

REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

April 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order by President Murphy-Romboletti at 7:04 PM

The Clerk called the roll. Present Members in person 12 (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, I. Rivera, J. Rivera Sullivan). Present Members on Zoom 1 (Vacon).

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion was made and seconded to take a roll call vote that for the purposes of this meeting would be applicable to all motion to receive, refer items to a committee, remove items from the table, place items on the table, package items together, comply with items, or suspend the rules, unless there is an objection. Motion passed on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 12--Nays 0--Absent 1 (Magrath-Smith).

The name of Councilor J. Rivera was pulled to head the roll call voting.

PUBLIC HEARING

Motion was made and seconded to remove item 1 from the table and open the public hearing.

Petition for Pole and Wire Locations. The Holyoke Gas and Electric Department requests permission to locate a line of wires, cables, poles and fixtures, including the necessary sustaining and protecting fixtures, along and across the following public way or ways:

One (1) street light hole between property line of 31 O'Connor Ave and 33 O'Connor Ave. Holyoke

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Vincent O'Connell, HG&E Electrical Engineer, stated that the request originated with the Council. He stated that all of the abutters within a 300 foot buffer had been contacted and they had not received any response in regard to not setting the pole.

Councilor Givner noted that the request had been initiated by a resident after several break-ins at the corner over recent years, including many within just a few months.

Motion was made and seconded to close the public hearing.

---> Received and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 12--Nays 0--Absent 1 (Magrath-Smith).

PUBLIC COMMENT

(5:15)

Brenda Sullivan, stated that she was a proud employee of the Appleton Mill Corporation, a company that managed numerous elderly housing communities in the city, and had the reputation of being the best

independent senior housing provider in Western Mass. She then stated that Elmwood Towers on South Street was one of the communities she managed, consisting of 151 units with 183 residents. She then noted that South Street was a major street in the city, and many of their residents utilize a pedestrian walkway to get to stores in the area. She then expressed concern that a traffic light had been down since December and that one of their residents, Roberta Sanchez, was struck and killed by car in February. She then explained that one of their duties was to ensure safe and decent housing for their residents and she requested that the city spend the \$11,000 needed to replace the light.

Councilor Greaney made a motion to suspend the necessary rules to allow Ms. Sullivan to speak for another minutes. Councilor Devine seconded the motion.

B. Councilor Sullivan stated that of the 183 residents, 71 had vehicles with 10 of them not being used. She then explained that the residents regularly frequented were Melo Grocery, Paper City Cuts, as well Taino Restaurant which provided free lunch to seniors every Wednesday through a grant. She emphasized that their residents relied on safety and the traffic light being down had taken away the safety. She then explained that the Mayor's office told her it would be \$11,000 to replace, that he had filed a Chapter 90 request that was denied, and would be replying for it in July. She added that she understood Councilor Bartley would be filing an order to go to the Finance Committee. She then asked that the money be found to fix it.

COMMUNICATIONS

(9:55)

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 2 through 5 as a package.

From Mayor Joshua Garcia, letter reappointing Mark Cutting of 40 Briarwood Dr., to HEDIC. Mr. Cutting will service a three-year term expiring June 30, 2027.

--> Received and appointment confirmed.

From Mayor Joshua Garcia, letter reappointing L. Dorothea MacNeil of 226 Beech St. to serve as the Republican Member for the Board of Registrar of Voters. Ms. MacNeil's will serve a three year term expiring on March 31, 2027.

--> Received and appointment confirmed.

From Mayor Joshua Garcia, letter reappointing Lizabeth Rodriguez of 193 Brown Ave. to the Historical Commission. Ms. Rodriguez will serve a three-year term expiring April 16, 2027

--> Received and appointment confirmed.

From Mayor Joshua Garcia, letter reappointing Christopher Gauthier of 1 Taylor St. to the Historical Commission. Mr. Gauthier will serve a three-year term expiring on May 1, 2027.

--> Received and appointment confirmed.

From City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee and Admin. Assistant Jeffery Anderson-Burgos, meeting minutes from April 2, 2024

--> Received and Adopted.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 7 and 34 as a package.

From Councilor Bartley, Minutes of DGR meeting

--> Received and referred to the Development and Governmental Relations Committee. Copy to Law Dept, Mayor, BOH.

Councilor Bartley- OPED please provide status on 245 High Street. Building sits across High St from City Hall and the windows are boarded with plywood. Minutes from DGR meeting are attached as a communication. Refer to OPED, Mayor and Law Dept.

Councilor Bartley stated that he provided an excerpt of the minutes to give everyone a sense of the history, noting that there was a reverter on it. He then pointed to the building across the street and noted that there were a dozen windows with plywood over them, adding that he did not believe that was allowed. He also pointed out that some of the plywood boards had blown in, exposing the building to the elements, and the bottom floor had graffiti on the boards. He then recalled that the Holyoke Health Center said that they would do something with it 9 years ago.

Councilor Devine asked if the DGR meeting minutes were current meeting.

Councilor Bartley stated that it was when the Council voted on the property.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that the minutes were from 2015.

