



CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

City Councilors:

Meg Robbins, At-Large
Garrick Perry, At-Large
Gwen Nabad, Ward 1
Deborah L. Klemer, Ward 2 - Vice President
Laurie Loisel, Ward 3
Jeremy Dubs, Ward 4
Aline Davis, Ward 5
Christopher C. Stratton, Ward 6
Rachel Maiore, Ward 7 - Council President

Meeting Agenda
City Council Chambers
212 Main Street, Northampton
Thursday, March 19, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

The City of Northampton does not discriminate based on disability and is committed to hosting accessible meetings. To request a reasonable accommodation to attend any City meeting, please contact the ADA Coordinator at: adacoordinator@northamptonma.gov or call 413-587-1288.

The March 19, 2026 City Council meeting will be conducted in hybrid format with the option for both councilors and the public to attend in person or participate remotely. The public may follow the council's deliberations by attending in person, watching the meeting live on Comcast channel 15, live-streaming it on YouTube [here](#) or joining the virtual meeting by phone or computer. Live public comment begins at 6:30 p.m.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CALLING IN OR JOINING THE MEETING

Join the meeting: [PUBLIC MEETING LINK](#)

For telephone call-in, call:

+929 436-2866 US

MEETING ID: 846 4414 6122

PARTICIPANT#: #

PASSCODE: 783792

1. Roll Call

2. Announcement that meeting is being Audio/Video Recorded

This meeting is being audio/video recorded.

3. Public Hearings

- A. 6:30 P.M. Public hearing re: Northampton Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031 - Thursday, March 19, 2026**

In accordance with Article 7, Section 7-5 of the Charter, the Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** in City Council Chambers, Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA. The City Council will consider the [Capital Improvement Program for FY2027-FY2031](#), and hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

Documents:

[CIP Public Hearing.031926_Abbreviated.pdf](#)

B. 6:45 P.M. Public Hearing to Consider FY2027 Water and Sewer Rates

The Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing to consider the proposed FY2027 water and sewer rates on Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 6:45 p.m. in Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA. The City Council will hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

4. Public Comment

5. Announcements from Councilors and the Mayor

6. Presentations

7. Consent Agenda

Rule 4.4.4 There shall be no debate or discussion by any City Council member regarding any item on the Consent Agenda, beyond asking questions for simple clarification.

Rule 4.4.5 Any item may be removed from the Consent Agenda upon the request of any City Council member prior to the taking of a vote on the motion to approve it. All such items will be considered individually, in the order in which they were removed, immediately following consideration of the Consent Agenda.

A. Minutes of January 29, 2026 Joint School Committee/City Council Meeting and March 5, 2026 regular City Council meeting

Documents:

[01-29-2026 Joint City Council and School Committee Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

[03-05-2026_City Council Meeting.pdf](#)

B. 26.016 An Order to Establish Water and Sewer Rates for FY2027 - 2nd reading

History:

- Referred to consent agenda - 3/5/2026

Documents:

[26.016 An Order to Establish Water and Sewer Rates for FY2027.pdf](#)

8. Package of 14 Financial Orders to Implement FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) (On 1st reading)

Rule 2.6.1.1.1 Process. Financial orders will be introduced and discussed at a full City Council meeting and referred to either the consent agenda of a future

meeting or the Finance Committee for more public input, discussion, and recommendation.

A. 26.022 An Order to Appropriate \$2.166 Million Free Cash to Various Capital Projects - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.022 An Order to Appropriate 2.166 Million Free Cash to Various Capital Projects.pdf](#)

B. 26.023 An Order to Appropriate \$300,000 from Climate Mitigation Stabilization for Jackson Street School Air Source Heat Pumps - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.023 An Order to Appropriate 300,000 from Climate Mitigation Stabilization for Jackson Street School Air Source Heat Pumps.pdf](#)

C. 26.024 An Order to Appropriate \$515,756 from Stabilization to NPS Paratransit Vans - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.024 An Order to Appropriate 515,756 from Stabilization to NPS Paratransit Vans.pdf](#)

D. 26.025 An Order to Appropriate \$1.35 Million from Capital Stabilization to Various Capital Projects - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.025 An Order to Appropriate 1.35 Million from Capital Stabilization to Various Capital Projects.pdf](#)

E. 26.026 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1.8 Million for City Hall Roof Replacement and Exterior Repairs - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.026 An Order to Authorize Borrowing 1.8 Million for City Hall Roof Replacement and Exterior Repairs.pdf](#)

F. 26.027 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1 Million for Sidewalks - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.027 An Order to Authorize Borrowing 1 Million for Sidewalks.pdf](#)

G. 26.028 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1.5 Million for Road Reconstruction - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.028 An Order to Authorize Borrowing 1.5 Million for Road Reconstruction.pdf](#)

H. 26.029 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$700,000 for DPW Vehicles - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.029 An Order to Authorize Borrowing 700,000 for DPW Vehicles.pdf](#)

I. 26.030 An Order to Appropriate \$25,000 from Cemetery Trust and Income for Cemetery Restorative Work - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.030 An Order to Appropriate 25,000 from Cemetery Trust and Income for Cemetery Restorative Work.pdf](#)

J. 26.031 An Order to Appropriate \$30,000 from Receipts Reserved for Appropriation - Sale of Land - for Tax Title Properties - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.031 An Order to Appropriate 30,000 from RRA - Sale of Land - for Tax Title Properties.pdf](#)

K. 26.032 An Order to Appropriate Parking Receipts Reserved Funds for Parking Projects - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.032 An Order to Appropriate Parking Receipts Reserved Funds for Parking Projects.pdf](#)

L. 26.033 An Order to Appropriate from Stabilization and Reprogram \$450,000 to Replace AOM Boiler - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.033 An Order to Appropriate from Stabilization and Reprogram 450,000 to Replace AOM Boiler.pdf](#)

M. 26.034 An Order to Appropriate from Capital Stabilization and Reprogram \$120,000 for Building Facility Condition Assessment - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.034 An Order to Appropriate from Capital Stabilization and Reprogram 120,000 for Building Facility Condition Assessment.pdf](#)

N. 26.035 An Order to Reprogram Tennis Court Project Money to Various NPS Projects - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.035 An Order to Reprogram Tennis Court Project Money to Various NPS Projects.pdf](#)

9. Financial Orders (on 1st reading)

Rule 2.6.1.1.1 Process. Financial orders will be introduced and discussed at a full City Council meeting and referred to either the consent agenda of a future meeting or the Finance Committee for more public input, discussion and recommendation.

A. 26.036 An Order to Reprogram \$6,310 for Visual Notification System in JFK Band Room - 1st reading

Documents:

B. 26.037 An Order to Reprogram \$914,035 Unexpended Bond Proceeds for DPW Cold Storage Facility - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.037 An Order to Reprogram 914,035 Unexpended Bond Proceeds for DPW Cold Storage Facility.pdf](#)

10. Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)

11. Orders

12. Ordinances (Not Yet Referred)

Rule 5.2.3 provides that no ordinance shall be voted on by the City Council until it has been considered by the Committee on Legislative Matters.

13. Ordinances

14. Zoning Ordinances (Not yet Referred)

Process note: Per M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 5, the city council shall submit proposed zoning ordinances to the planning board for review within fourteen days of receipt. No zoning ordinance or amendment thereto shall be adopted until after the planning board in a city or town, and the city council or a committee designated or appointed for the purpose by said council has each held a public hearing thereon, together or separately.

Rule 5.2.3 provides that no ordinance shall be voted on by the City Council until it has been considered by the Committee on Legislative Matters.

15. Zoning Ordinances

16. Resolutions

A. 26.015 A Resolution to Adopt the Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031 - 1st reading

Process note: Per the Northampton City Charter, **Section 7-5 Capital Improvement Program**, "Adoption - At any time after the public hearing but before the first day of the last month of the current fiscal year, the city council shall by resolution adopt the capital improvements program, which may be amended, provided that each amendment shall be voted on separately and that an increase in the capital improvements program as submitted shall clearly identify the method of financing to accomplish the proposed increase."

Documents:

[26.015 A Resolution to Adopt the Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031.pdf](#)

17. Information Requests (Charter Provision 2-7) and Committee Study Requests

A. 26.021 An Order to Require Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to Provide Information

on the Downtown Complete Streets Project - 1st reading

Documents:

[26.021 An Order to Require Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to Provide Information on the Downtown Complete Streets Project.pdf](#)

18. New Business

Rule 4.9 NEW BUSINESS. Any Councilor may introduce any written proposed order, ordinance, or resolution to be considered by the Council at the next meeting, but not to be debated during new business.

19. Adjourn

Contact: Rachel Maiore

Email: rmaiore@northamptonma.gov

Phone: (413) 923-4318

**CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL**

Per Northampton Charter Article 7 FINANCE AND FISCAL PROCEDURES, SECTION 7-5 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, the Northampton City Council will hold a Public Hearing on **Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** in Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA. The City Council will consider the Capital Improvement Program for FY2027-FY2031 and hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon. The public may attend in person or access the hearing remotely by following instructions to be posted on the March 19, 2026 City Council agenda on www.northamptonma.gov no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting.

The Capital Improvement Program for FY2027- FY2031 will be available for inspection by the public beginning March 5, 2026 in the following locations at the specified times:

Online on the City of Northampton website at www.northamptonma.gov

Forbes Library, [20 West Street, Northampton, MA](#)

Hours: Monday – Thursday 10am – 8pm, Friday and Saturday 10am - 6pm, Sunday – Closed

Lilly Library, [19 Meadow Street, Florence, MA](#)

Hours: Monday 10am – 5pm, Tuesday 10am – 8pm, Wednesday-Closed, Thursday 10am – 8pm, Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 10am – 5pm, Sunday 1pm – 5pm

Attest: Laura Hill Krutzler
Clerk to the City Council

Publish: March 5, 2026



Joint City Council and School Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

On January 29, 2026 a joint meeting of the Northampton City Council, Northampton School Committee and Trustees of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) was held via teleconference. The meeting was called in accordance with Northampton Charter §7-2 Annual Budget Policy.

At 6:38 p.m. Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra called the meeting to order, welcoming those in attendance. A roll call was taken by Laura H. Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council. Present were:

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, School Committee Chair
Alena Bartoli, Ward One School Committee Member
Anat Weisenfreund, Ward Two School Committee Member
Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe, Ward Three School Committee Member
Michael Stein, Ward Four School Committee Member
Amy Martyn, Ward Five School Committee Member
Cindy Mahoney, Ward Six School Committee Member
Valerie Reiss, Ward Seven School Committee Member
Tiffany Jewell, School Committee Member At-Large
Robbie Saner Sullivan, School Committee Member At-Large

Aline Davis, Ward Five City Councilor
Jeremy Dubs, Ward Four City Councilor
Deborah Klemer, Ward Two City Councilor - Council Vice-President
Laurie Loisel, Ward Three City Councilor
Rachel Maiore, Ward Seven City Councilor - Council President
Gwen Nabad, Ward One City Councilor
Garrick Perry, City Councilor At-Large
Meg Robbins, City Councilor At-Large
Christopher Stratton, Ward Six City Councilor

Also present were: School Superintendent Portia Bonner, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) Board of Trustees Chair Michael Cahillane and SVAHS Trustee Julie Spencer Robinson.

SVAHS Trustee Richard Aquadro was absent.

Mayor Sciarra took a moment to recognize the utter horror of what they are seeing in Minneapolis and to lift up the remarkable spirit and amazing fight of the people of Minneapolis. Last year at this meeting, she noted that the first 10 days of the presidential administration had been stressful, anxious and disturbing with the battery of executive orders coming through. What they have seen actually happening over the last few weeks has far

exceeded her worst possible imaginings. It is a very hard emotionally on all of them. In terms of the task before them, it is remarkably hard to project and make decisions in a time of such uncertainty. However, as she reflects back, it is very much how it has been the past six years, either because of the pandemic or because of the president.

She had the privilege of being at the state of the Commonwealth address last week at the Statehouse. "There's no other state that I'd rather be doing this work in than Massachusetts," she avowed, and no city other than theirs where she'd like to be doing this work.

Mayor Sciarra presented a detailed financial forecast including projected revenues and expenses for fiscal year 2027. (See Powerpoint presentation entitled, "City of Northampton, FY2027 Financial Trends and Projections, Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, January 29, 2026.") Among other things, she reviewed the following topics:

- Budget Process
- Current FY26 Revenues
- Current FY26 Expenditures
- Financial Indicators and Comparative Communities
- Review of Revenue and Expenditure Trends
- Fiscal Cliff(s)
- Reserves
- FY27 – FY31 Fiscal Stability Plan
- Revenue and Expenditure Projections for Fiscal Year 26
- Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Calendar

She began by describing the budget process governed by M.G.L. Chapter 44 and the Northampton City Charter, which begins with the joint meeting of the City Council, School Committee and Trustees of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (SVAHS) taking place tonight and concludes with adoption of an operating budget by the City Council following a required public hearing.

Mayor Sciarra showed a list of FY2026 General Fund (GF) revenue sources, noting that the city's main source of revenue is local taxes with 67.36% of revenue coming from real estate, personal property and motor vehicle excise taxes and 13.8% coming from the state, the next greatest revenue source. The third biggest source of revenue is charges for services (11.88%) such as parking and emergency medical, while all other sources represent less than 2%.

Next, the Mayor gave a breakdown of the percentage of taxes from various sources with the largest being real estate. Real estate and personal property taxes combined represent 92.8% of total tax revenue, both of which cannot be increased by more than two and a half percent (2.5%) by state law.

She reviewed terms and definitions related to the tax levy and presented a chart showing how levy is calculated. New tax revenue available for use in the FY2027 budget is \$2,868,065.

State revenue makes up 13.8% of total revenue. "We are seeing a continual decrease in annual state revenue," she reported. It was 14% in FY2025, 14.5% in FY2024 and 15% in FY2023. State aid includes Ch. 70 school aid, Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA), charter school tuition reimbursement, PILOTS for state-owned land, reimbursement for veterans' services, offsets for incoming school choice

students, etc. UGGA was slashed in the great recession, and a recent MMA report found that, 18 years after that reduction, it is only just getting back to its FY2008 level in this year's budget.

