

DENNIS BIDWELL

CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

www.dennisbidwellcitycouncil.com

Downtown Economy Public Forum Dates

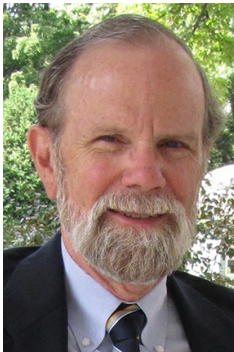
May 11, 2016

Business Owners
May 16, 5:30 pm

**Downtown Workers
& Residents**
June 20, 5:30 pm

Downtown Workers
June 27, 1:00 pm

**Property Owners,
Leasing, Arts &
Tourism**
July 18, 5:30 pm



To neighbors and friends, Ward 2 and elsewhere,

At the four-month mark as City Councilor for Ward 2 I thought I would offer an update and an important invitation:

[Downtown Public Forums](#)
[Water & Sewer Rates](#)
[LED Streetlights](#)
[Thanks to Jesse Adams](#)
[Four Months In](#)

Public Forums on the Local Economy, Focusing on Downtown Northampton and Florence

The City Council's Committee on Community Resources (where I serve as Vice-Chair) has been asked by the Council to undertake a study of "the local economy, with a focus on businesses and workers in downtown Northampton and downtown Florence, for the purpose of identifying practical recommendations, if any, that the City Council could pursue to strengthen the local economy."

An important part of the fact-finding phase of this work will be four public forums to be held in the weeks ahead. ([Click here for flyer](#), and see *hearings schedule to the left*.) The first of these will be **Monday, May 16, at 5:30 pm, in City Council Chambers (212 Main St.)**

The focus of this first hearing will be issues facing business owners, but any and all are encouraged to attend and share observations and recommendations.

The health of our downtowns, Northampton and Florence, is critical for all involved - business owners, workers, property owners, residents/consumers - and has been a topic extensively covered in the press in recent weeks. If any of you have any questions, concerns or recommendations, and aren't able to attend one of these forums, **please be in touch with me:** dbidwell@northamptonma.gov

Also, studies and reports submitted to the Committee can be found at www.northamptonma.gov/1679

New Water and Sewer Rates

I was strongly supportive of the new approach to water and sewer rates proposed by the Mayor, based on the premise that the burden of paying for badly needed infrastructure improvements and ongoing system operations should be apportioned as a function of volume of use and demands on the infrastructure.



Accordingly the new system shifts more of the burden to higher volume users, including some businesses and non-profits, while leaving many residential customers with very modest rate increases or, in some cases, decreases. I agreed that the process should be slowed down to allow for a full airing of the concerns of many business owners, and I agreed with the resulting modifications the Mayor made to his proposal. I was ultimately pleased to vote for the new rates, which passed 8 to 1 and will be in effect as of July 1.

Seeking Feedback on New LED Streetlight Options

Recently the City Council authorized the Mayor to proceed with a project to replace the City's over 2000 streetlights with new LED lights. The transition will cost nearly \$1,000,000, but will save an estimate \$170,000 per year in operating costs. The City is now seeking feedback on 8 sample LED light fixtures, located south of downtown

Northampton along Randolph Place, Holyoke Street and on Pleasant Street between Randolph and Holyoke. Four of the sample lights are considered "white" light, and four would be considered "warm white." For more details, including a map with locations of the sample lights, go to <http://ma-northampton.civicplus.com/1688/LED-Streetlights>

Please provide your feedback here: [LED Streetlights feedback form](#)

Thank You Jesse Adams

Last week Jesse Adams caught me and just about everyone else by surprise in announcing his resignation, effective immediately, as At-Large City Councilor. I join with many others in expressing my appreciation for Jesse's years of dedicated service and for being an independent voice on the Council. In such a situation the City Charter calls for a special election to be held within 90 days. The Special Election will be held August 4. If there are more than two candidates, a Preliminary Election will be held July 7.

Four Months In...

As I've been finding my way as the only new member of the City Council I've been impressed with the commitment and seriousness the Council brings to its work, pleased with the professionalism and smarts of Mayor Narkewicz and the good people in his administration, and surprised and amazed at the wide variety of issues coming before the Council. In addition to downtown economy issues and water/sewer rates, these have included: large capital expenditures (waste water treatment plant improvements, new fire truck) and small budget transfers; land acquisitions; approval of pool table and junk dealer licenses; City leases: review of the City's financial situation and audited financial statements in advance of upcoming FY17 budget hearings; the city's five-year capital improvement program; ordinances to protect significant trees, regulate LED lighting and to allow additional 15-minute parking spaces; acceptance of new public streets, etc. etc.

I'm enjoying my work on three committees: the aforementioned Committee on Community Resources, the Committee on Public Works and Utilities, and the Committee on City Services. And I'm doing the best I can to stay on top of constituent issues, which have included, among other matters, pedestrian safety issues, need for improved street lighting, airport noise, and Columbia Gas issues (gas leaks, the

impact of the continuing moratorium on new gas hookups).

I'm proud to represent Ward 2 on the Northampton City Council, and look forward to hearing your suggestions, recommendations and concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Bidwell

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