Councilor Sullivan emphasized that the ordinance required the windows to have polycarbonate, not plywood.

Councilor I. Rivera thanked Councilor Bartley for bringing this up, noting that someone brought up an interest in purchasing it with him recently. He added that it looked like nobody owned it.

Councilor Bartley stated that it was owned by the Holyoke Health Center. He then emphasized that it was bought for \$5,000.

--> Received and referred to the Development and Governmental Relations Committee. Copy to Law Dept, Mayor, BOH.

From Holyoke Redevelopment Authority, minutes for November 15, 2023, January 17, 2024 and February 21, 2024 meetings.

---> Received.

From HEDIC, minutes from February 29, 2024 meeting

---> Received.

From Holyoke Historical Commission, minutes from January 8, 2024 and December 12, 2023 meetings

---> Received.

PETITIONS

(16:40)

Petition from various Holyoke residents, petition regarding CPA rate change.

Councilor Vacon made a motion to set the public hearing for the May 7th meeting.

Councilor Jourdain stated that the ballot question was in Finance and likely would be taken up at one of its upcoming meetings. He added that he would propose the committee vote it out to have it taken up at the May 7th meeting.

Councilor Devine asked for clarification that May 7th would be a regular Council meeting.

Councilor Jourdain stated that was correct.

Councilor Devine asked if he was proposing the Finance Committee take it up before then.

Councilor Jourdain noted that the Finance Committee was meeting on April 17th and April 30th.

Councilor Devine stated that the meeting on the 30th was strictly for the School Department and Mayor. She suggested that another meeting could be scheduled on a Thursday.

Councilor Jourdain suggested that it should not need an extra meeting, emphasizing that everyone's feelings had been expressed by that point and it was only sent back to have some discussion about the wording.

Councilor Devine stated that her confusion was related to another order she filed to keep it at 1.5%, which she believed was passed. She then asked if there would be two ballot questions.

Councilor Jourdain recalled that after the vote was taken that defeated the question, the Council reconsidered its action and sent it back to Finance. He noted that some had proposed that both are done in one vote.

Councilor Devine stated that she was trying to understand because she recalled the Law Department explained that there needed to be two votes: one on the rate and one on the language. She noted that there was no language yet provided to keep it at 1.5%.

Councilor Jourdain stated that it was in committee. He then explained that the only thing that needed to change was the date of adoption. He emphasized that Atty Degnan had already advised that the Council just needed to ensure both elements were in the vote, adding that the vote to reduce was just a formality step before putting it on the ballot.

Councilor Devine stated that it would be one of the tabled items on the following day's Finance meeting but would prefer not to bring it up as she was still looking for more information.

Councilor Jourdain stated that he would be open to discussing it on the 30th, adding that it should likely be just a 5 minute discussion. He then expressed a hope that the citizens speaking at the meeting through their petition would then see their Council take final action on the matter.

Councilor Vacon recalled that she was the one who made the motion to reconsider. She noted that it was listed as item 16 on the upcoming Finance agenda as a tabled item. She noted that there were over 20 more names on the petition that had just been submitted.

Councilor I. Rivera expressed his understanding that citizens submitting a petition would skip the step of having to go through the Council.

Atty Bissonnette offered a reminder that the Council voted to place this on the ballot when it was initially considered rather than requiring citizens to submit a petition, adding that the statute required amending the surcharge by the same process. He added that the petition process had no impact on whether or not the CPA could be on the November ballot. He then reiterated that it would take two votes: one for the Council to approve the reduction and one to approve sending the reduction before the voters. He added that there would be time constraints to get it to the state legislature.

President Murphy-Romboletti asked what kind of notice was required for the meeting to take up the petition.

Atty Bissonnette stated that a meeting by petition could be done by special meeting or added to an agenda. He then suggested that some guidelines should be set to determine how long that section of the meeting could go.

President Murphy-Romboletti asked for clarification that it wasn't like a public hearing where a notice would have to go out.

Atty Bissonnette stated that it could be part of the regular agenda.

Councilor Vacon recalled the legal guidance that the motion could be made to take the two votes in one motion as long as it was specific that it was two things.

Atty Bissonnette stated that interpretation would pass muster with the Secretary of State, adding that this was the exact language used to enact it.

Councilor Jourdain emphasized that the motion would be to set the hearing for 7 p.m. on May 7th.
---> Received and laid on the table.

Petition from Ivory Billiards Lounge for 17 pool tables

Councilor Jourdain asked if this was for a renewal.

City Clerk Murphy McGee confirmed that it was.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that the Tax Collector and Treasurer's offices had signed off that all taxes and fees were paid.
---> Received and Adopted.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

(29:55)

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that there was an awesome turnout of councilors at the recent Chamber of Commerce networking event for elected officials.

She then stated that the Holyoke Gas and Electric had invited councilors to attend a tour the following week. She then stated that there would be a mini golf event at the library that Saturday as a fundraiser for the library.