While state aid does not even keep up with inflation, assessments the city is required to pay to the state have increased. Not only does it not maintain its low percentage, but state aid is actually decreasing.

The third largest source of revenue at 11.88% is charges for services such as parking, departmental fees for programs or services, revenue from inspections by the health department, building and fire department and revenue to SVAHS from sending communities (a direct pass-through to SVAHS).

She reviewed other miscellaneous sources of revenue (a little less than 2%) such as interfund investments and shared services and interfund transfers from Enterprise Funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, including indirect charges for a portion of employee health insurance costs.

Reserves and gift funds represent 1.49% of revenue and include the Smith College Gift Funds (\$166,666), the NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund (\$350,000) and \$1,403,757 from the Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF).

Contributions from licenses and permits, fines and forfeits and federal revenue are 1.13%, 0.59% and 0.14%, respectively, she reported.

Total projected revenue for the current year (FY2026) is \$130,026,682.

Accordingly, FY2026 Budgeted Expenses equal \$130,026,682. As always, education is the largest share of the city's expenditures at 43%, with \$55,946,917 budgeted in FY2026. The next biggest expense (20%) is for employee benefits; i.e. - health insurance and retirement, at nearly \$26 million. Departmental expenses are grouped in their state-designated categories, such as public safety and health and human services.

Debt service is their 5th largest expense at \$5 million. This is an important point since people have talked about debt and asked whether the city should be taking on more debt, Mayor Sciarra reminded. Debt service is paid from the General Fund GF), so if it increases, it decreases the amount of GF revenue available for schools and other city services, she pointed out.

Expenditure totals and percentages don't tell the full story since these are limited to direct expenses, she noted. When indirect expenses are included, education accounts for 56.51% of the overall budget.

Comparison of Key Financial Indicators

Mayor Sciarra continued by showing key financial indicators for Northampton in comparison to 11 comparison communities.

At \$13.67, Northampton's residential tax rate is the 3rd lowest among its comparison communities. Longmeadow has been the highest and had the highest tax rate in the state but its neighbor, East Longmeadow, recently surpassed it with a residential tax rate of \$19.43 per thousand.

Northampton's commercial tax rate is also the third lowest among comparison communities, while Holyoke's is the highest at \$38.15. The five highest commercial tax rate communities with all those with split tax rates, she pointed out.

Despite having the 3rd lowest tax rate, Northampton has high home values. While the tax rate has gone down, home values have gone up, so Northampton has the 2nd highest home values in this group, behind only Amherst.

Housing inventory in Massachusetts remains very tight, and property prices in Massachusetts have increased over 50% since the start of the pandemic, she shared.

The average single-family tax bill is \$7,801. Northampton ranked higher within the group because of its higher home values but is significantly below Longmeadow and Amherst.

Their residents are really feeling the effect of high property values, she acknowledged. When councilors hear from constituents struggling with increased taxes, she asked them to please tell them the city has some options for older residents and those with less income. She mentioned senior and veteran tax work-off programs.

Mayor Sciarra showed the growth in average single-family tax bills over the last four years (FY2023 to FY2026).

With regard to new growth, their continued and fairly consistent strong new growth shows people are interested in investing in Northampton, she continued. The new growth value is added to their levy increase. Northampton has fairly reliable new growth.

Revenue Trends

Mayor Sciarra showed main revenue sources aside from real and personal property taxes as a percentage of overall revenue, then discussed trends in different categories of revenue, such as new growth, local option cannabis, hotel/motel, meals, motor vehicle excise, etc.

Mayor Sciarra showed a slide depicting investment income from FY2007 to FY2026. As talked about before, prior to the fiscal stability plan, the city's reserves were very low, so there was less money to earn interest on. Before FY2023, the city averaged \$200,000 per year. In FY2023, the treasurer moved city reserves to higher interest-bearing instruments. This coincided with the account having unprecedented one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in it, greatly increasing the balance earning interest. The lighter green bar visible from FY2023 on reflects the amount of interest from ARPA funds.

The federal reserve has cut interest rates six times since September of 2024, and the interest rate on the SOFR account has dropped from 4.92% in 2024 to 3.73% now. They cannot assume it will remain at the historic high since it is a highly-volatile revenue source. They have added \$1.9 million of revenue to the current budget from this source to support increases in the Northampton Public Schools (NPS) and Northampton Fire Rescue (NFR) and will be pushing it a bit more the next year.

She showed a slide reflecting state aid as a percentage of the city's budget followed by a chart representing state revenue vs. assessments. In FY2015, it was 15.11% and has dropped to 12.58% this fiscal year. Over 25 years, revenue has grown from \$14 million in FY2002 to \$16.4 million in FY2026, but any increase has been offset by increased assessments, she presented. As the MMA has highlighted, there is increasingly more pressure on municipalities to make up the difference, she observed.

The city received the governor's budget last week with the cherry sheet, so she will talk about what they expect for projections based on it.

Expenditure Trends

Debt service as a percentage of the General Fund (GF) budget is 3.9% in FY2026, Mayor Sciarra reported.

At \$15,590,671, employee health insurance is 12% of the FY2026 budget, the 2nd highest expenditure after schools. Each year, the amount of the insurance increase is always one of the biggest budgetary unknowns as premiums are not set until the end of February/early March. The city uses the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), which has not seen as large an increase (double digit) as the Hampshire Country Group Insurance Trust (GIT).

All city employees except teachers participate in the Northampton Retirement Board's contributory retirement system. The city is at 75.1% of funding, and the retirement system is targeted to be fully-funded by 2037. Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) is a future liability for the city not yet required by the state to be fully-funded. City officials reduced the contribution to OPEB in FY2025 and FY26 to direct more money towards the schools

The Mayor showed a slide depicting education spending. Expenditures for education grow steadily and have seen larger increases in the last few years. She showed a chart with the increases from FY2023 to FY2026, reflecting an overall 32% increase to the NPS budget in this period. Total city education spending on the two school districts, including employee benefits, is \$74,145,885.

Mayor Sciarra showed the significant impact of charter and school choice sending tuition on the budget. She also showed a chart showing the percentage of net school spending set by the state and a chart illustrating required net school spending vs. actual school spending.

Reserves

Mayor Sciarra reviewed the importance and general uses of reserves and showed a slide with the balances of the six stabilization funds as of December 31st as follows:

- \$6,338,166 in Undesignated Fund Balance/Free Cash
- \$4,917,279 in General Fund Stabilization Fund
- \$4,194,137 in General Fund Capital Stabilization Fund
- \$1,502,236 in General Fund Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF)
- \$2,294,600 in Climate Change Mitigation Stabilization Fund
- \$704,580 in Special Education Stabilization Fund

She showed a chart depicting Free Cash balances from FY2015 to FY2026 with an orange bar reflecting the amount represented by ARPA funds. The balance in this account has been higher since the pandemic. The Division of Local Services' (DLS) latest best practice recommendation is that a municipality have a Free Cash balance each year that is 5 to 7% of its General Fund budget. As Northampton has needed to direct more of its money towards schools, they have not been able at this point to change their policy to meet DOR's best practice and remain with a 3 to 5% policy.

Free Cash is significantly less this year and is projected to be less next year because they have pushed revenue projections. Once certified, per city financial policies, Free Cash is used to contribute to stabilization funds, fund capital improvements and pay for other one-time uses. She reviewed a slide explaining the reasons for higher Free Cash balances since the pandemic.

The Mayor showed a chart depicting the city's Free Cash balance from FY2022 to FY2026 as a percentage of the city's operating budget. While in FY2023 it was over 15%, this year, it is once again under 5%.

In FY2012, the city was down to almost no reserves, with only \$253,811 on account. Since then, with careful budgeting and management practices, the city has gradually built up its reserves.

Mayor Sciarra showed the balance of the general stabilization fund as a percentage of the budget in comparison to other communities, noting that it is currently at the lower end.

She also talked about the DLS slide inadvertently misrepresenting Northampton's stabilization funds because it includes enterprise funds, which many communities do not have.

Mayor Sciarra went on to discuss the FSSF and the purpose and benefits of the fiscal stability plan, showing the percentage increases to the NPS budget before and after the plan was adopted. The timeline shows that prior to FY2014 when the fiscal stability plan was created, the percentage increase to NPS fluctuated widely and averaged 2.1%. Since FY2014, budget increases have stabilized and, in the last four years, increases have collectively equaled 32%. Average budget increases from 2014 on have been 4.82%.

She believes this slide illustrates the greatest benefit of the FSP. She briefly showed the fiscal stability plan worksheet.

PROJECTIONS

As far as projections, with the \$2,018,432 Proposition 2 and ½ increase and preliminary new growth estimate of \$875,000, financial officers know they can raise an additional \$2.9 million in revenue to support the FY2027 budget.

Based on the governor's budget, state aid shows a net decrease of \$333,547 for FY2027 since an increase of \$411,400 is offset by an increase in assessments of \$715,248.

As a preliminary projection, revenues are projected to increase by \$3.55 million (\$3,553,093), she reported. Of this, \$2.9 million is real and personal property taxes, with the balance achieved by pushing local revenue projections, including tax title and interest on taxes, which they don't usually rely on.

These projections are aggressive and carry with them some risk, she acknowledged.

Projected known increases in expenditures are \$4,855,489, she continued.

They are planning a larger than 4% increase for the schools this year and have removed all capital spending from the operating budget. Since estimated revenue as discussed is only \$3.55 million, this leaves a gap of \$1.3 million.

Mayor Sciarra concluded by reviewing concerns, such as the uncertainty of some federal funding. NPS receives an estimated \$1.5 million in entitlement grants. Schools have been told that \$119,000 in Title II, III & IV grants will be eliminated. Non-school city departments receive about \$2 million in federal grants. They are also concerned about Medicaid reimbursement dropping.

In addition to these factors, there is continued economic uncertainty.

She finished by reviewing the budget calendar.

At 8:14 p.m., the Mayor announced a 10-minute recess. At 8:24 p.m., the joint meeting reconvened

DISCUSSION

Following her presentation, the Mayor entertained questions and comments.

School Committee member Michael Stein thanked her for the presentation, saying he had a few observations and two questions. On the slide about the operating budget, he was struck to see the \$350,000 in the special education stabilization fund shown, which means they are treating funds set aside for unbudgeted costs as budgeted operational money. It is likely that the remaining \$150,000 is also being used for planned or budgeted expenses. Seeing it on the slide talking about the operating budget presumes they are planning to use it.

\$59 million, or 45% of the operating budget, goes to support NPS, which is unsurprising since it is the single largest city service by every metric. He referred to a slide saying that actual spending is \$16.9 million above net school spending. He would love to know if they could actually operate the schools at net school spending if they cut \$16.9 million.

Many municipalities are facing budget deficits, but they are facing budget surpluses each year, he observed.

All of the percent increases presented are restricted to the portion of the NPS operating budget that comes from the local appropriation. Their actual operating budget is larger and includes federal money that flows directly to the schools. Percentages here matter and are emphasized a lot but there are a lot of caveats that he thinks would be helpful.

With respect to debt service, he expressed his understanding that the \$5 million and change budget line item for FY2026 represents 3.9% of the GF operating budget. His understanding from conversations around the geothermal bonding is that a significant portion of the current debt service retired this year and \$1 million is coming off.

- 1) How much is the debt service dropping year over year if they include the new geothermal bonding talked about, and where can they see the details of bonds and related projects being serviced by the operating budget? He asked.
- 2) For the budget process going forward, an earlier slide described the Mayor and Finance Director as working with department heads to maintain services and identified needs. The overwhelming majority of this work goes on behind closed doors without a lot of transparency. He wondered if the mayor could share more about her approach to weighing the various needs of the city and making budget decisions in accord with the city's values.

Mayor Sciarra said the process she and Finance Director Nardi follow with department heads is parallel to the process the superintendent follows with the schools. Director Nardi meets with department heads and she meets with her and department heads individually. Generally, her directive to department heads is to keep the budget increase as low as possible (2.5%). They are often stripping out things. She will 'nickel and dime' budgets as much as she can.

Director Nardi said the budget book does talk about the debt although it doesn't actually list the associated projects. She was planning to talk to the mayor about adding more of the detail that has been requested.

Mayor Sciarra said she agrees net school spending would not be remotely sufficient.

Councilor Davis asked her to clarify what she said about removing capital projects from the budget.

Mayor Sciarra explained that some capital used to be built into the operating budget but it has been stripped out. It is a recommendation to have some capital built into the budget so that had been the practice.

Councilor Nabad asked when they will know about Free Cash for FY26. Why can't they discontinue the capital stabilization fund and put it somewhere else and what are the rules about Free Cash and its use? She asked.

Free Cash generally is certified by DOR after the books from the fiscal year are closed sometime in November or December, Mayor Sciarra advised.

They *could* discontinue capital stabilization, but it's not advisable, Mayor Sciarra allowed. In FY2012, they were down to less than \$5,000 in capital stabilization. Capital projects are defined as being over \$10,000, so they wouldn't be able to fund any capital projects without it. It is important to have capital stabilization to maintain the city's infrastructure and fund the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). They are still acutely feeling the effect of deferred maintenance. They have 160 miles of roadway and increased funding for sidewalks. "There is so much that needs to be done." They would be less able to keep up with the city's capital needs without the capital stabilization fund, she pointed out.

As far as rules for Free Cash, the recommendation is that it only be used for one-time expenses. It is not considered a recurring revenue source. There are not actual restrictions by the state on its use, however.

Councilor Loisel said it was good to hear how far along they are on the pension funding schedule. She asked:

- 1) Does the city tax as high as is allowed for hotel and meals?
- 2) At the MMA, DLS representative Sean Cronin said something about the ability to shift the residential exemptions on property taxes from the lower to the higher end as being a powerful tool only the executive can use.
- 3) The balance of the circuit breaker fund and how much of it they're using,

Mayor Sciarra confirmed that Northampton does exercise the maximum local excise option for hotel, meals and cannabis.

Councilor Maiore announced that the 'chat' feature should only be used for technical issues.

Director Nardi said she is not familiar with the residential exemption. Councilor Stratton said there is a problem with it in that it doesn't cover rental properties. Director Nardi said she would get more information about it from the principal assessor.

