

**Report to Northampton City Council
on Action Taken to Satisfy Committee Study Request
on the Local Economy (Issued on March 3, 2016)**

City Council Committee on Community Resources
August 10, 2016

**City Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair
City Councilor Dennis Bidwell, Vice-chair,
City Councilor Maureen Carney
City Councilor Alisa Klein**

OVERVIEW

On March 3rd, 2016, the Northampton City Council Committee on Community Resources received a [Committee Study Request](#) (CSR) from the City Council President Bill Dwight and City Council Vice President Ryan O'Donnell to "study issues relative to the local economy, with a focus on businesses and workers in downtown Northampton and downtown Florence, for the purpose of identifying practical recommendations, if any, that the City Council could pursue to strengthen the local economy." City Council [Rules 2.3.8](#), state that "such a request, shall require a committee to report to the full Council on a particular issue area within 120 days optionally accompanied by legislation."

Due to the expansive scope of the study request, it being the first application of a CSR, and the scheduling challenges within the committee, the Chair asked the President and Vice-President if a small extension of time could be granted for the submission of a report. The Chair also asked if the report could be on the data-collection steps completed to fulfill the study. Both requests by the Chair were agreed to by the President and Vice-President.

To address the CSR, the Committee held organizational meetings on the structuring of the study and scheduling of forums (March 8, March 21, April 12), a meeting where we received reports from three sources (March 21), a meeting with the Director of Planning and Sustainability (May 3), and four public forums centered around different constituencies, but that were open to participation by all that wished to speak on the downtowns' economy (May 16, Business Owners; June 20, Downtown Residents and Workers; June 27, Downtown Workers; July 18, Property Owners, Leasing, Arts and Tourism). The forums were intended to solicit testimony from those directly involved in the downtowns' economy on the pressures that are felt or experienced, things they think are done well and should be supported, and ideas for the future.

The Committee may consider recommendations or legislation after the last forum on July 18th. The Committee decided and reiterated at each meeting starting April 12 that we are collecting data and would not be deliberating on possible action until the forums had concluded. This was organized in this way so that all who wished to testify could do so equally and express their opinions to the committee before we began to discuss our opinions and ideas. When scheduling the committee meetings for the year, it was decided the Committee would not meet in August. It

is anticipated that the Committee will begin deliberating on information, data and testimony received during the study at the scheduled September 19th meeting.

MEETINGS, FORUMS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PERTAINING TO CSR

After receiving the request on March 3rd, the Committee held a special meeting on March 8th to discuss the request. Present at that meeting to review the request with the Committee and answer questions was the Council Vice-President and co-author the CSR, Councilor O'Donnell. How the study should be structured and what it should contain was discussed, and it was decided that Councilor Bidwell would write a draft work-plan for the study that would be discussed at the next meeting. It was also discussed that members of the committee believed there was current data or reports from certain city departments and organizations, which could be ready to be presented at the next meeting. It was decided that the Chair would invite the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce, the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, the City's Economic Development Director and the newly-formed Downtown Northampton Association to the March 21 meeting to present any relevant data they could provide. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

At the March 21st meeting, the Committee voted to accept the Committee Study Request (3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (Councilor Klein)). The proposed work-plan for the study was discussed at this meeting, including the structure and promotion for the public forums. Some elements of the work plan were adopted and some were not. From the invitations extended after the March 8th meeting, the committee then received reports and testimony. The Committee heard from Suzanne Beck from the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce and received some survey data on downtown businesses. Then the Pioneer Valley Workers Center, UMASS Amherst Labor Center and people speaking at their request presented a report on "Wage Theft" and gave testimony on the subject and other workers' issues. Last, Northampton's Economic and Community Development Director, Terry Masterson, presented economic data including statistics and data trends on the economic health of downtown Northampton, that had just been posted to the City's website. (Minutes in Addendum 1, all related documents on [CSR webpage](#)).

After the March 21st meeting where the Committee voted to accept the CSR, the Chair and Administrative Assistant established [a webpage for the study](#) on the City's website. The purpose of this was to make available to all an overview of the process, the committee's schedule, links to the materials received, agendas and minutes, links to the videos of the meetings and forums,

and a description of how to submit written testimony to the Administrative Assistant. This page has been updated throughout the study with information and links when they become available.

The April 12st meeting was centered around organizing and scheduling the public forums and discussing how to promote them and invite stakeholders. As with every meeting, we began with public comment, and five people spoke in response to the reports and testimony received by the committee at the March 21st meeting, and the subsequent news coverage. The Committee then finalized the topics and schedule for four public forums. The Committee also expressed interest in having an additional meeting to invite Wayne Feiden, the Northampton director of Planning and Sustainability, to discuss his opinion of the downtowns' economy, and what other municipalities have done for revitalization. It was decided that the Chair would extend an invitation to Director Feiden. Additionally discussed was the offer by Jonathan Goldman, former NHS student and Youth Commission member, to be an intern on the study to help the committee gather information. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

After the April 12th meeting, the Chair and Administrative Assistant created a flyer for the public forums, which was subsequently translated into Spanish (Addendum 2). The flyer was directly emailed to stakeholders, was shared on Facebook and was brought to businesses by committee members and by Jonathan Goldman. The Chair wrote [a column](#) in the Daily Hampshire Gazette on April 19th that outlined the study and promoted the forum dates, and another article about the forums was posted [on MassLive](#) on April 20th.

A special meeting was held on May 3rd to hear from Director Feiden. He discussed the downtowns from a planning perspective, and answered questions about what other communities in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world have done in terms of revitalization. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

May 16th was the first public forum. It was centered around business ownership and issues related to doing business in the downtowns. Sixteen people provided testimony. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

June 20th was the second public forum. It was centered around workers and downtown residents. Eighteen people provided testimony. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

June 27th was the third public forum. It was centered around workers and was held at 1pm to accommodate people who work in the evenings and couldn't attend the other forums at 5:30pm. sixteen people provided testimony.

