

# DENNIS BIDWELL

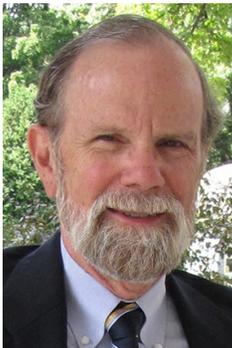
CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

[www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com](http://www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com)

August 4, 2016

To Neighbors and Friends, Ward 2 and Elsewhere,

## Please Vote Today



Today is Election Day in Northampton. The polls are open (for Ward 2 voters, that's Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, 80 Locust St.) from 7 am to 8 pm. I encourage you to vote in this special election for At-Large City Councilor. I am a strong supporter of Ryan O'Donnell, current Ward 3 City Councilor.

Among the pieces of misinformation that have been spread by Ryan O'Donnell's opponent, Marlene Morin, are her assertions that the current City Council has not fulfilled its responsibilities regarding review and approval of the City budget for the fiscal year started July 1, 2016. My Ward 4 colleague on the Council, Gina-Louise Sciarra, has set the record straight in the form of a letter to her constituents. I reprint it [here](#) with her permission. I encourage you to read it.

## Celebrating the new Pulaski Park

I saw many of you at the July 22 dedication of our new Pulaski Park in downtown Northampton. I commend the Mayor for putting together a formal celebration of the opening of the Park. When a City spends 8 years, on and off, on a very public planning process, and commits to careful construction and high-quality craftsmanship, and invests almost \$2 million of taxpayer dollars in infrastructure that will benefit us all (about \$1.2 million was from the City's CPA funds, the balance from Commonwealth of Mass. grants), it's worthy of note and celebration. I especially enjoyed seeing the sense of pride and ownership exhibited by the DPW crew that worked on the project, as well as Mountain View, the landscape contractor that did excellent work on the project.

Lauren Stimson, of Stephen Stimson Associates landscape architects, who was the lead designer for the project, delivered wonderful remarks reminding us that this important civic space has been common land since 1653 - used for grazing, public markets, and a public park as of the early 1900s. Her complete remarks are [here](#). She concluded her comments with this:

*"The fence is down, the Park is open. It is now up to you, the City and community of Northampton, to take care of this landscape. It will need your respect and your diligence. We urge you to be the stewards of this common land. Everyone can play a role, large or small. Pick up the trash, don't tread on the plants, respect the furniture, clean up after your dog. This is the only public green space in the heart of Northampton. Everyone needs this space. It represents you, your values and your*

*community. Treat this place like an extension of your own home, and it will be here for the next generation and continue to grow with all of us for the next 100 years."*

As always, I look forward to hearing your suggestions, recommendations and concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Bidwell

### **Letter from Gina-Louise Sciarra:**

For my constituents and all residents in the city, I want to address something that is being said by a candidate for councilor at-large, not just about her opponent, but about all Northampton city councilors.

Marlene Morin has repeatedly questioned whether city councilors read the city budget, including most recently in her letter in the Gazette today. She has claimed we don't ask questions about it or talk to the departments about their budgets.

Between May 19 and June 28, while Ms. Morin was campaigning and saying that we don't talk about the budget,

1. The City Council was presented the 2017 budget and budget message by the Mayor,
2. Councilors requested of the administration the department heads we wished to question,
3. The City Council held two days of budget hearings during which department heads came before us and answered questions on their proposed 2017 budgets,
4. The City Council held a public hearing on the budget in the Council Chambers,
5. The Finance Committee and full City Council held a joint meeting on the budget and asked questions of the Mayor and Finance Director,
6. The City Council discussed and took our first votes on the budget,
7. The City Council discussed and took our second votes on the budget.

Perhaps the reason Ms. Morin has such a misconception of the work done on the budget is that despite every one of those meetings being posted and open to the public, Ms. Morin did not attend them. I was at every one of those meetings and I additionally spent time preparing for them. It's too bad that she didn't take the opportunity that the timing of this special election afforded to learn about the budget and the process.

It's important to me that my Ward 4 constituents, and all residents of Northampton know that I and the other councilors take our responsibilities seriously, work hard and invest many hours preparing for and participating in public meetings on the business of the city.

Thanks for reading,

Gina-Louise

### **Lauren Stimson remarks on Pulaski Park:**

My name is Lauren Stimson, and I am a Principal and landscape architect with

Stephen Stimson Associates. I represent the team of designers and consultants that worked on the re-envisioning of this Park.

Eight years ago we won a competition to re-design Pulaski Park. We were thrilled. Many of us in the studio had gone to UMass-we were familiar with this place and knew Northampton and the Valley quite well. Unfortunately, after the excitement of winning the competition, the project had no funding and was shelved for almost five years. We had all but forgotten about it until late in 2012, when the former City Engineer, Jim Laurila called me. The project potentially had life, and would we be interested in starting it up again. That was the beginning of the design process and here we are today.