Mayor Sciarra reported that the balance of the circuit breaker account is \$1,176,096. NPS received \$878,117 in FY2025 and carried it over to FY2026, as is the general practice.

NPS receives circuit breaker reimbursements and can carry them over for one year, School Business Manager Bobbie Jones confirmed. Extraordinary circuit breaker funds have to be spent in the same year in which they are received.

Councilor Robbins commented that the January 26th storm event was a horrible snowstorm for the city and has been awful to dig out of. She thanked the DPW for disappearing the snow. Everyone wants to know where it went.

She is curious about the additional costs for snow removal. 1) Will those costs come out of enterprise funds?

She thought she saw on the draft cherry sheet that the governor was going to fully-fund the circuit breaker, she noted parenthetically.

- 2) She asked if the Mayor had considered the midyear appropriation in thinking about what the schools need for FY2027.
- 3) She said it seemed as though there was a difference in the amount of reserves shown on the slides today from those seen last year. A lot of folks wondered how they were used.
- 4) Finally, is she fairly confident in the reserves and does she have an estimated projection of what the FY2027 costs for the redesign of Main Street will be to the city?

Director Nardi said they budget \$500,000 for snow and ice. The city doesn't get insurance anymore because they are allowed to overspend this account and have reserves to cover it. None of it comes out of enterprise funds.

The midyear appropriation was not factored into this presentation since that vote only happened late last week, Mayor Sciarra said.

Regarding the difference in the balance of reserves, they are always going to be different every year. Last year, they probably looked lower because city officials had already approved capital expenditures at that point.

Director Nardi confirmed that the CIP was presented in December last year. Reserves are all affected by orders presented to city council. Council just appropriated money for the geothermal and solar projects, so that affected the balance of the climate stabilization account, she noted. Last summer, they made an appropriation from stabilization for Memorial Hall repairs, she reminded. Those types of orders have impacted the reserves.

They do not have any updated estimate for the cost of Picture Main Street, Mayor Sciarra said. They had estimates for the underground infrastructure and are still waiting for 100% designs to be certified.

With regard to capital expenditures, Councilor Stratton said he thinks it's important to maintain clarity between the GF budget and the verb 'to budget.' It's not that they are not 'budgeting' for capital, they are not including it in their GF budget. They are budgeting for capital outside of the GF. Basically, because they view capital as a one-time expense, they are budgeting for future capital in the money they leave on the table by their overly-conservative estimates.

Mayor Sciarra said that, at this point, they are not being overly conservative with their estimates and are actually overall above the recommendation for revenue estimates.

Director Nardi noted they are not just 'leaving money on the table' in Councilor Stratton's words for capital but because they are trying to make sure they can afford their operating budgets in multiple out years as expenses increase.

Councilor Maiore asked how the number and diversity of their stabilization funds compare to other communities.

Mayor Sciarra referred to the slide in the presentation showing the comparison of stabilization funds as a percentage of the budget. For general stabilization, they were at the lower end but for all stabilization accounts they were at the higher end of the 12 communities, but not nearly as high as Amherst and Easthampton.

Councilor Maiore asked if they have more specialized funds.

Other communities have special education stabilization funds, Mayor Sciarra said. Most communities don't have a climate mitigation fund.

Director Nardi noted that many communities leave their reserves in Free Cash but the challenge is that Free Cash is not available year round.

Member Saner Sullivan asked if she knows of any other minimum aid communities in the area.

In the last few years, many more communities have tipped over into this status. It is a fairly significant number in the Commonwealth, Mayor Sciarra confirmed.

Councilor Davis said she believes the 'chat' feature violates Open Meeting Law since it can't be preserved for the public record. Some very meaty conversations were happening there, she noted.

Mayor Sciarra pointed out that not everyone has access to the chat, so it does not provide equal access to all participants.

Member Stein asserted that, just as members are allowed to work on a google document during a meeting, so a chat like this is also allowable. The constant attempt to shut down conversations when they're already so limited is frustrating, he volunteered.

He would request that in future presentations, the Mayor show what other reserve accounts other communities have. Over 200 municipalities are minimum aid either because of declining enrollment or relative wealth. The reason Northampton doesn't get more Chapter 70 aid is based on it's the relative income of its residents and its property values. It is a reflection of their relative wealth in comparison to other communities. In the last formula change, the state directed significant resources to other much poorer communities. Of comparison districts provided, Northampton is in a cluster with Longmeadow and Amherst. They spend almost as much as Longmeadow in net school spending and significantly less than Amherst. He thinks when they do these comparisons, they need much more data in order to draw conclusions.

Councilor Nabad asked what defines smart growth and how can they grow more. She also asked the deadline for spending ARPA funds.

Construction must be completed by September of 2026 and all funds expended by December 2026, Director Nardi said. All of Northampton's funds have been allocated, she stressed.

Councilor Stratton clarified that, with the Ch. 70 formula, there is an assessment against communities based on local property values and one based on resident income. Northampton has relatively high property values in the state context but relatively low income.

Free Cash certification expires at the end of the fiscal year and then can't be spent from until the new Free Cash certification in December. However, the end of the fiscal year is months away at this point, so he finds this rush to put money away into the stabilization funds strange. In the last three years, they both spent from the fiscal stability fund and put money into it. It strikes him as strange that they would put money in and take it out in the same year. What's the rush to put money in the stabilization fund now? Why do people feel it's so important to pass this financial order in January or early February rather than waiting to have the rest of their expenses figured out? He asked.

Using Free Cash for stabilization is one of its recommended uses, Mayor Sciarra pointed out.

Director Nardi said she thinks it is good practice to refill when they have been spending money out of a reserve. It is not intended to be a rushed process; it is part of their policy. It does not mean the money is gone.

She, Mayor Sciarra, Dr. Bonner and Dr. Linkenhoker had a meeting with the senator to advocate for changes to the school funding formula that would benefit Northampton. When DESE increased the foundation budget, the percentage split paid by Northampton simultaneously increased, so it did not work for their city. These are some of the things city leaders have been advocating for, she assured.

Using the chat for substantive comments is also interrupting, Councilor Maiore interjected. It is a way of speaking out of turn and unfair to the rest of the committee and the council.

Councilor Nabad thanked Councilor Maiore for pointing that out. She found those side conversations distracting and maybe emotional.

Councilor Stratton said it raises the question of whose meeting this is.

It is mine, Mayor Sciarra interjected.

Neither the Mayor or Director Nardi answered his question, he asserted. If this were a council meeting, there could be a little more insistence that questions be answered, not just talked around.

There being no further questions or comments, **Councilor Loisel moved to adjourn the City Council. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.**

School Committee Member Mahone moved to adjourn. School Committee Member Bartoli seconded. The motion carried unanimously 10:0 by roll call vote. The School Committee adjourned.

SVAHS Trustee Dr. Julie Spencer Robinson moved to adjourn. Dr. Bonner seconded. The motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote with Mr. Aquadro and Mr. Cahillane absent.

The joint meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Prepared by:
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Roll Call

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING
March 5, 2026**

A regularl meeting of the City Council was called to order by Council President Rachel Maiore at 6:30 p.m. Upon a roll call, the following City Councilors were present:

- At-Large Councilor Meg Robbins (6:32 pm)
- Ward 1 Councilor Gwen Nabad
- Ward 3 Councilor Laurie Loisel
- Ward 5 Councilor Aline Davis
- Ward 7 Councilor Rachel Maiore
- At-Large Councilor Garrick Perry
- Ward 2 Councilor Deborah Klemer
- Ward 4 Councilor Jeremy Dubs
- Ward 6 Councilor Christopher Stratton

Announcement that Meeting Audio/Video Recorded

Councilor Maiore announced that the meeting is being audio/video recorded.

**Public Hearings
Announcement of Public hearing re: Northampton Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031 - Thursday, March 19, 2026
Announcement of Public Hearing to Consider FY2027 Water and Sewer Rates**

Public Hearings

Councilor Maiore read the following public hearing announcements:

Announcement of Public hearing re: Northampton Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031 - Thursday, March 19, 2026

In accordance with Article 7, Section 7-5 of the Charter, the Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** in City Council Chambers, Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA Instructions for accessing the hearing remotely may be found on the March 19, 2026 City Council agenda to be posted on www.northamptonma.gov no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. The City Council will consider the [Capital Improvement Program for FY2027-FY2031](#), and hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

Announcement of Public Hearing to Consider FY2027 Water and Sewer Rates

The Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing to consider the FY2027 water and sewer rates on **Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 6:45 p.m.** in Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA. Instructions for accessing the hearing remotely may be found on the March 19, 2026 City Council agenda to be posted on www.northamptonma.gov no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. The City Council will hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

Public Comment

Councilor Maiore explained the procedure she would use in conducting public comment and opened the floor to comments.

Jacqueline McCreanor, Northampton, said that, as she learns about additional Picture Main Street (PMS) project delays, she is becoming increasingly concerned about hidden expenditures related to the project and the Sciarra administration’s lack of transparency with regard to costs being passed on to Northampton taxpayers for below-grade work on Main Street. For example, it has come to people’s attention that Eversource has been conducting several test digs on Main Street and, though that work, may have identified some additional work and costs related to underground utilities that may need to occur during the project. Northampton taxpayers deserve to know what issues have been identified by different utilities, what additional work may need to be done to underground utilities, what the costs are, and who will be on the hook for paying for them. Folks have also learned of vaults located below Main Street that appear to be connected to basements of some of the buildings along the street. What are the issues associated with PMS and the underground vaults? What does that work entail? What are the costs of this work and who will have to pay for it to be done? Northampton taxpayers need clarity on who will pay for any replacements or repairs to water, sewer and stormwater lines under Main Street. And, are the upgrades – particularly the stormwater infrastructure upgrades - going to be truly adequate and sufficient to keep up with climate change?

Northampton taxpayers request this administration to share real-time PMS project information and cost updates – at the state, federal and local levels – on the PMS portion of the city website as soon as these cost and information updates become available.

Lastly, they ask that the City Council openly and transparently discuss all expenditures for all of the stake-holders of the PMS project, particularly expenditures that will be covered by Northampton taxpayers, in near-future council meetings.

Saying she knew her two minutes were up, Ms. McCreanor pointed out that Northampton taxpayers should not have to ask for PMS cost updates; the Sciarra administration should be providing them voluntarily, which is not happening.

Jim Nash, Montville Avenue, spoke in favor of the financial order appropriating \$90,000 for economic development for downtown. The financial order very aptly describes that this investment has a great return. "When we support our downtown and the activities that draw people to our community, the pay-back is substantial," he confirmed. He is asking council to approve the \$90,000. He is very glad to see they are getting an update from Finance Director Charlene Nardi relative to revenue and expenses. He asked them to look in particular at the local revenues. Their downtown continues to do well, indicating recovery from the pandemic. Their numbers continue to grow, but they'd still like to see more robust improvement, and this \$90,000 will help make that happen.

Collete Paro, Chicopee, said she is deeply connected to Northampton, being a disabled vet who some-times visits the VA center three times a week. She is also in a theatre company that last year had a residency and three performances at the APE Gallery on Main Street and is part of the workspace co-op program at the Northampton Center for the Arts. Quite frankly, she spends a lot of money on dining, shopping and entertainment in Northampton. She can appreciate wanting to have a clean city but prohibiting flyers is not how to promote a thriving arts scene. Pushing advertising on line only promotes and channels money towards companies like META, which they all know can be a breeding ground for false information and hate speech. The city of Northampton has a long history of being a mecca for free speech. Northampton's very own Wikipedia page describes the city as "an academic, artistic, musical and countercultural hub."

Do they think they've achieved that status by ripping down an acoustic guitarist's concert flyer or by tearing down the local theater company's posting for a play about Emily Dickinson? One excuse city government has given for removal of flyers is to ensure unacceptable postings are not allowed. But controlling forms of communication is censorship, and that is a very slippery slope. Trust that the over-whelming majority of citizens post flyers for art, music and organizing events that contribute positively to the community, she urged. Trust that citizens won't stand for intolerance in their community and will actually save them money by taking hateful flyers down themselves.

They are asking for temporary removal or change in the flyering ordinance or at least its enforcement in order to collect data.

Ross C. introduced himself as a lifetime **Massachusetts** resident, also known as his drag persona, Victory Evangelica, who represented Northampton in Massachusetts Office of Tourism and Travel's podcast, "It's Revolutionary," covering the queer community of Northampton in celebration of Massachusetts' 250th anniversary. With regard to the ordinances surrounding flyers, as a nightlife entertainer and artist, he recognizes the harsh reality that Northampton is a place where they lose beloved businesses like the Majestic Saloon, Faces, Doherty or Wurst Haus frequently to the high costs associated with running a business in the unstable economic environment seen nationwide. He referred to reasonable concerns that opening flyering to the public could risk tasteless and controversial material posted downtown, thus deter-ring business. However, he reminded the council that the reason Northampton is beloved is not a squeaky-clean, family-friendly reputation but rather its reputation as an artistic community with a history of abolitionist and Utopian thinkers going back centuries. As money leaves this city, so does a starving artist who makes this city. The least they can do to allow Northampton to retain its Utopian spirit is to loosen up regulations here and there and allow creativity to thrive in the small nooks and crannies it still can. He warned the council that, without flyering, downtown will continue to become nothing more than a quirky shopping mall that casts the shared spirit of its locals aside. Please stop wasting resources, even tearing down flyers unless they are hateful in nature, even for a little while to test the waters. The community that gives the town its identity will show them that it's worth the risk. The small difference helps Northampton preserve it's revolutionary spirit and allows the town to live and breathe in person, not through nebulous social media platforms that shadow ban artists.

Heather Geoffrey, Co-director of Northampton Center for the Arts, shared what Arts Night Out means from the perspective of a participating arts event venue. 33 Hawley is home to three

arts organizations, Northampton Center for the Arts, APE, which also operates a gallery on Main Street and Northampton Open Media (NOM), which is recording this meeting. In addition, an arts trust owns the building and is another nonprofit that benefits from the noticeable foot traffic Arts Night Out brings in. This traffic benefits all of the organizations in the building, including artists having openings in their galleries (two each month) and musicians hired to perform. It becomes one of the most active evenings of the month and introduces many new visitors to their space, people who often return later for classes, performances and exhibitions and sometimes go on to become participants and often donors. They appreciate the city's continued support of the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) and the role its playing in organizing and promoting these events and ask that they consider any other support that could be put towards the DNA that benefits Arts Night Out and Northampton.

