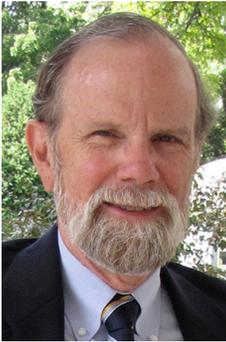


DENNIS BIDWELL

CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com

January 30, 2017



To neighbors and friends, Ward 2 and elsewhere,

Recent events continue to remind me that local government is more important now than ever. We have an opportunity in Northampton to assure that our shared values, increasingly at odds with policies emerging from the new administration in Washington, are translated into programs and positions that embolden other communities to also step up. I feel privileged to be part of these efforts as your Ward 2 City Councillor.

Please read on about these topics:

[Refugee update](#)

[Good Neighbor signs](#)

[Recommendations from the Local Economy Study of the Community Resources Committee](#)

[Aging in Place, Northampton Neighbors and Atul Gawande](#)

[The Downtown Northampton Association](#)

[LED streetlights](#)

[Opportunities for local involvement](#)

Sincerely,

Dennis Bidwell

Refugee update

I've had several inquiries about the status of local refugee resettlement efforts. Alisa Klein, who is the City Council's representative on the Welcome Home steering committee, recently provided an update to me and other Councillors.

Working closely with Catholic Charities, the City stands ready to accept 51 refugees in the months ahead from Syria, Afghanistan, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo. The first two families have been cleared through the State Department. Expected to arrive sometime after mid-February are: two brothers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who have been in refugee camps in Burundi since 2005; and a husband, wife and 10-month old son, also from the DRC, who have been in refugee camps in Rwanda since 1996.

Two permanent housing units have been approved, two more are in the pipeline, and two more have been offered. Eight "circles of care" are in various stages of orientation and training. Catholic Charities' staffing is complete and in place. Volunteer Coordinator Keegan Pyle is busy engaging volunteers. [Here is information](#) on volunteering, donating funds, and donating household goods.

What might be the effect of the Executive Order on immigration matters signed this week by the President? Too early to tell. Similarly, we're all trying to sort through the implications of the Executive Order addressing sanctuary cities.

Late breaking news: It appears that the Executive Order on immigration matters will in fact have the effect of putting our refugee settlement program with Catholic Charities on hold.

Good Neighbor signs

You may have started to see around town signs with the message "No matter where you're from, we're glad you're our neighbor" written in Spanish, English and Arabic. These signs, made available through the Good Neighbors Project, are available for \$15.00 at the River Valley Market. **To promote this effort, I have used campaign funds to purchase ten of these signs. I will make them available to the first ten people who ask for them. Locations with good visibility on relatively busy streets would be preferred.**

Recommendations from the Local Economy Study of the Community Resources Committee

One of my major responsibilities in my first year on the Council has been to serve as Vice Chair of the Community Resources Committee. We have been occupied throughout the year in hearing testimony and receiving analysis and recommendation concerning the state of our downtown. After considerable deliberation, we issued [our report of recommendations](#).

Key recommendations:

- We have asked the Mayor to convene a task force to explore non-ordinance ways of addressing the needs of downtown's at-risk population and the panhandling issue. There is growing interest in approaches [like those recently implemented](#) in New Haven.
- We support measures (Executive Order, Council Resolution and Order) to address the issue of wage theft - illegal withholding of payment from employees - in the restaurant and construction industries, while expressing our support for the great many "high road" employers who conscientiously comply with wage and labor laws.
- We have recommended a forum on the topics of downtown arts and events promotion, to explore whether the development and promotion of downtown events can be even better coordinated and more successful than is the case now.
- We propose to write several opinion pieces for the local press addressing, with facts and figures, the state of the downtown economy, the City's support for local business, looming challenges, innovative ways of encouraging "shop local", etc.

Aging in Place, Northampton Neighbors and Atul Gawande

As part of the "Village Movement" spurred on by the experience of the Beacon Hill Village in Boston, Northampton Neighbors has formed to support the notion of "aging in place" here in Northampton. The group - already incorporated and with its federal tax-exempt status in hand - will provide access to support services and programs to empower aging residents to live independent, engaged lives while staying in their homes.

The group hopes to launch more officially in the fall, at which time membership will be

opened up. All are invited to attend their monthly board meetings/community meetings. See website for details. www.northamptonneighbors.org

On Monday, February 13, at 4:30 pm, at the Northampton Senior Center, Dr. Atul Gawande, author of Being Mortal, will speak via video simulcast as part of a national conversation about changing the experience of aging. The event is free and open to the public.

The Downtown Northampton Association

Most of you know that after Northampton's Business Improvement District (BID) met its demise, the Chamber of Commerce, the City and others worked to create a new, voluntary, Downtown Northampton Association. This group has accomplished great things for downtown in its first year. If you enjoyed the Holiday Lights Stroll in early December, and the lights themselves, you have the DNA to thank.

This voluntary organization depends on contributions from downtown property owners and businesses, the City and other friends, and membership contributions from people throughout the City. I would encourage you to go to the [DNA website](#) and join as a member. We all have a stake in the success of downtown Northampton.

LED Streetlights

As the conversion to energy-efficient LED streetlights continues to roll out, I have heard a roughly equal number of supportive comments and critical comments. Anyone who wishes the City to install a glare shield on a street light affecting them should make application through [this website](#). Alternatively, you can call the City's Central Services department at 587-1238.

Opportunities for Local Involvement

I sit on the Council's City Services Committee, which among other things reviews all appointments to City boards, commission, committees, etc. I am consistently impressed with the outstanding qualifications of people who step up to volunteer for these positions. It's also true that many of the same people rotate from one position to another, and that many of these people are, well, my age, give or take. I would like your help in identifying new contributors, especially younger folks, to become involved in the fascinating and important work of local government.

Also, wearing my Northampton Democratic City Committee, I'm also looking for new talent to become involved in local Democratic Party work.

Dennis Bidwell City Council Ward 2
413-584-2732 | dennis@dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com
www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com
19 Forbes Avenue
Northampton, MA 01060

Copyright © 2017. All Rights Reserved.



Bidwell Advisors | 19 Forbes Avenue | Northampton | MA | 01060