She also stated that OneHolyoke CDC would be hosting its Earth Day kickoff for their Keep Holyoke Clean campaign. She added that Earth Day was on Monday, April 22nd. She stated that everyone would be meeting at 433 Canal Street at 12:30 p.m. She also stated that cleanup events would take place throughout the summer.

She also stated that the Children's Museum would host an event on April 25th to celebrate a new exhibit. She then stated that she, Admin Asst Anderson-Burgos, and Mayor Garcia were working on a schedule for budget hearings.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

(32:15)

The Committee on Ordinance to whom was referred an order petition for Speed Humps for Laurel Street.

have considered the same and Recommended that the petition be granted.

Committee Members:

Israel Rivera
Linda L. Vacon
Meg Magrath-Smith
David K. Bartley
Jenny Rivera

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor I. Rivera stated that 15-20 residents from Laurel Street and neighboring streets attended to address concerns with accidents, speeding, and crazy drivers. He observed that it was good engagement by the residents. He added that he lived near the street and understood the concerns. He then explained that once approved, the funding would have to be figured out. He added that there would need to be a City Engineer in place to help follow through.

---> Report of Committee received and the Ordinance passed its first reading.

The Ordinance passed its second reading.

The Ordinance was passed to be enrolled.

The Committee has considered the same and find that it is truly and properly enrolled.

Report of Enrollment received.

The Ordinance was passed to be Ordained and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 12--Nays 0--Absent 1 (Magrath-Smith).

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up item 32 out of order.

Bartley, I. Rivera, Sullivan- The mayor and the DPW finance speed humps at Laurel St. Please see the Petition approved in ordinance 4/10/24 and (I hope) at full city council 4/17/24. Refer to Mayor and Finance.
---> Received and Adopted. Copy to the Mayor, Finance Committee.

The Committee on Ordinance to whom was referred an order that an ordinance be established to address the 2/3 majority vote of the body for votes. Legal please provide the language necessary for review.

have considered the same and Recommended that the order, with two separate legal drafts, be referred to the Council without recommendations.

Committee Members:

Israel Rivera
Linda L. Vacon
Meg Magrath-Smith
David K. Bartley
Jenny Rivera

UNDER DISCUSSION:

President Murphy-Romboletti asked if legal language was ready.

Councilor I. Rivera stated that it was not and that this should remain tabled until they were provided. He then explained that they had language at the committee meeting, but amendments were made, and it wouldn't be fair to assume people knew what they were. He then stated that he would hold off on reporting on the discussion until the forms were ready. He then explained that there would be two in order for the Council to decide which way they wanted to go with it.

---> Report of Committee received and Laid on the table.

The Committee on Ordinance to whom was referred an order that we ban single use plastic bags, straws, and/or food containers.

have considered the same and Recommended that the order be given a leave to withdraw.

Committee Members:

Israel Rivera
Linda L. Vacon
Meg Magrath-Smith
David K. Bartley
Jenny Rivera

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor I. Rivera stated that while he believed this was something that could be considered, he believed it should be withdrawn for now. He stated that he would plan to file a new order that would be clearer on what needed to be addressed regarding litter and plastic bags, straws, and other containers. He recalled speaking with a gas attendant and learning that Connecticut already had this throughout the entire state, and that people had to pay if they wanted a bag with the revenue going to the state.

---> Report of Committee received and recommendation Adopted.

(40:10)

Moton was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 16 and 17 as a package.

The Committee on Finance to whom was referred an order Settlement Agreement by and Between the City of Holyoke and N.A.G.E. R1-180 Clerical Union

have considered the same and Recommended that the order be referred to the Council without recommendation.

Committee Members:

Patricia Devine
Kocayne Givner
Michael Sullivan
Kevin A. Jourdain
Linda L. Vacon

---> Report of Committee received, passed two readings and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 12--Nays 1 (Bartley)--Absent 0.

The Committee on Finance to whom was referred an order that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, SIXTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 Dollars (\$60,000) as follows:

FROM:

11211-51276 MAYOR-CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: \$60,000

TO:

11411-51102 ASSISTANT ASSESSOR: \$3,000

11411-51125 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT-ASSESSOR: \$3000

14221 -51105 DPW PROPERTY BUILDING CUSTODIAN: \$6,000

16931-51101 WAR MEMORIAL SR BUILDING CUSTODIAN: \$3,000

16931-51102 WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING CUSTODIAN: \$3,000

11611-51105 2ND ASSISTANT CITY CLERK: \$5,000

11611-51126 SR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT-CITY CLERK: \$3,000=

11611-51125 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT-CITY CLERK: \$3,000

11631-51103 ASSISTANT REGISTRAR OF VOTERS: \$3,000

12401-51126 SR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT-BUILDING & CODES : \$3,000

15101-51126 SR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT-BOARD OF HEALTH: \$3,000

15101-51109 SANITARIAN I: \$10,000

15101-51104 PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE: \$2,000

11461-51106 SR DEPUTY TAX COLLECTOR: \$5,000
11451-51131 SR PAYROLL SPECIALIST: \$5,000

have considered the same and Recommended that the order be referred to the Council without recommendation.

