

REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

January 2, 2024

The meeting was called to order by President Murphy-Romboletti at 7:00 PM

The Clerk called the roll. Present Members in person 13 (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon).

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

President Murphy-Romboletti noted that there would not be live translation due to a scheduling issue but that the video would be translated at a later date and be made available.

Motion was made and seconded to adopt the rules.

Vote on City Council rules.

Councilor Bartley asked why he was seated in a new place.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that as City Council President, she made a decision to change things up in the spirit of trying to make things more efficient and collaborative. She noted that a few spoke with her directly with requests and those were honored and she made a decision with all others.

Councilor Bartley asked why that was done without input. He stated that he would prefer to go back where he was for the next meeting.

Councilor Jourdain stated that he spoke with the administrative assistant about a seating request.

Admin Asst Anderson-Burgos expressed his understanding that the request had been specifically for the reorganizational meeting.

Councilor Jourdain stated that he reached out on behalf of a couple people in terms of seating. He then suggested that it be based on seniority. He also suggested that former councilors, McGee and Tallman, be talked to for their perspective. He recalled that when he was president, he kept people in their seat unless they asked or were okay with being moved. He then stated that he would not have thought to call to think this was an issue or that she would have been contemplating making these decisions. He added that he would have called if she had warned people that chairs could be moved.

President Murphy-Romboletti expressed her understanding that she had to make a decision that day.

Councilor Jourdain questioned who would tell her when she's the boss.

President Murphy-Romboletti emphasized that a motion had been made and seconded to adopt the rules. She then asked that people try to embrace the change and not have everyone sitting next to the same people. She added that she split up everyone in an attempt to get people to work together. She added that she intended to stand by her decision.

Councilor Vacon noted that under the current rules, section D under first order of business stated that "The seats of the City Council shall be numbered, and no member shall change their seat, but by permission of the President." She then suggested that it implied things would stay the same unless someone wanted a change.

President Murphy-Romboletti suggested that an order be filed to clarify that rule.

Councilor Anderson-Burgos began by emphasizing that he was trying to embrace a new attitude for the new term. He then stated that he did not like change when he was comfortable, adding that he was bothered when he saw his new seat. He also stated that he was attempting to understand that there was a reason for it, adding that everyone should give the new president and each other time to adjust to changes that could be in the greater good.

Councilor Jourdain stated that such changes should at least be discussed with people. He then asked that the decision be revisited and avoid unnecessary tension by getting out in front of things together.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that she understood.

Councilor Rivera_I stated that he did not want to move either but understood the overall goal and intent. He noted that with new colleagues, he was going into the term with a positive outlook.

Councilor Rivera_J emphasized that this was the president's decision, adding that she did not think moving seats would make people think any differently or make decisions differently.

Councilor Devine suggested sending the rules to committee to give newer people a chance to read them over and consider changes.

---> Received and Adopted. Copy to Charter and Rules.

Motion was made and seconded to allow Mrs. Councilor Greaney to remain in chambers with her husband, Councilor Greaney, during Council meetings. Councilor Greaney abstained from the vote.

LAI D ON THE TABLE

(11:45)

Motion was made and seconded to remove item 2 from the table.

The Committee on Charter and Rules to whom was referred an order that committee chairs limit the amount of public hearings added to an agenda, It is not fair and undemocratic to have the public wait until 10:30 – 11:00 pm so they can be heard.

Recommended that the order be adopted.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

(12:15)

Betty Gatewood, 15 Farnum Drive, stated that it had been 40 years speaking before the Council, adding that she was a lifelong citizen having graduated from school in the city and was proud to say she was the first black girl working in City Hall. She added that she had owned several businesses in Holyoke. She then explained that the last time she spoke before the Council was a request to back funding for the black community for a program she started. She then asked for the city to allocate funding for the community, noting that many other ethnic groups were prospering in the city while nothing being provided for her community. She also noted that she owned the Colony Restaurant in the city, as well as the Pioneer Beauty Nook on Main Street. She then asked the Council to help her ask for funding.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to allow Councilor Bartley to address the speaker.

Councilor Bartley recalled that he went to the Colony many times. He then asked her to provide her address.

B. Gatewood stated she lived at 15 Farnum Drive.

Councilor Bartley stated that he and Councilor Vacon would work on having a chat with her at some time in the near future.

Spencer Fox Peterson, 51 Portland Street, stated that he was looking forward to a productive session. He then asked that the Council reign in spending on policing and spend more on housing and feeding people. He added that cages do not solve problems. He also expressed a hope that the Council could be less dysfunctional.