Northampton resident Karen Carswell, the DNA board member who heads the Taste of Northampton Committee, talked about why economic development funding matters from the front line of the Taste. The Taste centers Northampton as a culinary, music and community celebration at the start of the school year. Last year, they drew about 5,000 people over two days and returned to the Armory parking lot where it felt like a homecoming for businesses. This year, they would like to add a second musical stage to showcase musical talent. Last year, Smith College students attended and a professor connected it to an Anthropology class. This year, they are in conversations with local nonprofits about getting more people involved and the DNA is committed to growing its impact. None of this happens without the city – the free parking, the electricity on site and the city employees who show up from health inspection, licensing and the Arts Department to solve problems on the fly. She volunteers because she wants to showcase the incredible businesses that chose Northampton as their home. It is an honor to work alongside restaurant owners who literally cook outside and share their craft with the community. Order 26.019, the \$90,000 appropriation for economic development, is an investment that comes back to this community through local spending, tax revenue, and a downtown people want to return to. Please support this funding.

Erin Morse, Northampton, an educator and local musician in the city's DIY music scene, also spoke to the flyering ordinance. Since moving to western Mass in 2024, she has easily spent 20 hours walking downtown to get the word out about local events, going in and out of buildings with public spaces to hang flyers, talking to neighbors, handing leaflets out at intersections and hanging flyers on city buildings, which are taken down at speeds greater than those directed to address any other city issue. Access to information about community events is critical to the thriving arts scene the city purports to support which draws transplants to the Pioneer Valley. Northampton benefits from this part of its public image but does little to support its growth – even the most basic things like hanging flyers - let alone maintaining active small music venues downtown accessible to local and small touring music acts. Preventing the hanging of flyers in the city forces the community into the online realm and requires individuals to engage with social media in order to know about events. Information about arts and culture events, as well as things like Narcan trainings, library fundraisers and more, could be easily accessible at any passing light post as people move throughout their city. When people ask her how she knows about so many events in the city, her answer is always from flyers. She asked them to consider at least a temporary halt in the existing flyer ordinance with the hope to repeal this ordinance.

Arts and Culture Department Director Brian Foote spoke in support of the order to appropriate \$90,000 for economic development. As a producer of events like Bands on Brewster and Salsa in the Plaza, he serves as the primary link between the artists who energize their streets and the organizers who shape the downtown's vision. His work goes beyond managing performances, it is about intentionally fostering the vitality of their city. When he coordinates with the talent and teams behind these events, the conversation is as much about the foot traffic sustaining their local storefronts as it is about the music or dance. These initiatives are not merely nice-to-have cultural perks, they are the essential engine driving their local economy and community identity. By supporting this order, they are supporting the critical resources needed to manage outreach and recruitment for their downtown. They are ensuring that the success stories built over the last five years, from Salsa in the Plaza to Summer on Strong, can continue to be scaled and thrive. He urged councilors to vote in favor to keep Northampton's economic and cultural heart beating strong.

Chris Freeman, Executive Director of the Parlor Room Collective, spoke in support of the initiative for more city funding for downtown events. He has seen firsthand what this kind of smart public investment can unlock. When the Iron Horse was closed, downtown felt different; one of the hearts of their cultural life was dark. In the early days of bringing it back, the city stepped up with \$73,000 in ARPA funds, which was about 10% of what was needed to get the project off the

ground. That 10% really mattered because it sent a signal that this was worth saving and gave them the foundation to raise the other 90%. Since reopening, they have staged over 400 shows, welcomed more than 60,000 attendees and re-energized downtown nights and weekends. That initial public investment has led to an operation that supports 22 full-time jobs and dozens of part-time jobs, pays out over \$800,000 a year in payroll and has paid over \$1.5 million to artists, working musicians who power the vibrant music ecosystem that exists in their valley. According to NEA figures, the Iron Horse has generated roughly \$2.4 million for Northampton's economy. Festivals and venues are hard to run; they carry a lot of risk, and the city funding that underlies events can really help.

Virginia Crand, Northampton, urged councilors not to support a ban on public postings. The first speaker (Collette) said it very well that this will only weaken their economy and what attracts people to Northampton. Making it so people can only post flyers in places of consumerism; i.e. - cafes, restaurants, etc., feels very pro capitalism. She thinks a lot of people in their community will make sure to take down posters that have gone past the date. She thinks it is imperative that they keep this. She has gone off Instagram before but got back on because it was one of the only places where people can see what's going on. "Flyers help so much to make us so more connected. . ."

Justin Cohen, a former Northampton resident now living in **Springfield**, spoke in favor of the \$90,000 appropriation for economic development, sharing that he runs both profit and nonprofit events in Northampton, including the Northampton Record Fair, and coordinated one of the concert series – Wednesday Parties in the Park - last summer for the Arts Council which usually drew a few hundred people. He also went to a lot of Salsa in the Park and Bands on Brewster events. The more the city can do in addition to 'for profit' events, the better. He always felt Northampton was the cultural hub of the Pioneer Valley. Less is happening now, not because of government but because of the falling of the 'for profit' industry. . . everything the Arts Council and Center for the Arts is doing is a major push toward picking up the slack.

He totally agrees with lifting the ban on flyers. He flyers a lot but makes sure not to put them on city property. He didn't realize there was a possibility of lifting that ban and would certainly be in support.

Oliver Kelly said he lives in **Easthampton**, works in Northampton, and produces drag shows in the area. He urged councilors to impose a temporary repeal or alteration of the flyering ordinance or at least of its enforcement. This ordinance hurts local arts scenes, drives communities even further isolated and online into the hands of unethical tech platforms and is an infringement on their basic first amendment rights to speech and distribution. When flyering in Northampton, several times he has had city employees follow directly behind him ripping down flyers as soon as he posts them and, at times, shouting at him. Several times in the past month, he has tried to speak to various city staff members about it. With the exception of Meg Robbins, he has been ignored, given a political roundabout, or given obtuse answers that changing it would be too difficult, that city councilors don't have time to consider asks from their own community, etc. This matter was brought up at a review meeting last November, and the only opposition recorded was that it would open them up to stuff they don't want and that removing the ordinance would raise the question of enforcement and discretion, but the town is already doing that. "I haven't seen much enforcement around lost cat flyers," he quoted from meeting minutes.

When he pointed out that the city is already paying to take things down and that, if anything, it would save money by doing so periodically instead of constantly and reduce waste by letting flyers serve their purpose instead of being instantly thrown away, he was ignored. When he suggested a volunteer group of citizens, himself included, would be happy to contribute and ensure the recycling of materials, this was also ignored. This makes him think there may be some larger opposition at hand than material logistics which perfectly viable solutions have been provided for. The fact that this ordinance is located under Disorderly Conduct next to public drinking and swearing shows all that is needed to know how the city views this issue. He urged them to think about the soul of the city, the impact on the community and art spaces as a whole that the city touts as its lifeblood, and ask themselves why the city should be so hell bent on opposing its own community on what should be an easily solvable issue.

Jesus Acevedo, Amherst, said he grew up in the valley and spent many years in Northampton either working, walking, or eating. With regard to the flyer ordinance, flyers have always been a part of this town from community boards in the Forbes Library to flyers posted in storefronts and on the walls of bus stops. It is a quick, easy way to find events and help to build community. It's tied into the spirit of Northampton, a community made up of artists, musicians and the queer

community. He believes restricting flyers basically hampers ways for people to find events and build community within this town. He just ate at a restaurant where there is a community board and that's usually how he finds out about large events. On the way here, he saw flyers for missing kids in storefronts. While their heart may be in the right place, he thinks city officials should really think about repealing the ordinance because flyers are really the lifeblood of this community. There are better ways to deal with them than taking them down. Have faith people will take down hateful messages if they see them, he urged.

Diane Germain, who, with her husband, Kevin, owns **Splendor Solis Books**, spoke in favor of the economic development order on behalf of the Market Street Market: A Curiosities Fair team, composed of her and her husband and Isaac Weiner of Familiars Coffee and Tea. In October, along with the city and DNA, the team self-funded a market that attracted over 30 artists, makers, musicians and 'purveyors of the strange and beautiful' from all around New England to Market Street, she share.

She read the following prepared statement:

The event drew a substantial crowd to Market Street all the while supporting the broader downtown Northampton's shops and restaurants. This kind of event in the Ward 3 district has a potential to become a neighborhood-scale cultural and economic driver for the city of Northampton.

There was a measurable boost in sales for Market Street businesses — we can personally say we had our best day since opening three years ago, Deep Thought Records reported an 85% increase in sales. We are pleased to say that this trend expanded beyond Market Street— Familiars Coffee and Tea also reported it being one of their best days, Thorne's Market reported foot traffic was up almost 13% and a 22% increase in sales year to date.

We are on target to repeat the event on October 3rd of this year with the hopes of growing it and adding more vendors, entertainment and merchandise. An increase in funding for this year's event would help us to further market it through print, social and online media as well as ensuring that we can continue the event in a safe and sustainable way with increased officer details, portable restrooms, and adequate trash and recycling stations.

We are proud to say that this type of programming is like no other that is being presented in town. It highlights Ward 3 and brings Northampton back to its roots of being truly bizarre, weird and quirky.

Jim Olson, Signature Sounds, Masonic Street, said the business produces music events. He spoke in favor of the initiative to continue to fund arts funding for downtown Northampton, which he thinks is so important for the city's general 'halo' effect, its reputation and what has grown over the decades. The 12th annual Back Porch Fest is coming up March 28th. Musicians are coming from all over the U.S. to play in 12 different venues in downtown Northampton. Over 60 bands are booked over three days with a mix of national and local artists. The festival attracts visitors from all over the northeast. It started very humbly and wouldn't have happened without support from the city. He can't understate how important this arts funding is to keep Northampton 'weird and cool' and keep it growing.

Fred Zimnoch said he lives on **Pomeroy Terrace**, a residential street with a walking school bus and truck escape route that sidesteps the truck-eating bridge and is a well-known cut through to avoid busy Main Street. Earlier this year, he returned home on Bridge Street only to find cars jamming up Pomeroy Terrace. Later, he learned that, during that traffic blockage, the Hot Chocolate Run was in progress. Picture Main Street, a project that will change downtown, will narrow Main Street and reduce its traffic flow. The Toole functional design document only says that displaced traffic will go elsewhere. Can the city assure him that their busy residential street will not become a full-time cut through? Other streets are also in jeopardy.

Amanda Chaffee, chair of the DNA board, thanked the city, saying she is extremely invested in Northampton as both a property owner and business owner. The city has been a strong partner of the DNA and, without the city's support, much of what they do would not be possible. She is here to support the economic development funding request. Another example of city-supported programs is the recent Ice Arts festival. Earlier this year, they nearly had to cancel the event due to funding challenges. When discussed at the monthly downtown business forum, the response was overwhelming. Businesses told them just how important this festival is for bringing people downtown during slow winter months. This year, several snow days forced businesses to close, resulting in lost sales during an already difficult season. This year's Ice Arts featured 17 ice-

carving stations across downtown attracting visitors from Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. In the month surrounding the event, DNA social media saw over 94,000 organic Instagram views, 631,000 Facebook views and nearly 19,000 website visits. Most importantly, businesses reported packed restaurants and some of their strongest winter sales days. Events like Ice Arts, Arts Night Out and Taste of Northampton are more than celebrations; they are economic engines that support small businesses and strengthen Northampton's identity as a vibrant destination. The economic initiative supports their continued partnership and investment in the DNA. Results show that this investment pays back many times over.

Brigid Bogan, social worker, former Northampton resident and part of the western Mass DIY music scene for the past eight years, said she is struck by all the people who've come out to support the change to §241-2 and thanked them for their support. For the past year, she has been flyering independently, not asking for funds, just using her own time and resources. She can easily speak for most people in the underground scene when she says the lack of venues is depressing enough that it's harder to exist as a music scene, especially with the existence of §241-2. She gets so much joy from being able to fly around town, talking to people, hanging up flyers and speaking with business owners has made a huge difference in her view of the scene and she has heard the same from those around her. The city is standing in their way to being more free in their expression of events. "It can't be simply restricted to a Northampton.live website or a few private buildings that are inaccessible, full and even more heavily curated."

She hopes they can all hold Mr. Eric Suher responsible for his empty storefronts. As Mr. Cohen said, a lot less is happening downtown than it used to, and she highly disagrees that it is not the government's fault. What's the plan for those storefronts? Flyers, maybe? She asked.

Andrea Fox said she is a Northampton homeowner who can see the intersection of Finn and Prospect Street from her driveway. Every day, she either walks, drives, trikes or bikes through that intersection and has observed traffic in all directions traveling faster than is safe. Due to the curve in the road, visibility can be limited. She named destinations on Prospect Street, such as the LGA school, the synagogue, the survival center and the YMCA, that draw walkers, people pushing carts or wagons and children alone or in groups needing to cross. Because of the proximity to the bike path, there are a lot of scooters, trikes and bikes that are lower to the ground and easier to miss if you're not expecting them. Traffic signs assist with traffic calming and create a safer and more orderly process for travel. She mentioned four-way stops at State Street and the intersection of Prospect and Jackson Street. It is her belief they have added to improved traffic flow, replacing the often long delays waiting for the kindness of motorists to allow others to pass either on foot, bike or car. Yesterday, while on Bates at the Day and Lincoln three-way stop, she noticed its similarity to the curve of this intersection. She noticed no delays but rather a smooth orderly process for travel. She urged them to support and affirm the 3:1 vote in favor of the three-way stop taken by TPC and LM committees and to vote for safety.

