here](#), and fill out the application form on the city website by visiting northamptonma.gov/192/Boards-Committees or stop by the Mayor's Office for a paper application.

Temporary Trail Closure Through April

National Grid has temporarily closed a section of the Northampton-New Haven Canal shared-use path from Earle Street in Northampton to Easthampton, through April. Please refer to the linked map for details on the closure to plan your walking or cycling routes accordingly. This closure is required for National Grid to replace and repair utility poles in this corridor. The shared-use path exists through an easement granted to the city by National Grid, which remains responsible for all detours, signage, and traffic control during this utility upgrade project.

[Map linked here!](#)



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Reminders!

Annual Street Listing

- Responses to the Annual Street Listing (Census) are due by April 15th. Please bring your response to the drop box at the bottom of the stairs in front of City Hall or return it by mail using the self-addressed envelope included in the mailing. Questions? Contact the [City Clerk's Office](#) for more information.

Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Bills

- 2025 motor vehicle excise tax bills are due by Thursday, March 27th. These bills apply to vehicles that the Registry of Motor Vehicles lists as registered and garaged in Northampton as of January 1, 2025. If you did not receive a bill for your vehicle, please contact the Treasurer/Collector's Office at 413-587-1293.

ServiceNet Community Art Displayed at City Hall

Mayor Sciarra had the pleasure of meeting the talented artists featured in the ServiceNet Community Art Show, now on display at City Hall! Stop by to see the incredible creativity and artistry of the ServiceNet community. The artwork will be displayed through the end of March.



More than 30 artists participated in the show, celebrating creativity and highlighting how art serves as a powerful

tool for self-expression and meaningful connection with the world. Learn more about ServiceNet's programs and services, [here](#).

Subscribe to the Newsletter!



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](#).

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ARPA Updates

We are highlighting the Music and Poetry Synchronized (MAPS) program in this issue to share some information about this creative and inspiring project at Northampton High School (NHS). The MAPS program brings students together to share stories, poetry, art, and music. Participants are able to learn from each other and connect with students from other schools and with different life experiences to explore and create together.

"This program was made possible through the generous support of ARPA, which has allowed MAPS to continue fostering artistic collaboration, cultural exchange, and creative expression among students.

Your donation helps sustain and grow programs like this, ensuring that students have the opportunity to express themselves creatively and build meaningful connections through art. Contributions directly support student projects, performances, and resources that make these collaborations possible."

Tom Willitis
Executive Director



Visit the MAPS website [HERE](#) to see the culmination of the most recent NHS and Great Path Academy (Manchester, CT) exchange. Great Path Academy students created musical pieces out of poetry written by students at NHS.

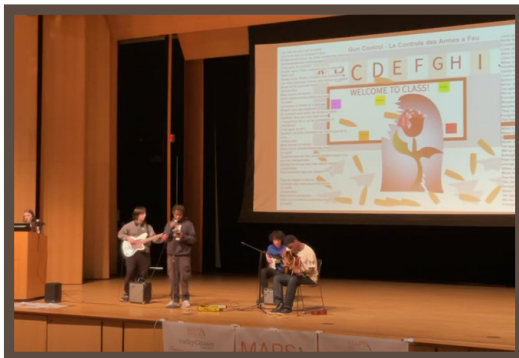


Photo Credit: mapsmusic.org



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City of Northampton Awarded Green Communities Competitive Grant Award

The City of Northampton has been awarded a Green Communities Competitive Grant from the Department of Energy Resources in the amount of \$494,613 to fund projects at Leeds Elementary School. This funding will allow the city to pursue Energy Recovery Ventilators for classrooms, restrooms, and the cafeteria, along with a heat pump system.

Not only do these projects exhibit consistency with the Commonwealth's clean energy priorities, they also bring the city closer to its aggressive goals to meet a 2030 target for carbon neutrality for city operations and a 2050 target for net-zero carbon emissions citywide.



Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

In 2023, Northampton was chosen to pilot the state's [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness \(MVP\) 2.0 Program](#). Building on the city's [Resilience and Regeneration Plan](#), a project Core Team—including residents, community organization liaisons, and municipal employees—surveyed and interviewed residents to better understand the root causes of social vulnerability and sources of resilience in Northampton. A key focus was engaging groups that have been historically underrepresented in planning discussions, gathering their experiences and concerns about climate change. Based on the valuable feedback received, the Core Team developed an updated list of resilience priorities for the city. MVP Core Team members will be at the Senior Center on March 21st and 28th from 11am-1pm to discuss these priorities with residents. Following these conversations, a small seed project will be developed to jump-start action on one of the top priorities. Learn more about the MVP Program and resilience planning efforts, [here](#). This webpage also includes a survey where residents can provide feedback on priorities.



Message from Police Chief John Cartledge

"My next "Chat with the Chief" will be Friday, March 21st at Dunkin Donuts at 132 King Street. Everyone is welcome and I would love a visit! The department currently has three Student Officers in the police academy, with graduation dates set for this spring. After finishing their academy training, they will move on to a 15-week Field Training and Evaluation Program. Our officers continue to respond to traffic and speeding complaints, and they are assigned to these enforcement details during each shift, as long as call volume and other factors permit."



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Digital Skills Workshops with Tech Foundry

Gain new digital skills and strengthen your understanding of digital technology in this free workshop series! These workshops are open to any members of the community and no prior knowledge is needed. Devices will be provided for all participants.

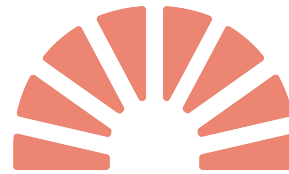
Schedule (Mondays, 12:00pm to 1:15pm)

March 17: Computer Basics
 March 31: Internet Basics
 April 14: Google Chrome
 April 28: Email Basics
 May 12: Social Media Basics
 June 2: Online Safety Basics

Please email reference@forbeslibrary.org with any question or contact the Reference Desk.

This workshop series is presented in partnership with Tech Foundry and the Alliance for Digital Equity. [Learn more!](#)

Space is limited; register online to secure your spot. Register for the first session (March 17th) to commit to all six sessions.



**Forbes
Library**

Northampton Parks and Recreation 2025 Summer Camp

Are you interested in Safety Village, Camp KidZone, Camp Hamp, or Teen Expeditions? Online registration is now open for Northampton's favorite summer camps. Children between the ages of 4 and 14 are invited to join our Parks and Recreation Department for a week, two weeks, or the whole summer! You must sign up by the Thursday before each session begins. Financial aid is available for residents of Northampton, Florence, and Leeds. [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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Northampton Board of Health Working on Regulation Around Nitrous Oxide

The City of Northampton Board of Health is in the process of developing a regulation to limit the sale of Nitrous Oxide (NO). This regulation aims to safeguard public health and safety by restricting the availability of nitrous oxide in order to prevent its misuse for recreational purposes. The recreational inhalation of nitrous oxide poses significant health risks, including neurological damage, oxygen deprivation, and potential long-term harm. A public forum will be held on March 20th at 5:30pm, which will be accessible via Zoom by using the following link: [Public Forum - Nitrous Oxide Regulation](#)



For your reference, a copy of the draft regulation, *City of Northampton Board of Health Regulation Restricting the Sale of Nitrous Oxide*, is posted on our website which you can find [here](#).

Division of Community Care and Public Safety Dispatch Coordination Launched

On March 3rd, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Community Care (DCC) and Northampton Public Safety (NPS) Dispatch officially launched their coordinated work to support community members in Northampton. DCC Community Responders (CRs) provide a public-health led emergency response option to support Northampton area community members to meet personal challenges. The launch of this coordination enables NPS Dispatch to efficiently direct appropriate urgent calls to the DCC.

The DCC provides holistic, non-clinical support through its dedicated team of CRs, who are all highly trained members of the community, with lived experience. CRs work directly with community members in need of support, offering immediate assistance and connecting them to long-term resources.

