



**CITY OF HAVERHILL  
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

**Friday, May 8, 2026, at 3:00 PM**

**Theodore A. Pelosi, Jr. Council Chambers, 4 Summer St, Room 202**

**In-Person/Remote Meeting: <https://meet.google.com/ugs-brnt-udf>**

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Present: Councilors Jordan, Basiliere, Diodati, Sullivan, Michitson, Lewandowski, Toohey, and Rogers

Remote: Councilor McGonagle

Absent: Councilors LePage and Ferreira

City Clerk: Kaitlin M. Wright

- 1. OPENING PRAYER**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING**
- 4. ASSIGNMENT OF THE MINUTES REVIEW FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**
- 5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR:**

**5.1. Mayor Barrett submits an order for Declaration of Emergency**

- 5.1.1. Order – Declaration of Emergency, authorization for deficit spending and declaration to remove building at 14-16 Stevens Street** 1-z

Mayor Barrett addressed the council. She stated a three-alarm fire at the Stevens Street mill last Tuesday morning caused catastrophic structural damage, with extreme heat leading to collapsing floors, walls, roofing and steel supports, while ongoing hotspots have kept firefighters on the scene for days. The response has required more than 3 million gallons of water, significant fuel and overtime costs, and coordination amongst numerous city departments, state agencies, and mutual aid communities, though fortunately only two firefighters suffered minor injuries. Due to the severe risk of the collapse onto Stevens Street and presence of asbestos throughout the building, we are seeking an emergency declaration and authorization for emergency demolition spending after the property owners stated they are unable to handle the remediation themselves.

**Councilor McGonagle joined the meeting.**

City Solicitor Lisa Mead addressed the Council. She stated that following inspections on April 30th by the City Building Inspector, Fire Chief, and a structural engineer, the building was officially declared unsafe, and the owner was notified that demolition was required under state law. On May 1st, the Mayor declared a state of emergency to authorize immediate action, and the City Council was now being asked to issue its own emergency declaration under Chapter 44, Section 31 and Charter Sections 20-23. This would allow the city to bypass the normal ten-day waiting period, secure emergency procurement for demolition, and quickly hire a contractor to take down the building. The City also plans to place a lien on the property to recover expenses, while emphasizing the urgent need to protect public safety, nearby businesses on Steven Street, and address ongoing environmental risks.

Councilor Sullivan asked if the city had received any bids yet. City Solicitor Mead stated that all bids came in that day and were currently being evaluated. Councilor Sullivan stated that down the road the City would exercise all rights it has against the property owner regarding the future of the property. City Solicitor Mead confirmed that was correct.

Councilor Lewandowski asked whether the estimated \$5 million for demolition was expected to be the final number. City Solicitor Mead stated they did not yet know because once the building comes down there will be questions regarding the condition of the foundation and potential environmental risks. She stated it appears to be what is needed right now, but she could not guarantee the City would not need to return for additional funding. Councilor Lewandowski also referenced the Mayor's statement that the state is committed to helping the City aggressively pursue reimbursement for project costs. She expressed hope that the City would ultimately recover those funds, potentially through action against the property owner, a breach-related claim, breach of fiduciary duty, or possibly against a trust if one exists. Mayor Barrett stated the state would search for any available funding sources to support completion of the work.



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Councilor Basiliere stated he had remained involved and informed about the fire response through site visits and communication with City officials. He asked the City Solicitor to confirm that the City has no choice but to take emergency action immediately to prevent the situation from worsening. City Solicitor Mead stated the choice is not to do nothing.

Vice President Michitson asked City Auditor Angel Perkins how the City would pay for the demolition. Angel Perkins stated that if the City does not receive full reimbursement from the state for these costs, the City would be authorizing borrowing.

Councilor Rogers asked whether the entire building was being taken down. Mayor Barrett stated the building would be demolished down to the foundation. Councilor Rogers then asked whether fencing would be installed around the site. Mayor Barrett stated fencing would be included as part of the demolition process. Councilor Rogers also asked whether the Fire Department would need to remain on site until demolition was complete. Mayor Barrett stated yes, noting there were still hotspots present. Chief Cestari stated that on Wednesday officials felt comfortable enough to pull out, but by Thursday morning the front section nearly reignited because the fire was embedded so deeply within the structure. Councilor Rogers asked how quickly demolition would begin once a bid was selected and how long the process would take. Mayor Barrett stated the process would likely take a number of weeks. City Solicitor Mead stated the City had not yet received a schedule from a contractor and noted there is still a process that must be followed. She added that Steven Street may reopen once the immediate danger is removed.

Mayor Barrett noted that clips from State Police drone footage were being shown during the meeting.