Shelly Berkowitz, Northampton, said she supports not obstructing informational flyers. She expects insanity from the federal administration but, until recently, naively still viewed Northampton's government pretty much as a rational entity. How does she continue believing that when she sees communications worthy of the Orwellian Ministry of Truth, where millions and millions of their Northampton dollars are stashed away for a Disneyland-esque, poorly thought out, unnecessary and frankly dangerous project, Picture Main Street. Thankfully, since the last election, the majority of Northampton residents now know the truth about this project, the real truth. They already witnessed the bungling, pseudo-resilience hub scam which left their city the proud owners of a boarded up, unusable, \$3 million church, all while the mayor continues to claim they're penniless and can't afford to fix the harm already inflicted on their children and their schools, some of whom are reading at the 7th percentile for their grade level, because of cruel, illegal and frankly dangerous understaffing.

Back to PMS. To finish, "jump off that clown car. . . forget about the bogus POP, Pardon Our Progress." Show empathy for their downtown small businesses who would go bankrupt. "Forget about the cockeyed, dangerous protected bike lanes and, for god's sakes, just fix the damn pipes."

While they're at it, make sure they're wide enough to handle the expected flood-level rains that come from global warming, she added. That would give the mayor a meaningful environmental legacy, not chopping down mature trees. "And, oh yeah, fund our schools."

Denise McKahn, Northampton, said she lives just a few blocks from Finn and Prospect. She believes it is the 4th time she has come to talk to council about it, telling them something about

her level of interest. She hopes they will support the stop sign installation. They know stop signs are inconvenient for drivers and the intersection would be better served by other interventions, like a push-button light. However, doing nothing puts her and her children at continued risk. This is an intersection she literally crosses daily by foot or bike. She personally has almost been hit multiple times in the middle of the crosswalk by drivers who can't see her when they turn a 90-degree angle, even if they're not going too fast. This intersection is on a major walking path to the elementary school and high school. Her son also came to council asking for this stop sign. Please protect her, her neighbors and their kids. "Something is better than nothing."

Isaac Weiner, co-owner of **Familiars Coffee and Tea** and the **Florence Pie Bar**, vice chair of the DNA, board member of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce and co-organizer of Summer on Strong and Market Street Market, spoke in support of the order to appropriate \$90,000 for economic development. Since the decline of the BID (Business Improvement District), Northampton has been caught in an impossible struggle between expectations for high deliverables - such as economic vibrancy and world-class programming - and the ever-dwindling resources and funds from private donors, sponsors and stakeholders. More and more businesses are going after fewer and fewer private donations. Had the city not stepped up and filled the financial void left by the BID in such a strong and tangible way, the land-scape of their town as they understand it would be nonexistent. It has taken hard work, dedication and investment from both public and private partners to maintain and enhance their culture. They have become a scrappy, frugal and agile community of volunteers as they navigate this reality. They are at a pivotal moment in Northampton's history. They need to pursue alternative, stable and sustainable revenue for a strong economic development budget that will allow them to strategically and thoughtfully evolve and grow. In the meantime, it's imperative to maintain this vital economic lifeline that has allowed their town to prosper with events like Summer on Strong, the Taste and Market Street Market and through partnerships like those between the city, DNA and the Chamber. He is so hopeful as he looks around and hears from those who have shown up and spoken. He cannot tolerate hearing about the Northampton of yesterday anymore when there are so many of them working to build the Northampton of tomorrow. Please stand with them again to make sure these crucial resources are available to allow them to continue to do what they know needs to be done. Please stand with the DNA, the mayor's office, business and restaurant owners and retailers in their community to help them grow and support their beloved downtown.

Vince Jackson, Executive Director of the greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce, shared the chamber's mission to promote a thriving economy and thriving community, since they know the two are inextricably linked. He offered comments in strong support of the \$90,000 appropriation. Chamber members take great pride in partnering with the city and DNA on initiatives that drive economic impact, enhance the quality of life and create memorable experiences for those who choose to spend time here. Businesses already offer great products and services people want but it's the 'stuff to do' that attracts more people, keeps them here longer, gives them reasons to come back over and over again, and, for residents, makes it a place they can really appreciate living, working and playing. Marketing is a key strength of the chamber. Whether it's elevating the Ice Arts festival or supporting Summer on Strong or the inaugural Market Street Market, they are excited to be partners with the city and the DNA. These events and many more support small businesses, drive economic activity, and reinforce Northampton's reputation as a regional gem, a great tourist destination and a fun, vibrant place to be. As they always say at the chamber, when the economy thrives, the community thrives and vice versa.

Ruth Griggs introduced herself as **President of the Northampton Jazz Festival**, held every year on the last weekend of September, and proud member of the newly-formed western MA Arts Advocacy Coalition. Personally, the funding they received for the first time this year from the economic development department made it possible for the Northampton Jazz Festival to have musicians able to perform in a restaurant every month this year on Arts Night Out. They enjoyed the beauty of the music, the increased attendance in the restaurants and the enthusiastic participation of restaurant owners. This absolutely, unequivocally would not have happened without the support of the city. Chief of Staff Alan Wolf recognizes the value of the arts as an economic driver. If able to continue this partnership, they are looking to turn it into a 'Side of Jazz' restaurant membership operation during the Main Street redesign to keep people coming downtown. This \$90,000 appropriation is crucial for ensuring that the arts will continue to support the economic vitality of the city. As a resident, she supports the stop signs at Finn and Prospect Street and recently installed signs at Trumbull and Prospect, she added.

Melissa Maciborski, Northampton, said she wanted to check in with councilors. A lot of their constituents are still under the impression that PMS is funded by the state because of the

narrative put forward by the city. People do not think any municipal funds are being spent on this project, and that is not true. They are spending millions of city funds and she thinks they need more specifics on exactly how much. She doesn't know if anyone had a chance to listen to the case report but it showed that students in Northampton are behind their DESE-designated peer district academically. This is a city that has always been known for its schools, and the kids are behind. The only thing that could have fixed that is funding. What they've done is decrease funding leading to staff cuts, to put [other] funding aside. She hopes people on the council will look a little deeper and see where that money is actually going. When kids can't read, all of that harm that was done was completely preventable. "The choice was yours."

John Mark Lampley, Crescent Street, said he was speaking out of some discomfort he is feeling about public comment on the \$90,000 for downtown development. He has been looking over the order on the agenda and is not seeing very clear answers as to how that sum is supposed to be spent. From public comment, he feels like there is some consensus as to where it is going but, as a resident, he just doesn't know. It is giving him pause and discomfort. When Chief of Staff Wolf makes this kind of proposal, he would like him to be prepared to speak on where it is going before it is approved with at least the same level of scrutiny applied to funding for goods and services like roads, sidewalks and schools.

There being no further comments, **Councilor Maiore brought public comment to a close.**

Announcements from Councilors and the Mayor

Announcements from Councilors and the Mayor

March 13th is the next Arts Night Out, Councilor Perry reminded. He encouraged folks to support it.

At the most recent Community Resources meeting, members had a really robust discussion with Historic Northampton and Ruggles Center representatives. Historic Northampton currently has a moving exhibit on slavery in Northampton and Ruggles Center members reminded the committee that anyone in the city can schedule a visit. At their next meeting Monday, April 16th at 5:30 p.m. committee members are talking about trying to delve into resources in terms of food and farms.

Councilor Loisel announced that Legislative Matters meets next Monday, March 9, 2026 at 6 p.m. And, a 'No Kings' protest will be March 28th from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. downtown.

Councilor Maiore said Saturday is the Volunteers in Northampton Schools (VINS) dog show from 12 to 3 p.m. at Northampton High School. As emcee, they will have the pleasure of seeing her trying to come up with bad canine puns.

Presentations 2025 Special Committee for Review of Ordinances - Presentation of Final Report

Presentations 2025 Special Committee for Review of Ordinances - Presentation of Final Report

Councilor Dubs and Councilor Perry jointly presented the Ordinance Review Committee's final report, including ordinances recommended for adoption, revision and/or rescission and topics recommended for further study.

As a process note, Councilor Dubs noted that no votes are expected tonight. Recommended ordinances can be introduced by any one of the councilors at any point, he advised.

Councilor Stratton commented that the ordinances prioritized for amendment include many he is looking forward to working on. A lot of work remains to be done since nobody has written them up as orders yet. He is particularly interested in the snow problem and eager to begin working on it. Council rules in general allow referral of matters to council committees or executive multi-member bodies, he reminded. He asked if councilors could refer the topic to the Transportation and Parking Commission, City Services and/or Legislative Matters or whether those committees themselves could self assign the subject.

The council also has the ability to issue a study request, he noted. As a point of information, M.G.L. 40U has some state recommendations related to snow removal ordinances and M.G.L. Ch. 85, Sections 5 and 6 also have relevant provisions, he added. He would be interested in discussing the options tonight for kick-starting some action.

Councilor Dubs said no specific agenda items related to their recommendations are on tonight's agenda, so he believes any votes would need to be taken at a future meeting.

Councilor Maiore recognized Attorney Seewald, who let them know this is his 3rd time overseeing the ordinance review process. This particular committee didn't have a specific charge. Last time, the City Council adopted a resolution recommending a charge so there were specific parameters around discussion. This process was wide-ranging and free-flowing. He enjoyed working with the councilors and members of the public who brought an innocence councilors couldn't bring. He acknowledged the administrative assistant's 'yeoman's work' in coordinating and recording the proceedings.

Since no specific orders are on the agenda, if the council would like to bring a particular ordinance forward or refer anything to a committee, they can do that at another meeting, he clarified. He put in a plug for the sign ordinance, since the city currently has an unconstitutional sign ordinance that cannot be enforced. It's there and ready to go. Former Councilor Stan Moulton and Planning Director Carolyn Misch with his assistance put in a lot of work on this.

Councilor Moulton thanked Councilor Dubs and Councilor Perry for their presentation. A lot of the work presented in the report is conceptual and requires a discussion to see if it is the council's will to move it forward as a more specific proposal. However, the sign revisions are in substantially completed form.

The sign ordinance needs to be content neutral, he stressed. The path forward for it is fairly straight-forward. Once introduced, it can be referred to Legislative Matters and the Planning Board.

Councilor Nabad she said was thinking of pulling any pesticide-related recommendations and bringing them to the Northampton Energy and Sustainability Commission (NESC). She understands from Attorney Seewald that they cannot make those referrals tonight.

Councilor Loisel asked if there were any major things they didn't get to that they wanted to that should be noted for the next time.

Looking at E-bikes was an important topic they did not take up, but they did push it to another committee, Councilor Perry said.

It is helpful to hear that there is some urgency to the sign ordinance, so it would be helpful to know what the other priorities are, Councilor Loisel said.

There are some 'shovel-ready' ordinance changes identified as 'housekeeping' measures, Councilor Perry confirmed.

Councilor Loisel wondered if chairs would feel comfortable coming to the next meeting with a list of things that are shovel-ready. Councilor Perry and Councilor Dubs agreed the logical next step is to bring specific proposals to the next meeting.

Councilors thanked committee members for all their hard work and Mayor Sciarra added her huge thanks to the councilors and two community members, Molly Moses and Dane Kuttler. Councilor Robbins said she hoped they could continue working on the noise issue that emerged and was referred to the License Commission, since it didn't end up resulting in tangible change to address the concerns of constituents.

Attorney Seewald stressed that councilors can sponsor ordinance changes at any time. He offered to make himself available to any councilor who would like to write legislation but needs help drafting an order. The spreadsheet of housekeeping changes can just be attached to an order, he pointed out. He encouraged the council to move forward with these and any other proposals they may have.

Her concern is making sure this work does not get lost, Councilor Loisel stressed. She doesn't want to leave this meeting without a plan. She hopes someone can come back with a plan for some of the low-hanging fruit.

Councilor Stratton wondered if they should have some kind of a sign-up sheet. He is very interested in working on the snow ordinance and thinks vegetation is a natural companion to it. He wondered if some sort of coordination is needed.

Attorney Seewald cautioned against the council making assignments since this would constitute creation of a subcommittee, which would be subject to the Open Meeting Law (OML).

	<p>To avoid duplication of effort, Councilor Loisel renewed her suggestion that Councilor Dubs and Councilor Perry map out a plan.</p>
<p><u>Recess</u></p>	<p><u>Recess</u> The City Council recessed briefly at 8:39 p.m. The council reconvened at 8:50 p.m.</p>
<p><u>FY2026 Second Quarter Financial Report</u></p>	<p><u>FY2026 Second Quarter Financial Report</u> Finance Director Charlene Nardi presented the second quarter financial report. For a line item-by-line item comparison, she referred councilors to the five spreadsheets attached to the agenda.</p> <p>As a quick overview, everything is on track to meet budget revenue projections, Director Nardi reported. Revenue is at 48.5% of projected collections and expenses are on track to stay within budgets.</p> <p>With regard to revenue, she focuses on the percent collected, making sure it is close to or above 50%, she advised. Tax revenues are right where they expect them to be, slightly below 50%. The first two bills are preliminary and mirror bills from the third and fourth quarter of the previous year while bills for the last two quarters are based on new values and the actual tax rate, so collections are expected to be just below 50% at this point.</p> <p>For motor vehicle excise, the first bills go out in February and are due in March, so most of the money comes in in March and April. Collections are only at 14.2%, but this is to be expected.</p> <p>Hotel/motel taxes so far have brought in \$683,000, 70.1% of projected receipts. This is \$121,000 higher than the same time last year, representing a 21% increase in revenue. This projection was pushed higher in FY2026, up about 11.4% from last year, she reminded.</p> <p>Meals tax receipts are \$441,750, 59.1% of the revenue projection. This projection was increased 3.17% over last year and is coming in slightly higher (\$30,000) than the same time last year.</p> <p>Cannabis revenue is at 51.8% of the projection of \$466,000. This is lower than the same time last year by about \$120,000, so receipts are down by 21%.</p> <p>Although many PILOTS show zero, invoices are sent out in December and are expected to be paid by the end of the fiscal year.</p> <p>Overall, the tax and excise category, representing the bulk of their revenue, is at 47% after motor vehicle excise tax is removed.</p> <p>Moving on to page 2, collectively, the parking revenues category has brought in \$984,000, 64% of projected receipts. This represents a \$13,157 (1%) increase over the same period last year. All funds over projections go to support the parking system, she reminded.</p> <p>Ambulance Services is at 54.8% of the projected budget, only slightly higher (\$23,000) than the same time last year. They increased this budget by 11% in FY2025 and another 13.3% in FY2026.</p> <p>Fees and services are running ahead in most lines using the 50% measurement. While the overall category is at 34.7%, if they remove tuition for Smith Vocational, the overall category is budgeted to bring in \$394,000 and has so far taken in \$303,000 for a 77% collection rate. It is looking good.</p> <p>On pg. 3, Licenses and Permits, most are looking good but overall they are at 47.1% of the budget projection, \$229,000 less than the same period last year. They increased this projection by \$194,000 so that is another category they will continue to watch.</p> <p>In federal revenue, they are at 6.3% for Medicaid reimbursement but she believes they will meet projections this year. They have been told Medicaid reimbursement may not be the same for FY2027.</p> <p>State revenues (cherry sheet figures) are at 49.1%.</p>

The city collected \$450,629 in parking tickets, 62.6% of the projected budget. The collection percentage is the same as last year but they are actually bringing more money in towards the budget over FY2025 as the budget projection increased.

