

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – May 18, 2022
Meeting held in-person at 50 Payson Avenue and remotely by Google Meet
6:00 p.m.

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

Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes: On motion made by Councilor Rothschild and seconded by Councilor Derby it was **VOTED** (by roll call) to approve the minutes of the May 4th meeting. Councilor Rist abstained as he was absent on May 4th.

Public Speak Time Summary (some in person/some remotely):

- *Donna Wilson, 14 Mayher St.* – She spoke in favor of the Fair Share Resolution
- *Joan Kurtz, 359 Main St.* – She reminded councilors of the May 21st fundraiser for a city Dog Park
- *Nancy Stenberg, 17 Maine Ave.* – She spoke in favor of the Fair Share Resolution
- *Marin Goldstein, Chair of the School Finance Subcommittee* – He said he hoped the City Councilors would support the full School Committee budget.
- *Sarah Woodard, 24 Sheldon Ave.* – She is a local teacher and spoke both in favor of supporting the school committee budget and also the Fair Share Resolution.
- *Paul Fenn, Haydenville resident and president of Local Power.* His company sets up climate mobilization programs to eliminate carbon emissions caused by a community’s energy use.
- *Megan Harvey, School Committee Member* – She urged support of the school committee’s budget.
- *“Julie” from Pr. #1* – She spoke of mass shootings and urged the council to fully fund the Police Department.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS – STARTING AT 6:15 p.m.
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1. **Interdepartmental Transfer – City Council legal advertising:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$1,500.00 to cover City Council legal advertising through the end of FY ’22. A large number of lengthy and expensive legal ads led to this budget again falling short of the budgeted amount.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Rist it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to transfer the sum of \$1,500 from the Reserve Fund (#001.9510.5967) to City Council Advertising (#001.1110.5301) to provide additional funding for City Council legal advertising for the rest of fiscal year 2022.

2. **Supplemental Appropriation – CPA Funds - Acquire property on Ward Ave. for Rail Trail Connection (continued from April 6th meeting):** City Planner Jeff Bagg had submitted a request to withdraw this appropriation request. He said in a memo that while city funds will likely be required in the future to either acquire this land or an easement, a vote at this time is premature. Councilor Rist emphasized this doesn't "kill the project", it's "timing that's the issue".

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Derby it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) that this request be **WITHDRAWN** without prejudice.

3. **Supplemental Appropriation – CPA Funds – Valley CDC Housing Sustainability & Financial Literacy:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$156,130 from CPA Funds for Valley CDC financial literacy, housing counseling and three down payment grants.

Assistant Planner Jamie Webb said this will cover an 18-month program and also offer three income eligible first-time homebuyers grants of \$25,000.00 to help them purchase a home in Easthampton.

Alexis Schneeflock and Donna Cabana of the Valley CDC said the funding would provide a vetted program for first-time homebuyers and assist buyers in how to plan and save for a home.

Councilor Zaret said this program empowers people and educates them; he felt it helps level the playing field.

Councilor Rothschild, who is a realtor, disagreed, saying that while it is a help, it doesn't help "level the playing field" due to the extremely competitive real estate market. Councilor Kwiecinski said it help buyers be better prepared.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Derby it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$156,130.00 from the following:

CPA Reserved for Affordable Housing (#024.0024.3243):	\$107,115.00
CPA Undesignated Fund (#024.0024.3590):	\$49,015.00

to be appropriated to Valley CDC Housing Sustainability & Financial Literacy (#024.2982.5400.2462) to provide low to moderate income households with financial literacy education, housing counseling services, and three down payment assistance grants.

4. **Supplemental Appropriation – IT Dept. Payroll:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$27,467.23 for IT payroll costs for FY '22.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Kwiecinski it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$27,467.23 from Free Cash to the following:

Computer Salary Full Time (#001.1451.5111):	\$14,413.21
Computer Salaries (#001.1451.5100):	\$13,054.02

To cover FY '22 IT Department payroll.

5. **Supplemental Appropriation – Tesla Police Cruisers & EV Charging Stations:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$89,864.00 to purchase one Tesla police Y EV cruiser, equip two Tesla Y EV cruisers and install two EV charging stations.

Police Chief Robert Alberti said that Conservation Agent Cassie Tragert had applied for a Green Communities grant and been awarded \$15,000 (\$7,500 per cruiser). Funding for one cruiser will come from the Federal drug forfeiture account and other would come from Free Cash. He said the Tesla cruisers have a 5 star crash rating and meet the performance and safety standards for police cruisers. Two EV charging stations will be installed at the Public Safety Complex. The SUV cruisers will primarily be used by the traffic officers, but can be used for other purposes as well.