COMMUNICATIONS

(16:50)

From City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee and Admin. Assistant Jeffery Anderson-Burgos, minutes of Dec 5th, 14th, and 19th meetings.

Councilor Bartley stated that the minutes were excellent.
---> Received and Adopted.

List of City Council appointments for 2024

UNDER DISCUSSION:

President Murphy-Romboletti noted that there were 5 reappointments for the Council to take up.

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for the role of Administrative Assistant to the City Council.

President Murphy-Romboletti asked if this was done in alphabetical order.

Councilor Bartley stated that people can vote for whoever they want.

President Murphy-Romboletti asked to clarify that roll call was in alphabetical order.

Councilor Bartley asked if a name was drawn.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that Councilor Jourdain was drawn to head the roll call voting.

Councilor Bartley stated that was the order it should go in.

President Murphy-Romboletti recalled that was a debate the last time this was done.

Councilor Bartley stated that was a made up rule.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated for the benefit of those who were unfamiliar that they would state the name of the person that they wanted to nominate, adding that each person needed 7 votes.

Councilor Jourdain stated that he believed names were supposed to be called alphabetically.

President Murphy-Romboletti emphasized that was what she just said.

Councilor Bartley stated that he agreed with Councilor Jourdain.

Councilor Jourdain suggested staying with tradition.

--> Jeffery Anderson-Burgos received 12 votes (Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon) for Administrative Assistant to the City Council. Jeffery Anderson-Burgos appointed Administrative Assistant to the City Council. The term will expire January 31, 2026. Councilor Anderson-Burgos abstained from the vote.

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for the Community Preservation Committee.

Councilor Ocasio noted that she did not know any of these appointees.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that she recalled similar concerns from the meeting two years earlier. She then explained that typically the reappointments were not usually sent to the Public Service Committee unless a member asks for that to happen. She added that with regard to reappointments, the thought is that they have been vetted in the past.

Councilor Bartley emphasized that councilors could vote for whoever they want. He added that councilors could not abstain. He then suggested that other people could be encouraged to apply.

---> Maribel Ortiz received 13 votes (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon) for Community Preservation Committee. Maribel Ortiz appointed to Community Preservation Committee. The term will expire January 31, 2027.

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for the Water Commission.

---> Timothy F. Keane received 13 votes (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon) for Water Commissioner. Timothy F. Keane appointed to Water Commission. The term will expire January 31, 2027.

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for the Whiting Street Fund.

---> John Pietrikowski received 13 votes (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon) for Whiting Street Fund. John Pietrikowski appointed to Whiting Street Fund. The term will expire January 31, 2027.

Motion was made and seconded to go to the first ballot for Tax Collector.

President Murphy-Romboletti noted that the appointment was a 3 year term and that the reappointment should have been done the previous year.

Councilor Bartley stated that this fine, occasionally happened, and she was just a holdover until the vote.

---> Laura Wilson received 13 votes (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Devine, Givner, Greaney, Jourdain, Magrath-Smith, Murphy-Romboletti, Ocasio, Rivera_I, Rivera_J, Sullivan, Vacon) for Tax Collector. Laura Wilson appointed to Tax Collector. The term will expire January 31, 2026.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 5 and 7 as a package.

From Anthony Soto, Superintendent of Holyoke Public Schools letter re: Petition the MA DESE to release the City of Holyoke from State Receivership.

---> Received and referred to the Joint Committee of the City Council and School Committee.

From Jeffrey C Riley, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Receipt of petition to end receivership.

---> Received and referred to the Joint Committee of the City Council and School Committee.

Councilor Greaney asked if the state provided a response.

Councilor Bartley stated that it was expected in four months.

Councilor Rivera_I stated that an email had since come in from Commissioner Riley that he would respond with an answer by February.

From Amy Landau, CPA manager, recommendation for Revised Award for FY21 CPA Fire Truck Engine 9 Restoration Project

Councilor Magrath-Smith made a motion to adopt it right away. Councilor Bartley seconded the motion.

Councilor Vacon asked for an explanation for adopting it right away.

Councilor Magrath-Smith stated that the project had been following through with for the last two years. She then explained that the goal was to be done by April, adding that the CPC was asked to extend another \$8,000 for the project in order to complete the work. She also emphasized that it was highly specialized work and that they were able to save a lot of money by doing some of the work in-house. She further explained that they needed the extra funding to complete it, adding that it was within the budget of the CPA to provide the funding. She noted that with the way the process worked out, it was 8 weeks since the request had been made.