At 64% of the projection, interest on investments has earned \$1.3 million, \$177,000 less than the same time last year. The city is now relying on this revenue source for \$2 million in the FY2026 budget. Two years ago, they took in \$422,000 in interest on ARPA funds in this period; this year (FY2026), they took in \$64,000 from that source. Conversely, in interest on General Fund (GF) reserves, the city took in \$829,000 at this point last year, but it is at \$1.26 million now. They need to keep an eye on this as outside auditors and Standard & Poor do not recommend relying on this revenue source, since it is volatile and can change.

Overall, the city has collected 46.3% of its revenue projections, and, if SVAHS tuition, motor vehicle excise tax and PILOTS are removed, collections are at 48.5%. "We're right where we expect to be for our revenues," she confirmed.

For enterprise fund revenue, everything is tracking as expected. Sewer and water enterprises are at 58% and 56%, respectively, with rates and base charges being the two big drivers. Revenue in rate charges is higher because Coca-Cola is still running two lines. (They've been told that will drop sometime this summer.) Stormwater is at 51.1% and solid waste, 63.4%. Revenue drivers of that enterprise are dump stickers and trash bag sales.

For GF expenses, the end of the report puts overall expenses at 43.1%. A lot of the DPW's work occurs in the spring and carries over into early summer, so expenses tend to peak later in the fiscal year. If capital projects, reserve for personnel, and contributory retirement are taken out, expenses are at 47%.

Expenses are tracking as expected, she concluded.

Generally, percentages of enterprise fund expenses are lower due to carryovers and carry forwards as projects are ongoing and cross fiscal years.

Director Nardi referred to the local receipts spreadsheet and made brief comparisons of current revenues for meals, hotel/motel and cannabis with previous year totals.

Councilor Stratton noted that the relatively high proportion of local receipts relative to the city's overall budget is one reason they all recognize for the city still being solvent. He expressed his understanding that permit receipts were unusually high in FY2025 because of Smith College projects, so comparison to that year may not be entirely fair.

Also, in FY2025, interest income went from \$500,000 in the 1st quarter to over a million in the 2nd, then back down to \$600,000. So, while they're lower this year than the same time last year, the more interesting comparison may be that the 1st quarter of FY2026 is just under \$700,000 while the 2nd quarter is \$636,000. "I think we're basically back on the long-term trend there," he suggested.

Referring to a recent tour of Northampton Fire Rescue, Councilor Stratton noted that mutual aid has typically not involved money. However, an article in the Greenfield Recorder reported that South County EMS, an EMS system that serves South Deerfield and Whately, has done so many calls to Hatfield that they recently began charging. He hopes that if Northampton finds itself in a similar state of imbalance, it could do something similar.

Councilor Stratton asked the Mayor if they had any information about why the PVRTA assessment increased.

Assessments are based on audited figures for FY2025, Director Nardi said. A letter from the transit authority explained that PVRTA may increase the assessment by 2.5% plus additional service if applicable.

The difference of \$252,388 in the prior year's assessment is due to a 27.2% increase in fixed route service miles and a 41% increase in paratransit service, the letter stated.

Councilor Stratton wondered if they got a new bus route they're now being charged for.

Mayor Sciarra said they could find out what accounts for the increase in fixed route service.

<p><u>Consent Agenda</u></p>	<p><u>Consent Agenda</u> Councilor Maiore reviewed the items on the consent agenda. Councilor Stratton requested removal of <u>26.020 Appointments to Various Committees, for referral to City Services.</u> Councilor Klemer moved to approve the consent agenda with the removal. Councilor Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.</p> <p>The following item was approved as part of the consent agenda: A. <u>Minutes of February 5, 2026 regular meetings and February 26, 2026 special meeting</u></p> <p><u>26.020 Appointments to Various Committees, for referral to City Services</u> <u>Board of Health</u></p> <p>Luke Messac, 294 Cardinal Way Term: March 2026 - June 2028 <i>To fill a vacancy</i></p> <p><u>Community Preservation Committee</u></p> <p>Leticia Ward, 12 High Meadow Rd Term: March 2026 - June 2028 <i>Filling the position of Debin Bruce</i></p> <p><u>Housing Partnership</u></p> <p>Yakov Kronrod, 188 Rocky Hill Rd Term: March 2026 - June 2028 <i>To fill a vacancy</i></p> <p>Councilor Stratton said he will of course move to refer this to City Services, but he expressed his hope that, since these are all new appointments, City Services will schedule each of the candidates for an interview by the full committee rather than assigning them to a single member. Two of three of them are relatively new to the city, so he would appreciate the opportunity to interview each of them as a committee.</p> <p>Councilor Stratton moved to refer the appointments to City Services. Councilor Nabad seconded.</p> <p>The process decision will be made by City Services, it was noted. He is raising the suggestion now since the council only has 45 days to act, Councilor Stratton explained.</p> <p>The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.</p>
<p><u>Financial Orders (on 1st reading)</u> <u>26.016 An Order to Establish Water and Sewer Rates for FY2027 - 1st reading</u></p>	<p><u>Financial Orders (on 1st reading)</u> <u>26.016 An Order to Establish Water and Sewer Rates for FY2027 - 1st reading</u> City officials will make a presentation in two weeks as part of the rate-setting public hearing, Mayor Sciarra advised.</p> <p>Councilor Robbins said she would like to refer the order to finance so the Finance Committee has the opportunity to hear public feedback.</p> <p>Councilor Stratton noted that filing for the CPA exemption waives water and sewer base charges, representing fairly substantial savings, but he is finding the application deadlines on the website confusing. He asked if the mayor and assessor could make sure those documents are up to date.</p> <p>The Mayor confirmed that rates are not changing.</p> <p>Councilor Maiore said that, since rates are not changing, she personally does not feel the need to refer it to Finance.</p> <p>Councilor Robbins said she would like to have some discussion. There is concern from her constituents about sudden changes so she would want to be very cognizant of not having that</p>

happen again. If projections for operations beyond FY2027 might result in substantial increases in FY2028 or FY2029, she thinks they should be aware of that.

Next Tuesday at noon, Finance Director Nardi and Principal Assessor Marc Dautreuil are giving their annual presentation on tax exemptions at the senior center which will be posted to the website, Mayor Sciarra advised. Applications are due April 1st.

Councilor Klemer moved to refer the order to the consent agenda. Councilor Davis seconded. The order passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

See minutes of March 19, 2026 for final reading.

26.017 An Order to Accept Gift of Scoreboards from Ray Ellerbrook Family Memorial Field Fund - 1st reading

26.017 An Order to Accept Gift of Scoreboards from Ray Ellerbrook Family Memorial Field Fund - 1st reading

Parks & Recreation Director Ann-Marie Moggio explained that the gift is in memory of Ray Ellerbrook, director of Northampton's Parks and Recreation Department for 27 years. In 2009, Ellerbrook Field was named in his honor. He unfortunately lost his 10-year battle with cancer in 2013, but, since then, his wife and children have established the Ellerbrook Family Fund to keep his memory alive. The family has made multiple gifts - sheds at various fields, picnic tables, rebuilding the playground at Arcanum Field after a fire and scoreboards there - and made a major donation to the pickle ball courts. They are just asking the City Council to accept this generous gift as a reflection of Ray's passion and inspiration.

Councilor Nabad moved to suspend the rules to waive two readings. Councilor Dubs seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

Councilor Robbins said it was a perfect and appropriate memorial to Mr. Ellerbrook.

Councilor Loisel moved to approve the order. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The following order passed final reading:

APPROVED - 26.017
An Order to Accept
Gift of Scoreboards
from Ray Ellerbrook
Family Memorial
Field Fund - 1st
reading

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council March 5, 2026

Upon recommendation of the Mayor

26.017 An Order to Accept Gift of Scoreboards from Ray Ellerbrook Family Memorial
Field Fund

Whereas, Ray Ellerbrook was the city Parks & Recreation Director for 27 years; and

Whereas, over the past 13 years his family through the Ray Ellerbrook Family Memorial Field Fund has donated needed recreational equipment such as a play structure and scoreboard at Arcanum Field, picnic tables, and field storage sheds in support and recognition of the value of the Northampton Parks & Recreation Department; and

Whereas, the family would like to purchase two (2) electronic scoreboards at an estimated cost of \$15,000; and

Whereas, using CPA funds the scoreboards will be installed at the two baseball fields at Florence Recreation Fields for use by Northampton youth and high school teams.

Ordered, that

The Northampton City Council gratefully accept the donation of two (2) scoreboards from the Ray Ellerbrook Family Memorial Fund as a gift to the City of Northampton, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53A 1/2.

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

26.018 An Order to
Reprogram Funds to
Repaint JFK Gym -
1st reading

26.018 An Order to Reprogram Funds to Repaint JFK Gym - 1st reading

The order simply requests reprogramming of left over funds from two completed projects, Mayor Sciarra explained.

Councilor Klemer moved to suspend the rules to waive two readings. Councilor Nabad seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

Councilor Nabad moved to approve the order. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The following order passed final reading:

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 5, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.018 An Order to Reprogram Funds to Repaint JFK Gym

WHEREAS, the Supervisor of NPS School Maintenance would like to reprogram leftover funds for a small project to repaint a portion of the JFK middle school gymnasium; and

WHEREAS, there are leftover funds from the JFK Façade Repairs project and the JFK tennis court project that can be used to support this project which is less than \$10,000.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED,

That the City Council reprogram and authorize the transfer of the funds from the completed NPS projects to support the small repainting project at the JFK middle school gymnasium.

Project	Transfer out	Transfer in
CS - JFK Façade Repairs Project	\$ 2,763.35	
NPS - JFK Tennis Court Rebuild	\$ 1,536.65	
JFK Gym Repainting		\$4,300.00

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

26.019 An Order to Appropriate \$90,000 Free Cash to Economic Development Projects and Initiatives - 1st reading

26.019 An Order to Appropriate \$90,000 Free Cash to Economic Development Projects and Initiatives - 1st reading

Mayor Sciarra thanked all those who spoke tonight and everyone who works to make Northampton the vibrant place that it is.

Chief of Staff Alan Wolf gave the slide presentation, "Investing in Downtown Vitality: Economic Development Appropriation." As background, Northampton previously had a Business Improvement District (BID) that generated over \$400,000 a year for downtown activities, but, in November of 2014, it was dissolved and that money went away, he explained. For about a year, everyone was shocked and not much happened downtown. Then, a bunch of people got together and formed the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) and raised money to get things going again. The mantra was beautification, events and advocacy. When asked for money, downtown business leader Chuck Bowles said, "you've got to bring the BID back because this 'pass the hat' method is never going to work," Mr. Wolf recounted.

Enter the pandemic and the 2nd Trump presidency; all these things inspired people, along with the Chamber of Commerce and other downtown actors, to get active and think creatively. To quote Arts and Culture Department Director Brian Foote, "Our job is to get peoples' butts downtown."

"We have centered that mantra in every action that we have done and supported since," he reported. He referred to initiatives to bring back the Taste of Northampton and roll out musical events like Bands on Brewster and Masonic Street Live as examples of activities intended to keep people coming downtown.

With the pandemic, different pots of money became available. The result has been a reactive, creative and hard scrabble effort by a lot of people to 'make a lot out of a little.'

An official economic development budget hasn't been created; instead, financial requests have always been a one-off. Now, they are at a crossroads trying to get to the next step. An effort is underway with a steering committee to try to bring back a BID to restore recurring revenue to support downtown initiatives. He has no illusions that this is a large amount of money, but a lot more could be done with more. The DNA no longer has an executive director.

Now is the time to reinforce what's working, he proposed. Things have not really gotten better; they now have Trump tariffs, international uncertainty and fear and war. Gas prices are rising and the stock market is dropping. It is not a time to take their foot off the gas.

There is no secret agenda; when people come to them, they want to have money available, he shared. This continues to build on the effort to keep downtown active and vibrant.

He reviewed a slide titled, "A strategic investment with a meaningful return," pointing out that while \$90,000 is just .06% of the city's FY2026 General Fund budget, local receipts generated over \$5.81 million in FY2025, indicating that a modest investment goes a long way. Last year's investment supported outdoor dining (with barriers and planters), downtown music (Summer on Strong, Bands on Brewster, Salsa in the Park and the Back Porch Festival) and provided in-kind support for one-time events such as the Taste.

He showed examples of additional city support, such as ARPA community investment grants and the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program.

City officials are trying to get them to a BID - a consistent, recurring revenue source.

Councilor Perry expressed strong support.

Councilor Stratton said he wanted to refer this to Finance. Local receipts are in many ways the engine of their city budget, he agreed. He thinks this is very important and would like to see time for public comment on it in committee. He finds the 'Whereas' clauses a little vague as to what actual spending will be and would ultimately like to see it amended to add more specificity. He thinks the public needs to know more specifically how the money will be spent.

He moved to refer the order to Finance. Councilor Robbins seconded.

Councilor Loisel asked what the process is by which the money is given out?

Chief of Staff Wolf said the people they have been working with ask again. The DNA has been struggling and has asked for more money and support, so that's why this ask is bigger than the last. He said he is happy to share a list of what they've funded in the past.

