



*CITY COUNCIL MEETING
212 MAIN STREET
Northampton, Massachusetts
February 5, 2026*

Roll Call

A regular 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:

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

Announcement that Meeting Audio/Video Recorded

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

Public Hearings
Public Hearing on 25.355 National Grid Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)

Public Hearings

Councilor Maiore read the legal notice advertising the public hearing:
Public Hearing on 25.355 National Grid Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)
Per M.G.L. Ch. 166, Section 22, the Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** in Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA on National Grid's petition to relocate one SO pole and install new midspan pole on Park Hill Road to accommodate a service upgrade request. (Petition #31193070). The City Council will hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

Councilor Klemer moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Nabad seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The public hearing opened at 6:33 p.m.

National Grid representative Ken Creigle said the new pole is proposed to be installed in front of the customer's house it will serve. There isn't another pole available to install a new transformer in that area since they are all used up by underground primary services to transformers up long driveways.

Councilor Maiore asked if anyone wished to speak in favor or opposition.

Janice Hanley said they just put in solar panels and need the pole to accommodate the upgrade.

There being no further comments, **Councilor Stratton moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Nabad seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.**

The public hearing closed at 6:37 p.m.

Public Hearing on 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)

Councilor Maiore read the following legal notice:

Public Hearing on 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)

Per M.G.L. Ch. 166, Section 22, the Northampton City Council will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 6:35 p.m.** in Council Chambers, 212 Main Street, Northampton, MA on National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186). The City Council will hear all persons who wish to be heard thereon.

Councilor Klemer moved to open the public hearing. Councilor Loisel seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

Ken Creigle said it is a very busy street with two buildings going in on one lot. The poles are too close right now to meet minimum building and OSHA clearances. Poles were relocated for sidewalk projects a couple of years ago, and these are the only places these can go.

Councilor Maiore asked if anyone wished to speak to the petition.

Councilor Stratton asked what was meant by an 'OSHA clearance issue.'

The building has to be at least 10 feet away for when workers are working on scaffolding or siding, Mr. Creigle explained. They will have just over 10 feet diagonally after they move these.

There being no further comments, **Councilor Klemer moved to close the public hearing. Councilor Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.**

The public hearing was closed at 6:41 p.m.

Approval of the petitions will be taken up as part of the consent agenda, it was noted.

Public Comment

Public Comment

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

Nick Mottern was accompanied by **Laura Belusci**, who held up a picture of a new sign on display at L3Harris. Today, as the last nuclear weapon control freeze between the United States and Russia expires, Mr. Mottern said he wanted to show them the new sign on display on the front of the L3Harris Technologies plant in Northampton. It is a beacon of death on a factory that makes periscopes for U.S. submarines that carry nuclear missiles with the power to kill every person on earth, he asserted. The new sign, approved by the city last December, represents a corporation sending weapons to Israel to enable U.S.-Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people. L3Harris also provides surveillance equipment not only to Israel, but to ICE and border patrol, enabling their agents to terrorize and violate the human rights of residents of Northampton and the United States. The new sign affirms that the beautiful piece of land on which the L3 plant sits has been horribly degraded to a place of war industry and thus a place of greed, immense sorrow and shame.

Dan Breindel, Ward 3, commented that, for a lot of them, it was a pretty disappointing week, a little frustrating. They saw the School Committee hand down what was a compromise decision and then saw the Mayor actually ask for less money. They saw a budget and finance committee meeting last week at which it became very clear that the city plans on plowing ahead with a lot of the projects, a lot of the Free Cash. All of these things were major issues during the campaign last year. A lot of councilors and School Committee members had very valid questions, which in some cases were completely disregarded while others were just not answered. During the campaign, Mayor Sciarra said being Mayor is not a one-person job and that to get things done and make things better requires robust collaboration. At the same time, she is disregarding what the School Committee is passing down and the City Council is asking. To be clear, the Mayor did not win a majority of Northampton, she got a plurality. She got 49% to her competitor's 48.5%. She lost Ward 3, Ward 6 and Ward 7. Meanwhile, most councilors (Wards 5, 6 and 7) got more votes in their wards than the Mayor did; the same with many School Committee members, Wards 3, 5, 6, 7 and 1 all got far more votes than the Mayor did. Councilor Stratton received over 200 more votes than the Mayor, yet he's been disregarded in his questions to this Mayor. The School Committee's decisions have been disregarded by this Mayor. The Mayor said how much they can accomplish when they unite, collaborate and do the hard work together. They are asking the Mayor to do the hard work of working and collaborating with the rest of them and allowing the city to unite. . .

[When he continued to speak after being informed his time was up, Mr. Breindel was muted.]

Laura Belusci, Ward 4, named Demilitarize Western MA, Stop L3 Harris Coalition, Apartheid Free Western MA, Jewish Voice for Peace and Veterans for Peace as groups that all cosigned the Mayors for Peace proclamation she presented at the last open meeting. She ran out of time in public comment and wasn't able to read those cosigning names, a couple of which are national groups. This leads to the question, how do Mayor Sciarra and the City Council justify their unquestioning support for L3Harris and balance that with their membership in Mayors for Peace? The document signed in 2005 said that the Mayor at the time agreed to abide by the mission for peace established many years ago after the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thousands of communities all over the world have signed it, including Northampton. In their closed sessions, they ask them to talk about this. How do you balance that? They want to know; it's a valid question. She hopes at some point they will come back with an answer; in the meantime, she will keep asking.

Ward 4 School Committee Representative Michael Stein, Columbus Avenue, spoke in support of the appropriation request. On January 22nd, the School Committee considered three midyear appropriation proposals, one of which passed by a supermajority of the School Committee. In its motion, the committee instructed the superintendent to bring forth a request to the Mayor for an order reflecting exactly the funds voted on. The superintendent produced such a request. Unfortunately, Mayor Sciarra chose to unilaterally

ignore the request of her colleagues and brought forth a reduced order. While the Mayor can bring forth any order she wants, what particularly troubled him is that she appears to have directed the superintendent to provide a list of priorities corresponding to the amount she wanted to offer and then included that list in her order tonight. This is a fundamental overreach of her authority. No single member can direct the work of district personnel. The superintendent is not like other department heads that report to the Mayor. The superintendent reports to the School Committee. In this instance, the mayor has entirely circumvented the body. Throughout the last two years of budget fights, they have heard endlessly from the Mayor's supporters about the need for collaboration and are instead met with unilateral decisions imposed upon the schools that contradict the votes of the School Committee. Where are the calls for the Mayor to actually collaborate, to lead a process of collaboration? She chose to not even notify the School Committee of the order she was bringing, let alone consult them beforehand. She chose not to engage in the deliberation about the midyear appropriation that she chaired on January 22nd. The only collaboration that's tolerated is being a collaborator in imposing the budget one person has decided. He has heard the order referred to as a compromise, but a compromise between whom? In fact, "it only continues to compromise our ability to meet our legal and moral obligations to the children of Northampton."

Megan Wolf, Northampton, offered a brief comment on the midyear appropriation. She strongly supports sustained and adequate funding for the public schools. Their schools are essential to their community and ensuring they have the resources they need is always a priority. At the same time, midyear appropriations are by nature unusual. The annual budget process exists so priorities can be considered together, trade-offs weighed transparently, and decisions made with a full understanding of the long-term impact. It is important that they not unintentionally re-legislate a complete budget process outside of that framework except when circumstances truly warrant it. In this case, she appreciates that the Mayor has brought forth a focused and sensible request rather than an open-ended one. It reflects an effort to respond to real needs in the schools while still respecting the city's overall fiscal structure. She also wants to thank the Mayor for last week's budget presentation, which made clear the sheer number of priorities the city is balancing. Schools, housing, infrastructure and public safety are all core city services. She appreciates that thoughtful and disciplined approach and hopes the council can consider this request in a way that supports their schools while preserving the integrity of the budget process.

Regarding the proposed four-way (sic) stop at Finn and Prospect, **Danielle McKahn, 32 Perkins Avenue**, said that intersection is very confusing. Having raised kids in that neighborhood, it is terrifying to send kids alone in that direction to try to cross to go to the campus school playground or the hill at the Clark School for sledding. She thinks it's a real improvement to make it an all-way stop. This will be quick, easy and inexpensive, and she thinks it is a good first move to force cars to slow down and thereby make it safer.