Committee Members:

Patricia Devine
Kocayne Givner
Michael Sullivan
Kevin A. Jourdain
Linda L. Vacon

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Devine stated that there were questions about the method the union used to compare salaries of surrounding communities. She then expressed her understanding that the questions had been answered. She explained that the contract negotiations had been approved by the union as well as the Mayor.

Councilor Greaney asked what the cost of the contract was. Councilor Devine stated that it was \$60,000.

Councilor Jourdain emphasized that the \$60,000 being voted on was in addition to the \$84,000 in COLA increases in the three year contract. He added that those increases were already approved by the City Council. He then explained that the contract had an element that allowed them to do a reopener in order to do a salary study to see if additional increases were justified due to market forces. He noted that roughly half the positions warranted increases. He then stated that he would support the request as they had done a good job with the study. He then suggested that the leadership of the city also consider the financial capacity of the city to afford these adjustments compared to the other cities.

Councilor Greaney stated that the cost of this would end up being more than \$60,000 but he would support this because the people worked hard and deserved it. He added that the city had an obligation to take care of its employees.

Councilor Vacon expressed agreement that the study did justify the pay rates, but expressed concern that if the city did not find efficiencies and cost reductions elsewhere, it could lead to layoffs if the growing budget outpaced the ability of the taxpayers to support the budget. She also expressed a hope that the free cash would be certified before the Council was asked to vote on the budget.

Councilor I. Rivera stated that Holyoke was a small city with bug buildings, making it difficult to compare this city with others in the area. He then suggested that there were not many where there could be a fair comparison with. He then stated that while he agreed with the concern that there was a level the city could handle, there needed to be a standard where consistency in with employment and staff could be expected. He recognized that it did put constraints on the budget, but it should be the responsibility of those creating the budget to see how funds could be shifted to ensure things didn't get cut. He suggested that there was not a balanced approach to how departments were funded, with some having huge budgets while others struggled to get by.

Councilor Givner reiterated the importance of retaining employees, adding that it was especially troubling to lose them to other cities over \$10,000. She also emphasized the importance of considering how much it cost to replace and retrain employees, as well as for hiring consultants when positions aren't filled.

Councilor Greaney stated that in comparing Holyoke to other communities, the large number of nonprofits in the city not paying taxes had to be considered.

Councilor I. Rivera stated that while other communities had more money, the bills and costs employees pay for their daily needs are still the same.

---> Report of Committee received, passed two readings and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 12--Nays 1 (Bartley)--Absent 0.

The Committee on Finance to whom was referred an order that the City Council review for approval the FY24 projects recommended for funding by the Holyoke Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC).

have considered the same and Recommended that the Appleton Mill project be referred to the full Council without recommendation all and other projects be adopted

Committee Members:

Patricia Devine
Kocayne Givner
Michael Sullivan
Kevin A. Jourdain
Linda L. Vacon

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Devine stated that the committee recommended approval for Library Commons, Jones Point, the Wistariahurst retaining wall, the City Hall granite stairs, the Korean War Memorial restoration, the Holyoke veterans' graves restoration project, as well as the Holyoke Merry-go-Round replacement. She added that a recommendation was not made on the Appleton Mills housing project.

Councilor Jourdain suggested voting on the package of 7 first as one vote and then voting separately on the Appleton Mills project. He explained that the Council could vote to reduce a recommendation but could not vote to add to the CPA's recommendation or shift funds from one project to another.

Councilor Devine stated that Library Commons Phase 2 Housing project was recommended for \$100,000 with a 6-2 vote, the Jones Point project was recommended for \$350,000 with an 8-0 vote, the Wistariahurst retaining wall project was recommended for \$264,000 with an 8-0 vote, the City Hall granite stairs project was recommended for \$30,000 with a 7-1 vote, the Korean War Memorial restoration project was recommended for \$2,000 with an 8-0 vote, the Holyoke veterans' graves restoration project was recommended for \$6,000 with an 8-0 vote, and the Holyoke Merry-go-Round replacement project was recommended for \$16,875 with an 8-0 vote.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that the Library Commons vote was 6-2 because the CPA combined the vote with the Appleton Mills project and some members wanted to fully fund the Appleton Mills project rather

than splitting it between both projects. She noted both projects requested more than what each was recommended to get.

Councilor I. Rivera expressed a preference to vote on all of them separately rather than having one trump another.

Councilor Bartley asked what the balance in the CPA account would be after these recommendations of around \$77,000.

Councilor Devine stated that this would cover \$993,000.

Councilor I. Rivera noted that the funds in their account had to be split between three different buckets. He then asked if the housing requests fell under the same bucket.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that they were required expend or reserve for each category at least 10% between housing, historic preservation, and open spaces & recreation. She then explained that of the current projects, \$300,000 was being recommended for housing, \$318,000 was being recommended for historic preservation, and \$360,000 was being recommended for open space and recreation, adding up to close to a third for each category. She noted that this was unique because they had intended to hover around 10% for the last few years in the housing category because they hadn't seen a lot of those projects request from them due to the availability of ARPA funding. She added that there weren't many shovel-ready projects in that category because moving forward took a long time. She suggested that two projects being ready at the same time was an anomaly.

