



Office of the City Clerk

City of North Adams

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Deborah M. Pedercini
City Clerk

Regular Meeting of the City Council

December 8, 2020

A meeting of the North Adams City Council was held at 7:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Councilors Blackmer, Bona, Harpin, Hopkins, Oleskiewicz, Sweeney, Wilkinson, absent, Councilors, LaForest and Lamb.

Council President Hopkins read the following statement regarding COVID-19. Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the North Adams City Council is being conducted via remote participation and in City Council Chambers. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.

A moment of silent remembrance was held remembering Shirley Wolfe who worked at both East and Greylock Schools and was a recipient of the Key to the City for her exceptional volunteer services to the community.

The President called for a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of November 24, 2020.

On motion of Councilor Blackmer, duly seconded by Councilor Oleskiewicz, it was VOTED: to approve the minutes. Councilor Sweeney abstained.

The President called for hearing of visitors.

Leslie Puppino, Pittsfield, MA spoke on behalf of Berkshire Voters for Animals and stated her gratitude for the community's efforts in bringing the pet ordinance forward.

11,910 The President presented an Ordinance amending Chapter 27, entitled Dog Regulations, adding a new section 27-12, entitled Prohibition of the Sale of Dogs, Cats, or Rabbits by Pet Shops, which was postponed at the meeting of October 24, 2020 and referred to General Government Committee.

On motion of Councilor Blackmer, duly seconded by Councilor Sweeney it was VOTED: to postpone to the meeting of February 23, 2021.

Councilor Blackmer stated that the town of Hollister had brought forth similar language before the Attorney General's office and the General Government Committee would like to wait to hear what the ruling is from the AG's office which currently has a deadline of February 24, 2021, but feels that the ruling could come sooner.

Councilor Harpin stated that the ruling originally was delayed, however, she felt that the date of return could be sooner.

On motion of Councilor Blackmer, duly seconded by Councilor Harpin it was VOTED: to amend the motion to postpone to the meeting of January 25, 2021.

11,915 The President presented Mayor's communication #67 recommending the reappointment of Robin Meyer to the North Adams Commission on Disabilities for a term to expire December 1, 2023.

On motion of Councilor Oleskiewicz, duly seconded by Councilor Blackmer, it was VOTED: to confirm the reappointment.

11,916 The President presented Mayor's communication #68 recommending the reappointment of Eric Wilson to the North Adams Commission on Disabilities for a term to expire December 1, 2023.

On motion of Councilor Blackmer, duly seconded by Councilor Oleskiewicz, it was VOTED: to confirm the reappointment.

11,917 The President presented Mayor's communication #69 recommending the reappointment of Justyna Carlson to the North Adams Commission on Disabilities for a term to expire January 2, 2024.

On motion of Councilor Oleskiewicz, duly seconded by Councilor Blackmer, it was VOTED: to confirm the reappointment.

11,918 The President presented Mayor's communication #70 recommending the reappointment of Wayne J. Wilkinson to the North Adams Mobile Home Rent Control Board for a term to expire September 1, 2025.

On motion of Councilor Blackmer, duly seconded by Councilor Oleskiewicz, it was VOTED: to confirm the reappointment. Councilor Wilkinson abstained.

11,919 The President presented Mayor's communication #71 regarding the acceptance of grant award in the amount of \$12,881 to the North Adams Police Department.

Without objection, the President filed the communication.

11,919 The President presented an Order authorizing the Mayor, pursuant to MGL, Chapter 44, Section 53A, to accept a grant from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) in the Amount of \$12,881.

On motion of Councilor Wilkinson, duly seconded by Councilor Oleskiewicz, it was VOTED: to adopt the order.

The Mayor explained the money was targeted for a new vehicle for the detective bureau, "given that the current vehicle for that purpose is past its serviceable life and that's putting in generously."

Councilor Blackmer stated "Given the whole conversation we've been having about diversity and equity, I guess I would have preferred to see this money used for some training for staff on addressing those issues and all the things that we're talking about,". "Why a vehicle and not training, when that's such an issue right now?"

Police Chief, Jason Wood stated the training is mandated by the state Municipal Police Training Committee and is already allocated in the training line of the department's budget. He clarified that the vehicle being replaced was a 1998 Honda Accord that was being operated every day, he said. "It wasn't safe to drive. I thought that was a creative way to get the funds without tapping into any of the city's assets."

Councilor Sweeney, agreed with Councilor Blackmer, though she understood the Police Department's need for physical resources. She stated that in the future she would like to see funds to include other resources and stated other cities help connect victims with resources that they need. She stated with the pandemic increasing substance abuse challenges or domestic abuse challenges, that allocating some of this money to those kinds of situations would better serve.