Al Simon, Ward 2, spoke in favor of the mid-year appropriation. He knows councilors have only three choices; pass the order as written, reduce it by some amount or kill it entirely. He is extremely frustrated that that is the decision to be made. The topic is collaboration, the word heard over and over and over again last year. Collaboration means more people get to be part of the decision-making. All nine of the elected School Committee members unanimously passed the proposal for \$790,000. He did actually expect that to be the order. He expected the mayor to have an opinion on what she thought ought to happen and that would allow for actual deliberation, discussion and decision-making by many people. It is a huge missed opportunity and a signal that nothing has quite changed since the election.

Jody R., Prospect Street, said she has a little different perspective on the all-way stop. She feels like with the new stoplight that went in on State Street and Finn, there is already a back-up of traffic. It does provide a safer crosswalk, but she feels like to put either a stop sign or stoplight at the curve on Finn will just create a bottleneck between that stoplight and the rest of Prospect Street and create more problems than it would solve. She agrees with Dani that it is a dangerous crosswalk where the road curves. Maybe some kind of signage could be put up to slow traffic and alert drivers to the challenge for pedestrians going around that corner but she doesn't think putting in a four-way (sic) stop is going to solve the problem.

Adam Novitt, 17 Hooker Avenue, spoke in favor of the all-way stop at Finn and Prospect Street. It is an area he walks through frequently. The crosswalk is too long. It is confusing for cars. People are treating it like a high-speed corner, and some people are already stopping there because they think a stop sign is supposed to be there. He thinks putting a stop sign there would clarify what is supposed to be happening at the corner and slow cars down. If he's walking back from Smith College, he might take a different route just to not walk through there.

Ward 3 School Committee member Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe noted that her comments are her own and not representative of the School Committee or Ward 3. She said she was there to talk about the midyear appropriation. On January 22nd, a special meeting of the School Committee was held called by Anat Weisenfreund and herself. They wanted to address urgent needs of the schools. They presented an

initial request of \$925,000 with the understanding that the number might change based on hiring needs. Superintendent Bonner gave a midyear appropriation of \$587,000K, including \$123,000 that she had initially overlooked, and they finally approved 9:0 with one abstention (the Mayor) a compromise of \$790,000. Tonight's request, which is \$500,000 less than what they asked for, is an insult. Monday they heard testimony that most schools are severely underperforming in ELA, to the point where only 17% of students are turning in work that meets or exceeds expectations. Looking at MCA's data, they are doing somewhat better, with 46% of their students meeting or exceeding expectations, but that means more than half of their students are failing to meet expectations. For a city with such high reserves, they are doing a poor job of educating all of their children. Compulsory education means just that; everyone is required to attend school. By not providing children with the skills needed to succeed, they are creating barriers to opportunity; they are shifting costs back to the parents, the community and students themselves. If the parents cannot afford to pay for supplemental services, their children suffer. Children with low literacy levels grow into adults who struggle to succeed. They face higher levels of unemployment, higher levels of poverty and less social mobility. "We are setting up our children to fail." The idea that they can't afford to properly fund their schools as they sit on \$2.1 million in Free Cash - more than double their original ask - seems disingenuous to her.

Abby Spector, Winterberry Lane, said she is here because she has been increasingly concerned by a trend in the political discourse in this city she believes is important to address. Democracy is messy. In a small, middle-class community like Northampton in today's world, local politics is often about making difficult financial choices with very limited resources. What concerns her is the loss of recognizing that, although they might disagree, they all have Northampton's best interests at heart. When words like authoritarianism, totalitarianism, corrupt and fascism are used to describe the other side, good intent is a casualty. "Not winning a budget vote or an election does not mean we are under authoritarian rule. This approach destroys our sense of community."

She believes Trump represents a very real threat to democracy nationally, which is why their language matters so much. She hopes they can all begin by seeing good intent in the other, no matter how passionately they may disagree on an issue. Be hard on the problem and soft on the people. If not, she fears they will just be joining Trump's project of destroying and dehumanizing those they disagree with.

Mareatha Wallace, a paraprofessional at JFK Middle School, wished those listening 'Happy Black History month,' reminding people that is where they are. While she thinks \$290,000 would be an amazing amount of money, they need more. They have low scores in reading and math and actually need the help. "We want to reach our kids, we want to give them all that they need to succeed in this world," especially ones who are black and brown and tan like her. When budgets are not met and students need more help and they cannot give it to them, it affects black and brown students more than other people. She would ask for the full amount of \$500,000 that was requested. She is asking because she stands in a gap where her face represents and advocates for students of color.

Anat Weisenfreund, Northampton, speaking as a resident and School Committee member but not on the committee's behalf, noted that, on January 22nd, the School Committee held a special meeting to put forth a midyear appropriation. There were three plans: the first in the amount of \$925,000 included critical resources for every school, the second developed by the superintendent was in the amount of \$464,000 and the third which was ultimately approved was for \$790,175. The Mayor is also chair of the School Committee, but when chairing the meeting at which they deliberated the appropriation, she did not offer any fiscal or programmatic input. Tonight she is asking them to vote on a financial order totaling \$290,317, approximately half of what was requested. The order also included specific instructions for how that money should be spent. The Mayor has not let them know why she chose to cut their request, and she does not yet know how she chose to spend the proposed appropriation.

"Did she work directly with the superintendent on this proposal, entirely bypassing the school committee?" Member Weisenfreund asked. "Councilors, please ask that question tonight."

During the Mayor's re-election campaign, she spoke about collaborating with the School Committee. Sadly, this now seems like a hollow election promise. Through this order, the Mayor acts against a vote of the supermajority of the School Committee, chose not to inform their democratically-elected body ahead of time, and did not allow the body to deliberate on how this new amount of money should be best spent. The mayor's unilateral action unmoored from the scope of actual needs of the district makes it clear yet again of the necessity of the City Council to opt in. "This is our only path towards open and more democratic budget choices," she maintained.

Quaverly Rothenberg, immediate past Ward 3 City Councilor, said that as she returns to work as a court stenographer, she is reminded of what a kangaroo council this is. It is so disappointing to hear actual deliberations, actual rulings, actual arguments, actual questions and answers taking place in courts

of law and then compare that to what happens here, where Councilor Maiore cuts off questions that are extremely pertinent to the argument at hand in the name of efficiency or maybe to avoid what she perceives as conflict. She would encourage her to listen to the substance of the questions and answers and give space, even if she doesn't understand them or thinks there is conflict. They always talk about bias, relationships and things like that when listening to witnesses and instructing jurors on how to weigh the credibility of their testimony. Abby Spector, daughter of a long-time councilor who groomed the Mayor, spoke tonight and said she doesn't like how divisive things are. Megan Wolf, wife of the Mayor's Chief of Staff, spoke tonight and said she thinks the Mayor's doing a great job balancing needs. She sees Jenn Nery in the audience. She doesn't like being named the treasurer of Laurie Loisel's campaign and that she points out hypocrisy in the zoning changes she loves to support and champion when they affect her neighbors negatively and affect her beneficially financially. She doesn't like it when they point out that she wouldn't like it if the shoe were on the other foot.

"It is Black History Month and we live in America which is neoliberal, which is full of inverted totalitarianism. The mayor is not special in that regard." Bridge Street School is being defunded and underfunded in Black History Month, their most diverse school of color. "You should be ashamed," she observed.

Phil Wilson, Ward 1, said a couple of days ago he got an email from the Mayor; he is not quite sure why; it might have something to do with his requesting a 15-minute audience. The email is very disappointing. It said local police officers do not inquire about immigration status in the course of routine policing or collect immigration information, and city resources are not used to carry out federal immigration enforcement activities. At the same time, local law enforcement does not interfere with federal actions carried out under lawful authority and does not take actions that would escalate risk and undermine public safety. What lawful authority? He asked.

"The city's approach is grounded in restraint, professionalism and adherence to clear legal boundaries," he quoted.

Sounds good, but the Mayor didn't even include the phone number or LUCE in case anybody is really threatened by ICE.