Councilor Vacon asked if there was a written explanation of the funding available in the packet.

Councilor Bartley stated that there was.

Councilor Jourdain stated that item spelled out that it was an \$8,000 change, noting that the Council had already approved the original request of \$130,677.

Councilor Bartley stated that he would support the request, noting that he was a part of approving the original request, but typically preferred to go in regular order by having such items go to the Finance Committee. He then stated that CPA stuff needed to be thought out. He then emphasized that it was the Council that approved CPA funding, noting that the CPA Committee only recommended funding. He then recalled that he hadn't voted against any of their recommendations. He then reiterated that in this case, he felt comfortable moving forward.

Councilor Rivera_I stated that this project had been going on for a couple years, with the CPA continuously keeping the Council up to date on it. He further stated that it was an awesome project allowing the city to invest in one of its own trucks.

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

From MassDOT, letter regarding Holyoke Fair Share apportionment for FY2024.

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Bartley emphasized that this was an unbelievable letter, noting that the body often had strong feelings about the city not enough from Chapter 90 funds. He then noted that this was providing 2 1/2 times what the city usually got on top of the usual amount. He then stated that there was an open question requiring feedback from DPW and the mayor's office on what their plan was for this \$473,000. He also recalled that this Council unanimously endorsed supporting the enactment of the Fair Share

Amendment. He also commended the governor for coming up with the idea, as well as the legislature and others. He then noted that the city usually got around \$200,000 from Chapter 90 for streets and sidewalks. He then suggested that there should be a discussion with the DPW Director and the Mayor on their plan for this. He also suggested that as this would be an expectation every year going forward, this should be considered during budget time. He then stated that with regard to the Police Department, they receive a lot of grant funding. He then suggested that these kinds of funds coming in should offset some of the budget for reallocation elsewhere. He then suggested that President Murphy-Romboletti, as president, should work to stay on top of these things.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that she looked forward to the discussion in the Finance Committee.
---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up items 9 and 10 as a package.

From Board of Fire Commission minutes of November 15, 2023.

Councilor Magrath-Smith noted that item 3 of these minutes was the Fire Chief's report. She expressed her understanding that the report should be a separate document attached to the minutes. She then asked that the Fire Department be reached out to as asked to provide that in the future.

Admin Asst Anderson-Burgos states that he would reach out to them.
---> Received.

From Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation minutes October 26, 2023.
---> Received.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that her goal would be to hand out committee assignments by the following Monday. She then expressed her intent to speak with councilors about their interests on this, adding that some had already reached out to her. She also stated that several City Council appointments on various subcommittees and that she would have the administrative assistant send out an email on what roles were open. She also asked that councilors reach out to her if they were already serving on one of those committees and wanted to stay on them.

ORDERS AND TRANSFERS

(37:30)

ANDERSON-BURGOS — Ordered, that the City Council present a proclamation to retiring OPED Administrative Head Clerk, Sharon Konstantinidis, for her over 20 years of service working for the city.

Councilor Devine stated that the proclamations were already done.

President Murphy-Romboletti stated that she would be invited to the next full City Council meeting.
---> Received and Adopted.

DEVINE — That the City Council present Irma Cruz a proclamation upon her retirement for her 30 plus years of service to the City of Holyoke.

Councilor Anderson-Burgos noted that the next meeting would be January 16th.
---> Received and Adopted.

JOURDAIN — that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, NINE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED SIXTY EIGHT DOLLARS AND 13/100 Dollars (\$9,768.13) as follows:
FROM:

11752-53010 OPED-CONTRACT SERVICES \$9,768.13

TOTAL: \$9,768.13

TO:

11751-51500 VACATION BUYBACK \$4,770.36

11751-51510 SICK LEAVE BUYBACK 4,997.77

TOTAL: \$9,768.13

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

Councilor Devine made a motion to approve this right away, noting that this was for the retiring OPED Clerk.

Councilor Jourdain suggested that the department head should have made that request if it was urgent. He suggested that it could be pulled from committee if there wasn't a committee meeting prior to the next Council meeting, as long as they provided an explanation of the transfer.

Councilor Devine withdrew her motion to adopt.

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

JOURDAIN — that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, THIRTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 Dollars (\$30,000) as follows:

FROM:

14101-51101 ENGINEER/ASST DPW SUPERINTENDANT \$15,000

14101-51105 SR CIVIL ENGINEER 15,000

TOTAL: \$30,000

TO:

14102-53010 PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES \$30,000

TOTAL: \$30,000

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

Councilor Jourdain noted that this was being done to continue to refresh funding for engineering services in lieu of having an Engineer. He then stated that this would be a good opportunity to get details on the search for a new City Engineer.

