



**Committee on Community Resources
and the Northampton City Council**

Committee Members:

Councilor Garrick Perry

Councilor Aline Davis

Councilor Laurie Loisel

Councilor Gwen Nabad

Meeting Agenda

Date: January 26, 2026, Time: 5:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

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The January 26, 2026 Community Resources Committee meeting will be held via teleconference. The public may follow the committee's deliberations by joining the virtual meeting by phone or computer. The meeting will be recorded for later broadcast and uploaded to the Northampton Government Video Archive on YouTube.

Live public comment will be available using telephone call-in or video conferencing technology.

"Jurisdiction. Matters affecting the community including economic development, local business, tourism, the environment, the arts, planning, zoning, sustainability, land use, housing and affordability, among others"

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MEETING ID: 879 9806 4717

PARTICIPANT#: #

PASSCODE: 936356

- 1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call**
- 2. Election of Chair/Vice Chair**
- 3. Public Comment**

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

A. Minutes of November 17, 2025 and December 15, 2025

Documents:

[11-17-2025_Community Resources_Meeting.pdf](#)

[12-15-2025_Community Resources.pdf](#)

5. Updates and Announcements from Committee Members

6. Items Referred to Committee

None.

7. Set Meeting Schedule and Format for 2026 - 2027

8. Brainstorming

Discussion of topics/community conversations councilors may be interested in having
Community Resources explore/initiate independently.

9. New Business

10. Adjourn

Contact: At-Large Councilor Garrick Perry
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Committee on Community Resources and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Chair: Councilor Deborah Klemer

Vice-Chair: Councilor Garrick Perry

Councilor Jeremy Dubs

Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 17, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers

212 Main Street, Northampton, MA

- 1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call.** At 5:30 p.m., Chair Deborah Klemer called the meeting to order. Present were Councilor Klemer, Chair; Councilor Garrick Perry, Vice Chair and Councilor Jeremy Dubs. Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg was absent. Also present was state Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
- 2. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Klemer announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
- 3. Public Comment**
There was no general public comment.
- 4. Minutes of September 24, 2025**
Councilor Dubs moved to approve the minutes of September 24, 2025. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Rothenberg absent.

Councilor Rothenberg arrived at 5:32 p.m.
- 5. Updates and Announcements from Committee Members**
None.
- 6. Program Topic: Legislative Overview with State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa**
Councilor Klemer recognized Representative Sabadosa.

State representatives are at the end of the first year of the session, so house rules require them to finish business by next Wednesday, Representative Sabadosa reported. On the agenda this week, they are taking up the Bright Act, a bill that is going to use some fair share money and bonding to fund public institutions of higher education and so important for community colleges, state universities and, of course, UMass. The House will

also be taking up the closeout budget. She is really excited about several provisions in that, perhaps not super relevant to councilors. One is provisions around the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust; specifically, trying to protect individuals within that trust, which is having some financial difficulties. She found out today that a provision which will help protect the security of people going through the name change process added by her and Senator Comerford made it into that bill, so it will help the trans community and victims of domestic violence who want that information impounded and protected and not published in the newspaper. Here in Hampshire County, their registry of deeds has done a tremendous job making sure it is easy for folks, but it's not consistent throughout the state. Otherwise, the closeout budget is just making sure the state is paying all its bills end of year and filling gaps.

They know there are going to be significant changes to Medicaid which came through in federal government. There's going to be funding in this bill to deal with some of the extra bureaucracy they know will be needed to keep people on that program. Changes start to go into effect January 1st and roll out over a couple of years, so they are trying to be as proactive as possible in the Commonwealth.

They are also taking up a resolution to rescind all prior calls for an Article V convention, she shared. The state provides a way for states to convene to make amendments to the constitution, she explained. At this point, representatives feel that would be a dangerous thing. Rescinding all prior calls will make clear that they're not participating in a call for a constitutional convention to amend the U.S. Constitution.