Frankly, he would like some flexibility to fund somebody else's great idea. He cited Ruth Griggs' recent appeal to support Arts Night Out, which is struggling, as an example. They sponsor things people come to them with. Bands on Brewster would not happen without the city's support.

Councilor Loisel said she does not see a need for this to go to Finance. She met with Isaac of Familiars and heard how much they all were struggling. She feels like the businesses are running on a shoestring and it is a good use of their money to support them. She would hope they could approve this tonight.

Councilor Robbins said she enjoyed the presentation and thinks it is a good investment. They heard from a lot of voices tonight but didn't really hear a specific break down of expenses. It is hard to understand how these funds fit into a larger city economic vitality plan.

She looked at a lot of city documents, including the Sustainable Northampton Plan, and didn't see any directly addressing economic development. If there is one, she thinks it would be helpful to make it available to the public. If there isn't, she wondered if it is time for a council conversation about creating a larger economic plan. "This really needs to be 'part of,' instead of just a piece of," she suggested.

She would agree with a referral to finance.

Chief of Staff Wolf said he doesn't think he is ever going to be able to quantify the direct impact on the city budget of Bands on Brewster or Market Street Market. But, take it down to 1%; call it a 100% return on investment and it's still worth it. The point of the numbers is to say how important this money and activity is to their city and that it is a wise investment.

"This is not a tough choice. This is supporting our residents who are doing this work," he asserted.

If the threshold is going to be to prove a direct line between Salsa in the Park and local receipts, "I'm not sure I'm up to that," he noted. "This is an incredibly critical thing to support. . . there's no hidden agenda."

Councilor Perry said they listened to a lot of people tonight claiming that the city is not supporting their downtown and arts over flyering and are now presented with a clear example of how the city *is* trying to promote downtown business. It's important to understand that it's hard to show causality. Having this money gives organizers the peace of mind to move on to the next step. It allows them to keep moving forward and expand on things he thinks they all believe are important to their community.

He doesn't believe it needs to go to Finance.

Councilor Klemer agreed with everything Councilor Perry said. She doesn't think it should go to Finance. She thinks they should suspend the rules and move on with this so restaurant owners and everybody else involved can start planning for the summer.

Councilor Davis noted that, in this particular case, she heard passionate people who love Northampton who would use this pittance of money well when split among them. She agreed the flyer-ing conversation and this are absolutely linked. Approval would demonstrate their love for all kinds of arts, whether music or visual.

Councilor Dubs said he personally is living proof of how important and meaningful it is to have a vibrant downtown. 20 years ago, he lived in Pennsylvania and moved up here with his band mate because he heard it was a great place for people in bands. He became part of the community because of its vibrant arts, culture and music. It can't be overstated how important this is.

Councilor Nabad said that as a former business owner herself, she knows the struggle. She thinks it would be preposterous - a real 'kick in the teeth' to people who keep their city moving during the summer - not to approve this tonight.

She also stressed the importance of these events. It can't be overstated how much foot traffic and business they bring in. She would not be up for any kind of referral.

Councilor Stratton said he is a little alarmed here by the disparate standards. When the schools come to them with terrible test scores, children denied their legal rights and a request for money, there's no money. When the mayor and chief of staff comes to them on just a few days' notice, "we're ready to write a check."

Councilor Loisel raised the point of order that this is not a conversation about the schools. .

They're talking about \$90,000; \$90,000 was two of the interventionists they didn't just fund or five paras or tutors. Essentially what they're saying is that their businesses are an investment but their children are not.

Councilor Stratton proposed amending the order to pull out the amount for support of specific festivals and come back with more information about other things.

Councilor Maiore said her comfort level with this is that they do this every year, so businesses have come to expect it. She is comfortable with it going to the consent agenda.

Councilor Maiore called the motion to refer the order to Finance to a vote, and it failed 2:7 by roll call vote with Councilors Robbins and Stratton in favor and the rest opposed.

Councilor Perry moved to suspend the rules to waive two readings. Councilor Dubs seconded. The motion passed 7:2 by roll call vote with Councilor Robbins and Stratton opposed.

Councilor Perry moved to approve the order. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion carried 8:1 by roll call vote with Councilor Stratton opposed.

The following order passed final reading:

APPROVED - 26.019
An Order to
Appropriate \$90,000
Free Cash to
Economic
Development
Projects and
Initiatives - 1st
reading

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council, March 5, 2026

Upon the recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

26.019 An Order to Appropriate \$90,000 Free Cash to Economic Development Projects and Initiatives

Whereas, the city identified during COVID-19 economic recovery planning that activating economic development projects is key to reviving and sustaining local economic activity, particularly for hotel/motel and meals tax revenues; and

Whereas, as the city continues working to help businesses recover from the pandemic, navigate ongoing economic uncertainty, and prepare for the upcoming improvements to downtown infrastructure, safety, and equity to support general economic development efforts; and

Whereas, Northampton's parking fees and fines, cannabis, hotel/motel, and meals taxes made up 4.75% of the city's general fund revenue in FY2024 and totaled \$5,814,180 in FY2025, with \$3,048,932 received in the first two quarters of FY2026 alone; and

Whereas, even with a modest investment in economic development, this proposed appropriation represents just 0.06% of the FY2026 General Fund budget, which can yield a significant return. If economic development efforts drive just 10% of local receipts, this investment delivers a return on investment (ROI) of more than 546%. These revenues fund Northampton's schools, public safety, public works, and other essential services; and

Whereas, Northampton continues to face economic headwinds. Federal relief funds are winding down, and reduced support for health and human services, education, community and social safety nets, and environmental and regional programs are just some examples of a broad withdrawal of federal investment. At the state level, Governor Healey's proposed budget reduces funding for key social service programs that cities like Northampton rely on to meet local needs. Combined with volatile business conditions and cumulative inflation in the Boston area now exceeding 22.46% since 2020 (per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), these pressures make it all the more critical for Northampton to strengthen its locally generated revenue base through strategic economic development; and

Whereas, the city will continue to partner with the Arts & Culture Department and groups like the Downtown Northampton Association, the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce, Signature Sounds, and the Iron Horse on events such as Summer on Strong, The Taste of Northampton, Market Street Market, and the Back Porch

Festival, and continue initiatives like Bands on Brewster, Salsa in the Plaza, Parties in the Park, the Florence Concert Series, outdoor dining, and more; and

Whereas, the city will apply to the FY27 round of the Community One Stop for Growth for up to \$50,000 in refundable state tax credits through the updated Vacant Storefront Program; and

Whereas, this economic development appropriation will help position the city competitively by continuing to provide municipal matching funds and resources to manage the outreach, application, and recruitment process for the MSVP program and to support the many worthwhile downtown economic activities that have proven successful over the past five years.

Now, Therefore be it Ordered, that

The sum of \$90,000 be appropriated from the FY2026 General Fund Undesignated Fund Balance (Free Cash) for economic development projects and initiatives, including but not limited to activities that support the city's participation in the FY27 Vacant Storefront Program, ongoing economic development efforts, and related revitalization efforts.

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

Financial Orders (on
2nd reading)

Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)
26.003 An Order to Appropriate \$2.1 Million Free Cash to Various Reserve Accounts - 2nd reading

26.003 An Order to Appropriate \$2.1 Million Free Cash to Various Reserve Accounts - 2nd reading

Councilor Stratton said he will be opposing this. By the end of the fiscal year, they do have to put everything in stabilization because Free Cash is frozen, but they have not really seen the full plan yet for Free Cash or the budget. He has asked repeatedly why they need to do this now. In effect, by passing this tonight, they will be continuing with business as usual, i.e. - "underfunded schools, neglected services. . . [and] roads that don't get plowed timely." Yes, they could legally vote to pull money back out of all of these funds. However, passing this order tonight will preempt a lot of important conversations he thinks need to happen.

Councilor Klemer moved to approve the order. Councilor Dubs seconded.

Councilor Robbins said Councilor Stratton is absolutely right that when they put money in stabilization funds, they can draw it out. However, it feels nominally easier to draw it out of the Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund (FSSF) than one of the other named funds. She will vote positively on this but hopes they would have an understanding as a council that, should they need money for essential services, these are funds they could conceivably draw on.

Councilor Klemer and Councilor Nabad maintained that this has gone through the process and been thoroughly discussed. They both expressed support.

The motion passed 8:1 by roll call vote with Councilor Stratton opposed.

The following order passed final reading:

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.003 An Order to Appropriate \$2.1 Million Free Cash to Various Reserve Accounts

Ordered, that

\$2,112,722 be appropriated from the FY26 General Fund Undesignated Fund Balance (Free Cash) to the following accounts:

\$528,180.50	Capital Stabilization Fund
\$528,180.50	Climate Mitigation Stabilization Fund
\$528,180.50	Fiscal Stability Stabilization Fund
\$528,180.50	Stabilization Fund

Passed final reading and enrolled.

Ordinances
26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street

Ordinances
26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street

Councilor Dubs said he heard from quite a few Ward 4 constituents. He read several of their comments in support aloud, saying he agrees with the recommendation.

Councilor Dubs moved to approve the ordinance. Councilor Klemer seconded.

Councilor Klemer said she also heard from a number of constituents and was on Transportation and Parking (TPC) last term where the proposal for stop signs was discussed at length. She expressed her opinion that it is the best and least expensive option.

Councilor Robbins said she would like to talk about the process. The city website has a couple of pages on traffic calming and presents putting in stop signs as somewhat of a last resort, giving an explanation of how stop signs actually can be more dangerous than traffic calming. It's a terrible corner which she doesn't think should ever have a crosswalk.

She called the school transportation director to see if kids on the Summer Street side of Finn Street could pick up the school bus on State Street instead of having to cross there. The transportation director said they could, so that's an option that's available.

At a public hearing [before TPC], 12 people spoke, she reported. Two spoke in favor of stop signs and 10 had really good ideas about how to do things differently. She was very surprised at the end that the entire TPC voted unanimously not to explore what they heard in the public hearing but just to put in stop signs.

"I wondered about why we have public hearings if a decision's already been made," she noted.

Most councilors got an extensive email from former city engineer David Veleta, who was quite disturbed by the report of the consultants, Councilor Robbins continued. Mr. Veleta had some very good suggestions about making the intersection more pedestrian-friendly, including simply moving the stop sign on Prospect Street forward. At Legislative Matters, a member asked to talk about the data he brought forward, and she was a bit shocked that the chair was not interested, saying, "oh, he's just a resident."

She questioned the correlation between the traffic-calming request's position on a DPW website traffic-calming list and its prioritization for action/review, noting that this item is #38 on that list.

A lot of folks seem really happy with stop signs, but "I think we all know that, in Northampton, people aren't stopping at stop signs."

Her biggest fear is that someone is going to come around the corner without stopping and hit a kid who thinks they *will* stop.

Councilor Maiore shared that they talked in Legislative Matters about how, if money were no object, other options could be pursued, but budgetary constraints are a reality.

To echo Councilor Robbins, this is clearly a request for traffic calming, Councilor Stratton agreed. It also happens to be an intersection that doesn't have a pedestrian crash history leap-frogging over many intersections that do because people perceive it as dangerous.

"Stop signs are not a means of traffic calming," he stressed.

There are rules for stop signs. "They are not supposed to be installed by legislative fiat, which is what we are poised to do." There are criteria to be met, and the suggestion they have been met seems not entirely credible to him. They don't have traffic speed measurements, they have a subjective measurement by someone with a misconception of the actual posted speed. The sight line measurements also seem not credible to him. There are cases that could be made that would be compelling for a stop sign, "but I'm not seeing that made." This will be a 'no' for him.

Councilor Loisel took exception to Councilor Robbins's statement that people don't stop at stop signs. "I think the police would beg to differ with you," she remonstrated.

DPW Director Donna LaScaleia clarified that her request to Fuss & O'Neill, the city's third-party engineering firm, was to assess/evaluate the intersection for the need for all-way stop control. She made this request because she believed there to be insufficient sight lines on the Finn Street approach to Prospect Street and the Prospect Street turn onto Finn Street.

Fuss & O'Neill collected speed limit detail and found the 85th percentile in that area to be 25 mph. They used 35 mph as a sightline metric because they observed multiple cars speeding during their field visit. Although the 85th percentile shows a lower speed limit, they are using a higher speed when calculating sight distances, she acknowledged.

All that being said, even at 25 mph, they are still not hitting required sight line distances. What they are focused on is safety of vulnerable road users. With cars moving uncontrolled through an intersection with a crosswalk without good sight lines, they have to contemplate how they can actually stop those cars to help vulnerable road users move through that intersection.

She is confident in their traffic consultants who do traffic analyses all over the Commonwealth.

Councilor Stratton noted Director LaScaleia referred to traffic measurements from which the 85% speed determination was made, but these were not included in the report or associated memo.

He moved to postpone to give the director time to bring the actual data.

No one seconded.

Councilor Maiore called the motion to approve to a vote, **and it passed 7:1 by roll call vote with Councilor Stratton opposed and Councilor Robbins abstained.**

The following ordinance passed final reading:

**CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS**

In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-Five
Upon the Recommendation of the Transportation and Parking Commission

**26.010
AN ORDINANCE**

**RELATIVE TO ALL-WAY STOP CONTROL FOR
FINN STREET AT PROSPECT STREET**

An Ordinance of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts. Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Northampton, in City Council assembled, as follows:

SECTION 1

1
2
3 *That the § 312-113 of the Code of Ordinances be amended as follows:*
4
5 § 312-113 Schedule XII: Stop and Yield Intersections.
6
7 A. Isolated stop signs. Stop intersections are established at the following locations:
8 [10-15-1981; 10-15-1987; 5-18-1989; 5-6-1993; 11-5-1998; 1-7-1999; 3-6-2003;
9 12-2-2004]
10

Location	Direction of Travel	At the Intersection of
Prospect Street	North	Finn Street

11
12
13 D. Multiway stop signs. Multiway stop intersections are established at the following
14 locations:
15

Location	Direction of Travel	Intersection
<u>Finn Street</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>Prospect Street</u>
<u>Prospect Street</u>	<u>North/South</u>	<u>Finn Street</u>

16

Passed final reading and enrolled.