--> Report of Committee passed two readings and all projects other than Appleton Mills adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 13--Nays 0--Absent 0.

Councilor Devine stated that they had not provided a recommendation as some facts came up in the committee meeting.

Councilor Sullivan suggested that the \$200,000 would be going directly into the pockets of investors and principles of Winn Development. He added that the developers knew what they were getting into when they took on the project, which was between \$55-60 million. He noted that they claimed that not getting the \$200,000 would require them to cut back on amenities for the units. He emphasized that \$200,000 would only represent four-tenths of one percent of the entire budget.

Councilor Givner stated that while she respected those as valid points and believed the developers had not approached the issue well, she believed there was something to be said about having Holyoke's stamp on various projects as one of the funders. She added that it showed the city spending money on one of the things the city needed.

Councilor Vacon asked to confirm that the CPA could repurpose the funds if the city did not approve the funding for the project.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that she believed it had to be housing.

Councilor Vacon suggested that it could go to the other housing project.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that the CPA Committee had developed a process of putting all projects forward as one recommendation in order to prevent a lot of back and forth. She added that the spirit of the legislation stating that the Council could reduce funding for or reject a project but could not move it to another project or increase it was through a desire to avoid having a lot of back and forth in the Council. She then explained that if this was not approved, the funds would then not be encumbered but would go back to the general fund for the CPA to then be used for the following year's recommendations.

Councilor Vacon expressed her understanding that they had been given some funding but had not used it and were coming back again under the same high risk project.

Councilor Magrath-Smith asked if she was referring to the Library Commons project.

Councilor Vacon stated that she was talking about the Appleton Mills project. She then stated that she would take heed to the concerns from Councilor Sullivan.

Councilor Jourdain stated that he had a lot of concerns with this, first off being that the city's stamp on the project would just be stamps on the envelopes of the dividend checks to Winn Development shareholders, mailing more money to very wealthy people. He then suggested there was an irony in that the CPA was based on asking the poorest residents in the commonwealth to pay \$30-\$50 a year so that it could go toward noble projects such as affordable housing. He then suggested that while this was a noble project, it was a business development project. He questioned giving a big company like Winn Development \$200,000 for a \$60 million project. He added that the funds should be used for things like rehabbing a 3-family home that would otherwise not get redeveloped or redeveloping an apartment block and turning it into affordable housing, projects that could be a make or break situation based on getting \$200,000. He suggested that this kind of feedback should be valuable to the CPA Committee. He added that these funds would not be consequential to the project.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that the project would create 88 affordable senior apartments for those in a range of incomes, setting aside a certain number of units for seniors in various income ranges based on percentage of AMI (area median income). She then emphasized that when Library Commons applied for their Phase 2 project, they noted that their Phase 1 project had over 1,000 applications for just 38 units, indicating a big need for housing. She also noted that the Library Commons phase 2 project had a \$28 million project cost for 41 units, while the Winn Development project had a \$55 million cost for 88 units. She emphasized that it was insanely expensive to create housing out of old stock. She then suggested that the two projects were comparable to one another. She also suggested that while \$200,000 may seem small compared to the overall cost, every dollar mattered. She noted that the developer explained that they had not foreseen extra costs related to the parking lot that they discovered once they began the demolition. She added that amenities should matter, and people should be able to feel proud about their apartments.

Councilor Anderson-Burgos stated that while he did not particularly like giving money to people who already had money, from a financial standpoint, better amenities would mean the assessed value would go up leading to more tax revenue for the city.

Councilor I. Rivera stated that while he agreed with the concerns, he also agreed that amenities mattered. He noted that when growing up in subsidized housing, he could recall that certain places had nicer spaces than others. He added that he did not necessarily agree this was just money going into peoples' pockets. He suggested they were likely putting in things like new sprinkler systems and everything brand new. He further suggested that they likely would not see checks immediately but years down the road. He also questioned if

the city should allow them to fail just because they knew what they were getting into. He then stated that he would support this because he believed it made sense and extra amenities could make a difference for the people living there.

Councilor Greaney stated that he was still looking for the balance in the CPA fund.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that the balance would \$24,776 remaining in the accounts if Council approved all of the recommendations.

Councilor Greaney asked for clarification about a mandate for \$200,000. He then suggested that the existing senior housing in the city could use \$200,000 for upgrades. He then stated that he would be voting against this request.

Councilor Bartley stated that he would be opposing this request now, but that did not necessarily mean he would oppose similar requests in the future. He then explained that he did not believe it was ready for support. He also suggested that it was unfair to compare it to Library Commons as that had a proven track record. He added that he did not believe it was fair to say that those voting against this were against amenities. He then questioned the argument that a miniscule fraction of the overall budget would negatively impact the amenities. He further suggested that they could come back with a request after they had put in real investment.

Councilor Devine thanked Councilor Sullivan for bringing concerns to everyone's attention. She then noted that the total project cost was \$55,328,551 and that they had also secured other resources, including tax equities, tax credits, an affordable housing trust loan, a housing stability fund loan, adding up to \$55,028,551, allowing the \$200,000 to bring the project up to its cost. She then stated that she would support the request as it was a good project.