Councilor Diodati stated that in addition to the Fire Department, the Police Department was monitoring the building to ensure no one entered the site. Mayor Barrett confirmed that was correct and stated the City had also begun exploring security agencies for the next phase of the response. Councilor Diodati asked whether the City intended to hold the property owner accountable for repayment of any costs incurred by the City. City Solicitor Mead stated that the first step allowed by statute would be to immediately place a lien on the property. She added that any additional action would depend on future developments, but emphasized that the Mayor had made clear the City would pursue every available option.

Councilor McGonagle noted that he would abstain from the vote because his son has an office on Steven Street.

President Jordan thanked the Fire Department, mutual aid departments, Inspectional Services, and the Police Department for their work during the emergency response. President Jordan then asked why the building had not been demolished in 2015. Mayor Barrett responded that she was not Mayor at that time and noted the property was privately owned. She stated she was unaware of the property's tax delinquency status at that time, but said it was likely not as severe as it is today. She added that if the City had taken the building at that time, it likely would have inherited a Brownfields site and all associated liabilities. Since taking office, she stated, the Fire Department and Inspectional Services had prevented anyone from entering the building. President Jordan stated he wanted the public to understand that demolishing the building was not as simple as just taking it down because the City would have inherited significant liability. President Jordan asked whether the City would need to return to the Council if costs exceeded \$5 million. City Solicitor Mead confirmed that was correct. He also asked how likely it was that the Governor or the state would cover the costs. Mayor Barrett stated she did not yet have an answer to that question.

Councilor Rogers asked whether the soil would be tested during demolition to ensure all contamination was properly addressed. City Solicitor Mead stated that would largely depend on the next steps taken during the project.

Vice President Michitson asked how the City arrived at the \$5 million figure. City Solicitor Mead stated the City had received a range of bids, though she could not publicly disclose the amounts. She added that the estimate also included the City's broader responsibilities related to the emergency response. City Solicitor Mead further noted that



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the City had already incurred overtime expenses from the Fire Department, Police Department, and Inspectional Services.

Motion by Councilor Sullivan to approve the order. Second by Councilor Basiliere.

City Clerk Wright: Vice President Michitson-yes, Councilor Basiliere-yes, Councilor Diodati-yes, Councilor Sullivan-yes, Councilor Lewandowski-yes, Councilor Toohey-yes, Councilor McGonagle-abstain, Councilor Rogers-yes, President Jordan-yes.

PASSED YEAS 8, NAYS 0, ABSENT 2 (FERREIRA AND LEPAGE), 1 ABSTENTION (MCGONAGLE)

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCILORS TO INTRODUCE AN INDIVIDUAL(S) TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL:

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION- REQUESTS UNDER COUNCIL RULE 28:

8. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM CITY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES:

9. UTILITY PUBLIC HEARING(S) AND RELATED ORDER(S):

10. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND RELATED ORDERS:

11. APPOINTMENTS:

- 11.1. Confirming Appointments:
- 11.2. Non-Confirming Appointments:
- 11.3. Constables
- 11.4. Resignations

12. PETITIONS:

- 12.1. Applications Handicap Parking Sign: *with Police approval*
- 12.2. Amusement/Event Application: *with Police approval*
- 12.3. Auctioneer License:
- 12.4. Tag Days: *with Police approval*
- 12.5. One Day Liquor License –with HPD approval
- 12.6. ANNUAL LICENSE RENEWALS:
  - 12.6.1. Hawker Peddlers License- Fixed location – w/Police approval
  - 12.6.2. Coin-Op License Renewals – with Police approval
  - 12.6.3. Christmas Tree Vendor – with Police approval
  - 12.6.4. Taxi Driver Licenses: with Police approval
  - 12.6.5. Taxi/Limousine License with Police approval
  - 12.6.6. Junk Dealer /Collector License - with Police approval
  - 12.6.7. Pool/Billiard
  - 12.6.8. Bowling
  - 12.6.9. Sunday Bowling
  - 12.6.10. Buy & Sell Secondhand Articles with Police approval
  - 12.6.11. Buy & Sell Secondhand Clothing with Police approval
  - 12.6.12. Pawnbroker license - with police approval
  - 12.6.13. Fortune Teller with - Police approval



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- 12.6.14. **Buy & Sell Old Gold – *with Police approval***
- 12.6.15. **Roller Skating Rink**
- 12.6.16. **Sunday Skating**
- 12.6.17. **Exterior Vending Machines/Redbox Automated Retail, LLC**
- 12.6.18. **Limousine/Livery License/Chair Cars *with Police approval***

**13. MOTIONS AND ORDERS:**

**14. ORDINANCES (FILE 10 DAYS):**

**15. COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCILORS:**

**16. UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF PRECEDING MEETING:**

**17. RESOLUTIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS:**

**18. COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**19. DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE STUDY:**

**20. LONG TERM MATTERS STUDY LIST:**

**21. ADJOURN:**

Motion by Councilor Sullivan to adjourn, Second by Councilor Lewandowski

PASSED YEAS 9, NAYS 0, ABSENT 2 (FERREIRA AND LEPAGE)

**ADJOURNED: 15:27**