This is pure euphemism, cowardice and gas-lighting, Mr. Wilson suggested. Everything ICE does is illegal. ICE commits crimes against humanity by masking, detaining with no legal basis, conducting warrantless searches and invading private spaces with no warrants. The one and only response that defends their legal and human rights would be to deploy Northampton police to arrest ICE agents who violate the civil rights of local residents. The police chief of Philadelphia actually set that precedent by promising to do just that. He doesn't hear Mayor Sciarra supporting any measure of resistance. Correct him if he's wrong; maybe he missed something. On the issue of the obscene sign at L3 mentioned earlier; their government is blind to irony; it is the mandate of L3 to inflict trauma on the planet and L3 bears down fiercely on their local mental health, standing right across from ServiceNet and DMH. He hopes Deb Klemer, their Ward 2 City Councilor, is all over this issue.

Kiah McKahn, a 9th grader at Northampton High School (NHS), said he lives in **Ward 1**, just a few blocks from the Finn and Prospect Street intersection. This intersection is on the walking and biking path to both an elementary and a high school, and he uses it daily. Cars do not have adequate sight lines to see pedestrians in the crosswalk, he asserted. He knows this because he has almost been hit by cars when in the crosswalk. "I should not be made to be afraid to walk to school." A small inconvenience to vehicles is worth protecting him and his friends. The design of this intersection does not naturally support vehicles to make good choices. Please approve the stop sign at Finn and Prospect, he urged.

Re: L3, **Dennis Moore, Ward 3**, a member of the **Western MA Club of the Communist Party, USA**, urged the city council to pass a weapons manufacturing ban. It has been said that it will not kick L3Harris out, but it will prevent them from expanding, prevent other weapons manufacturers from moving in and send a clear message that they don't want them in this city. Northampton has a long history of peace, including being the home of peace advocate Sojourner Truth. Having L3 Harris is a stain on the history of the city.

Re: ICE, he was disappointed in the police chief, Mayor and Commissioner of Health and Human Services' (HHS) statement the other day. The main issue is that ICE is doing illegal things over and over and over again. ICE is kidnapping people, ignoring court orders and brutalizing people in the streets. It's not enough that police don't aide ICE, they have to stop them if they're doing anything illegal, and he wants that made explicit. Also, appropriate funding for the schools and, although he only drives through the intersection, he thinks there should be a stop sign at Finn & Prospect.

Luke Rotello, Ward 5, recently reelected as Co-chair of the **Western MA Club of the Communist Party, USA**, echoed Dennis' points. He said he expressed his significant concerns with Mayor Sciarra's midyear appropriation proposal and woefully inadequate response to ICE at a meeting with Councilor Davis yesterday. He hopes tonight's meeting will lead to greater clarity as to why \$250,000 was removed from the mid-year appropriation request without written justification. He is looking to see more concrete action and dialogue in regards to really moving the needle forward on what is really a very inadequate, a sort of 'consultant speak' response to ICE so far.

In a separate but related vein, if he is seeing right, there is a portrait of Frederick Douglas behind Councilor Robbins. It is a gift from their club intended for the walls of Council Chambers in honor of Black History Month. He hopes this contribution can serve as a proud shared symbol of the struggle for multi-racial democracy in their city and society.

Jenn Nery, Ward 3, said she is very excited to see more safety-oriented progress being made on intersections and segments of road around town. She loves the emphasis on safety but is not sure they are always achieving it. What they have with the three-way stop at Finn & Prospect is another proposal from Fuss & O'Neill that strikes her as very short-sighted, not really in line with best practices around creating safer roads for vulnerable users like bicyclists and pedestrians. The Intersection has far too long a crosswalk even with a stop sign, people with mobility issues are going to continue to have problems there. She thinks there are other techniques that would also be very cheap, such as narrowing the walk with paint or concrete blocks. Narrowing the road and making it a sharper turn without stopping every car that goes through would still slow traffic quite a bit. This follows the recently-approved high school intersection at Elm and Woodlawn, which, in many of their estimations, is not much of an improvement considering the cost. They are still weighing the Prospect Street improvement. Bicyclists she knows say it's no improvement whatsoever. She thinks Fuss & O'Neill needs to be questioned and their DPW needs to be a little bit more insistent on real bike and crosswalk provisions.

Melissa Maciborski, Northampton, shared quick thoughts on the midyear appropriation Would she like them to approve it? Yes, please do. Does she think this is how they should be managing their finances? No, absolutely not. She thinks they should be budgeting effectively using the ample revenue she is certain that they have to fully fund their schools. Does she think this addresses the needs of the students? Absolutely not. As a quick summary, a lot of the kids at JFK can't read at grade level. This midyear appropriation does absolutely nothing to address that. It is giving campus safety monitors to JFK to address behavioral problems of the kids. When kids can't read, they act out and it's not their fault; it's because they haven't taught them to read. "We actually have to talk to each other." The kids are depending on that, so they need to start to figure this out.

Zara Swan, a senior at NHS, 109 High Street, said when trying to park yesterday, since she hates technology, she was trying to pay with quarters and the meter said it was unavailable and she should try again later and she should get the app. Well, she doesn't want to get the app. "I don't think we should have to get a third-party app to pay for parking in our city." She asked if the council could please make it free if something like that goes wrong, because that was very frustrating.

As Al Simon pointed out, they don't have the authority to increase the midyear appropriation. Her principal came up to her and said, Zara, I'm so sorry, I forgot to add the one thing the Student Union requested on the appropriation. They need Chromebooks to successfully implement the new digital hall pass system at NHS. Please pass it. NHS really needs the literacy intervention, specialists and technology but, even more, get ready, with the phone ban next year they are going to need even more money. She just got a letter from the clerk reminding her to register to vote and is very excited to do that for the first time.

Jo Ella Tarbutton, (Jada), Ward 3, self-described as an engaged resident and community advocate, said that when they speak of black history, they often focus rightfully on courage, resistance and progress, but one of the most enduring lessons comes from Ida B. Wells Barnett, who warned about the danger of divisions between groups and parties and even within movements themselves. She understood that fragmentation weakens the pursuit of justice and distracts them from their shared responsibility to one another. Her message echoes the life and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, who reminded them that justice isn't about defeating one another but about lifting the moral center of an entire community. Dr. King taught us that dignity, love and courage are deliberate choices, she reminded.

Like many in the community, she is deeply concerned about ICE activity locally, statewide and nationally. This is not abstract for her. She grew up in Texas where she witnessed deportation raids targeting Mexican and Central American nationals who were in some ways brought there and then discarded. Those are very painful memories and there will be a workshop with the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association. She extended sincere congratulations to the Mayor, Councilor Dubs, Councilor Nabad, Councilor Maiore and Councilor Perry who were recognized for carrying on the spirit of Martin Luther King's legacy in a

variety of ways. Recognition matters. In that spirit, black history is not something they remember, it is something they practice when they listen across differences, govern with integrity and choose unity over division.

A woman in the audience interrupted to say that not everyone was listening to the last speaker; Madame Mayor was carrying on a conversation.

Councilor Maiore told her she was out of order.

Brad Carmody, Ward 7, noted that, one month ago at the senior center, the mayor spoke of listening and collaboration. Tonight, the numbers prove those were just words. Mayor Sciarra won by a narrow 76-vote margin. Meanwhile, the voters handed the School Committee a clear, overwhelming mandate to prioritize their children; a directive the mayor is now choosing to ignore. The School Committee voted unanimously for \$790,000. Instead of bringing this or the superintendent's bare minimum budget to the floor, the mayor submitted an order for just \$290,000. This is a calculated undemocratic maneuver. By submitting less than half, the mayor is intentionally tying the council's hands. She's using a procedural loophole to silence the voice of representatives who won their seats by a much larger margin than she did. It isn't collaboration, it's an executive ambush. Starving the schools is fiscally reckless; their home values and tax base are tied directly to school health. Underfund the schools, and you gut the value of every house in the city. You can't build a stable city or protect its financial future while underfunding the schools year after year. Mayor Sciarra, you are failing our kids and our city by ignoring the principals, the superintendent and the unanimous vote of the School Committee. Let the record reflect that this is a fraction of what is owed, delivered through a system exploited to ignore the will of the voters.

With regard to the intersection, **Yakov Kronrod, Ward 4**, acknowledged that he sometimes forgets that it's not a quick turn. It is a dangerous intersection, and he has had to slam on brakes when he notices a pedestrian coming around the corner. From a driver's perspective, that intersection could be slowed down.