Councilor Sullivan emphasized that each unit was going to cost \$650,000. He then stated that they had raised a lot through various credits and loans. He added that they had a proven track record of making a lot of money on every one of their projects. He then suggested that if the Council wanted to put taxpayer money into good projects, there were many that would do more for 88 units than spending \$650,000 per unit. He added that this was taking industrial property off the commercial tax rolls.

Councilor Vacon suggested that there was an irony of councilors speaking in favor of giving \$200,000 in taxpayer money to a wealthy and huge company and were the same councilors who would not vote to give a break to overburdened taxpayers.

Councilor Jourdain stated that this request amounted to funding one third of one unit. He then questioned asking taxpayers for their limited income to fund CPA and then use that money to help a massive company. He added that supporting this also meant not supporting small rehab projects that much tighter budgets impacting whether or not they moved forward, projects such as rehabbing two or three family homes. He suggested that this was the kind of thing that made people cynical of the CPA. He also questioned the argument that the CPA could only support projects that stepped up to ask, noting that a company such as Winn had the capacity to fill out several applications while small projects may not have someone leading them to where the funds were. He suggested that they needed to go out and recruit smaller projects that could help rehab smaller homes and apartment blocks, places could provide more generational wealth to disenfranchised people in the community.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that while she understood the concerns and did also find it mind-boggling how expensive the larger housing projects were, they did look into and understand what it took to take older buildings that had been vacant for decades and turn them into apartments. She also explained that the preservation plan said that for housing, they should be going after two different types of housing: one to take blighted and vacant buildings and bring them back into use, and the other to take empty properties where buildings used to exist and infill them with new housing. She then reiterated that large housing projects that required rehabbing vacant buildings were just more costly, emphasizing that the Library Commons project was not any better than the Appleton Mills Project in terms of cost.

Councilor I. Rivera questioned the sincerity of others expressing concern about disenfranchised people. He then suggested that if people really cared, there was a whole community of people in wards 1 and 2 housing the entire cannabis industry but none of the tax dollars were going to those wards. He added that those wards were mainly funded through federal and state grants like CDBG. He suggested that those wards were subsidizing the rest of the city while having to fight for safety measures like speed humps or blinking lights while other neighborhoods were getting those things on a regular basis. He then questioned if this would be an issue if this was located in other wards. He recalled people kicking and screaming about the funding for work at Lyman Terrace.

Councilor Givner reiterated that these grants to be applied for so people who don't apply for other projects being proposed don't get a grant. She also emphasized that this was the most recommended project from the CPA in this round. He then suggested that it was the job of councilors to help people know about these grants if they believed there were better uses for these funds.

Councilor Greaney noted that he was one of the possible people who could take advantage of the housing in this situation. He also stated that when the marijuana industry came into the city, he had voted no on every project because a study was never done on the effects of marijuana on people, while an order was in Public safety for three years. He then moved the question.

---> Report of Committee passed two readings on Appleton Mills project and adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 7--Nays 6 (Bartley, Greaney, Jourdain, Ocasio, Sullivan, Vacon)--Absent 0.

The Committee on Finance to whom was referred an order The DPW and Mayor consider repairing the sidewalk and tree belt proximate to 548 South St. Send copy to Finance. Request appropriation from Mayor if this Order makes sense.

have considered the same and Recommended that the order be referred to the mayor.

Committee Members:

Patricia Devine
Kocayne Givner
Michael Sullivan
Kevin A. Jourdain
Linda L. Vacon

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Devine stated that the order had been a copy to Finance and was recommended to be referred to the Mayor.

Councilor Jourdain emphasized the importance of having this area in front of Taino Restaurant fixed, especially given the earlier point about providing meals to seniors. He asked that the Mayor fund the improvements.

Councilor Bartley recalled that when Ms. Councilor Sullivan spoke during public comment, one more point that could have been made was that their company was willing to possibly front the money for the crosswalk to help the seniors. He then expressed the hope that the Mayor could present a financial transfer for the \$11,000 to fix this.

Councilor I. Rivera stated that he frequented that restaurant, and his mother utilized the services as well. He then reiterated his earlier point about paying attention to where dollars were being spent in the community and the need for more fairness.

---> Report of Committee received and recommendation Adopted.

ORDERS AND TRANSFERS

(1:54:50)

President Murphy-Romboletti offered a reminder that orders being sent to committee didn't need to be debated.

Givner- Ordered the DPW install a handicap sign at 199 Beech St for Pablo Gonzalez. Handicap Placard PL2280794.

---> Received and referred to the Ordinance Committee. Copy to Disabilities.

Magrath-Smith- Ordered, that City Ordinance section 74-34 be revised to remove (2): "Any entity that does not receive city solid waste collection services will be exempt from this section if they can prove that the cost of implementing such a plan, over a 12-month period, would cost more than their current solid waste removal plan."

---> Received and referred to the Ordinance Committee.