Meanwhile, hearings are continuing for legislation. They are at the tail end. With 78 bills filed, it has been a lot of work getting through all those hearings. Many bills are in Ways and Means in 3rd reading at this point. And, they are already preparing for the FY2027 budget. The Governor will release her budget in January, then they will begin the round of Ways and Means hearings before going into the House budget in April and the Senate budget in May. This really is the time to start advocating for priorities for the FY2027 budget, she noted. They expect it to be a tighter budget. The state is not in recessionary territory, but they know the 'Big Beautiful Bill' passed in January is pushing more costs onto states. They know they will have to pick up more costs from Medicaid and that more administration costs of the SNAP program will fall to the Commonwealth. The way the bill is phased, it doesn't all happen on day 1 but happens over a period of time.

They also understand there are rising costs and rising needs and are trying to meet them as best they can. That was a snippet of the work, but she would be happy to delve into details.

Councilor Dubs noted that the City Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of an Act Establishing Medicare for all in MA. He asked if there are any updates on that or thoughts on how it is going or the probability of it passing in Massachusetts.

Representative Sadosa said she appreciates the resolution because it's a bill that she filed. It matters that Northampton is supportive but they need other communities to be supportive as well. It's a tricky bill this session because the bill is very prescriptive about the financing and the federal landscape is changing for Medicaid payments.

They are in good conversations with the chair of the committee to look at how to rewrite the financing system to better reflect current realities, she related. They all feel they are on a good slope to a single-payer system since the current one is absolutely not working. The conversation has become deeper and more complex. The other day they had what they called a Super Bowl of healthcare where the Health Policy Commission and other health care stakeholders came and talked about cost trends and where they're headed. The State sets a benchmark for rising health care costs, which she recalled as being 3.6%. "We're at a much, much, much higher rate so

we're clearly are not meeting benchmark," she pointed out. They're not finding solutions in their current system to keep the costs down and are looking at all options.

Councilor Perry said the last time she was here, she talked about the maternal health bill. He asked if it has had an impact.

The maternal health bill is definitely in implementation phase, Representative Sabadosa said. The Midwifery Commission is meeting with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and working on regulations to make sure certified public midwives are in place as the bill sets forth, and work is taking place on coverage for lactation consultants. Her piece of the bill was centered around pregnancy loss. DPH has launched a campaign called 'Count the Kicks' to help women determine if there are any problems with their pregnancy. Implementation work requires funding so they are trying to understand how they can continue to fund all this good work. The Fetal Mortality Commission is up and running, which she thinks will be generative of future legislation.

Councilor Perry referred to a movement to address marijuana sales, asking how folks are feeling about the ballot question related to that. Once those funds go away, he worries about how they will make up for that loss.

Representative Sabadosa said she is not as familiar with the ballot question. She knows it has something to do with THC levels. The House passed legislation around the Cannabis Control Commission earlier this year, changing the way it's configured because they have heard time and time again it is really hard to get an answer from it. They are trying to narrow it down, change appointing authorities and make it a little sleeker but hopefully easier to work with. One piece of that legislation she is glad passed was regulating previously unregulated beverages with a really high level of THC that don't fall under the CCC because they aren't marijuana but are made from hemp. For the first time that would be regulated. The Senate is going to take up its own version of the bill very shortly. That will go into conference committee, so it is a good time to weigh in.

If they get enough signatures on the ballot question by Wednesday, it will come before the legislature. The first round of signatures is just to determine if enough people in the Commonwealth are interested. She knows many people have strong opinions about it.

Councilor Klemer said she heard she had gotten them some money. (She mentioned \$50K.) The administrative assistant wondered if she was referring to the vacant storefront program. Representative Sabadosa said that was not her, it was the city applying proactively through a grant program. She is really glad to see communities going after these grants the Healey administration worked so hard for.

With SNAP, she mentioned that the Commonwealth has to pick up more administrative fees, Councilor Klemer noted. She asked if that is what is happening with other federal programs.