With regard to issues that were important to him during the campaign - affordable housing and education funding - he thinks it is really important to keep in mind that people of color and all minorities are disproportionately affected by both. If they want to help schools and create more affordable housing, "there's a million things all of you could do," he pointed out. The Northampton Education Foundation is an amazing organization; its money directly supports teachers and their projects. On affordable housing, while there are a million different efforts, there are also organizers on the streets working their butts off to create more affordable housing, specifically right now focused on West Street and Smith College. It isn't only that the city can do x, y and z; everyone in the city can do that. He urged them all to work towards those efforts.

Paula Rigano, Ward 1, said that, of course, she is suggesting they approve the midyear appropriation, particularly the one passed by the School Committee. Regarding the intersection at Finn & Prospect, she agrees with Jenn Nery that there are a lot of things they could do besides put in a three-way stop. If anything, they could add a stop sign from Prospect onto Finn, which is where the traffic comes the fastest and the blind curve is. With the addition of the stop light at State and Finn, traffic is already slowed, and, in that direction, there is a very clear view of the crosswalk. She struggles with putting in a three-way stop there but could get behind a two-way stop. She thinks there are a lot more things they could do to make that intersection safer besides throwing in more stop signs.

Regarding the all-way stop at Finn & Prospect, **Andrea Fox, Ward 2**, said she lives close by and walks there probably every day. She has a trike and rides a bike and sees a lot of people walking towards the Y, LGA or the Survival Center. It is a very busy street with a lot of utility, DPW and fire truck traffic. She supports having an all-way stop. When they put in a four-way stop on State and Trumbull, she was worried traffic was going to back up, but, in fact, she hasn't really seen that much more traffic. In fact, she thinks it makes traffic go faster. You could otherwise sit at those intersections for a very long time. A lot of kids walk by themselves across that intersection to get to school. For safety, she does support an all-way stop and doesn't think it would back up traffic any more than any of the others recently added.

Ryan, Ward 2, said he is embarrassed as always driving by L3 Harris and in favor of anything that helps with safety on the roads as a driver and pedestrian. Even slight measures like the all-way stop would be great. Regarding the letter from the Mayor and police chief, they are reaffirming that they are going to do pretty much what everyone else is doing, stopping the public from interfering with the feds. If they are only enforcing one side and not the other, that looks like siding with the feds to him. If that's the Mayor and police chief's plan, he hopes checks and balances come from [councilors].

Maria, Ward 6, commented that in this moment, thoughtful, reality-based leadership matters deeply. She wanted to speak briefly about something very simple and fundamental, whether the city is staffing essential services at the level everyday life clearly requires.

Nearly four years ago, she happened to be at the Florence baseball field with her newborn and 70-year old mother. When she needed to use the restroom, they found the facilities locked. A DPW worker explained kindly and apologetically that they didn't have the staff to keep them open. He shared that 16 positions were unfilled. She assumed it was temporary. It's been four years, and the impact of those staffing deficits are still with them. When problems persist for years rather than months, they are no longer transitional, they require deliberate successful solutions. Recently, she heard an observation that really stuck with her: Successful leaders respond to observable reality by changing course when it becomes clear that something is not working.

"Staffing levels in our public schools, DPW vacancies, and service gaps are not abstract concepts. They are observable reality," she asserted. They are living in a time when truth and reality can seem to get bent in ways that are deeply unsettling. That makes grounding their decisions in realities they can plainly see even more important. Where is the essential services investment plan, the plan that treats human infrastructure – their teachers and school staff, DPW workers and firefighters - as just as critical as physical infrastructure? The midyear appropriation offers a way to begin addressing the long-term impacts of these staffing decisions on their public schools and children. She encouraged them to support its approval.

David Ames, Ward 3, spoke in favor of the three-way stop. As a year-round bicyclist, he reported that some kind of drainage situation is coming off the right-hand embankment on Prospect Street as riders turn onto Finn and actually covers the road with ice. This is one aspect of the intersection that really needs to be looked at. He knows the DPW was up there earlier this week with a pay loader. The curve onto Finn Street in the winter actually freezes, forcing anybody who's riding more out onto Prospect Street. Not only does he support the three-way stop as something that slows down cars, but taking a look at the drainage situation there would be greatly appreciated.

There being no further comments, **Councilor Maiore brought public comment to a close at 7:47 p.m.**

<u>Recess</u>	<u>Recess</u> The City Council recessed briefly at 7:47 p.m. The council reconvened at 8:01 p.m.
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<u>Announcements</u>	<p><u>Announcements</u></p> <p>Councilor Robbins shared that the first Town Hall held at Bombyx last night (February 4th) with a turnout of about 60 residents was exciting and engaging. People worked in small groups and talked about Northampton. Hopefully, this is the first of many such events.</p> <p>And, as Luke Rotello said earlier, their club awarded a portrait of Frederick Douglas to the Northampton Reparations Commission and is making a donation of it. Mr. Douglas wanted to come live in Council Chambers because the room has become very non-representative. He would have been very proud of this community going forward. She suggested that, if anyone else has somebody 'who would like to live on the wall,' that would be fabulous.</p> <p>Councilor Nabad said she is still attending Northampton Housing Partnership (NHP) meetings as a city councilor and still committed to creating more affordable housing in their city. NHP is always looking for new members. Sometimes it seems really unexciting but a lot of what they do individually and as a collective does actually result in the development of affordable housing. Meetings are the 1st Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m. and they would love to have more people.</p> <p>Councilor Klemer reminded folks that the Finance Committee's budget listening session is next Tuesday from 6 to 8 p.m. via Zoom. She encouraged them to bring their questions.</p> <p>Councilor Dubs said they were supposed to have the first City Services Committee meeting Monday, but, due to technical issues, the meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, February 24th @ 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Councilor Perry also acknowledged the observance of Black History Month. He thanked Luke for the gift, saying it is nice to look up and see a person of color on the walls for the first time. The Reparations Commission is in the process of finding an administrative assistant and looking for new members. He is hoping to have some people from the Reparations Commission come to another subcommittee. Last month, unfortunately, the Community Resources Committee meeting was interrupted by some ne'er do wells. Some racial epithets and slurs were spewed and members were subjected to explicit material. It was not lost on him that he is the only person of color elected to serve on this body and that it happened to be the only meeting that was zoom-bombed. He is hoping going forward to have a little more support for their people of color. The committee's next meeting is Monday, February 23rd at 5:30 p.m. and he is</p>
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hoping to feature positive organizations and committees working towards representing their African American citizens, workers and culture. He wanted people to know that while these things can be harmful and hurtful, the way to fight that is with positivity and information. He is thankful to be serving on the committee again, which he has tried to use as a resource not just for city councilors but for their citizens. From their last election, he see the need for spaces for residents to communicate and talk. Despite how folks try to bring them down, he wanted to let people know that Community Resources is undaunted and can still be found sharing information.

Anyone interested in in joining the Reparations Commission can reach out to the group’s chairs, he said.

To save the necessity of removing the Park Hill Road pole petition from the consent agenda, Councilor Stratton reported that, on one of the few warm days last month, he biked up to Park Hill Road to look at its proposed location. Nobody there had any particular feelings about the new pole except the homeowner, who was charged \$11,000 for the installation, he shared.

Councilor Maiore announced that Legislative Matters will hold its organizational meeting on Monday, October 9th at 4 p.m.

Presentations

Presentations

It all Starts at the Library; Forbes and Lilly Library updates – Lisa Downing and Adam Novitt

Councilors heard presentations from library directors Lisa Downing and Adam Novitt of Forbes and Lilly Libraries, independent entities which opened in 1894 and 1890, respectively. The directors highlighted their collaboration, community services, and upcoming projects including an outdoor performance stage (Hess Performance Stage) and the Coolidge Museum renovation, and provided an overview of library services. The conversation ended with an invitation to a volunteer and donor event.

Forbes Library was a gift from Charles Edward Forbes upon the condition that the city maintain its building, operations and staff, Ms. Downing related, so it has been a partnership with the city from the beginning. An historic renovation happened around 2000 although the building’s footprint remained the same. Last year, they welcomed 200,000 visitors through their doors.

The building housing Lilly Library originally housed a kindergarten on the first floor and library on the second and the library actually still has some of the kindergarten seats, Mr. Novitt related. Lilly Library underwent a renovation around 2005 and sees about 60,000 visitors a year. The library is super-efficient, ranking at the top in circulations per full-time staff person and per capita per surface area with only libraries on the cape ranking ahead of them. He likes to think the library’s success comes from its focus on the qualitative side of serving their patrons; staff’s main focus is on giving people a great experience.