Ocasio- ordered that the DPW install a handicap sign at 624 South East St. #202 for Syliva Reyes. Handicap Placard PL780517

---> Received and referred to the Ordinance Committee. Copy to Disabilities.

Ocasio- Ordered that the DPW install a sign at the Entrance to Holyoke coming North on Route 5 ,that notifies drivers Not to use Air Engine Brakes unless Emergency

Councilor Jourdain recalled a similar order being adopted to put these signs up at all entrances into the city. He questioned if the signs ever got put up.

Councilor I. Rivera recalled filing a similar order and being laughed at.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Ocasio- Ordered that the School Department provides a Crossing Guard at the corner of South Bridge St and Sargent St. To protect the children and families crossing the street. Coming to and from Morgan School this is

a very dangerous situation that needs immediate attention.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to Joint Committee of the City Council and School Committee, School Department, HPD.

Ocasio- Ordered that a Don't Block Driveway sign be installed at Elliott Place on Main Street.

Councilor Bartley asked if this had to be put into the ordinances.

Councilor Jourdain stated that it was already illegal to park in front of a driveway.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Ocasio- Ordered that all the Money meters throughout Holyoke be checked, to see if broken or just need a change of (9V) battery.

Councilor Bartley noted that a lot of new meter heads had been installed.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up Late File B out of order.

Holyoke Downtown Parking Study Final Report

---> Received and referred to the Development and Governmental Relations Committee.

Ocasio, Bartley- Order that the Speed Humps in front of Dean School and Raised Crosswalks be repainted, yellow to help distinguish them from the roadway to improve safety and effectiveness.

Councilor Bartley asked to be added to the order.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Motion was made and seconded to reconsider the previous action on item 23.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion to amend the order, changing air brakes to engine brakes. Councilor Bartley seconded the motion.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Bartley, I. Rivera, Sullivan- DPW install a STOP sign at Charles St. where it intersects Laurel St. Receive, Adopt, Refer to DPW and please follow-up with the admin. Assistant in 45 days to advise if/when installed.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Bartley, Sullivan, I. Rivera- HPD enforce the STOP sign at Brown Ave and Laurel St. Receive, Adopt, Refer to HPD for implementation and send to Public Safety for a follow-up meeting in 2 months to review results.

Councilor Bartley recalled a lot of residents expressing concern about safety in that area during a recent Ordinance Committee meeting.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to HPD, Public Safety Committee.

Bartley, I. Rivera- DPW install “warning” sign to motorists of 3-way STOP signs at Charles St. // Washington Ave. Receive, Adopt, Refer to DPW. Send order to Public Safety for a follow-up and send communication to Admin Asst in 45 days to advise if/when installed.

Councilor Bartley stated that this came from the same meeting where a lot of residents had concerns about the area.

Councilor I. Rivera recalled constituents expressed an interest in having more police presence, and wondering why the Police Department were not actually doing traffic work. He suggested having more discussion about a traffic squad.

---> Received and referred to the Public Safety Committee. Copy to DPW.

Bartley, Sullivan, I. Rivera- Have the HPD advise on the status of formation of a traffic bureau and a code enforcement.

Councilor Jourdain emphasized that an ordinance relative to the requirements for traffic enforcement was not being enforced.

---> Received and referred to the Public Safety Committee. Copy to HPD, Mayor.

Bartley- The fencing around the Fitzpatrick Rink – especially along the N-side of Parenteau Dr. – is disgraceful and in desperate need of repair. Please notice the glorious Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the vendor operating the rink. The vendor to its credit as done great work to repair the fence along S. Elm St. Refer to state DCR, the vendor for the Rink, and Rep. Duffy. Please copy Public Safety to follow-up on this in 60 days with a status report.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DCR, Rink, State Rep Duffy, State Senator Velis.

Bartley- DPW conduct the following on the ‘way finder’ signs in Smith’s Ferry: fix the damaged ‘Holyoke Country *Club’ sign on the southbound side of Rt 5 and install a new sign on the northbound side of Rt 5 as it’s been missing now for a few years. Receive, Adopt and Refer to DPW. Copy to Public Safety to follow-up in 45 days.

Councilor Bartley offered an apology to Councilor Magrath-Smith, noting he usually would reach out to a ward’s councilor to co-file an order but got rushed to get this filed before the deadline.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW, Public Safety Committee.

Bartley, Vacon- DPW remove the broken metal pole protruding from the tree belt near the Shell Station on Whiting Farms Rd. Receive, Adopt and Refer.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW.

Bartley- DPW repair the “Hampshire St” street sign located at corner of Pine St. Sign is damaged. Receive, Adopt and Refer. Copy to Public Safety for follow-up in 45 days.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW, Public Safety Committee.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 38 and 39 as a package.

Devine- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, TWO THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY SEVEN AND 22/100 Dollars (\$2,457.22) as follows:

FROM:

12201-51105 FIREFIGHTER \$2,457.22

TOTAL: \$2,457.22

TO:

12201-51180 INJURED ON DUTY (PAY PERIOD #20) \$2,457.22

TOTAL: \$2,457.22

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

---> Passed two readings and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 13--Nays 0--Absent 0.