Representative Sabadosa said it is definitely what is happening with SNAP, but she doesn't know if she'd want to characterize it more broadly. The state is going to be taking on an administrative fee. It will be based on error rates so they don't really know what the cost will be. From the Commonwealth's perspective, it has long been an issue that they think there need to be more DTA (Division of Transitional Assistance) workers. Wait times are very long and caseloads are far too great. The number of people who qualify and need food assistance is increasing and western MA's numbers are stark and sobering.

Councilor Klemer mentioned that DHHS Commissioner O'Leary noted the largest proportion of new homeless are elderly.

Representative Sabadosa referred to seniors being forced from their homes because of not being able to afford taxes. The question to municipalities is how to keep senior citizens in their homes. The state needs to engage more with cities and towns to figure out how to come up with solutions, she acknowledged. They have done more around the senior circuit tax breaker, a refundable tax credit for seniors, and tried to increase the amount of the senior tax write-off. People have sometimes forgotten the need to center dignity and respect for seniors when talking about that.

Councilor Klemer pointed out that if people can age in place they have neighbors and community to check on them so it makes sense for them to stay where they are.

With the housing bond bill, Ward 1 Candidate Gwen Nabad wondered if she could tell them about the money set aside for preservation of public housing. She wondered how it was distributed and how they were determining which communities are getting it. There are still lingering issues that need to be addressed in public housing and she gets this question all the time. She wondered if it's too late or if there is something residents can do to take action.

Representative Sabadosa framed her response by saying she thinks the legislature is well aware that the need in public housing for capital improvements far outweighs the amount of money in the bond bill. (Needs were estimated at several billion dollars and the entire bond was several billion.) There is by no stretch enough to address everything, she stressed.

The Housing Bond Bill was passed at the end of the last session and then the state's financial outlook changed. They've been working with HLC to see when they are going to release some of that money. HLC only very recently put forth a capital improvement program based on the bond bill. She has not yet received information about how they are going to distribute money to various authorities. She visited all of the properties and they are in desperate need of improvement. "We'll keep tracking it, but it's really slow," she allowed.

Councilor Moulton asked her assessment of where three home rule petitions recommended by the Charter Review Committee are in terms of closeness to the finish line: ranked choice voting, Vote 16 and non-citizen resident voting in local elections. The City Council earlier this year reaffirmed its support for all three.

They are closest to ranked choice voting, followed by Vote 16, then non-citizen [participation], Representative Sabadosa advised. The last of the three has had pretty significant negative feedback. A lot of folks say, 'you cannot do that.' Vote 16 has tremendous and wonderful energy behind it but is a harder lift. She thinks ranked choice voting will turn a corner. They got so close last session. They talked about how it worked so well in Easthampton. The challenge, of course, is that it lost at the ballot. They are trying to make the case that that wasn't the case in Northampton and voters here *did* say they wanted it.

Northampton in particular on ranked choice voting and Vote 16 has been very well-represented at the hearings, Councilor Moulton observed. He said he appreciates her support.

Representative Sabadosa agreed the Mayor's Youth Commission is passionate and eloquent. Their presence at the state house underscores the petition's importance, she opined.

Councilor Perry asked how councilors could help her in her efforts.

Representative Sabadosa encouraged everyone to attend the Chapter 70 listening session tomorrow in Greenfield. It would be great if people could attend in person or submit testimony. The Superintendent has submitted her testimony.

There is a hearing Wednesday in the Housing Committee for a piece of legislation that would ban algorithmic rent fixing, she added. That is where companies use technology to gather all the rents to advise landlords on rent increases and never raise prices below the minimum rent. It is a way to continually drive up rents.

And, she has a bill in 3rd reading around banning grocery store surveillance pricing. Massachusetts has long not allowed electronic price tags but that recently changed, and stores are now allowed by right to have electronic tags. They have seen stores experimenting with surge pricing then offering discounts based on the biometrics of the customer. They want to prevent that in Massachusetts.

