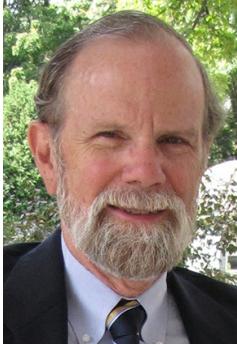


# DENNIS BIDWELL

## CITY COUNCIL ★ WARD 2

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

September 2, 2016



**To neighbors and friends, Ward 2 and elsewhere,**

As the summer winds down and the school year starts, I wanted to share several updates and announcements:

September 8 is Primary Day - Please Vote!  
Here's a [sample ballot](#).

[City Council votes to oppose Charter School expansion](#)

[Calling all infrastructure nerds: Join me for a tour of the City's water and wastewater treatment systems](#)

[Refugee resettlement in Northampton: Upcoming meetings to learn about the proposal](#)

[Update on Round Hill Road and the Rogers Hall fire](#)

[New signage \(wayfaring\) that will guide visitors through the City: join the process](#)

### **City Council votes to oppose Charter School expansion**

At last night's meeting of the City Council (Sept. 1), I was pleased to introduce - with Mayor David Narkewicz and Council President Bill Dwight - a [resolution](#) in opposition to lifting the existing cap on the number of Commonwealth Charter Schools allowed. The resolution passed 6-0, with one abstention, and will come up for a second reading at the Council's September 15 meeting. Final approval of this resolution will mean the City Council joins School Committees and other City Councils across the state in being on the record as urging a No vote on Question 2 on the November ballot.

When I spoke at last night's meeting I went out of my way to say that I was not disapproving in any way of the many Northampton families who have elected to send their kids to charters. I totally support parents and their kids making the best educational decisions for their children.

What I am saying is that the system that creates and funds charter schools is badly broken and needs to be totally overhauled before we as a Commonwealth have any business making the problem worse by adding more charters.

The dramatic impact of the way we fund Charter schools was really driven home to me when the Council approved a FY17 City budget that includes over \$2.2 million of Northampton taxpayer dollars (and that's net of reimbursements) going to six

charters. That's more than the budget of any of our existing elementary schools. That's about 8% of the entire Northampton Public Schools budget.

## **Calling all infrastructure nerds: Join me for a tour of the City's water and wastewater treatment systems**

I now chair the City Council's Public Works and Utilities Committee. I decided I wanted to get a better understanding, on the ground, of Northampton's elaborate water system and the wastewater treatment plant that will be substantially replaced in the years ahead. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia has arranged such a tour for me, and we decided to open it up to others in Ward 2 who, like me, have a curiosity about our municipal infrastructure.

The tour will start at **9 am on Monday, Sept. 26**, and will continue for about 2 ½ hours.

Please contact me if you'd like to join in this tour, and I'll send along more detailed information.

## **Refugee resettlement in Northampton: Upcoming meetings to learn about the proposal**

In December the City Council approved a Resolution calling for the welcoming into our City of refugees from Syria and elsewhere. Since that time, discussions have been underway between City officials and community leaders with Catholic Charities' Office of Immigration, Migration and Refugee Services. Catholic Charities officials made a presentation to the City Council in July about a community-based approach to resettling 51 refugees (10 to 17 families) from Syria, Afghanistan, Burundi and/or the Congo in Northampton over the period of a year or so.

The next step in this process is the scheduling of two public conversations so that anyone interested can learn about their refugee neighbors, ask questions about how a resettlement program might work, and share concerns.

If interested, please try to attend one of these public conversations:

- **Monday, September 19, 6:30-8:30pm in the cafeteria at JFK Middle School. with Mayor Narkewicz in attendance**
- **Thursday, September 22, 2-4pm at the Northampton Senior Center.**

## **Update on Round Hill Road and the Rogers Hall fire**

The very intense August 5 fire at 49 Round Hill Road (Rogers Hall of the old Clarke School) and the extensive water and smoke damage to the recently-occupied Hubbard Hall building next door caused great hardship to some and inconvenience to many. Fortunately, there were no fatalities or injuries. Assessing the situation, assuring public safety, assisting those who needed to relocate, removing debris, developing a plan going forward, dealing with permits and regulations and insurance companies - these are all complicated matters. I know that some residents are annoyed that Round Hill Road remains closed to through traffic. I have been in contact with a range of city officials and am satisfied that they are doing a very good job juggling the needs of the building owners, the convenience of nearby residents, and public safety. In the final analysis, public safety trumps all else, which explains why the road remains closed to through traffic. Until the walls of Rogers Hall are adequately stabilized, the road is in the theoretical "fall zone" of the building.

In the hours and days following the fire, I heard nothing but praise for the many

firefighters, police officers, DPW personnel and Building Department staff who responded professionally and courteously to the incident.

## **New signage (wayfinding) that will guide visitors through the City: join the process**

The Mayor has created a Wayfinding Ideate Committee to help guide the City's wayfinding consultant create a new signage program that promotes a Northampton brand, helps visitors find parking, and helps orient people to the city. The committee asked for a public forum to engage the community in brainstorming what kind of character-defining features should be part of our final wayfinding design.

**This public forum will be held on Tuesday, September 20, in City Council Chamber, 212 Main Street, Northampton.**

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