Forbes and Lilly are independent but work together by arranging their hours to give the community seven days of service a week, which is very unusual for a town of their size.

A few years ago, the libraries started making purchases together and have been working closer and closer together all the time. Both libraries offer free public programming, meeting rooms, services, etc. Both libraries have pivoted towards providing a place for people to work remotely since the pandemic. Lilly library hosts many zoom meetings and has worked to have better seamless printing for people walking through the door so they can work from home.

Ms. Downing highlighted some of Forbes Library’s unique contributions, such as serving as a satellite office for the Mass Hire Franklin/Hampshire Career Center. The library also has an extensive local history collection. With its proximity to Smith College, the library is the school’s largest off-campus employer, which helps the library because it gets subsidized student help. The library has notary services and Paco, a beloved fish nearing 40 years old.

Lilly offers free parking, and staff have been working on a wildflower walkway going around the building. Forbes and Lilly are different animals, he agreed. He thinks they are a little bit more of a personal feel for users, but he thinks it is very important that both of these library exist.

Following the presentation, directors entertained questions and comments from councilors.

Councilor Maiore thanked directors for the presentation, saying the range of what both libraries offer is remarkable.

Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda

Councilor Maiore reviewed the items on the consent agenda. Councilor Stratton requested removal of **26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund - 2nd reading**. Councilor Klemer moved to approve the consent agenda with the removal. Councilor Stratton seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The following items were approved as part of the consent agenda:

- A. **Minutes of December 18, 2025 and January 15, 2026 regular meetings and January 5, 2026 organizational meeting**
- B. **Approve 25.355 National Grid Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)**
- C. **Approve 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)**
- D. **26.006 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for McKinney Vento Transportation Reimbursement - 2nd reading**
- E. **26.007 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement - 2nd reading**

26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund - 2nd reading

Councilor Stratton expressed his understanding that this money is reimbursement for services performed in the schools. He wants this money to go to the schools, he stressed. The question is how it should go to them.

When the Special Education Stabilization Fund was established in June of 2024 (by orders 24.091 and 24.092), Councilor Maiore asked why they couldn't just give the money to the schools directly, Councilor Stratton reminded. The argument from the Mayor and Finance Director was that they could not put Free Cash into the operating budget. Essentially, they are treating this stabilization account as a fig leaf to cover the fact that every fiscal year they are putting Free Cash into the operating budget, he asserted. In the current fiscal year (FY2026), the city has already spent the \$350,000 limit established, which is a hard cap. They took \$209K out of the budget in June and pulled the remaining \$140K out for two special education teachers in July 10 days into the fiscal year. They used the money for special education, but hit the limit on annual expenditures at the very start of the year. In looking at the language, it says it is for unexpected expenses, but they just used up the whole amount on *expected* expenses. If they put money into this today, they could not access any of it until the start of the fiscal year in July. They couldn't use it for an unexpected special education expense, nor could they use any of the reserve balance since they've already hit the limit. If they put this money in and then take it out again for a routine purpose, they run out the limit at the start of the fiscal year again and have no access to the reserve.

He would really like to ask the mayor to split this allocation into a larger amount to go directly into the FY2027 school budget for expected special education expenses and a remainder reserve to go into the special education stabilization fund. He doesn't have those numbers and is not sure the Mayor has them today either. For that reason, he is going to move to table this item until they have the outline of the school budget and a predicted special education cost for the coming year (FY2027).

He moved to table/postpone. Councilor Robbins seconded.

Councilor Loisel asked how much is in the stabilization account now and if this reimbursement is guaranteed at the same amount every year.

Director Nardi said the allocation is based on the Medicaid reimbursement received, so it varies. The balance is \$704,580 right now. That's not all from Medicaid; it was seeded with Free Cash.

The account was backfilled with Free Cash last year because Medicaid was in question, Mayor Sciarra clarified.

The fund was set up with the approval of the City Council and the School Committee with parameters, Mayor Sciarra confirmed. It was set up that way because the School Committee had a stabilization account which had been overspent. They put in parameters so what happened to the school choice fund did not happen to it.

Councilor Robbins said she was on the School Committee when the special education fund was first created, and one remark has sat with her all these years. Councilor Elkins said the council created it because they didn't trust the school committee to work with its own money. Previously, the schools didn't see the Medicaid reimbursement in the school department budget for many years. Having this money go into the operating budget could possibly relieve some of the stress on the school department.

Mayor Sciarra said that, in that case, less money would be going directly to the schools because it has been dropping.

Councilor Nabad said that numerous people wrote to her today asking that this be passed tonight.

Councilor Maiore said she would like to discuss the purpose of the fund in terms of its use for unexpected vs. expected expenses.

Director Nardi said the fund was set up to put more money towards the budget tied to money coming in every year. The idea was not to use up the fund quickly and to help special education costs, which are rising quickly. There is a cap of \$350,000. This was just another way to support the schools and they used ARPA funds to do that. There has been concern that the vote to enact this refers to 'unexpected' costs. But, the bottom line is that special education costs will always be unexpected. They are using it in this manner, which is legal.

Councilor Stratton read from the preface of M.G.L. 40, Section 13E, the enabling statute, which authorizes "school district reserve funds to pay for unanticipated or unbudgeted costs for special education, out-of-district tuition, or transportation."

This fiscal year, they used \$209K as part of the school budget and then, 10 days into the fiscal year, used the other \$140,000. He asked if they could explain how those costs were unexpected.

Mayor Sciarra said that if the council no longer wants to have this fund for special education, they could work on dismantling it and then Medicaid reimbursement would just go directly to the schools.

Councilor Maiore wondered if they could change the stipulation. She had thought of whether, with other funds, they could add 'for any legal purpose' to add flexibility.

Since they used the funds early in the school year last year, Councilor Klemer asked how emergencies that came up later in the year were paid for.

Mayor Sciarra said that if there wasn't an additional \$350,000, other choices would have to be made within the schools. It would have to come out of the school budget.

Councilor Klemer expressed her understanding that it is available to use at the school's discretion.

Councilor Stratton raised a point of order. It's not available at their discretion, he said.

For special ed, it is, Councilor Klemer remonstrated.

No, it's not, Councilor Stratton said.

Councilor Maiore reminded councilors to raise hands to be recognized.

Councilor Perry asked how much interest the account has generated. To Councilor Stratton's point, he agreed city officials know they will need money for special education, but noted that they don't know how wildly that amount might fluctuate.

Mayor Sciarra noted that something else that feeds this fund are tailings from the school budget, which would normally come back to the city as Free Cash. It is another way funds are being captured to be put aside to stay within the schools.

Councilor Robbins said this is not a hill she is going to die on but she would love it to be an open conversation. She felt at the time that it was crossing lines between the role of the council and the role of the School Committee as far as how school funds are used. "I think we need to be really careful about that," she opined. The law does say that if the schools have a stabilization fund, the city council needs to be part of the authorization process. But, many districts just have education stabilization funds not differentiated between regular education and special education needs. She thought she saw in Governor Healey's cherry sheet that she was talking about greater funding of circuit breaker funds.

She would like them to be mindful of their role as a council and how they work with the School Committee and honor their experience. Maybe in tabling this, they could think a little bit more creatively about how to approach those funds and maybe even consult with their brethren.

Councilor Stratton apologized for his earlier impatience. He doesn't think they can change the purpose of this fund which is defined under a very specific state statute, nor is he proposing that they do away with it. What he is proposing is to let it be used for what it is actually intended for, truly unexpected expenses.

This year, they have \$251,000 to work with. He is envisioning putting \$200,000 right into the school budget, leaving \$150,000 to pull out of the reserve fund for anything truly unanticipated. He is not saying do away with the fund or do away with the process entirely. He is saying let's put the amount we are confident we are going to spend into the school budget directly and put a smaller amount (\$51,000) into the stabilization fund. He can't tell them the correct numbers today and that is why he is moving to table it instead of somehow modifying it.

Mayor Sciarra said she didn't see how that is different from what the situation is now.

If some of the money is put directly into the school budget, they still have headroom under the \$350,000 cap, Councilor Stratton said. It preserves the headroom for true emergencies.