Councilor Rothenberg thanked her for coming.

She hopes all councilors feel they can reach out at any point and view her as a resource to help solve problems for people in their community.

Councilor Klemer asked if there was anything else they should be aware of coming down from the federal level.

The continuing resolution ending the government shutdown only lasts until January, Representative Sabadosa reminded. Issues around healthcare are going to be significant. The first Medicaid change that takes effect January 1st will remove everyone from Medicaid who is a noncitizen regardless of their immigration status. It means 36,000 in MA will lose their insurance right out of the gate. That means busier emergency rooms, people waiting to get care for chronic conditions, etc.

And, even though SNAP is back and funded, if people are going through recertification, all of the work requirements and additional bureaucratic barriers are starting to be implemented. The new rule is starting to affect new applicants.

The big thing is housing. They are seeing higher and higher usage of the WRAP program, people falling behind on their rent or mortgage. She hopes they are all connecting people with those services as quickly as possible and trying to be as proactive as they can. They will not have all the tools but will make use of tools they have.

Gwen Nabad asked what the work requirements are and if volunteering qualifies.

Representative Sabadosa said she didn't believe volunteering would necessarily apply. She didn't want to say too much because she didn't want to misspeak. She said she would be happy to provide information in writing so she could share it with others.

She doesn't want to be fear-mongering, she stressed. There are a lot of bad things happening, but services still remain in place; it just means it will be harder to access them. As a state, they want to figure out anything they can do to make it a little easier to keep people on those services to the greatest extent possible.

7. Items Referred to Committee

None.

8. New Business

None.

9. Adjourn. There being no further business, Councilor Perry moved to adjourn; Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call. The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Prepared By:
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Committee on Community Resources and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Chair: Councilor Deborah Klemer

Vice-Chair: Councilor Garrick Perry

Councilor Jeremy Dubs

Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg

Meeting Minutes

Date: December 15, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers

212 Main Street, Northampton, MA

- 1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call.** At 5:30 p.m., Chair Deborah Klemer called the meeting to order. Present were Councilor Klemer, Chair; Councilor Garrick Perry, Vice Chair and Councilor Jeremy Dubs. Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg was absent on roll call. Also present was Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Vince Jackson and Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.
- 2. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording**
Councilor Klemer announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.
- 3. Public Comment**
There was no general public comment.
- 4. Minutes of October 20, 2025**
Councilor Dubs moved to approve the minutes of October 20, 2025. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 by roll call vote with Councilor Rothenberg absent.
- 5. Updates and Announcements from Committee Members**
This is unfortunately their last meeting, Councilor Perry reminded.

Yes, the two years went quick, and she really enjoyed working with them all, Councilor Klemer responded. "We accomplished a lot," she said. Councilor Dubs said he enjoyed working with them as well.

1st night is coming up, Councilor Klemer announced.

- 6. Program Topic: Chamber of Commerce Update**
Update on Chamber of Commerce Projects and Initiatives. Discussion with Executive Director Vince Jackson.

Councilor Klemer recognized Vince Jackson, Executive Director of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Jackson said he appreciated the invitation; anytime he can talk about the work of the Chamber of Commerce and how it is a bridge to the community, he is all excited.

Mr. Jackson introduced himself as the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce's Executive Director and gave an overview of the organization. He has been in this role for the past six and a half years and it's been his distinct honor to lead this organization. At 106 years of age, it is the oldest and largest of the 12 Chambers of Commerce in Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden counties. He joined in its centennial year and its 500 members are referred to as 'investors' because they invest time, treasure and talent in the organization. Their membership is 75% small businesses, defined as fewer than five employees and less than \$2 million in annual sales. Another one-fifth, or 20% (about 100), are nonprofits, unique for a chamber. The rest are the 'fill-ins,' Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH), Smith College, all of the wonderful banking institutions and about a dozen of what he refers to as 'prestige' investors because they create jobs – i.e. Keiter Corporation, Western Mass Heating & Plumbing, DA Sullivan and Wright Builders - a good diverse mix, people who really care about this community. They are a staff of five with about 100 volunteers. The chamber is governed by a 17-member board of directors, and five standing committees meet every month.

