



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 29, 2018

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Present	

Others in attendance: Tim Snyder, John DeLuca, Stan Koty, Jason Grossfield and resident Chris Duran.

The meeting started at 7:25 p.m. and adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

1. Approval of the October 25, 2018 Minutes

RESULT: ACCEPTED

200773: That the Commissioner of Public Works describe to this Board, the rationale for treating multi-unit residences the same as single family residences for purposes of volume-based escalation of water rates.

John DeLuca from the water department attended the meeting to answer questions about the water rates of multi-family units vs. single family. Mr. DeLuca discussed information he had on average comparison of 41 units that he randomly selected assuming an average family of 4. His analysis appeared to show that there was no impact on rate payers as a result of the volume based escalation of water rates. The Committee discussed some of the assumptions that were made in that study. Ald. Davis indicated that it appeared that the system seemed to favor those who live in single homes than those who live in multi-family homes and the city should try to level out the rates. Mr. DeLuca responded that he will further examine the billing and will report back to the Committee. Members questioned whether units can be metered separately. Mr. DeLuca said it depends upon the plumbing of the unit and, if the plumbing is appropriate, an owner can request a meter at the owner's cost which could be \$150 per unit.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

204486: Proposing an Ordinance for the management and elimination of natural gas leaks.

For discussion of this item, see #207037, agenda item 15.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

206781: That gas leaks be a regular topic on any standing meetings with Eversource or National Grid.

This was discussed at the last meeting. There are no standing meetings.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206783: That the Administration and this Board support Bill H2683, “An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for leaked and unaccounted for gas.”

According to the minutes of a previous meeting, the Administration was to have a joint resolution to the BOA. Mr. Snyder stated that the bill in question had been sent to a study committee at the legislature, which effectively killed it. He believes this bill will be resubmitted in the New Year at which point in time the administration would work with the Board to draft an appropriate resolution.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206826: That the Director of Engineering and/or the Commissioner of Public Works repair the pedestrian and bicycle ramp under the railroad bridge on Sacramento Street, and respond to this Board in writing before the next meeting of the Committee on Public Utilities and Works.

Ald. Scott had received a response in late October and does have the full report. There is no timeline for to repair the current condition of the ramp. The administration may be coming to the BOA for an appropriate within the next two meetings. Ald. Scott will email the report to the Clerk of Committees for distribution to the other aldermen.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206906: That Commissioner of Public Works fill the sink holes along Gilman Street from Walnut to Cross Streets.

This work is complete, but sink holes can come back. After a sink hole is filled twice, the matter is then referred to engineering to review. Mr. DeLuca had reviewed the area and felt it was appropriate.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206907: That the Director of Water and Sewer update this Board on a potential sewer main break under the Gilman Street bridge and any actions to remedy the problem.

Mr. DeLuca stated the repair work is complete. He will continue to monitor to make sure there are no sink holes.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206908: That the Director of Water and Sewer update this Board on a potential sewer main break on Webster Avenue and any actions to remedy the problem.

Mr. DeLuca believes the request is for Webster Street, not avenue. This was repaired on 11/7/18. Ald. Davis talked to Mr. DeLuca about whether Mr. DeLuca was receiving messages left by aldermen as it

appeared some had not been answered. Mr. DeLuca stated that he will email his cell number to the BOA members.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206909: That the Director of Water and Sewer update this Board on possible burst pipes on Wellington Street by Walnut Street.

Mr. DeLuca stated this is a known issue and will get a contractor out with a follow up to Ald. McLaughlin.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206911: That the City Arborist determine if the leaning tree at 11 Melvin Street is in danger of falling and recommend an appropriate solution.

There was a communication from the City arborist who determined that the tree is healthy and no action is required. Further the arborist stated the following: the tree is a 16.5 inch diameter Japanese Pagoda tree. In the last year or so, this tree has been inspected by 3 arborists, including the city arborist, the city's contracted arborist and an arborist involved in the city's tree inventory. Complete email is attached.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206945: That the Director of SPCD prioritize repaving Stickney Avenue in response to a residents' petition.

Mr. Snyder stated Stickney Avenue is not on the five (5) year street paving plan, which is updated almost every year. He offered to have Mr. Raiche attend a future meeting for a discussion on this matter.

