

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – MARCH 2, 2022**  
**Meeting held remotely due to COVID 19 Pandemic Restrictions**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Members Present:** President Homar Gomez, Vice-President Salem Derby, Daniel Rist, Owen Zaret, Lindsey Rothschild, Thomas Peake, Koni Denham, Brad Riley and James Kwiecinski.

**Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Approval of Minutes:** On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2022 meeting. Councilor Riley abstained as he was absent on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Speak Time Summary:**

- Jeff Mastroianna, the new Director of Easthampton Media was present. He said that they are waiting for new equipment to arrive for installation at 50 Payson Ave. He said they will be ready for when the council returns to in-person meetings.

**Communications:**

- Councilor Peake spoke about the Western MA Municipal conference to be held at the high school in April; he’s planning to attend and encouraged other councilors to attend as well.
- Councilor Zaret spoke about the situation in Ukraine; he said he stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Councilor Kwiecinski echoed his comments.
- Councilor Rothschild said she and President Gomez will be manning a table at the Farmer’s Market on March 13th to provide information about serving on boards and committees.

**Mayor Communications:** None.

**Correspondence, Announcements & President/Vice-President Communications:** President Gomez encouraged donations to help the “We the People” team from EHS raise money for their April trip to the Nationals in Washington, DC.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to open the public hearings.

<b>PUBLIC HEARINGS – STARTING AT 6:15 p.m.</b>
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1. **Amend City Ordinances, Chapter. 7, Sec. 7-18 (Pay Plan Salary Scale):** Councilor Rist reported the Finance Committee had voted 3 to 0 to recommend the Exhibit B pay scale be increased by 3% effective July 1, 2022. Councilor Rist said the pay scale had recently been updated (effective January 1, 2022) by 2%. The Finance Committee had reviewed a request to look into upgrading their three positions, but after Councilor Rist said data is needed and a review should include all employees, not just a few. He said the council doesn’t have the

information to make grade changes. There had been discussion about changing the pay scale from 12 to 15 steps, but for now the Mayor has put forward a 3% increase for the 12-step plan, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. Councilor Rist said he feels an extensive study should be done, but for now this is a start.

Mayor LaChapelle agreed there is a wage increase deficit and this step is a “band-aid to addressing inequity”. She encouraged both a “yes” vote and a recognition of the value of work done by city pay plan employees.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to amend the City Ordinances, Chapter 7, Article II “Classification and Pay Plan”, Section 7-18 by substituting Exhibit B, Salary and Wage Scale, as on file in the Office of the City Clerk, dated January 1, 2022, with the attached Exhibit B, Salary and Wage Scale, dated July 1, 2022, and to establish the effective date of said substitution as July 1, 2022.

2. **Supplemental Appropriation – CPA Fund – Emily Williston Library Historic Preservation Restriction:** Second reading by Councilor Rist on the request to appropriate CPA funds to cover costs involved with placing a Historic Preservation Restriction on the Emily Williston Library. Recommended 8 to 0 by the CPA Committee and 3 to 0 by the Finance Committee.

Councilor Rist said a Historic Preservation Restriction would attach a deed restriction to the library; ensuring the beautiful architecture of the building would remain, no matter the future use.

Elizabeth Appelquist, president of the Library Board was in attendance. She said they are exploring options but would like to guarantee the preservation of the library building. Library board member Marge Prendergast said they are excited about all the possibilities. Councilor Zaret said he thought this was “great all around” and Councilor Kwiecinski added that both the Easthampton and Northampton libraries are beautiful buildings.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$15,000.00 from CPA Reserved for Historic Resources (#024.0024.3242) to Emily Williston Library Historic Preservation Restriction (#024.2981.5400.2498) to provide funding for legal fees, conducting appraisals, baseline documentation, and other relevant costs as necessary to implement a Historic Preservation Restriction on the Emily Williston Library building.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to close the public hearings.