The chamber has membership in a national organization called 'ACE,' Association for Chamber of Commerce Executives, of which the Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Executives (MACE) is a state affiliate. Agency directors stay in touch with these agencies for organizational guidance, workshops and best practices, he shared. He is honored to serve as one of 14 directors on the board of directors of MACE.

The Chamber delivers three newsletters: two weekly publications, the Community Connector and the Northamptonist, and a quarterly, more investor-focused publication, Chambers News. The Northamptonist is out every Thursday and lets people know what's happening on the weekend. The Connector comes out every Tuesday. They manage these with a small team of five staff who also manage three social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Linked in.

The Chamber's Mission is to promote a thriving economy and community governed by the belief system that when the economy thrives, the community thrives. The two key words are economy and community. From an economic standpoint, the Chamber has two engines. One of the five standing committees is the Economic Development Committee, a volunteer group of about 40 engaged members, including residents. The old myth is that someone has to have a business to be a member, but their organization is open; anyone can participate and engage.

ECONOMIC ENGINES

The two economic engines are the Northampton gift card program and the tourism program, he continued. The gift card program keeps local dollars local by encouraging residents, visitors and the community to spend with their local businesses. Businesses have to be Chamber members to accept the gift card as a merchant and 130 merchants are currently enrolled in the program, which is in its 20th anniversary year. At the Doozy Doo Parade, he was a walking sandwich board advertising the program's 20th year. When he asked the Boston-based gift card processing company who they could turn to to learn more about this program, he was told Northampton is the gold standard. No one came close to the sales they do annually. They average \$355,000 in annual gift card sales, representing about 7,000 cards a year, and send redemptions to merchants of about a quarter million. People have seven years to use a card.

Sales have grown 7% year to date, but redemptions are down 7%. It is a great barometer for how the overall economy is doing. They like to see the mirror effect; if sales are up 7%, they love to see redemptions up 7%. They are seeing some softness in the economy through gift card redemptions, he observed.

In December alone, they do 50% of sales. The 2nd peak season is graduation and Mother's Day/Father's Day, teacher appreciation timeframe in May/June and the beloved Keiter card promotion that happens in August.

From a tourism standpoint, they are the parent or home for the Hampshire County Regional Tourism Council's (HCRTC's) Tourism and Visitor Bureau. While the gift card program is about \$355,000, the tourism program is about \$300,000. They get a state grant every year through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to promote Hampshire County as a visitor and tourist destination. The office promotes all 20 counties and the four cities and towns of the Greater Northampton Chamber, Amherst, South Hadley/Granby and Easthampton. A dedicated advisory council gives direction on what's hot and important to see so all of their county assets and attractions are featured in its marketing. A local visitor guide is in distribution all the way down to Washington, DC, in Grand Central Station in New York City (NYC) and up and down the '91 corridor.

As fun facts: Hampshire is the only county in MA that does not border a body of water or another state. "We're locked in," he reminded. "We are Massachusetts through and through." The other fun fact is that this is the 15th anniversary year for Hampshire County RTC. "We're young, we're strong and we're growing," he reported. The county had domestic visitor spending last year of \$231 million (up 2.5%) which drives local and state taxes of \$21 million dollars (up 2.1%). Folks who work in the hospitality industry have earnings of \$78 million, up 3.4% over last year. This industry supports about 3,000 jobs, up 0.3%. "We're growing on all major metrics and cylinders," he shared. About four million visitors are welcomed to Hampshire County every year. He mentioned the strength of the Five-College area, which has students representing all 50 states and 120 countries. Their brand is, 'the other side of Massachusetts.'

When he goes home, he is always asked "How's Boston?" and has to explain that he lives 90 miles away. They have so much fun with that tag line and part of their branding that says 'the other side of MA.'