Councilor Zaret asked if one charge will last through a shift. Chief Alberti said they should get 8 hours on a charge and he anticipates they'll be charging them overnight. It is expected that the cars could last 300,000 to 500,000 miles or about 10-12 years. Councilor Kwiecinski asked if lights could stay on during a traffic stop; Chief Alberti said they are LED's and could stay on for multiple stops.

Public Speak:

- **Donovan Lee** – He spoke against this purchase saying the police department doesn't need them. He thought it was just an effort to bolster equipment. There is no ecological benefit to buying a car we don't need, he said. He thought the money could be used for other items.
- **Shelby Lee** – She didn't think this purchase reflected the desire of the community. She thought funding could be better used to improve the library. She said the public was never asked what they thought.
- **Liz Jensen** – She spoke against the purchase and said the city should be looking to alternatives to policing.
- **"Julie" from Pr. #1** – She thanked the police department for being environmentally proactive. She didn't think this should be about politics, but instead what is best for the community and environment.
- **Desiree Marsil** – She mentioned the "no idling" signs around town. She thought it was nice the city was looking at other options for its vehicles.

Councilor Peake said his concerns were over the brand and company. Councilor Denham said she wanted to be environmentally conscious but couldn't support this company (Tesla). She

felt there were better options. She also had real concerns about drivers “being pulled over by a luxury vehicle”.

Councilor Kwiecinski asked if the chargers were universal or if they were specific to Tesla vehicles. Chief Alberti said they were universal.

After some further discussion, on motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Rist it was **VOTED** (by roll call, with eight in favor and Councilor Denham voting against the motion) to appropriate the sum of \$89,864.00 from Free Cash to #001.2100.5818.2022 for the following:

One 2022 Tesla Model Y – EV Cruiser for the Traffic Bureau:	\$56,940.00
Police conversion & equipment for 2 Tesla Y-EV Cruisers:	\$24,129.00
Installation of two Police Dept. electric vehicle charging stations:	\$8,795.00

6. **Supplemental Appropriation – Fire/EMS expenses for FY ‘22:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$148,000.00 from Free Cash to cover Fire and EMS expenses for remainder of FY ‘22.

Councilor Rist said end of year appropriations come all the time and prices for many EMS supplies have risen due to COVID. Fire Chief Chris Norris also the funding was needed due to retirements and it would bring the department through the end of the fiscal year. He also said that COVID reimbursements were being tied up by FEMA. Councilor Peake noted that overtime expenses have actually fallen.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$148,000.00 from Free Cash to the following:

EMS Overtime #2310.5131:	\$22,500.00
Misc. Pro. & Tech Services #2310.5319:	\$10,000.00
EMS Supplies #2310.5500:	\$22,500.00
Overtime Pay #2200.5131:	\$45,000.00
Permanent Salaries #2200.5111:	\$ 9,500.00
Sick Leave Incentive #2200.5153:	\$16,500.00
Ambulance Vehicle Repairs #2310.5483:	\$ 7,000.00
Firefighting Equipment #2200.5595:	\$15,000.00

to be used for the following purposes:

EMS Overtime: Coverage for ambulance recall of personnel
Misc. Pro. & Tech. Services: Third party billing agency costs for EMS revenue collection
EMS Supplies: Costs for supplies on ambulances
Overtime Pay: Costs for backfill on shifts
Permanent Salaries: Costs for vacation buy-out – retirement Greg Gagnon
Sick Leave Incentive: Costs for sick leave buy-out – retirement Greg Gagnon

Ambulance vehicle repairs: Costs for exhaust filter on A1 that occurred on 2/1/22
Firefighting Equipment: Purchase of new gear for 2 new firefighters & change rank for 2 others

7. **Supplemental Appropriation – Liberty St. Pump Station Upgrade Design Services:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$49,800.00 from Enterprise Retained Earnings to evaluate options for upgrades to the Liberty Street pump station.

DPW Superintendent Greg Nuttelman said the station was built in 1969 and both equipment and the building are nearing the end of their service life. This funding would take a hard look at the site and building.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$49,800 from Enterprise Retained Earnings to Liberty Street Pump Station Removal (#060.4461.5809.2022) for design services to evaluate options for upgrades to the Liberty Street station.

8. **Supplemental Appropriation – Tree removal/trimming:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$15,000.00 from Free Cash to remove and trim trees.

DPW Superintendent Nuttelman said the new tree warden has identified damaged or decayed trees that need to be either removed or trimmed. Some of the damage came from weather events, he said.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Rist it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$15,000.00 from Free Cash (#001.0001.3590) to Tree (#001.4951.5293) to remove seven declining or decaying trees and the trimming on an additional eight trees.