Ald. Davis offer the following resolution, which was unanimously approved by the Committee (to receive a separate item number and referred back to committee): *That the Director of Engineering report to this Board on his review of the process and associated algorithm for determining the five year street paving plan and any potential revisions that may be considered.*

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206959: That the Administration deem Newport Construction and Northern Tree to be “not considered responsible bidders or offerors” for 5 years, reflecting their performance on the Beacon St Reconstruction.

The committee had questions about what would happen should responsive low bidder be identified with previous work that was unacceptable. Mr. Snyder stated the bidding process is conducted by the purchasing department along with a panel to review the bids. It was suggested that there be a “red flag” should be included in its file so that in the event that Newport Construction is a low bidder on a City project, it is deemed to be not qualified. The administration will continue to explore this matter with the purchasing and law departments. Additionally, a communication to the vendor regarding improper removal of the trees has been prepared with no amount yet. Offices of OSPCD, DPW and Law will determine the appropriate dollar amount regarding the improper removal of trees and then send the appropriate communication to Newport.

Ald. Scott moved an Order that the administration update this board on the institution legal action against Newport regarding improper removal of trees, which was unanimously approved (to receive a separate item and referred back to Committee).

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206960: That the Commissioner of Public Works provide the Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works with the number of outstanding requests to replace defective or dangerous utility poles.

DPW provided a written response and Commissioner Koty spoke on it as well. He stated that there are four telephone poles with wires attached to trees that the DPW has requested to be removed over the past three years. There are approximately 10 poles with serious “lean” in them creating low hanging wires that has also been ongoing. When questioned by Chair White, Commissioner Koty responded that the DPW is waiting for a report back from Eversource of the number of double poles around the city which is believed to be around 100 or so.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207037: Assistant City Solicitor responding to #204486 with a proposed ordinance for natural gas leaks.

Agenda items 3 and 15 were discussed together.

Mr. Grossfield from the law office discussed the status of the Boston Ordinance, upon which the proposed Somerville Ordinance was based. As he had previously advised the Committee, the Superior Court had struck down a portion of the Boston Ordinance, which the City of Boston had not appealed. As instructed by the Committee at its previous meeting, he discussed the draft ordinance that he had submitted (207037) using the ordinance from Boston. According to Mr. Snyder there is no in-house engineering capacity available to work on this item, or to process the information that would be supplied to the City by this item.

Ald. Davis then moved an Order that the city engineer advise this board as to what use the city can make of the information that would be received under the proposed ordinance pertaining to gas leaks and repairs and what additional capacity would be needed to maximize that use. The Order was approved unanimously by the Committee.

RESULT:

APPROVED

207043: That the Commissioner of Public Works discuss with this Board, the community’s desire to have snow plowing occur up to the curb on city streets.

There were discussions about plowing to the curb to free up the bike lane. Commissioner Koty talked about the heavy wet snow being a problem and that DPW instructs plow operators to try to not push the snow on to the sidewalks. Additionally, operators are instructed that if there is a driveway, they should be careful not to plow in driveways. Mr. Koty also said that in the past the DPW has used front end loaders to remove snow from the streets and place them in trucks to be dumped. He then stated that it has been quite difficult to find a snow farm nearby to drop off that snow. A recent bid was opened for Northgate in Revere to serve as such a location and it was priced reasonably but the long distance is a negative factor in making a decision on whether to use it. DPW will do everything they can to keep the bike lanes open. He suggested that BOA members call his cell phone should they see an area where the snow is covering the bike lanes or any areas they may have missed.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

207060: That the Administration delay the Somerville Avenue infrastructure-related detour until January, in order to support local businesses throughout the holiday season.

Mr. Snyder stated that the engineering department strongly recommended against delaying the work. The committee talked about the construction may be bad for local businesses and the contractor be held to a speedy completion. Questions were asked if there are plans to have any events to help residents get out to local businesses during this time. Work has already been delayed somewhat due to Eversource and the weather. Ald. Davis and Scott both suggested ways to support local businesses in their wards working through the economic development and art council departments such as a winter carnival.

Ald. Scott submitted a resolution which was unanimously approved that the administration, economic development office, and art council host a series of events to bring pedestrian traffic to the effected Union Square areas during the detour period. This resolution was amended by Ald. Davis to also include Ball Square during its bridge closure.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

COMMITTEE MEETING HANDOUTS

1. Sign in Sheet
2. Memo re 206911
3. DPW re 206826, 206906, 206960, 207043