

DENNIS BIDWELL

CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com

April 18, 2017



To neighbors and friends, Ward 2 and elsewhere,

These are busy times in City government. Budget season is upon us. It's the time of year when we authorize spending on summer improvement projects in the public schools and on road projects for the upcoming paving season. A variety of proposed zoning ordinances are working their way through the system. Resolutions on carbon pricing and the Massachusetts Safe Communities Act are in the works. Last week the City Council joined with the School Committee to appoint an interim School Committee member from Ward 6 to fill an unexpected vacancy. And it will fall to the City Council to appoint an interim City Clerk in the wake of Wendy Mazza's announced retirement.

Please read on about these topics:

[Safe Communities Act](#)
[Reporting on the study of the downtown economy](#)
[The Mayor's Panhandling Advisory Group](#)
[Town Hall Budget Meetings](#)
[Upcoming road improvement projects/Pleasant Street](#)
[Northampton Neighbors: Aging in Place Forum April 26](#)

Sincerely,

Dennis Bidwell

Safe Communities Act

The City Council will soon take up a resolution expressing support for the "Safe Communities Act" which is currently working its way through the Legislature. Titled "An Act to Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of Massachusetts Residents", the Act, if approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, would aim to protect all Massachusetts residents and build trust within communities by limiting cooperation regarding detention of immigrants between local law enforcement agencies and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. I recommend an excellent Boston Globe editorial ("[Want to Detain Immigrants? Get a Warrant](#)") for background on the matter. The language of the actual Safe Communities Act can be found [here](#).

Kudos to our State Representative Peter Kocot for being one of the proponents of this important legislation.

Reporting on the study of the downtown economy

The Committee on Community Resources, for which I serve as Vice Chair, was asked

last year by the Council to study the downtown Northampton economy and recommend ways to strengthen it. Based on a series of widely-attended public forums, and taking into consideration a wide range of reports and expert testimony presented to the Committee, we agreed to report our conclusions and recommendations in a series of three Guest Columns in the Hampshire Daily Gazette. The first of these, which I authored on behalf of the Committee, appeared in the April 4 Gazette. ([Read here.](#))

That first column emphasized our conclusion that our local economy, particularly as it affects the downtowns of Northampton and Florence, is relatively well balanced and the envy of other communities far and wide, though not without its challenges. A column to appear next month will address some of those challenges and the City's responses, including reports of wage theft; the challenges facing at-risk downtown populations; concerns about panhandling; and opportunities to be even more effective in coordinating and promoting arts events.

The Mayor's Panhandling Advisory Group

One of the downtown-related recommendations from our Community Resources Committee was that the Mayor convene a task force to explore non-ordinance ways of addressing the solicitation/panhandling issue in downtown and elsewhere, while focusing on the needs of at-risk populations. I'm pleased to report that the Mayor has indeed gathered together such an advisory group, which includes representation from social service and housing organizations, downtown stakeholders and City department heads. That group has had its first of several meetings. I represent the Council's Community Resources Committee on this advisory group.

Town Hall Budget Meetings and Council Budget Hearings

The Mayor will introduce to the City Council his budget for the new fiscal year at the Council's May 18 meeting. As the Mayor is working with department heads and his Finance Director to prepare the proposed Fiscal Year 2018 budget, he will be holding three Town Hall Budget Meetings to gather input and encourage discussion. Those Town Hall Budget Meetings will be:

- **Wednesday, April 19, 7:00 pm, at Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street., Northampton**
- **Wednesday, April 26, 7:00 pm, at Florence Civic Center, 90 Park Street, Florence**
- **Thursday, April 27, 7:00 pm, at Leeds Elementary School (in the Library), 10 Florence, Leeds**

The City Council will be holding one or more hearings on the proposed budget for FY2018, after May 18. Details to follow.

Upcoming road improvement projects/Pleasant Street

The City's DPW Director, Donna LaScaleia, has presented the department's plans for this coming season's roadway improvements, consisting of:

- crack sealing on about 30 City streets,
- mill and overlay work (expected repair life of 12-15 years) on a portion of Ryan Road
- micro-surfacing work (expected repair life 7-9 years) on another part of Ryan Road and on Park Hill Road
- major reclamation work (expected repair life 18-20 years) on Audubon Road and Day Avenue
- and a full depth reconstruction (expected repair life of 22 or more years) on Hinckley Road.

Ward 2 streets that expect to see crack sealing work include: Arnold Avenue, Bancroft Road, Vernon Street (between Federal St and Ward Avenue), and Ward Avenue.

This work will be paid for with about \$1.0 million of State Chapter 90 funds as well as \$500,000 in local tax dollars (pending final City Council approval.)

The DPW's upcoming roadway improvement projects are described in detail in Director LaScaleia's memo to the Mayor. ([Here.](#))

In addition, starting this week, a major reconstruction of the **Pleasant Street corridor** will begin. The project will include two raised crosswalks, protected bicycle lanes, curb extensions and replacements, street trees, a rain garden, and a large amount of new sidewalk. The aim is to make Pleasant Street safer and more attractive for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Completion is projected for September.

Northampton Neighbors: Aging in Place Forum April 26

Northampton Neighbors is a recently incorporated "aging in place" community, part of a national "village" movement. The organization will be hosting a forum on **Wednesday, April 26, 2017 at the Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.**

At the forum, you can meet others who are interested and involved, create or join committees, such as membership, service providers, volunteers, fundraising, outreach, social events and activities, etc. If there is a particular area you are interested in, you can meet and talk with others who have the same ideas or concerns. The forum will be organized around neighborhood wards. Please tell your friends and neighbors about Northampton Neighbors and bring them to the meeting.

See the group's website for details: www.northamptonneighbors.org. Also see [Village to Village Network](#), which links hundreds of similar communities. The group's mission statement is [here](#).

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