The interest is about \$1,400 a month but has been as high as \$2,500, Director Nardi advised.

His ideal outcome is for the Mayor to replace the order with a different one putting some money directly into the school budget, Councilor Stratton clarified.

Director Nardi stressed that this money is going to go into the school budget next year. Director Jones is counting on this money. This money will be added to the base of the FY2027 budget.

Councilor Loisel said she sees no reason to table this at all. She feels satisfied that the reserve account was created for very good reason, and she's ready to vote.

Councilor Robbins said she thinks it has been an interesting discussion. They are talking about how a different department uses its money. Maybe they could forward think about having a joint meeting of the Finance Committee and the budget and property subcommittee and this could be an agenda item.

Councilor Stratton said he would propose rewriting the order to take the part they know they are going to pull out and put directly into the school budget into the school budget. The interest is not lost to the city, it's just a matter of which account it lands in, he pointed out. He thinks a joint meeting with the budget and property committee would be fantastic, he added.

Councilor Maiore said she thinks the questions warrant looking at. She has no problem unpacking that and reviewing it with the School Committee. She is not in a position to want to postpone this item but thinks these are great and compelling questions about how they structure their budgets. As a member of finance, would support having those kinds of proactive discussions.

The motion to postpone was called to a vote, and it failed 1:8 by roll call with Stratton in favor and Davis, Dubs, Klemer, Loisel, Maiore, Nabad, Perry and Robbins opposed.

Councilor Stratton moved to call the question. Councilor Loisel seconded.

However, after Councilor Maiore said she had been about to entertain a motion to approve the order, **Councilor Stratton withdrew the motion.**

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

The following motion passed final reading:

APPROVED - 26.005
An Order to
Appropriate
\$251,025 Free Cash
to NPS Special
Education
Stabilization Fund -
2nd reading

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund

WHEREAS, on June 6, 2024, the City Council accepted Chapter 40, §13E of the Mass. General Laws, and pursuant to that statute, authorized the creation of a special purpose stabilization fund called the Northampton Public Schools (NPS) Special Education Stabilization Fund; and

WHEREAS, on June 20, 2024, \$800,000 was appropriated to initially fund the special purpose stabilization fund; and

WHEREAS, in order to support the stabilization account an annual appropriation would be made into the NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund by the amount of the prior year’s Medicaid reimbursement and the amount of any turnback to the city from the prior year’s NPS budget following the certification of free cash; and

WHEREAS, the method of this appropriation would be by an Order to the Northampton City Council filed by the mayor.

Now, Therefore be it Ordered, that

The City Council appropriate \$235,310.62 which is the amount of Medicaid reimbursement the city received in FY2025 and \$15,713.92 which is the amount of unspent funds from the FY2024 NPS budget returned to the city, for a total of \$251,024.54 from the FY2026 General Fund Undesignated Fund Balance (Free Cash) to the Special Education Stabilization Fund.

Passed final reading and enrolled.

Recess

Recess

The City Council recessed briefly at 9:21 p.m. The council reconvened at 9:31 p.m.

Financial Orders (on
1st reading)
26.011 An Order to
Make a \$290,317
Midyear
Appropriation to
NPS - 1st reading

Financial Orders (on 1st reading)

26.011 An Order to Make a \$290,317 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading

Two readings were respectfully requested, Councilor Maiore noted. Two readings were also requested for the second order (**26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks - 1st reading**) so, if councilors are comfortable, they could vote on the two as a group.

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

Rules were suspended.

Two School Committee members called a special meeting to discuss a request for a midyear appropriation, Mayor Sciarra related. Members asked Superintendent Bonner to come up with specific recommendations based on current requests from the schools, which she did after conferring with school principals and the administrative leadership team. A list was pulled together pretty quickly. The meeting was held January 22nd with a \$586,992 list presented by Superintendent Bonner based on the list of current needs she compiled.

Members Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe, Michael Stein and Anat Weisenfreund also created a list totaling \$925,000, and Member Jewell also created and presented a list.

The School Committee ultimately voted to have the Superintendent request the Mayor put forward to the council a \$790,175 financial order based on the list put together by School Committee Member Jewell.

It was a relatively short special meeting and she did ask questions, so it isn't true that she didn't deliberate, Mayor Sciarra noted. In a meeting with School Business Manager Bobbie Jones and Dr. Bonner after the vote, she learned that the \$123,000 request for student services on Dr. Bonner and Member Jewell's list is expected to be covered by the state circuit breaker reimbursement program.

Multiple capital items included on the list were also either already on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) or requested during the CIP process to be on the FY2027-FY2031 CIP, so that, if needed, these should be added to the CIP. These total \$91,050 and are either on or will be moved to the CIP. Director Nardi has been working with the school facilities director and business administrator on those requests.

The financial order before them includes the items listed that were voted on by the School Committee and that are current requests. The order is to fund these one-time requests for the remainder of the FY25-26 school year with \$290,317 from Free Cash. Since the \$123,000 request is to be covered by circuit breaker and \$91,000 is to be moved to the CIP, \$504,367 is actually being covered.

Items from the voted list which were not on the superintendent's list compiled by asking school officials for current requests and priorities are not included in the order, she explained.

Midyear appropriations are not part of the formal budget process, she reminded. They are in the process of preparing for the FY2027 budget. If new programs or initiatives are proposed, they should be included as part of this budget discussion. If any of these items are proposed to be recurring, they will need to be incorporated into the budgeting process and more than doubled since it will be for the full year.

Councilor Robbins thanked her for the explanation, saying she is prepared to vote positively. Once again, she thinks there is a blurred line, she volunteered. It would have been helpful to have information making clear to them and the public the request made by the School Committee. She referred to the surprise of seeing a very different number. She totally agrees they shouldn't need to make midyear appropriations.

She wondered if they could consider asking the Mayor as chair to go back to the School Committee to see if they would like to see additional items included that they would like to have input on. She understands that they weren't directly consulted about the order brought before them. She expressed interest in 'knowing that what comes from the School Committee. . . really respects the role of the School Committee. . .'

Councilor Klemer raised the point of order that the discussion is about acting on this specific order.

Councilor Maiore said it was relevant because Councilor Robbins was trying to weigh different paths but she would ask that the councilor wrap up because it was getting late.

Councilor Klemer thanked the Mayor for explaining that the schools are actually getting \$504,067 (sic). She voted last year to support a midyear appropriation and will again support the request put forward by the Mayor.

The amount is less than the School Committee asked for because some of the items are already covered by the circuit breaker and CIP. She said she hopes the School Committee, faculty, superintendent and council can collaborate and have a long-term plan to have the midyear request rolled into the budget.

Rather than reviewing midyear requests during a busy budget season, it would be better to thoughtfully plan for the future, she suggested.

In response to a question from Councilor Loisel about whether staff on the list would be rolled into the FY2027 budget, the Mayor said she made very clear that if school officials wanted positions to continue, they would have to figure out how to make them fit within the budget. "This is just for this year," she said.

Councilor Stratton said he thinks it's important to make clear that the city council does not have line item authority over school spending. Other than for CIP items, they are actually only voting on the total. The School Committee will allocate the money to the uses. He is hearing that the items that survived were the intersections of items on both member Jewell's list and Superintendent Bonner's.

The takeaway is that they are actually voting on a number. He personally believes the number is far too low.

His understanding is that the mayor's argument for reducing it is that the School Committee asked for things that are no longer needed or are not fillable at this point in the year, he continued. However, "the argument from many members of the School Committee is that. . . this superintendent purposefully obstructs communication between the building principals and the School Committees," he alleged.

“The School Committee does not have detailed understanding of what’s going on and that is one of our big problems,” he asserted.

A point of order was raised, and Councilor Maiore asked that they stick to the financial order and not their own theories.

Councilor Davis expressed her opinion that it is extremely important that the items in the order are things that the administrators and teachers have said that they need. If they all love and respect their schools, their teachers, their children, etc., then they would care what they say they need in their buildings. While it is completely true that they are just voting on the total, the itemization helps them see what is needed. “Justification does matter,” she professed.

Councilor Klemer expressed her belief that if council appropriates the money, the schools will spend if for these items.

Mayor Sciarra said she trusts they will use it for the needs they have prioritized.

Councilor Nabad said she would like to call the question but Councilor Maiore pointed out that a motion is not yet on the floor.

