



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 16, 2022

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jesse Clingan	Chair	Present	
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Vice Chair	Present	
Charlotte Kelly	City Councilor At Large	Present	

Others present: Tom Galligani-OSPCD, Eric Weisman-DPW, Hannah Carrillo-Mayor's Office, Mark Hamel-DPW, Jill Lathan-DPW, Brad Rawson-OSPCD, and Brian Postlewaite-Engineering

Approval of the February 16, 2022 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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OSPCD/DPW

212828: That the Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development work with this Council to create policies to reduce the length of time that construction projects block sidewalk access, including the possibility of increasing fees to discourage extended sidewalk closures.

Director Postlewaite provided insight on sidewalk construction. He stated the contractor is required to provide a traffic management plan which includes all modes of travel which is reviewed with the traffic engineer. They receive 311 calls on construction that does not appear to be appropriate and they go out to review the site. There is a charge for the street occupancy permits which is good for three months and they would have to come in to have the permit renewed.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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DPW

213139: That the Commissioner of Public Works establish a maximum time frame for a sidewalk panel to be dug up and replaced.

DPW commissioner sent an email to respond to this item. See attached. Councilor Kelly asked about falling short with staff to complete work. Director Weisman stated there were some tree

removal requests along with the process of removing tree and the stump. This involved many days to get this work completed and it was complicated using the same staff. The staff had to switch back in forth to break out from the different roles.

Councilor Kelly asked if there is a way to track how many sidewalks are blocked off. Director Weisman stated they use 311 system to drive their work and separate work orders. They do not have a great way when a work is taken up and they try to make notes on the orders. Councilor Kelly suggested they get a database to track the work that will also allow the councilors to respond back to the residents.

Chair Clingan suggested putting up signs to give residents advance notice of a sidewalk closing. Councilor Gomez Mouakad suggested putting up saw horses to reroute sidewalk traffic.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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212962: That the Commissioner of Public Works report on all school building deferred maintenance projects completed following the ventilation system assessment, proposed completion dates, and strategies to assess needs for future deferred maintenance projects.

This item is being discharged for reassignment to the School Buildings Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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213137: That the Commissioner of Public Works replace all open garbage cans in city parks and on the Community Path with closed rat-proof garbage cans.

Director Weisman stated that Lexington Park was part of the quote with Big Belly barrel. DPW is reviewing the quote and will identify funding very shortly.

Councilor Kelly referenced trash barrel in Brookline that have a foot pedal to open barrels. She asked when the barrels will be put into place. Director Weisman stated talking to Big Belly ordering today, the barrels would be available in August. Councilor Kelly would like an update in written form when the barrels become available and councilors can let their constituents know when they are available.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked if Chucky Harris Park is on the list to get barrels. She was sent pictures of rats on the trees in daylight. Director Weisman stated he did not believe that Chucky Harris Park is on the list and will confirm the list. Councilor Kelly asked if there are plans to have trash barrels along the area for the community path.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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213135: That the Commissioner of Public Works contact the MA Department of Transportation to determine their plan for the recently condemned staircase connecting McGrath Highway to Ten Hills Road.

Director Rawson stated he has worked closely with DPW. The stairs are under state jurisdiction. MassDot determined the stairs were not safe. MassDot is working with DCR on this project.

Director Rawson stated the stairs may not be able to be replaced. Not sure if the state agencies can restore some or all of the stairs.

Councilor Kelly asked about the land being under state jurisdiction. Director Rawson will do a title search about the land and will get back to the committee.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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213246: That the Commissioner of Public Works contact MA Department of Transportation to ascertain their plan for the recently condemned staircase connecting McGrath Highway to Ten Hills Road.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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213226: That the Commissioner of Public Works work with the MA Department of Transportation to address highway safety measures along I-93 that directly about the East Somerville neighborhood.

Director Rawson has worked with other members of the city on this request. This year 2022, there are two active projects for safety in Ten Hill. One of the projects is Early Action working with MassDot. There will be raised crosswalks in areas and replacing missing curb ramps. There is also safety and accessibility measures happening on Mystic Avenue and Shore Drive regarding a new power line with Eversource working this summer.

The chair asked about the direct abutting neighborhood of Route 93 and the changes that are coming. Director Rawson many have advocated for upgrades in the area such as Pennsylvania Avenue with mom and pop stores. There are a couple hundred vehicles speeding through the area in a day. Director Rawson stated they have been working with the state agency partners to design and construct noise walls. Not much success to date.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about MassDot and the repair of the sound walls. Director Rawson stated MassDot is initiating around \$60M for Middlesex Avenue to Fells Ways West and Temple Street repairs. This will take about 3 years on this request. MassDot will be notifying residents about night work.

Councilor Kelly stated there are comments from residents about where the on-ramp of 93 begins. She referenced a conversation with an elderly resident who lives in theMiddlesex area and the quality of life they have had to live with and hoping for updates. She also spoke on how the fence does not make residents feel safe.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212842: That the Commissioner of Public Works address reports of trash barrels being picked up by recycling trucks.

Commissioner Lathan stated there have been numerous conversations with Boston Carting and this has been addressed with their workers. They understand this is unacceptable. Please see attached DPW correspondence on this item.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

213709: That the Commissioner of Public Works resume the rain barrel program that was halted during the pandemic.

Items 213709 and 213710 were discussed together.

The chair received a written response from DPW. Please see attached. He asked if there are any thoughts on what the process would be to reenact the program. Commissioner Lathan needs to look at the financial impact and procedures on the impact of the program. DPW will continue to work with OSE to have the discussion.