9. **Supplemental Appropriation – Fuel Costs – FY '22:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$40,000.00 from Free Cash to cover increased fuel costs. It was noted the DPW manages purchasing accounts for gasoline, diesel fuel and heating oil for all city vehicles and buildings.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$40,000.00 from Free Cash to Fuel (#001.4100.5481) due to circumstances outside of our control fuel costs have increased dramatically in FY '2022.

10. **Supplemental Appropriation – Trash Removal & Pickup – FY '22:** Second reading by Councilor Peake on the request to appropriate \$4,000.00 from Free Cash to cover trash removal and pickup. The DPW manages the trash and recycling removal accounts for all city buildings, including the school department.

On motion made by Councilor Peake and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** (by roll call) to appropriate the sum of \$4,000.00 from Free Cash (#001.0001.3590) to:

Trash/Municipal (#001.4300.5319) - \$2,000.00
Trash/School (#001.4430.5316) - \$2,000.00

to cover trash removal and pickup expenses for the remainder of FY 2022.

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

Communications from elected officials, boards & committees:

Councilor Zaret spoke about the Parsons Street neighborhood visioning session set for May 21st.

Mayor Communications: Mayor LaChapelle said she has emailed the FY '23 budget to councilors. It will be on the city website tomorrow and some hard copies will also be available for review.

Reports of Standing Committees:

FINANCE:

On motion made by Councilor Rist and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer the FY '23 budget to the Finance Committee and to set a public hearing for the June 15th council meeting.

Councilor Rist announced the Finance Committee budget hearing schedule:

May 23rd: Public Works, Enterprise, Cultural & Recreation

May 25th: Public Safety, Human Services

June 2nd: Education, Debt & Interest, Unclassified

June 6th: Revenue, General Government, CPA

June 8th: Final finance votes

The meetings will be hybrid – in Conf. Rm. #1 and remote by Google Meet. Councilor Rist thanked Councilor Peake for covering for him while he was on vacation. He also reminded the councilors and public that the City Council cannot increase the Mayor's budget.

PUBLIC SAFETY: Councilor Zaret said the next Public Safety Committee meeting would be on June 7th. The Fire Department's quarterly report will be on the agenda.

APPOINTMENTS: Councilor Rothschild said the Appointments Committee had met last week to review five Mayoral appointments. All were recommended 2 to 0.

On motion made by Councilor Rothschild and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to confirm the following Mayoral appointment:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
Jessica Hebert	City Treasurer	May 1, 2025

On motion made by Councilor Rothschild and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to confirm the following Mayoral appointments:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Board/Committee</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
Sarah Carr	Conservation Commission	Dec. 31, 2023
Hal Weeks	Conservation Commission	Dec. 31, 2024

On motion made by Councilor Rothschild and seconded by Councilor Derby it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to confirm the following Mayoral appointments:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Board/Committee</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
Bonnie McLoud	Nashawannuck Pond Committee	Dec. 31, 2022
Anthony Manca	Veteran's Council	Dec. 31, 2024

The Appointments Committee will meet next on May 25th at 4 p.m.

ORDINANCE: Councilor Derby reported the Ordinance Committee had met last on May 9th. They finalized a list based on the Ordinance Review Committee's report. They need to create a plan; bringing some of the simpler items to the council while holding others for more review.

Councilor Derby said they had voted 3 to 0 to recommend adding a new ordinance in Chapter 6 (6-23. Deceptive Advertising Practices of Limited Pregnancy Centers). On motion made by Councilor Derby and seconded by Councilor Peake it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to set a public for June 1st to consider this proposed ordinance.

Councilor Derby said no next meeting date has been set to discuss the Vacant Storefronts Ordinance.

PROPERTY: No report

RULES & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: Councilor Rist said the Rules Committee would meet next on June 1st at 5 p.m.

He also reported that the charter amendments were moving along in the Senate.

New Business:

1. **Mayoral appointments:** On motion made by Councilor Derby and seconded by Councilor Zaret it was unanimously voted (by roll call) to refer one Mayoral appointment to the Appointments Committee.
2. **Fair Share Amendment Resolution:** On motion made by Councilor Derby and seconded by Councilor Rist it was unanimously voted to refer a resolution on the Fair Share Amendment to the Rules & Govt. Relations Committee. Councilor Zaret said an earlier draft had been included in the agenda; he will send the current version to councilors.

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

TIME: 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara L. LaBombard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully Submitted,".

Barbara L. LaBombard, Clerk to the City Council