The RTC primarily targets visitors geographically with Boston, NYC, Providence, New Haven (including Hartford /New Haven) and Philadelphia their top geographic markets. Philadelphia used to be an emerging market; a year ago, it ranked #12. Now, because of investments they have made, it is their #5 market. Washington, DC is another city in which they have made investments because of the Valley Flyer with the visitor guide being distributed at Union Station in Washington, DC, 30th Street Station in Philadelphia as well as Grand Central in NYC. "We can't keep them on the shelves."

Canada and the UK are considered two international hot spots. Because of the daily nonstop flight between Bradley and Dublin they keep their eye on Ireland too. International travel to the states right now is down for a whole host of reasons.

Who are the visitors? They primarily skew older: 45+ but affluent households, usually married couples without children making \$100,000 or more a year. Why do they come? Three main reasons: their arts and culture scene and their festivals and performance venues as well as outdoor recreation and, of course, the scenic beauty with fall foliage. That's how they market the county and promote it. It is a welcoming place for anybody and everybody. They have a dedicated website visithampshirecounty.com.

A 'visitor' is defined as someone who is 50 miles away. When they market, they are not talking to people who live here, they are attracting people outside of the county. That's where the marketing dollars go. Per the terms of their grant, they can't promote to Northampton residents. For some of their marketing campaigns, they

partner with the Back Porch Festival, one of their biggest and most economically-driven partners. It can get people to come here for about three days, and they always invest about \$5,000 to support its marketing efforts. They do the same thing with the Northampton Jazz Festival. Some of the newer events they've invested in are the Doozy Doo Parade and the Great Northampton Haunt. They are now running a campaign featuring a museum trail with venues such as the Eric Carle and Emily Dickinson Museums and Smith College Museum of Art and botanical gardens. That campaign is going bonkers; they are really getting a lot of clicks and traffic to their website.

The grant is written into statute. They are one of 16 regional tourism councils across the Commonwealth. He has the honor of serving as the co-chair of the RTC collaborative where all 16 of them get together to talk about drawing tourism to the area.

The other tenet of their mission is community, not just for businesses but for the broader community. Their three C's are Connection, Collaboration and Community. They have three signature programs and all of them either create connections between individuals, foster collaboration across organizations or build community.

The first of the three signature programs is their monthly networking event, "Arrive at 5," which happens the first Wednesday of every month except August, when folks are on vacation. This event attracts a hundred folks on average and is hosted by various members.

Another program is the 'Link and Learn' educational program. Anyone can come and learn about a topic. Since the new strategic plan six years ago, all of their programs are free and open to the public. A recent program featured Jennifer Ewers, a financial advisor with Edward Jones, for a 'Link and Learn' on Social Security.

The third program is called netWORKS with the emphasis on 'work.' It is a networking opportunity in which they recruit volunteers to support one of their nonprofits in a day of service. Last Thursday, they helped build a Habitat for Humanity (H4H) house on Route 66. Members put in about 60 volunteer hours putting in slats for a ceiling. Days of service benefit the nonprofit community and have been held with the Western Mass Food Bank, Northampton Survival Center and Camp Norwich. They have a base of 100 volunteers.

Mr. Jackson highlighted the magazine and online annual publication, Thrive, so named because it promotes a thriving community. When the economy thrives, the community thrives and vice versa. He is very proud of this magazine. It is a revenue-sharing opportunity which allows them to diversify their revenue stream and not rely so heavily on dues.

They are now in a position where they are taking advantage of every grant opportunity they can find. The state is still offering grants. Through the great leadership and commitment of Senator Jo Comerford, the chamber received an earmark of \$40,000. It was frozen for a while, but the governor has now released all earmarks. The chamber will deploy it to help promote the Ice Art Festival in conjunction with the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) and shore up the marketing of the POP program to keep people coming downtown during the Picture Main Street construction process. Money is also being used to provide lunch to families in need during the February school break in partnership with the Northampton Survival Center and Bueno Y Sano.