Councilor Nabad moved to approve 26.011. Councilor Klemer seconded.

Councilor Maiore thanked the School Committee and the mayor for expediently bringing an order to them. She expressed her understanding that midyear appropriations are for time-sensitive issues that need to be addressed. She understands that sometimes the entire scope of need for the schools isn’t known at the beginning of the year, but it’s becoming a pattern and she thinks they really need to think about that. She thinks the culture of having all the bodies and the Mayor’s office take on the process of a midyear appropriation during the budget season is a lot. She would like them to try to change this dynamic and have a robust budget process around the schools.

Councilor Perry said he will always support giving money to the schools but thinks the process is the question. “When we do rushed work, we don’t do effective work,” he suggested.

He asked how many positions went unfilled from last year’s midyear appropriation and when circuit breaker money comes through.

Mayor Sciarra said she didn’t think all of it was used but didn’t know how much was. She has also asked if there are current vacancies and is not sure of the answer to that either.

Director Nardi said circuit breaker money comes in throughout the year and is generally held until the following year to be used. \$685,793 is the current balance. \$490,000 is coming in and they will be receiving two payments (reimbursements) for the previous year.

Councilor Dubs said he will, of course, be in support of this. When he compares items listed by the School Committee with the Mayor’s list, it is glaringly noticeable that certain items are not included, he shared. He cited a special education teacher, the mental health and special education team at NHS and 1st grade paraeducators for each school. “It’s glaringly noticeable that disabled people do not seem to be prioritized on this list,” he observed.

Again, “Dr. Bonner’s list is what the schools themselves said were needed at this moment,” Mayor Sciarra responded. “This is what was directly heard from the schools.”

Councilor Maiore recognized the presence of Dr. Bonner, who previously had been thought not to be in attendance.

In response to Councilor Perry’s question, Dr. Bonner said the schools spent \$128,427.45 of last year’s \$294,883.02 midyear appropriation.

As far as current vacancies, there are six: a BCBA and paraeducator at Bridge Street, two paras at Leeds, school psychologist interns at the high school and crossing guards.

Regarding her list vs. Member Jewell’s list, her list was developed by asking individual buildings and departments for their one-time needs. The principals went to their staff and collected a list of items that would not be expected to continue into the next fiscal year, she clarified.

She doesn't know if they actually have a copy of her list because that list was not what was sent to the Mayor. The Mayor received the list voted on in January. That list included her requests but also included items cut from last year's appropriation, namely, two special education teachers – one at Ryan Road and one at NHS. They were able to fill those vacancies by asking for the remaining special education stabilization funds, so those positions are no longer needed, she attested.

The request for first-grade paraeducators came from a constituent, not from school staff or principals.

She is not quite sure what other items on the list refer to, but she believes it was a culmination of more specific items on her list.

Councilor Robbins said she really wished they had all the lists. Tonight, they heard from students that the request doesn't cover the digitized hall passes, which she is pretty sure they heard were important, since, moving forward, they might reduce the need for hall monitors.

She is pretty sure she remembers seeing some of these positions already advertised before this midyear appropriation.

One omission that concerns her is a request for professional development for teachers to create a new comparative government course at the high school. They have very little professional development money in their operating budget, which is a huge loss. She doesn't see that on this list.

She also thought she saw more than one front office clerk in the original request. She thinks that, for safety's sake, they need human beings in the front office in the eventuality that ICE shows up.

She reiterated her request that they vote on this but also request that the Mayor/chair go back and get some feedback from School Committee members as to whether this is what they want the mayor to bring forward.

Councilor Maiore stressed that this is an up or down vote on this order. She would like them to start focusing on that vote.

Councilor Stratton said he has frustration at the latency of being able to respond to something stated that was factually incorrect pertaining to Open Meeting Law. More than four councilors cannot talk amongst themselves and that rule also pertains to the School Committee. The consequence of that is that they cannot have a mailing list war of dueling motions. They are not supposed to be trading their proposals.

Councilor Loisel raised the point of order that this is off topic.

Councilor Maiore pointed out that other people talked about the process, so Councilor Stratton is able to as well. However, she said she is not going to continue doing rounds and is hoping to proceed to a vote.

Councilor Davis made some very important comments about targeting actual needs, Councilor Stratton continued. He hopes people are aware that, Monday night, reading scores for JFK came out, and they were abysmal. There is nothing in here to address that. He indicated a desire to hear more about the constraints placed on the requests from administrators. They've heard a statement that these needed to be one-time items, which sounds like temporary staff; i.e. tutors, not teachers.

Councilor Maiore said they needed to wrap it up.

Councilor Stratton moved to amend the order by striking the 2nd whereas clause, but subsequently withdrew his motion in the interest of time.

Councilor Maiore called the motion to approve to a vote, and it passed 8:1 by roll call vote with Councilor Stratton opposed.

The following order passed final reading:

APPROVED - 26.011
An Order to Make a
\$290,317 Midyear
Appropriation to
NPS - 1st reading

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council February 5, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra

O-26.011 An Order to Make a \$290,317 Midyear Appropriation to NPS

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2026, the Northampton School Committee voted to have the Superintendent request the Mayor put forward to the City Council a mid-year appropriation request for \$790,175 for the Northampton Public Schools, as presented by School Committee Member Jewell; and

WHEREAS, Superintendent Bonner was also requested by two members of the School Committee to create a list based on current requests from the schools, and working with school principals and the Administrative Leadership Team, created and presented a list of requests at the January 22, 2026, meeting. The voted-upon list included items that were not requested and are not included in this order; and

WHEREAS, the voted upon list includes \$123,000 for Student Services that the district anticipates will be covered by the Commonwealth Special Education Reimbursement Program (Circuit Breaker) funds, and are therefore not included; and

WHEREAS, the voted upon list includes items that are already on the Capital Improvement Plan, as well as other items that are capital requests, those items, totaling \$91,050, are on or will be moved to the Capital Improvement Plan; and

WHEREAS, the voted upon list includes the following items that will be funded with one-time Free Cash for the remainder of this school year:

Math & Reading Interventionists (BSS)	\$81,890
Tiered Support Educator (JSS and RR)	\$33,404
1.0 FTE Clerical Support (RR)	\$16,107

Four Campus Safety Monitors (JFK/NHS)	\$66,808
Four Math/Literacy Tutors	\$66,808
Curriculum Kits and Classroom Supplies	\$13,300
Curriculum Software & Subscriptions (District Wide)	\$12,000
TOTAL	\$290,317

Ordered, that, the City Council appropriate \$290,317 from the FY26 Certified General Fund Undesignated Fund Balance (Free Cash) as a one-time funding for the remainder of the 2025-2026 school year.

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks - 1st reading

26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks - 1st reading

Councilor Maiore reminded councilors that rules had been suspended.

Councilor Stratton moved to approve. Councilor Perry seconded.

Mayor Sciarra explained that reprogramming these funds is proposed because there is a need to purchase more Chromebooks.

Chief Information Officer Luigi Ottaviani said this fairly critical request came from the school. The breakage of Chromebooks this year is very significant. If they don't acquire new devices, there may not be enough. They tried to use every other fund they could operationally and are happy to decrease their capital budget for infrastructure to meet this need. It will help with the new HallPass solution the high school just purchased, which requires about 70 Chromebooks. The amount requested should allow them to purchase about 250 devices and have enough stock until the end of the school year.

The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.

The following order passed final reading:

City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

February 5, 2026

Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra

26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks

WHEREAS, entry-level Chromebooks are needed within the Northampton Public Schools (NPS); and

WHEREAS, the current Chromebooks being used at NPS are eight years old and they are having issues with the newest applications; and

WHEREAS, the number of Chromebooks that need to be replaced due to breakage is higher than expected; and

WHEREAS, there is not enough funds in the NPS Chromebook account; and

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to purchase these books as soon as possible to be used this current school year; and

WHEREAS, there are remaining FY25 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds in the completed NPS Website Redesign and NPS Server Equipment Upgrade, and the FY23 IT NPS UPS System Replacement accounts; and

WHEREAS, an amount of the FY26 CIP project for IT NPS Infrastructure Upgrades can be reprogrammed to fill this urgent need.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED,

That the City Council reprogram and authorize the transfer of the funds in the following NPS Information Technology project accounts for the purposes of purchasing Chromebooks for the Northampton Public Schools.