New Business

New Business

Councilor Stratton submitted a reformatted information request on behalf of himself and Councilor Robbins. [Councilor Maiore explained that she asked for it to be reformatted because Councilor Robbins earlier submitted an information request to be considered under 'New Business' but it did not meet the required format of being a "written proposed order, ordinance or resolution."]

Adjourn

Adjourn

Councilor Klemer moved to adjourn. Councilor Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:09 p.m.

| Attest: _____, Administrative Assistant

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

March 5, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.016 AN ORDER

TO ESTABLISH WATER AND SEWER RATES FOR FY2027

Ordered, that:

Effective July 1, 2026, the per 100 cubic foot (CCF) rates for water and sewer and the quarterly base rate charges for Fiscal Year 2027 will remain unchanged from Fiscal Year 2026. Rates and charges will remain as follows:

WATER

Water Rates		
Meter Size	Consumption	FY2027
Meters \leq 1 "	Tier 1 (0-16 CCF)	\$4.51 per CCF
	Tier 2 (> 16 CCF)	\$6.09 per CCF
Meters > 1 "	All consumption	\$5.99 per CCF

Quarterly Base Rate Charge FY27	
Water	
Meter Size	FY27
5/8 Inch	\$47.45
3/4 Inch	\$71.25
1 Inch	\$118.65
1.25 Inch	\$177.95
1.5 Inch	\$237.25
2 Inch	\$379.55
2.5Inch	\$545.60
3 Inch	\$711.65
4 Inch	\$1,186.05
6 Inch	\$2,372.05
8 Inch	\$3,795.25

SEWER

Sewer Rates	
Meter Status	FY2027
Non-Metered	\$7.86 per CCF based on 80% of metered water consumption
Metered	\$7.86 per CCF

Quarterly Base Rate Charge FY27	
Sewer	
Meter Size	FY27
5/8 Inch	\$28.85
3/4 Inch	\$36.06
1 Inch	\$50.49
1.25 Inch	\$86.55
1.5 Inch	\$86.55
2 Inch	\$129.83
2.5 Inch	\$230.80
3 Inch	\$230.80
4 Inch	\$375.05
6 Inch	\$735.68
8 Inch	\$1,168.43

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.022 An Order to Appropriate \$2.166 Million Free Cash to Various Capital Projects

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, the following Capital Projects be appropriated from the FY2026 General Fund Undesignated Fund Balance (Free Cash):

Northampton Public Schools	JFK Music, Science & Technology Equipment	\$ 30,489
Northampton Public Schools	NHS GOALS Program Furniture	\$ 25,000
Northampton Public Schools	English Language Arts - Strategic Plan	\$ 60,000
Northampton Public Schools	Implementation of Cell Phone Policy	\$ 54,473
Northampton Public Schools	Refrigerator/Freezer Wall Unit at NHS	\$ 145,395
Northampton Public Schools	Responsive Classroom - Strategic Plan	\$ 40,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Boiler in Building D	\$ 60,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Camera Upgrade	\$ 25,000
ITS - City	City Computer Replacements	\$ 45,000
ITS - City	City Fiber Expansion	\$ 200,000
ITS - City	Software Platforms Upgrade (Permits/GIS/Public Records/ AI)	\$ 130,000
ITS - City	Core Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 310,000
ITS - NPS	NPS Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 90,000
ITS - NPS	NPS Computers Replacements	\$ 55,000
ITS - NPS	NPS Students 1:1 Chromebooks	\$ 200,000
ITS - NPS	NPS Cameras Replacement (including data lines)	\$ 185,000
Fire Rescue	Battery Powered Jaws	\$ 161,000
Fire Rescue	Replacement of Ballistic Vests and Helmets	\$ 75,000
Planning & Sustainability	Comprehensive Street Network Plan	\$ 175,000
DPW	Traffic Calming	\$ 100,000
Total		\$ 2,166,357

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

**26.023 An Order to Appropriate \$300,000 from Climate Mitigation Stabilization for Jackson Street School
Air Source Heat Pumps**

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, the following Capital Projects be appropriated from the Climate Mitigation Stabilization Fund:

Northampton Public Schools	Jackson St. School Air Source Heat Pumps for the 1970s Classrooms	\$ 300,000
	Total	\$ 300,000

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.024 An Order to Appropriate \$515,756 from Stabilization to NPS Paratransit Vans

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, the following Capital Projects be appropriated from the General Stabilization Fund:

Northampton Public Schools	26 Passenger w/ Three Wheel Chair hook ups	\$	159,710
Northampton Public Schools	7D Van	\$	112,584
Northampton Public Schools	7D Van	\$	112,584
Northampton Public Schools	7D Van with Wheel Chair Access	\$	130,878
	Total	\$	515,756

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation Mayor Sciarra

26.025 An Order to Appropriate \$1.35 Million from Capital Stabilization to Various Capital Projects

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, the following Capital Projects be appropriated from the Capital Stabilization Fund:

Central Services	City Building Repairs & Equipment	\$ 120,000
Central Services	Forbes Library Front of Building Hardscape	\$ 40,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	12 Passenger Transit Vehicle Purchase	\$ 63,212
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Electrical & Fire Alarm Replacement	\$ 140,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Fiber Upgrade	\$ 91,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Network Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 25,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Paint Autobody Shop & Metal Doors in Buildings B & D	\$ 50,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Parking Lot Repair & Paint	\$ 25,000
Smith Vocational & Agricultural HS	Sidewalks in Front and Back of Building A	\$ 150,000
Climate Action & Project Administration	Fleet EV Charging Infrastructure	\$ 15,000
Climate Action & Project Administration	Vehicle Leasing	\$ 112,500
ITS - City	City Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 90,000
ITS - City	Unified Communication Improvements (Devices,Add-On	\$ 45,000
ITS - City	City Access Control Replacement	\$ 35,000
ITS - NPS	NPS Projectors replacement	\$ 47,000
Fire Rescue	2005 Crew Cab Utility Vehicle Replacement	\$ 100,000
Police Dept.	Vehicle Replacements	\$ 150,972
Planing & Sustainability	Shared Use Path	\$ 50,000
	Total	\$ 1,349,684

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.026 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1.8 Million for City Hall Roof Replacement and Exterior Repairs

Ordered, that

the sum of \$1,800,000 be appropriated to pay costs of design, construction and construction administration related to the roof replacement and exterior repairs and upgrades of Northampton City Hall, including all costs incidental and related thereto; that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor, is authorized to borrow said amount under Chapter 44, Section 7(1) of the General Laws, or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor; and that the Mayor is authorized to take any action necessary or convenient to carry out this project.

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.027 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1 Million for Sidewalks

Ordered, that

the sum of \$1,000,000 is appropriated to pay costs of sidewalk engineering, design and reconstruction, including all costs incidental and related thereto; that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor, is authorized to borrow said amount under Chapter 44, Section 7(1) of the General Laws, or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor; and that the Mayor is authorized to take any action necessary or convenient to carry out this project.

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.028 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$1.5 Million for Road Reconstruction

Ordered, that

the sum of \$1,500,000 is appropriated to pay costs of roadway engineering, design and reconstruction, including all costs incidental and related thereto; that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor, is authorized to borrow said amount under Chapter 44, Section 7(1) of the General Laws, or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor; and that the Mayor is authorized to take any action necessary or convenient to carry out this project.

CITY OF NORTHAMPTON
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.029 An Order to Authorize Borrowing \$700,000 for DPW Vehicles

Ordered, that

the sum of \$700,000 is appropriated to pay costs of acquiring various vehicles and other equipment for the Department of Public Works, including all costs incidental and related thereto; that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor, is authorized to borrow said amount under Chapter 44, Section 7(1) of the General Laws, or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefor; and that the Mayor is authorized to take any action necessary or convenient to carry out this project.

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.030 An Order to Appropriate \$25,000 from Cemetery Trust and Income for Cemetery Restorative Work

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, that \$25,000 be appropriated from the Cemetery Trust and Income fund, to be used to fund restorative improvements at the city's cemeteries.

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

**26.031 An Order to Appropriate \$30,000 from Receipts Reserved for Appropriation - Sale of Land - for
Tax Title Properties**

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, \$30,000 be appropriated from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation - Sale of Land Account (proceeds from the sale of various lots by the Planning Department) for Tax Title Properties.

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.032 An Order to Appropriate Parking Receipts Reserved Funds for Parking Projects

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, the following projects be appropriated from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation – Parking to fund the following projects:

Central Services: Parking Garage Repairs	\$ 650,000
<u>Central Services: Vehicle Replacement of 2014 Flatbed Truck</u>	<u>\$ 110,000</u>
TOTAL	\$ 760,000

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.033 An Order to Appropriate from Stabilization and Reprogram \$450,000 to Replace AOM Boiler

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), that \$210,000 be appropriated from the General Stabilization fund, \$210,000 be reprogrammed from the completed Academy of Music (AOM) roof project (19303-585605), that \$29,363.97 be reprogrammed from the Memorial Hall Roof project (19303-586845) and that \$636.03 be reprogrammed from Memorial Hall Emergency Repairs project (19303-586606) for a total of \$450,000 for the purposes of replacing the Academy of Music Boiler.

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.034 An Order to Appropriate from Capital Stabilization and Reprogram \$120,000 for Building Facility Condition Assessment

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), that \$40,000 be appropriated from the Capital Stabilization fund and \$80,000 be reprogrammed from the completed Memorial Hall Emergency Repairs project (19303-586606) for a total of \$120,000 for the purposes of the Building Facility Condition Assessment.

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.035 An Order to Reprogram Tennis Court Project Money to Various NPS Projects

Ordered, that

Pursuant to the FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program, that \$254,020 be appropriated from the remaining balance in the completed Tennis Court Project account (19303-585815) to the following projects as outlined below.

Northampton Public Schools	Jackson St. School Air Pressure Balancing and Retro Commissioning	\$ 15,000
Northampton Public Schools	JFK Library Replacement AC Compressor	\$ 12,000
Northampton Public Schools	Northampton High School Track Repairs	\$ 25,000
Northampton Public Schools	Northampton Public School Building Repairs & Equipment	\$ 50,000
Northampton Public Schools	Northampton Public School Field Renovation	\$ 25,000
Northampton Public Schools	Northampton Public School Playground Repairs	\$ 10,000
Northampton Public Schools	Northampton Public School Shade Replacement	\$ 10,000
Northampton Public Schools	RK Finn Ryan Rd School Sidewalk Repair and Replacement	\$ 75,000
Northampton Public Schools	Robotic Mower - Husqvarna	\$ 32,020
	Total	254,020

City of Northampton

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In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.036 An Order to Reprogram \$6,310 for Visual Notification System in JFK Band Room

WHEREAS, the Supervisor of NPS School Maintenance would like to install a visual notification system in the JFK band room at a cost of \$6,490; and

WHEREAS, in the event of a lockdown and a call can't be heard over the intercom due to the use of band instruments, the flashing light will give a visual notification to those in the room; and

WHEREAS, with a combination of operating budget funds and leftover funds in the completed Leeds cafeteria painting project this project can be funded and the work can be done during school break in April.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED,

That the City Council reprogram and authorize the transfer of \$6,310 from the completed Leeds Cafeteria painting project (19303 585540) to a new account which will be used in combination with \$180 of operating funds to install a visual notification system in the JFK band room.

City of Northampton

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In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.037 An Order to Reprogram \$914,035 Unexpended Bond Proceeds for DPW Cold Storage Facility

Ordered that,

\$914,035 is appropriated to pay costs of constructing a Department of Public Works cold storage facility for vehicles, equipment and/or materials, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto; that to meet this appropriation \$914,035 of unexpended proceeds shall be transferred from the City's outstanding General Obligation Municipal Purpose Loan of 2019 Bonds dated May 29, 2019 pursuant to Section 20 of Chapter 44 of the General Laws, which amount constitutes the total amount of unexpended proceeds related to the portion of such Bonds issued for the construction of a Department of Public Works cold storage facility for vehicles and equipment for the Forestry, Parks and Cemetery Division to be located at Spring Grove Cemetery pursuant to the vote of the City passed on April 4, 2019 (Order No. 19.016) and approved by the Mayor on April 10, 2019, for which no liability remains outstanding and unpaid on account thereof.

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

March 19, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

26.015 A Resolution to Adopt the Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 - FY2031

Ordered, that

The City Council hereby adopts the Capital Improvement Program for FY2027 – FY2031 submitted by the Mayor on March 2, 2026, in accordance with the Charter of Northampton, Massachusetts, Article 7 Finance and Fiscal Procedures, Section 7-5: Capital Improvement Program.

In City Council March 19th, 2026

Upon recommendation of Councilors Meg Robbins and Christopher Stratton

O-26.021

An Order

To Require Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to Provide Information on the Downtown Complete Streets Project

Whereas, Section 2-7 [c] of the Northampton Charter provides that "The city council may request specific information from the mayor on any municipal matter and may request that the mayor be present to answer written questions relating to that information at a meeting to be held not earlier than 7 days from the date the mayor receives the questions. The mayor shall personally, or through a designated city employee, attend such meeting and respond to the questions. The mayor, or the person designated to attend, shall not be required to answer questions relating to any other matter."

Ordered, that, the Northampton City Council requires Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra to appear at the April 2, 2026 regular meeting of the Northampton City Council to answer the following questions about the "NORTHAMPTON- DOWNTOWN COMPLETE STREETS CORRIDOR AND INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS ON MAIN STREET (ROUTE 9)" project, otherwise known as "Picture Main Street"

1. Currently expected design changes between the published 75% design and the upcoming 100% design submission to Massachusetts DOT
2. What Federal and State Funding is currently expected, by amount and date of availability, and if this funding has been fully appropriated, or is merely projected?
3. Projected expenditures of City funds by year on this project, indicating funding source
4. What current activities on the project or design are taking place?
5. All past city expenditures by year on this project including design services, marketing and public relations since its inception and planning "over two decades" including grants and ARPA monies, by funding source.
6. All currently identified and unresolved project challenges – including those relative to Vaults, EverSource distribution network locations, Right Of Way acquisition needs and costs
7. Projected increase in recurring expenses and staffing requirements for routine Downtown maintenance and snow removal, including snow removal from planned bike lanes
8. Specific plans to preserve downtown pedestrian and wheelchair mobility during construction