The Order was adopted by yea and nay vote, yea, Councilors Blackmer, Bona, Hopkins, Oleskiewicz, Sweeney, Wilkinson, no nays. Councilor Harpin abstained.

11,920 The President presented communication submitted by Council President Hopkins requesting time for a presentation from the Lever organization to discuss the Mohawk Trail Entrepreneur Challenge.

Jade Schnauber, Lever organization, spoke about the Mohawk Trail Entrepreneur challenge and the three criteria that would meet the obligations; creating jobs, natural woodlands and start-ups less than two years old and \$5,000 revenue. She stated that interest was going well and there were six applicants to date.

11,921 Communication submitted by Council President Hopkins regarding the appointment of Rachel Hailey to the Inclusion Diversity, Equity Access working group.

On motion of Councilor Oleskiewicz, duly seconded by Councilor Bona it was VOTED: to confirm the appointment.

11,922 Communication submitted by Councilor Sweeney regarding “The Not in My County Pledge” for a county-wide campaign coordinated by BRIDGE.

On motion of Councilor Sweeney, duly seconded by Councilor Bona, it was VOTED: to refer to Public Services.

Councilor Sweeney stated the city had an opportunity to further the efforts it began with the development of the IDEA Working Group. The countywide campaign is being coordinated by BRIDGE, the Berkshire Resources for Integration of Diverse Groups through Education. She read the communication into the record from herself and Councilor Lamb.

Councilor Bona inquired why they should refer to Public Services. Councilor Sweeney stated that this effort would take some time and other committees have hefty agendas at this time. She stated that she did not want to overwhelm those committees. Councilor Bona stated that in the past when he attempted to do this, he was met with a negative response. He stated he was not opposed to doing this, however he felt it was not the proper committee. Councilor Sweeney felt this could apply to all committees.

Councilor Harpin stated this was a good thing; she stated she has advocated for diversity and inclusion throughout her time on Council. She stated that no matter who hate is directed by or to, whether it is colleagues or even in the City or even the City Council should be addressed. She however, felt it would be helpful to get the IDEA training first, then move forward.

Council President inquired if there was a date to return to Council. Councilor Sweeney agreed with Councilor Harpin, that the training should come first.

On motion of Councilor Sweeney, duly seconded by Councilor Blackmer it was VOTED: to postpone to the meeting of March 23, 2021.

There was much discussion amongst Councilors as to which committee this should go before. Councilor Blackmer read the appropriate committee’s protocol for each committee. Councilor Blackmer stated that Community Development Committee would be the most appropriate as well as Public Safety. Councilor Wilkinson stated too much time is being spent on this decision, he feels it is an important issue.

On motion of Councilor Sweeney, duly seconded by Councilor Blackmer, it was VOTED: to refer to Public Safety Committee. Councilor Harpin voted against.

There were no licenses to come before Council.

The President called for Open Forum.

Robert Gyurasz, Pattison Road, spoke of concerns of nepotism, suppression of information and stated that he was still not getting any information regarding the shooting range.

Megan Carlin, 48 Windom Terrace, a one block street, off Church Street; she stated that she has concerns about a wall that appears to be falling down and would like some attention paid to this.

Eric Wilson, Brayton Hill Terrace, thanked the Council for his reappointment.

The President called for Mayor's Concerns.

The Mayor spoke about the COVID-19 guidance from the Governor and rolling back to phase three, step one, in effect December 13, 2020. He stated that the Church Street testing location is open. He gave a plea to limit gatherings and travel and follow all the guidelines.

The Mayor offered his best wishes to all for a happy and healthy, safe new year.

Councilor Bona inquired if the Mayor could comment on the "Winter Places" grant for downtown. The Mayor stated that was a Chamber of Commerce and NAmazing Initiative, including downtown potted trees, fire pit and lighting.

The President called for Committee Reports and Minutes.

The President gave an update on the City Clerk Screening Committee, he stated that the first round of candidates to return applications would be on January 12, 2020. He stated that the committee did not want to rush the process, especially with the holidays coming up.

The President called for Councilor Concerns and Liaison updates.

Councilor Bona spoke about implementing a community camera program and would like to catalog where residents have cameras that face public areas. This would enable the police department to assist in cases where children are missing or seniors wander, as well as break-ins.

The President called for a motion to adjourn. On motion of Councilor Sweeney, duly seconded by Councilor Wilkinson, it was VOTED: to adjourn at 8:26 pm.

A True Record
Attest,


City Clerk