Councilor Greaney emphasized that this was an important position for the city, adding that he hoped that the city was seeking out applicants for it.

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

JOURDAIN — that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, THIRTY THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED THIRTY SEVEN AND 19/100 Dollars (\$30,237.19) as follows:|

FROM:

12101-51105 SERGEANTS \$10,493.16

12101-51107 PATROLMEN 19,744.03

TOTAL: \$30,237.19

TO:

12101-51180 INJURED ON DUTY \$30,237.19

TOTAL: \$30,237.19

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Joshua A Garcia, Mayor

UNDER DISCUSSION:

Councilor Jourdain stated that this was a transfer line within the Police Department budget, covering around 12 officers out on injured on duty. He then explained that it required a vote to transfer funds from the personnel line items to another personnel line item to pay them their salary due to being out from being injured while in the line of duty. He added that it was an accounting measure where they were not being paid out of their salary account. He then expressed hope for a long term solution to reduce workplace injuries.

Councilor Rivera_I asked to clarify that the transfer accounts meant that they were either sergeants or patrolmen that were injured on duty.

Councilor Jourdain stated that was correct.

Councilor Rivera_I asked to clarify that it was not taxed.

Councilor Jourdain stated that was correct.

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

JOURDAIN — that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2024, TWENTY THOUSAND SEVENTY EIGHT AND 00/100 Dollars (\$20,078) as follows:

FROM:

16101-51111 LIBRARY ASSISTANT (NIGHT) \$20,078

TOTAL: \$20,078

TO:

16101-51102 REFERENCE LIBRARY ASSISTANCE \$20,078

TOTAL: \$20,078

To the City Council:

I hereby recommend the passage of the above order at the meeting of your Council to be held Tuesday, January 2, 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 17, 18, and 21 as a package.

RIVERA_I — Order that board of Health and tapestry reps come into public safety and discuss the importance of Narcan.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that honorable city council request the chief of police come into public safety to discuss the potential development of a traffic division solely focused on mitigating traffic issues throughout the city of Holyoke.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that the honorable city council request that the officers working at the Holyoke Police Departments Community Service Center that could be find at 208 race St. (STEAM Building) come into public safety and discuss what the initiative has been up to, and what plans they have to strategically work on filling in the gaps where service providers are not able to be present.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that the Holyoke Police department come into finance and elaborate on what is done with money that is seized or forfeited due to arrests or drug busts.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that the honorable city council place a temporary moratorium on cannabis retail business. Until the footprint of where this industry can be located within the city of Holyoke, I believe it prudent that we put a temporary halt on permitting new business.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that the honorable city council request that the mayor, Department of Public Works, and the parking advisory committee at the Public Safety committee to discuss the possibility of making parking enforcement a subdivision of the Traffic division.

Councilor Rivera_I stated that he would like this to go to both Public Safety and Ordinance to work on it at the same time.

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

RIVERA_I — Order that the honorable city council work with the law department on identifying the a criteria for the expenditure of Community Impact funding. It has been brought to my attention that at least one of the cannabis companies will soon be seeking a refund. How are we protected against this? And how have we spent money as of now?

---> Received and referred to the Finance Committee. Copy to the Law Department, OPED.

LATE FILED ORDERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

(48:55)

GIVNER, Jourdain, Greaney — Ordered that the City Council make a rule change to be added to “meetings” section for our first meeting.

2. MEETINGS

A. Regular meetings of the City Council shall be held on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 o'clock p.m sharp. All City Councilors are to be in the City Council Chambers or present by remote access by 6:45 p.m.

B. No meeting of the City Council shall go beyond 10PM EST unless, upon a motion of any councilor, the meeting is extended for a period of time stated in the motion, and so long as the motion is unanimously approved by all members present. If a motion to extend the meeting past 10PM EST is not approved, all remaining items shall be continued until the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting. If items are continued to the next meeting pursuant to this rule, those items shall appear at the beginning of the next agenda

B. The President and/or Committee chairs can cancel meetings due to inclement weather.

Councilor Bartley emphasized that late files should be for emergency purposes and not just because someone couldn't get an order in on time. He added that the purpose was to ensure councilors could see the written orders.

Councilor Vacon noted that the rules stated that when orders were filed late, they had to be printed at the bottom of the next agenda.

Councilor Jourdain asked to be added to the order.

Councilor Greaney asked to added to the order.

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

Adjourned at 7:51 PM