This City is a melting pot. There's a distinct sense of history here (the farming, the river, the mills, the industry)-it has real, authentic grit and connection to the past. What I love about it though, is that it is coupled with attitude-an attitude about shaping its own future through social and environmental change, freedom of speech and boldness with diversity. We started this entire design process by engaging you, the community, and asking you what you wanted. Over a series public meetings over six months, we heard multiple things: a civic plaza, a large lawn, a play area for children, performance space, flexible gathering space, places to sit, sunny areas, shady areas, a sustainable water feature...something for everyone all inside this pocket of a park-expressed in a way that celebrated the heritage and the atmosphere of the City.

We also did a lot of research-what was this land before it was a park? We discovered it was always open space, common land since the colonial settlements as far back as 1653. Animals grazed here, public markets occurred and eventually at the turn of the 20th century, the first public park was built-at the time, on the northern bank of the Mill River that ran adjacent to this site. Many years later, in the 1970s, the Park was re-built. And here we are in 2016, and the City has re-built the park again. This is a natural evolution of a landscape-it isn't like a building or architecture that is static. A landscape is made of living things, plants, soil, water, people and the needs and function of these living things transform with the seasons, mature with age, and change over time.

The Park you see here is our interpretation of what is distinctly Northampton right now, but we believe the elements are flexible enough to grow with your community for the next century. The Main Street Plaza is the new front door. Permeable pavers, local stone, and a heroic curb cut in the sidewalk that takes runoff from Rt. 9 during rain events into the Park's stormwater garden to be cleansed-all of these things say: Welcome to Northampton, this is a City that cares about its environment and the way it can contribute to a healthy regional ecosystem. Moveable furniture, a 50' long urban lounge, an expansive south facing lawn, this stage, a nature play area, and festive string lights, all support the lively social scene, but also give you flexibility and options for how you want to use the park. These elements encourage you to be here late into the evening, and throughout every season. The grove of heritage trees and woodland garden behind me give form to the ecological past of the site-restored with many of the same native groundcovers you would have seen growing on the banks of the Mill River.

The new materials of the Park reflect the history and culture of the City. Industrial rolling carts and rusty steel are a nod to your mill town heritage. The granite blocks you see throughout were salvaged from old mill foundations from central MA. The water feature and seatwalls are made of Goshen stone and reflect the geology and great legacy of farm walls as you move west through the Valley. The play area is made from black locust tree logs-these trees grow along the banks of the CT River.

Every element in this park, visible and invisible, is considered, authentic, and represents a sense of place.

We made this happen because you guided us. Thank you first and foremost, to the community of Northampton.

We also want to thank:

Mayor Narkewicz (his advocacy and support of this Park throughout the three year design process kept this project moving forward)

Thank you to the many City Council Members who were present at the community meetings

Along with the City Planner, Wayne Feiden

Thank you to the Community Preservation Committee who diligently reviewed our plans and drawings, and appropriated significant funding for this project.

And thank you to the Massachusetts PARC Grant program (for which this park has received 2 grants!)

Our client is officially the Northampton Department of Public Works Former City Engineer, Jim Laurila and his team: David Veleta, Diane and Doug have been the most progressive client we have ever had.

They helped us push the limits on making the environmental ethic of the City visible in the landscape of this Park. When we proposed something, they always said 'let's figure out a way to make this happen'.

When all is said and done, after you spend three years designing a project like this, community meetings, client meetings, CPC hearings, grant applications, design studies, models, construction documents, specifications...the project goes to bid-in this case, public bid. And you hope for the best. Because you are passing on your body of work and vision as a steward of the City, to a contractor that ultimately needs to build it.

We hoped for the best, and I can honestly say, we got the best. Mountain View is a Landscape Contractor from Chicopee. Led by Steve Corrigan, his on-site team: Liam Collins, John Cornell and their crew have been on the project since we started construction last fall. We set the bar high with our expectations for this park, and they understood our design intent from the beginning—maybe it's because a bunch of them went to UMass too, but we were always on the same page and we all knew this was always going to be a different type of Park—and a legacy project for everyone involved. Mountain View's dedication to the project, willingness to think on the fly with us—often making changes and improvements in the field together, is unparalleled in our experience. The quality of craft, especially in the masonry, the water feature, the Goshen stone walls, speaks for itself. Thank you for being our partners in the re-building of this important civic space.

I will leave you with one final thought. The fence is down, the Park is open. It is now up to you, the City and community of Northampton to take care of this landscape. It will need your respect and your diligence. We urge you to be the stewards of this common land. Everyone can play a role, large or small. Pick up the trash, don't tread on the plants, respect the furniture, clean up after your dog. This is the only public green space in the heart of Northampton. Everyone needs this space. It represents you, your values and your community. Treat this place like an extension of your own home, and it will be here for the next generation and continue to grow with all of us for the next 100 years.

Thank you.

Lauren Stimson, Principal, ASLA  
Stephen Stimson Associates Landscape Architects  
Pulaski Park Phase I Opening  
07.22.2016

**Dennis Bidwell City Council Ward 2**  
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