

Ward 5 Update July 2021

Hi Everyone: Happy Summer!

1) Budget:

The City Council made some cuts (\$434,250. as reported by the Clerk) to the budget presented by Mayor Murphy leaving approximately 1M dollars of expenses to be covered to balance the budget. Among the cuts were the elimination of an additional Captain in the Police Department (there are currently three (3) and the budget would have increased it to four (4). Due to the continuing budget deficit, it is not the time to add positions to increase the size of city government when taxpayers are still suffering from effects of the covid shutdown, including high unemployment.

2) City Hall is open!

City Council is now meeting in chambers with an option for those to use remote technology also. Masks are no longer required in City Hall, but of course anyone who chooses to wear one may do so.

3) Sewer Rate:

A rate of \$8.05 (from \$6.65) has been proposed and there will be a public hearing on July 28th at 7PM. Our Mayor has stated this rate is needed to balance the sewer fund that need to be self-supporting. For the past few years, the general fund has been supporting the sewer fund meaning those who do not have city sewer are paying for the sewer service. My position is that we should support the lowest rate needed to keep the fund balanced.

4) Sunset/Ashley project:

After overwhelming support from the neighborhood and a long test closing of the streets, the permanent project for the construction of sidewalks has been approved! A pre-construction meeting will take place this week and a date for the work will be determined. Gomes Construction will be the contractor for the project.

5) Apremont Hwy/Rock Valley intersection:

Once the jersey barriers are removed from Sunset & Ashley, Mike McManus, DPW Superintendent, has indicated they will be placed at the longstanding problematic intersection at Apremont & Rock Valley Road. They will alter the traffic pattern to test the change for improved safety at that intersection.

6) Light at Apremont Hwy and Rt 202:

The installation is planned to be completed in October.

7) Old Geriatric Authority property:

Mayor Murphy has indicated the property sale will be finalized in August. Traffic concerns for the area and the intersection of Westfield Road & Holy Family road will need to be addressed through the site plan review process for the hospital construction.

8) Neighborhood Watch:

In an effort to ensure neighborhood safety and collaboration, I am working with Ed Caissie and Madeline Fernandez from the Sheriff's Department along with a neighbor coalition for the Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative. An initial team building/neighborhood clean up took place at Tokeneke in May.

9) Pot holes, sunken man hole covers & traffic:

These concerns remain problematic here in Ward 5 and throughout the city. I forward your reported concerns to our DPW and/or file orders with the City Council as needed. While it is a frustrating situation, the needs currently exceed our resources. Hopefully some of the COVID \$ can be used for these issues. The Mayor will be deciding how to use the money (approximately \$14M) within certain rules that have been set by the Federal Government.

10) Election Season:

We have a very large number of candidates for Mayor this year! There will be a primary election on September 21st. Please vote as you will determine the two final candidates in the November election.

For more information on local issues and articles please visit my website at lindavacon.org

Thank You,

Your Ward 5 City Councilor
Linda Vacon
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