He is also excited about the Destination Development Capital Grant, a program for small nonprofits like the chamber through which they received \$38,000. This is their second grant. The first grant paid to upgrade, paint and replace carpet in the chambers office and the second grant will allow them to replace the 20-plus year old roof, repave the parking lot to get rid of puddles and install an alarm system.

The Chamber office at 99 Pleasant Street is a Visitors Center with a public restroom and place folks can pick up passes for First Night and bags for Bag Day. With his formal presentation ended, the director offered to take questions.

Councilor Dubs left at 6:05 p.m.

Councilor Perry said he loved the idea of the museum trail tour. He and his family just had the pleasure of going to Mass MOCA. Part of what they enjoyed was that free passes were available at Forbes Library. He wondered if the chamber had paired with any of the libraries to promote this tour.

They have not, but they have an ongoing partnership with Forbes Library, Mr. Jackson confirmed. The library is getting ready to remodel and renovate the Coolidge Museum; in fact, that's where the board of directors meets every month. With the new amphitheater there, they will be doing more to promote the library.

Councilor Perry said he worked with the executive director on the Vibrancy project which he believes is the kernel that led to POP. He asked what other work the chamber is doing for POP.

The chamber is part of the team/steering committee to make sure information is available, Jackson said. The team meets monthly and has four subcommittees, including a fundraising committee. The city applied for and received funding from two sources, the Casino commission (\$75,000) and another as well as the \$40,000 state earmark. Marketing is one activity. The team is comprised of city folks (Office of Planning and Sustainability and Mayor's office staff) and business owners such as Thornes. It is great to have that input and also the input of residents who are champions of the project to help them navigate some of the uncertainty and unknowns and, quite frankly, misinformation 'lurking around.'

He is excited that the formula from the Vibrancy project is transcending over to this new opportunity, Mr. Jackson volunteered. He is glad to have technology on their side to push information out to keep residents abreast of what's happening and when. Instructions for signing up to receive text messages are on the city website.

Councilors asked questions and offered comments and Mr. Jackson fielded additional questions from the public.

'Arrive at 5' happens the first Wednesday of every month from 5 to 7 p.m., Mr. Jackson advised. In January, it will be at the Foodbank of Western MA in Chicopee. If anyone has not had an opportunity to visit its new facility, it is awesome. All of their programs are open to the public free of charge, he stressed.

Director Jackson spoke of other chamber initiatives, such as its partnership with the local Five Colleges, three of which are greater Northampton chamber members. Mount Holyoke College (MHC) recently hosted an 'Arrive at 5.' The chamber has a program to place students in local businesses for internships. If a business is unable to pay, funding is available to pay the student. The hope is that the student's intern and collegiate experience will be so great that they will decide to stay in the area. UMass Amherst also has a strong entrepreneurial program, which the chamber supports in different ways.

Folks in the hospitality industry are very serious about youth programs and partnering with the colleges too, he continued. One initiative is to bring more youth sports to expose youth outside the Valley to the area. The chamber partners with the Norwottuck Rail Association to promote biking and help finish rail trails across the Commonwealth.

Among other things, Councilor Perry said he has been working with the Youth Commission and they really want to have a Juneteenth celebration. He asked if directing them towards funding or grant opportunities would be something the chamber could help with.

That probably wouldn't be in their wheelhouse because they are new at the grant game, Mr. Jackson said. He would start first with their state elected officials and encourage them to look to other communities with successful celebrations. For example, seeing what Juneteenth looks like for the Freedom Trail in Boston and what its funding source is. The chamber can help facilitate introductions. "We are a matchmaker when we know we are not an expert," he noted. "We know someone."

Councilor Klemer thanked Mr. Jackson for his presentation.

7. Items Referred to Committee

None.

8. New Business

None.

9. Adjourn. There being no further business, Councilor Perry moved to adjourn. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion carried 2:0 by roll call. The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Prepared By:

Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant

(413) 587-1210