Devine- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, TWENTY THREE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED NINETY SEVEN AND 20/100 Dollars (\$23,797.20) as follows:

FROM:

12101-51105 SERGEANTS \$10,493.16

12101-51107 PATROLMEN 13,304.04

TOTAL: \$23,797.20

TO:

12101-51180 INJURED ON DUTY \$23,797.20

TOTAL: \$23,797.20

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

UNDER DISCUSSION:

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that item 38 was for 1 firefighter and item 39 was for 9 officers.

---> Passed two readings and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays--Yeas 13--Nays 0--Absent 0.

Devine- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, THIRTY TWO THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY FIVE AND 00/100 Dollars (\$32,975.00) as follows:

FROM:

8811-10400 CAPITAL STABILIZATION \$32,975

TOTAL: \$32,975.00

TO:

16303-58001 RECREATION CAPITAL OUTLAY-VEHICLES \$32,975

TOTAL: \$32,975.00

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor
---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 41 through 45 as a package.

Devine- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, EIGHTY THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED SIXTY AND 00/100 Dollars (\$80,160) as follows:

FROM:

8811-10400 CAPITAL STABILIZATION \$80,160

TOTAL: \$80,160

TO:

12203-58000 FIRE DEPT. - CAPITAL OUTLAY VEHICLES \$80,160

TOTAL: \$80,160

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor
---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 Dollars (\$25,000) as follows:

FROM:

15101-51103 SANITARIAN II \$11,000

15101-51107 SANITARIAN III 6,000

15101-51109 SANITARIAN I 5,000

15101-51111 FLOATING CLERK 3,000

TOTAL: \$25,000

TO:

11512-53010 SPECIAL COUNSEL \$20,000

11512-53006 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES -OTHER 5,000

TOTAL: \$25,000

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine- Financial Order: That the amount of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) is appropriated for the purpose of financing the demolition, remodeling, reconstruction, engineering, construction, and equipping or re-equipping of various city parking facilities, including the payment of costs incidental or related thereto. To meet this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 7 or any other enabling authority.

FURTHER ORDERED: That the Mayor is authorized to contract for and expend any state aid available for the project; and that the Mayor is authorized to take any other action necessary or convenient to carry out these projects.

FURTHER ORDERED: That the Treasurer is authorized to file an application to qualify under Chapter 44A of the General Laws any and all of the bonds or notes authorized to be issued pursuant to this Order, and to provide such information and execute such documents as may be required for such purposes.

Further Ordered: That there shall be no change in the purpose of this bond authorization without prior vote of approval by the Holyoke City Council.

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine- Ordered, that in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 44 Sec. 53A, the City Council hereby accepts the provisions of the "MASSDEP FY24 SEWAGE NOTIFICATION ASSISTANCE GRANT, \$50,000, NO MATCH" grant and authorizes the establishment of a Fund or other method appropriate for the accounting of the receipts and expenditures of all resources associated with the administration of said grant.

Sec 2-509 - Grant Reporting

Any city department, of which has received grant funding by approval of the city council pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, or any other authorizing criteria, shall within a reasonable period of time, but no later than 60 days from the conclusion of said grant, generate a detailed report which outlines the planned outcomes with the documented actual results. Said report shall be submitted to the city clerk for addition to the city council's next agenda.

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine- Ordered, that the amount of ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED FIFTY AND 00/100 Dollars (\$1,950) be authorized from the COMPUTER Department's SOFTWARE LICENSE/USAGE FEES (11552-53100)

appropriation in fiscal year 2024 for services rendered in fiscal year 2023 which were unencumbered at the 2023 fiscal year end.

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine, Greaney - ordered that the handicapped access ramp from the City Hall parking deck into City Hall be replaced as finances allow.

Councilor Greaney asked to be added to the order.

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Devine-That City Council rule 9 (Committees) Section (P) be amended to change 45 days to 60 days. New language: All orders sent to any subcommittee be acted upon (taken up, not disposed of) within 60 days shall be deemed tabled.

---> Received and referred to the Charter and Rules Committee.

LATE FILED ORDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

(2:15:20)

Devine- ORDERED, that the recent vote by the City Council to keep the CPA at 1.5% be rescinded and a new vote be taken to reduce the CPA tax to 1.0% and be placed on the November ballot.

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Bartley - DPW consider resurfacing the roadbed on Woodland St. Multiple constituents (and their letter carrier) requesting. Receive and Refer to DPW, Public Safety, Mayor

Motion was made and seconded to take final action.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW, Public Safety Committee, Mayor.

Bartley - DPW // City Engineer please consider providing suggestions on entering WESTFIELD RD from both WOODLAND ST and HITCHCOCK ST. Mirrors have previously been suggested and dismissed so please provide an alternative solution. These are constituent requests. Receive and Refer to City Engineer, DPW and Public Safety.

Motion was made and seconded to take final action.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to DPW, Public Safety Committee, City Engineer.

Adjourned at 9:21 PM

Brenna Murphy McLee