### **Reports of Standing Committees:**

**FINANCE:** Councilor Rist said the Finance Committee had met last week and had gotten a “positive report” from the City Auditor in terms of second quarter revenue.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to remove the following item from the agenda, without prejudice:

- Review of pay grades of City Council appointees

The Finance Committee will meet next on March 9th at 5 p.m. to discuss the items under new business and continue the review of stipends.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Councilor Zaret said the Public Safety Committee had met on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The main topic of discussion was the Police Department's quarterly report and 2021 annual report. Councilor Zaret summarized the report. Some items mentioned were: fleet status, staffing, the increase in call volume, grants received, use of force policy, traffic stop data, review of the mental health clinician position, upgrading radios, department goals and possible addition of a comfort dog.

Councilor Zaret said that during the Police Department visit, they also talked about the South Street/Main Street intersection traffic light proposal. There have been 74 accidents at that intersection over the past 20 years, Councilor Zaret said. The committee was told that intersection's accident count is comparable to the Northampton Street/West Street intersection before the installation of a traffic light. The number of accidents at that intersection dropped dramatically after the traffic light was installed.

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee is scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>. The Dept. of Public Works will give its report at that meeting.

On motion made by Councilor Zaret and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to extend the following agenda items by 90 days:

- Ordinance Review Committee's final report review
- Request to review safety of the sidewalk at the Main St./South St. intersection

Councilor Rist asked whether body cameras had been discussed with the Police Department. Councilor Zaret said the department has applied for a grant to purchase them. Councilor Kwiecinski said he thinks funding should be found for them if the grant isn't successful.

Councilor Rist also mentioned reaching out to the Governor's Office about the traffic light (rather than just the MA DOT). He suggested the Public Safety Committee could work on a council resolution in support of the traffic light. Councilor Kwiecinski also said that intersection needs additional street lighting.

**APPOINTMENTS:** Councilor Rothschild said the Appointments Committee had met on February 23rd to discuss one Mayoral appointment, which was approved.

On motion made by Councilor Rothschild and seconded by Councilor Riley it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to confirm the following Mayoral appointments:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Term Expires</b>
Forrest Abild	Veterans Council	Dec. 31, 2022

The Appointments Committee will meet next on March 9th at 4 p.m.

**ORDINANCE:** Councilor Derby reported the Ordinance Committee met on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Ordinance Review Committee’s report. He said they would be looking to separate the easier changes from those that will need more work.

They will meet next as follows:

- March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6 p.m. to discuss the Vacant Storefronts Ordinance proposal
- March 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. – continued public hearing with the Planning Board (40R amendment)

**PROPERTY:** No report

**RULES & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS:** Councilor Rist said that with remote participation authorization being extended to July, he suggested removing the agenda item regarding a council rule on the subject. He said a new rule could be submitted later. Councilor Peake, who had submitted the request with then Councilor Flood, said it made sense and he had no objections.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to remove the following agenda item:

- Proposed amendment to council rules: Add Rule 20 – Remote Participation

**Ad Hoc Committees:**

**Senior Tax Work-Off Committee:** Councilor Kwiecinski said the Sr. Tax Work-Off Committee had met this week and are continuing to work on a report to present to the City Council. They are meeting next on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.

**New Business:**

- a. On motion made by Councilor Derby and seconded by Councilor Riley it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer to the Appointments Committee two City Council re-appointments (City Clerk & Asst. City Clerk).
- b. On motion made by Councilor Derby and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer to the Appointments Committee seven Mayoral appointments.

- c. On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer to the Finance Committee a request from the Retirement Board to increase the COLA base by \$2,000.00 to \$16,000.00.
- d. First reading by Councilor Rist on the following interdepartmental transfer and supplemental appropriation requests:
  - \$53,117.85 interdepartmental transfer to the PEG Access Receipts Reserved Account
  - \$6,900.00 supplemental appropriation for FY '22 deficit & unanticipated expenses – valuation of city OPEB benefits.
  - \$20,464.00 supplemental appropriation for FY '22 deficit & unanticipated expenses – property liability

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer these requests to the Finance Committee and to schedule public hearings for the March 16<sup>th</sup> council meeting.

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Peake it was unanimously voted (by roll call) that this meeting **ADJOURN**.

**TIME: 7:05 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Barbara L. LaBombard, Clerk to the City Council