July 18 was the fourth and final forum. It was centered around downtown property owners, leasing, arts and tourism. Ten people provided testimony. (Minutes in Addendum 1).

The Committee will next meet on September 19, 2016. In addition to any referred committee business on the agenda, we will begin discussions and deliberation on the qualitative and quantitative data received during the information gathering period of the committee study. We will work to determine if there are practical recommendations and/or legislation we can bring to the full City Council to "strengthen the local economy," as directed in the CSR.

Presentations and Reports Submitted to the Community Resources Committee

Date	Report/Presentation	Submitted/Presented By
03/21/16	Presentation; handout submitted w/survey data on downtown businesses	Suzanne Beck, Executive Director, Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce
03/21/16	Presentation and review of just-released “Downtown Northampton Economic Indicators” online report	Terry Masterson, Economic Development Director, City of Northampton
03/21/16	PowerPoint presentation and draft white paper: “Working Conditions in the Northampton Restaurant Industry;” also submitted a report entitled, “Feeding Northampton: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers in the Northampton Restaurant Industry.”	Clare Hammonds, UMass Amherst Labor Center
05/03/16	Presentation on Northampton’s Downtown Economy (see meeting minutes)	Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability, City of Northampton
May, 2016	Research report on online retail sales, Northampton's downtown projects, and case studies of other U.S. cities	Jonathan Goldman, Intern to the Community Resources Committee
07/18/16	Handout on tourism in downtown Northampton	Suzanne Beck, Executive Director, Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

Additional materials submitted to the City Council Committee on Community Resources include:

- [Gaming the System: How Employers Shortchange Workers and Get Away with It](#) (Report by Sarah Jimenez & Lena Afidi, Community Labor United)
- [MA Representative Peter Kocot Letter to Daniel Wolf & John Scibak re: An Act to Prevent Wage Theft](#)
- [The Epidemic of Wage Theft in Residential Construction in MA](#) (by T. Juravich, E. Ablamowitz, & J. Williams of the UMass Amherst Labor Center)
- [Wage Theft Information & Example Legislation](#) (by Community Labor United)
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters [Employer Payroll Fraud Suggested Resources](#)
- [Written testimony submitted to the Committee](#)

ADDENDUMS

Addendum 1 - MINUTES

[March 8, 2016](#)

[March 21, 2016](#)

[April 12, 2016](#)

[May 3, 2016](#)

[May 16, 2016](#)

[June 20, 2016](#)

[June 27, 2106](#)

[July 18, 2016](#)

Addendum 2 - VIDEOS

[March 8, 2016](#)

[March 21, 2016](#)

[April 12, 2016](#)

May 3, 2016 (No video available)

[May 16, 2016](#)

[June 20, 2016](#)

[June 27, 2106](#)

[July 18, 2016](#)

Where Do You Stand on Main Street?

A public discussion on the local economy in downtown Northampton and Florence



The Northampton City Council is holding a series of public forums to hear from anyone who contributes to, participates in and cares about our local economy in downtown Northampton and Florence. We want to hear about the pressures you feel and the concerns you have, as well as those things that you think are done well and should be supported.

Join us at one of the four scheduled forums, or send written testimony to be included in the record. Everyone is welcome at any forum, though the discussion of each forum will be centered around a certain sector of the economy.

BUSINESS OWNERS	DOWNTOWN WORKERS & RESIDENTS	DOWNTOWN WORKERS	PROPERTY OWNERS, LEASING, ARTS & TOURISM
May 16	June 20	June 27	July 18
5:30 pm	5:30 pm	1:00 pm scheduled to accommodate those who work evenings	5:30 pm

The forums will be held in the City Council Chambers at 212 Main St.

For more information or to submit written testimony, see the Committee Study Request page under the City Council @ www.northamptonma.gov/1679

For questions, contact Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair of City Council Committee on Community Resources at glsciarra@northamptonma.gov.

¿Qué opina sobre Main Street?

Un debate público sobre la economía local
en el centro de Northampton y Florence.



El Consejo del Ayuntamiento de Northampton está llevando a cabo una serie de foros públicos para escuchar a cualquier persona que contribuya, participe y se preocupe por nuestra economía local en el centro de Northampton y Florence. Queremos escuchar acerca de las presiones que usted siente y las preocupaciones que tiene, así como de las cosas que usted cree que se han hecho bien y deben apoyarse.

Únase a nosotros en uno de los cuatro foros programados, o envíe un testimonio escrito para que lo incluyan en el registro. Todo el mundo es bienvenido a cualquier foro, aunque la discusión de cada foro se concentrará en torno a un determinado sector de la economía.

DUEÑOS DE NEGOCIOS	RESIDENTES Y TRABAJADORES DEL CENTRO	TRABAJADORES DEL CENTRO	PROPIETARIOS, ALQUILERES, ARTE Y TURISMO
Mayo 16	Junio 20	Junio 27	Julio 18
5:30 pm	5:30 pm	1:00 pm Fijado para acomodar a quienes trabajan por las noches.	5:30 pm

Los foros tendrán lugar en los Salones del Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad en 212 Main Street.

Para más información o para enviar un testimonio por escrito, vea la página de Solicitudes de Estudio de la Comisión bajo el Consejo de la Ciudad en:
www.northamptonma.gov/1679

Para preguntas, comuníquese con la concejal Gina-Louise Sciarra, Presidenta de la Comisión del Consejo de la Ciudad para Recursos Comunitarios en:
glsciarra@northamptonma.gov.