This launch will allow the DCC to support more people, alleviating unnecessary pressure on other branches of Northampton Public Safety. It is the result of dedicated staff from NPS Dispatch, the Northampton Police Department, and the Department of Health and Human Services working together for months to determine protocols and procedures for which types of calls are appropriate to transfer to the DCC and what technical processes are to be used for call transfer and inter-department communication.



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Q&A with Mayor Sciarra

Q: I am interested in learning more about the POP Committee. Who from the Chamber, DNA, and local businesses are included, how are members selected, and who leads the group?



A: The POP: Pardon Our Progress Committee is a collaborative initiative led by Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, in partnership with Vince Jackson, Executive Director of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce (GNCC), and Andrea Monson, Executive Director of the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA). This effort is working to help Main Street businesses navigate and thrive during the Picture Main Street construction project, which starts in the spring of 2026.

The POP Committee brings together city officials, local business owners, GNCC and DNA board members, and stakeholders from Thornes Marketplace and Valley Community Development.

The committee is structured into a core team and four specialized subcommittees, each focusing on key areas of construction mitigation and business support:

- Communications, Marketing & Public Engagement
- Funding & Resource Allocation
- Construction Mitigation
- Business Support & Economic Development

These subcommittees foster communication, develop innovative strategies, and provide direct support to businesses, ensuring Main Street remains vibrant through the construction period. While all POP committee members serve on subcommittees, additional participants - such as representatives from Friends of Northampton Trails, local residents, and property owners - are brought in to provide specialized expertise to these focus areas.

Jim Nash, an original POP member during his time as City Council President, now chairs the POP committee in his role as Chair of the Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Council.

Members of the POP committee are selected based on their expertise in relevant fields. If there is an area where we do not yet have representation, we actively seek out individuals who can fill that gap to ensure a well-rounded and knowledgeable team. In the weeks and months ahead, there will be more opportunities for community engagement. The first of these is a Redevelopment Survival Workshop for Small Businesses, hosted by Inness Associates, the consulting firm funded through a grant secured by the Mayor's Office via the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI).

For ongoing updates, community members can sign up for construction progress alerts by texting PROGRESS to 99411.

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Calendar Updates

Upcoming Events and Notices

Inaugural R.I.S.E. Fest

Two days of artistic workshops, panels, performances, and creative connection await area youth April 18th-19th, at the first-ever R.I.S.E. Fest at 33 Hawley. R.I.S.E. (Resilience in Self Expression) Fest is co-founded by Expressive Arts Educator Gina M. Krosoczka and Jarrett J. Krosoczka, a New York Times-bestselling graphic novelist behind 46 published books.



[Read more!](#)

Toilet Paper Drive - March 2025

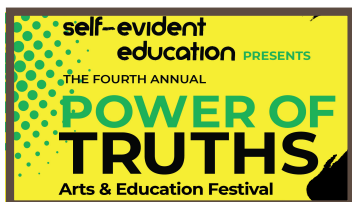
Forbes Library is collecting toilet paper donations for the Northampton Survival Center (NSC). NSC supports low-income individuals and families by providing essential items that can't be purchased with SNAP benefits,



including personal care and cleaning products. Donations can be dropped off at Forbes Library during open hours. Find library hours [here](#). Your support makes a difference!

4th Annual Power Of Truths Arts & Education Festival

Join Bombyx, the Northampton Arts Council, and Self-Evident Education from April 4th-5th for a unique opportunity to help build a community dedicated to seeing and understanding the history of racism and resistance, how that history is manifesting today, and learning, together, how to create a free and just future for all Americans. [Read more!](#)



Northampton Youth Cinema Festival

As the Northampton Youth Cinema Festival enters its second consecutive year, the Northampton Arts Council invites all people 21 or younger to submit to the Northampton Youth Cinema Festival FOR FREE!



The deadline for regular submissions is April 1st. To view the eligibility criteria and submit your film, please visit the following link, [here](#).