

Ward 5 Citizens May Forum Minutes

A special guest, Sgt. Jim Bartolomei joined us for our May 20th Forum meeting at Dino's.

He answered a variety of questions: mostly about traffic and general questions about the police department. He provided some data sheets from 3 areas of ward 5 from traffic speed counters, indicating that there are a few drivers speeding but in general there is quite good compliance within low risk and compliant measurements of speed.

He outlined the coming changes in the PD with the retirement of Chief Pratt. The Interim Chief will be Isaias Cruz a long-term officer, currently Captain of our PD, effective August 1, 2024

The main issue raised by those attending was truck traffic on the southern end of Homestead at night during the truck restriction hours. Sgt. Bartolomei indicated that there is a plan to try to dedicate some officers to traffic enforcement. He indicated that activity could also lead to other enforcement opportunities related to guns and drugs, and he indicated that he believes driver behavior would change within a few months if enforcement was increased.

1) City Council Update:

Mayor Garcia has presented the new budget which includes a \$3M increase to the tax levy, bringing it to the tax ceiling for our city. He indicated there is some new growth that has not been included yet. It was also pointed out during the meeting that the free cash has not been certified yet, so that will impact the financial picture also. Hearings are taking place during May and June with a vote to make any cuts at City Council set for June 13th at 6PM. The City Council can ONLY make cuts to the proposed budget, additions or shifts in spending are not allowed. During the budget hearing our Assessor predicts home values will increase 10%. Based on the initial presentation, expect higher taxes in the new fiscal year.

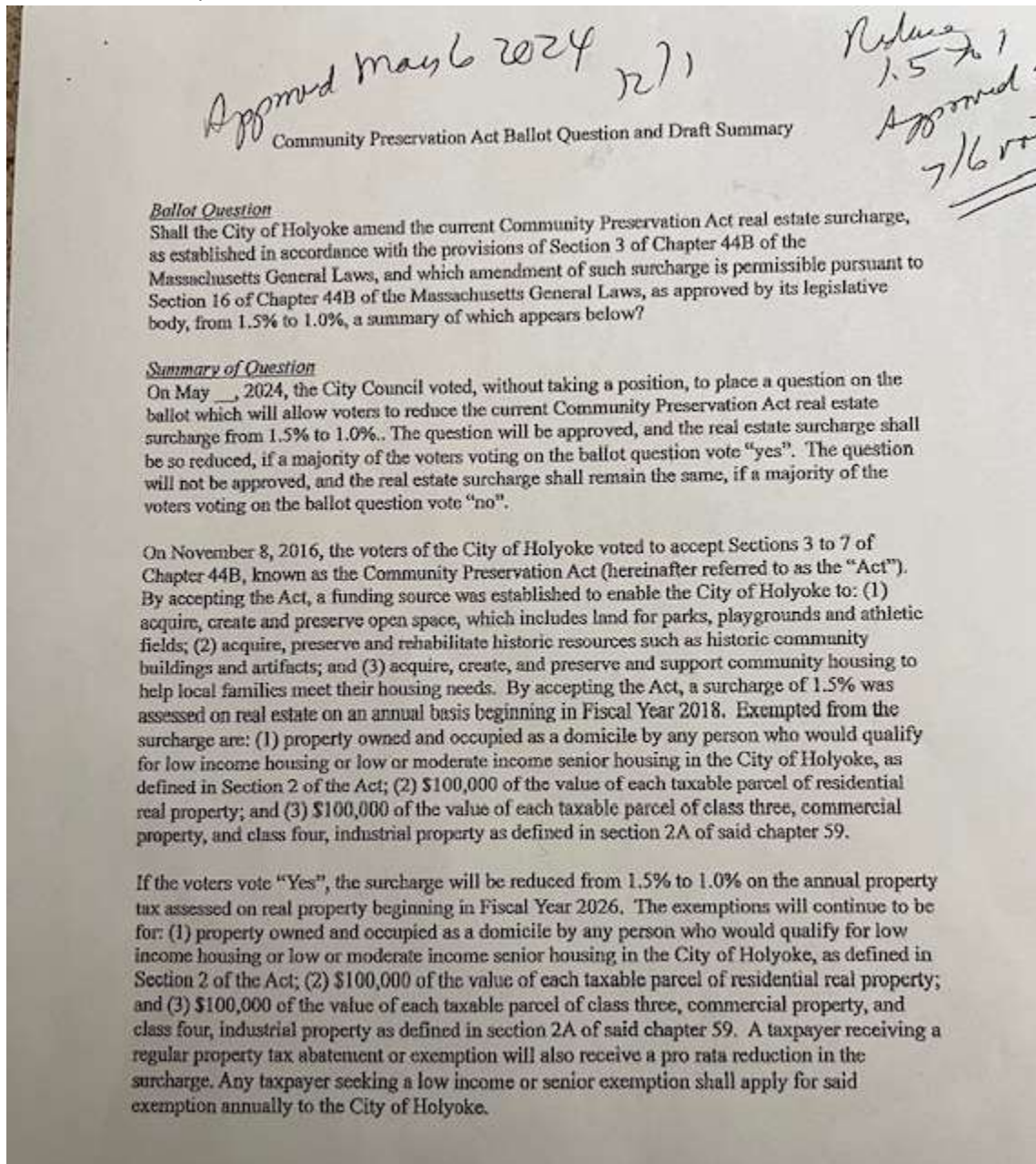
A change being considered at the next City Council meeting is a moving from an elected Treasurer to an appointed Treasurer by the City Council. If this passes the City Council the Mayor has indicated he supports it moving forward as a ballot question for voters this November 5th.

2) Traffic Light at Apremont and Rt. 202: The long-awaited traffic light installation at the top of Apremont and Rt. 202 is now projected to be completed by the end of May (yes, this month)! Please let me know if you see it installed before I do!

3) CPA ballot question:

After much debate and many delays, and two petitions filed by citizens seeking to reduce the rate, the City Council recently passed the CPA question to reduce the rate to 1% from 1.5% to be placed on the ballot this November. approved it. If a majority vote yes, the rate will decrease to 1%. If a majority vote against it, the rate will remain at 1.5%.

See entire ballot question below:



4) PVTa meeting:

The PVTa is holding a meeting on May 22nd at City Hall from 5:30 to 7:00PM. They are seeking feedback on the need for bus stop locations and any changes people are seeking.

5) Concerns & Comments:

Sgt. Bartolomei was thanked for his attendance and responses to the many questions.

It was noted that JB Hunt is frequently on Homestead Ave during restricted hours.

It was reported to Sgt. Bartolomei that car racing has started up again on Bobala Road in Holyoke usually at 1-2AM Saturdays

The meeting ended at 6:30PM

Linda Vacon Ward 5 City Councilor