Account Name	Amount From	Amount To:
NPS Website Redesign	\$ 39,475.00	
IT NPS Server System Replacement	\$ 5,178.69	
IT NPS UPS System Replacement	\$ 497.00	
IT NPS Infrastructure Upgrade	\$ 30,000.00	
IT NPS 1:1 Chromebooks		\$ 75,150.69

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.

Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)
26.004 An Order to Appropriate Enterprise Retained Earnings to Various Project - 2nd reading

Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)
26.004 An Order to Appropriate Enterprise Retained Earnings to Various Projects - 2nd reading
 The order was positively recommended by the Finance Committee, Councilor Maire reminded.
 Councilor Perry moved to approve. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote.
The following order passed final reading.

City of Northampton
 MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council _____ January 15, 2026

 Upon recommendation of Mayor Sciarra and DPW Director LaScaleia

26.004 An Order to Appropriate Enterprise Retained Earnings to Various Projects

Ordered, that

\$ 1,412,999 be appropriated from the FY26 Water Enterprise Retained Earnings to the Transmission Main account (3200610 583004) for the reconstruction of transmission mains.

\$ 569,233 be appropriated from the FY26 Sewer Enterprise Retained Earnings to the Sewer Line Replacement account (3200600 589168) for ongoing sewer projects.

\$ 569,233 be appropriated from the FY26 Sewer Enterprise Retained Earnings to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) account (3200600 583003) for WWTP and Pump Station Improvements.

\$ 60,740 be appropriated from the FY26 Stormwater Enterprise Retained Earnings to the Drain Replacement account (3200620-589022) for replacement of drain pipes throughout the city.

Passed final reading and enrolled.

Orders

Orders
 None.

Ordinances

Ordinances

<p><u>26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street - 1st reading</u></p>	<p><u>26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street - 1st reading</u> As an ordinance, it is required that this be referred to Legislative Matters, Councilor Maiore reminded. Councilor Nabad moved to refer the ordinance to Legislative Matters. Councilor Robbins seconded. Councilor Stratton raised the concern that the proposal contains disputed issues of material fact which would need to be substantiated by documentary evidence before Legislative Matters before the ordinance can be considered. These questions came up in Transportation and Parking (TPC) in the fall but have not been answered. This is a very technical proposal. There are rules about how stop signs are assigned and they cannot just be installed by legislative fiat. The rule is basically that either an engineer is required to state that, in his engineering judgment, a stop sign is needed or numerical criteria must be met. Councilor Loisel raised the point of order that this is about the content and this is a vote on referral. Councilor Maiore said her ruling is that Councilor Stratton is trying to address the referral. Councilor Loisel said she wants to hear what DPW Director Donna LaScaleia has to say. "He's giving his opinion about this ordinance," she asserted. Councilor Stratton said he would like to include David Veleta's letter by reference in the minutes. What was raised in TPC in Engineer Veleta's letter is that the numerical claims do not seem to be correct and basically need to be substantiated by a second reference. Or, the opinion of an engineer is needed. He doesn't think this is going to be actionable on Monday because LM will need more information. Councilor Klemer said some of what Councilor Stratton said is inaccurate. She referred to there being a study by Fuss & O'Neill. The motion to refer passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote. <u>See minutes of March 5, 2026 for final reading.</u></p>
<p><u>Zoning Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u></p>	<p><u>Zoning Ordinances (Not yet Referred)</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Zoning Ordinances</u></p>	<p><u>Zoning Ordinances</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Resolutions</u></p>	<p><u>Resolutions</u> None.</p>
<p><u>Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)</u></p>	<p><u>Financial Orders (on 2nd reading)</u> None.</p>
<p><u>New Business</u></p>	<p><u>New Business</u> Councilor Stratton introduced an item of new business for discussion at the next meeting, a document entitled, "An Order to Amend the Council Rules to Create the Position of Attorney to the City Council."</p>
<p><u>Adjourn</u></p>	<p><u>Adjourn</u> Councilor Perry moved to adjourn. Councilor Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously 9:0 by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 10:37 p.m. Attest: _____, Administrative Assistant</p>

EXHIBIT A

List of Documents Reviewed at February 5, 2026 Northampton City Council Meeting:

1. February 5, 2026 City Council Agenda
2. Minutes of December 18, 2025 and January 15, 2026 Regular Meetings and January 5, 2026 Organizational Meeting
3. Email from Anat Weisenfreund dated February 5, 2026 to Citycouncil forward email re: Weisenfreund Public Comment for 2/5/2026
4. Email from David Veleta dated February 2, 2026 to Council President Maiore copied to other councilors and DPW Director Donna LaScaleia re: Proposed All-way Stop Ordinance 26.010 with the following attachments:
5. Letter from David K. Veleta, PE Civil to Ms. Rachel Maiore, City Council President dated February 2, 2026 re: Proposed All-way Stop at Prospect and Finn Streets and
6. Stop Sign Safety Study, Northampton, Fuss & O'Neill, July 2025
7. 25.355 National Grid Pole Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)
8. 25.355 DPW Recommendation – Memo from Kris Baker, P.E. to Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, dated December 18, 2025, re: National Grid Pole Petition #31193070 – Park Hill Road – Pole #46-50
9. Free Cash Powerpoint Presentation
10. 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)
11. 25.357 DPW Recommendation – Memo from Kris Baker, P.E. to Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, dated December 18, 2025, re: National Grid Pole Petition #31163156 – Hawley Street Pole #15 & Pole #15-50
12. 26.004 An Order to Appropriate Enterprise Retained Earnings to Various Projects
13. 26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund
14. 26.006 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for McKinney Vento Transportation Reimbursement
15. 26.007 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement
16. 26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street
17. 26.011 An Order to Make a \$290,317 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading
18. Mid-Year Appropriation Request from School Committee - Memo to Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Cc: School Committee, Principals and Directors, dated January 23, 2026, Subject: Request for a Mid-Year Appropriation for FY2026
19. 26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks - 1st reading

Record of City Council Votes for February 5, 2026		Davis	Dubs	Klemer	Loisel	Maiore	Nabad	Perry	Robbins	Stratton	Total
Roll Call by Laura Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council @ 6:30 p.m.		Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	9 Present
Open Public Hearing on 25.355 National Grid Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)		Yes	Yes	Motion to open	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Close Public Hearing on 25.355 National Grid Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to close	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Open Public Hearing on 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)		Yes	Yes	Motion to open	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Close Public Hearing on 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)		Second Yes	Yes	Motion to close	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Approval of Consent Agenda		Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Minutes of December 18, 2025 and January 15, 2026 regular meetings and January 5, 2026 Organizational Meeting											
Approve 25.355 National Grid Petition for Park Hill Road (Petition#: 31193070)											
Approve 25.357 National Grid/Verizon Petition to install JO and Midspan Poles and Relocate Existing Pole #15 on Hawley Street (Petition# 31165186)											
26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund - 2nd reading Removed from consent agenda											
26.006 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for McKinney Vento Transportation Reimbursement - 2nd reading											
26.007 An Order to Appropriate Free Cash to NPS for Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement - 2nd reading											
26.005 An Order to Appropriate \$251,025 Free Cash to NPS Special Education Stabilization Fund - 2nd reading	Proposal to postpone	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Second No	Motion to postpone	Motion failed 1:8 w/Stratton sole vote in favor; roll call
	Approve	Yes	Second Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Motion carried 8:1; Stratton opposed; roll call
26.011 An Order to Make a \$290,317 Midyear Appropriation to NPS - 1st reading	1st reading	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion carried 8:1; Stratton opposed; roll call
26.012 An Order to Reprogram \$75,161 from Various IT Accounts for NPS Chromebooks -	1st reading	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
26.004 An Order to Appropriate Enterprise Retained Earnings to Various Project - 2nd reading	2nd reading	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to approve	Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
26.010 An Ordinance Relative to All-Way Stop Control for Finn Street at Prospect Street -	Referred to LM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to refer	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call
Motion to Adjourn	to Adjourn	Yes	Yes	Second Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Motion to adjourn	Yes	Yes	Motion passed unanimously 9:0; roll call

At 10:37 p.m., Councilor Perry moved to adjourn. Councilor Klemer seconded. The motion carried 9:0 by roll call vote.