Councilor Kelly suggests putting the rain barrel program in the 2023 budget request. She also asked about the timeline when rain barrel will be back. Director Weisman stated no timeline yet and the discussion just started with OSE. He did not think this would be a free or partially free program which would need to be discussed with finance. Councilor Kelly would like regular updates on this program.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

213710: That the Commissioner of Public Works make rain barrels available, at no cost, to any properties within the city's flood zones.

Items 213709 and 213710 were discussed together.

See attached correspondence.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

DPW/Snow

213052: That the Commissioner of Public Works report on the possibility of including sidewalk curb cut snow clearance when in close proximity to stormwater drains scheduled for clearing following a snowstorm.

Director Weisman stated curb ramps were originally part of the property owner's responsibility. The early storms had large snow dams and tried to clear them, the best they could. They are trying to do more proactive clearing of ramps. They also clear ramps as part of the bus stop clearing. Commissioner Lathan stated there are many curb cuts in the city. The chair asked for any creative solutions to manage the clearing of the stormwater drains. He also suggested resident adopt curb cuts in their area.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

213057: That the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council on snow removal operations during and following the weather event of January 29, 2022.

The chair received a written response on this item.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED****213100: That the Commissioner of Public Works identify a permanent location for disposal of snow.**

Director Weisman stated this is a region wide problem and some other communities are using snow-melters. DPW will continue to work with the purchasing department to find something reasonably close and reasonably priced. See attached correspondence.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED****213138: That the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council with details on the sidewalk snow-shoveling pilot which was included in the FY2022 budget.**

Director Weisman stated they targeted School Street and Broadway working with Inspectional Services on these areas. DPW removes snow from any area that was inappropriately salted or cleared.

Councilor Kelly asked if the city could add a street to the pilot. Director Weisman wants to work with engineering and the administration before adding any streets to the pilot. Councilor Kelly asked when the councilors can have the conversation to add a street. Commissioner Lathan suggested having the discussion after the budget season. Councilor Kelly would like to bring this conversation back late summer.

Gomez Mouakad would like to add major school routes to the pilot. Director Weisman stated DPW currently does a cleanup around the schools.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED****Economic Development****212963: That the Director of Economic Development report on the maintenance plan for the Armory building, completion of outstanding repairs, and ongoing maintenance and operational oversight of the building.**

Director Galligani and Councilor Gomez Mouakad have had many conversations. There was a list of outstanding repairs. She would like a more concrete solution since DPW has taken over the oversight of the building.

Director Galligani stated the city took over the building about a year ago in 2021. There were long term maintenance challenges. The initial goal was to assess the condition of the building and what type of tenants for the building. IAM did a building assessment for the age and the condition along with the elevator and other parts of the building.

In January, they hired Mark Hamel, DPW building superintendent who is developing a maintenance plan for the buildings. Over the last year, they dealt with challenges with leaks on the roof and other problems in the basement. He stated there are still many unanswered questions that they will be tackling over the several months. Mr. Hamel first entered the building on February 2nd. He inspected the building looking at basic structural integrity. There was also a huge rodent issue which has been eradicated. The emergency lighting has been updated. They are

procuring an elevator maintenance contract. He is getting a scope for the common area to be repainted and refinished.

Gomez Mouakad asked Mr. Hamel how the city plans to address the issues with the building and if it will be put in the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Hamel said they will clean out the small drain in the basement this summer to avoid water pooling in areas in the basement. He does not believe this work will require a capital plan. The roof appears to be 16 to 17 years old and he has not inspected the roof yet. He believes patch work will be okay for parts of the roof. Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about the parking area. Mr. Hamel believes a 1-2-inch overlay would be in good order and will consult with someone from highway to get a better assessment of the parking area.

DPW Commissioner Lathan stated DPW needs to do an assessment and there is a lot of work to be done to the Armory.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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212964: That the Director of Economic Development report on the status of existing leases for the Armory building.

Director Galligani stated they have any leases with tenants in the Armory. The city acquired the building a year ago and came with 11 tenants who already had leases with the previous owners. The tenants asked if the city were going to honor the leases. Director Galligani offered the tenants a Use of Occupancy agreement extended until the end of the year. Some of the tenants have relocated and others have agreed to the Use of Occupancy agreement. The city is obligated to pay relocation cost for tenants which include buying new signs and business cards. The city has hired a consultant to assess the use of the building. They are doing some logistics and planning for a meeting later this month.

Director Galligani stated that a couple of the tenants did not sign the Occupancy Agreement because they are planning to move. The city did move others to the vacant spaces to keep the building active.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Engineering

213134: That the Director of Engineering provide an update on Eversource's re-sealing of the gas main between Acadia Park and Elm Street.

Items 213134 and 213245 were discussed together.

Chair Clingan worked with Mothers Out Front on the numerous gas leaks. There were multiple site visits with Eversource. The end results were that Eversource had a new technology that can send a robot down the pipe to seal from the outside. Director Postlewaite stated the latest update he heard back from Eversource gas is they finished approximately 1500 feet of pipe. The entire pipe in Somerville is complete and they are still working on the Cambridge pipe. There were detours set up and the project was a success. The chair asked if Eversource would pay for the cost of the trees. The chair discussed the possibility of Somerville being a part of the Geothermal program in the future.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

213245: That the Director of Engineering provide an update on Eversource's re-sealing of the gas main between Acadia Park and Elm Street.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

213713: That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide the Ward 4 Councilor with an estimated paving date for Douglas Street.

The chair stated Douglas Street is a dead end, short street and is in much need of paving. Director Postlewaite stated Douglas Street is on the 5-year plan and it was presented last fall. Douglas Street is 2nd from the top of the list for paving on the next contract. The chair stated the city paves 1% of the streets a year.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

213712: That the Director of Engineering explain the timeline for the installation of the proposed Gilman Square water retention tank, as it relates to the overall flood water management plan.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Reference Material:

- DPW responses to various items