



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 20, 2019

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	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor McLaughlin, Khushbu Webber, Steve MacEachern, Hannah Pappenheim, Richard Raiche, and members from the community.

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairman White and adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Approval of the September 4, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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205059: That the Administration present the information described herein about the Brown School's physical plant and planned and completed renovations, to this Board, to the School Committee, and to the Brown School community.

Councilor Davis gave a summary of the ongoing requests for the history of plans, studies, renovations and repairs for the Brown School. Mr. MacEachern did not have any information on the matter. Chairman White inquired about the filing system, if there were any hard copy or electronic filings about the repairs completed over the years or of any studies or plans. Mr. MacEachern will reach out to 311 and other city departments to see what, if any pertinent information is available. Chairman White asked Mr. Raiche to work with Mr. MacEachern to get the information about the building history of repairs, plans, etc.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205813: That the Director of Engineering and the Superintendent of Inspectional Services report to this Board on enforcement of the ordinance on driveway construction and paving over front, back or side yards, with a list of violations and fines levied in 2016 and 2017.

Mr. Raiche stated that the Superintendent for ISD had previously appeared before the committee on this item. In 2016, there were 6 violations and 2 fined levied. In 2017, there were 8 violations and no fined levied. Mr. Raiche stated that ISD is the entity that issues stop requests and fines. ISD relies on neighbors to contact them about potential violations. ISD also likes to work with property owners when they do learn of a violation by allowing the property owner to correct the violation before issuing any fines.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

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.

Ms. Pappenheim did not have any case law to review from Councilor Scott who will resend this information to her. She also stated that it was the opinion of Mr. Grossfield from the law office that the city may reject a potential bidder based on past performance. Councilor Scott’s request, however, was different because it would create a finding that would apply to all contracts bid so that any bid by Newport would be automatically disqualified instead of leaving it up to however might be reviewing the bids and might not have notice of Newport’s history. Councilor Scott stated that he had made a motion on October 25th to bar constructor from future city work, which was approved by the committee. The law department will look at case law and prepare a memo to send to the committee. Councilor Ballantyne forwarded an email from a resident, Chris Dwan, regarding evaluations on Newport Construction. Please see email attached to this item.

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.

Mr. MacEachern stated that he is utilizing information from the 311 system to determine the poles that are receiving complaints about being defective or dangerous. There have been 35 reports of poles which have been sent to Eversource and Verizon. He does not receive confirmation back to determine when and if the repairs are made by the utilities. Chairman White asked if a protocol could be put into place to check if the work is completed. Mr. MacEachern stated the orders come in from 311 and do not go to DPW. He has had conversations with Mr. Craig about changing the process.

Chairman White motioned and it was approved *that the Commissioner of DPW report back to the committee about changing the mechanics of the DPW monitoring of utility pole complaints to determine whether there is follow through by the utilities of the complaints that are sent to them.*

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

207193: That the Administration, SPCD, and Arts Council host events to bring pedestrians to the affected Union Square and Ball Square areas during construction detours.

Ms. Webber distributed an email from Mr. Galligani describing the efforts of OSPCD to direct pedestrians to Union and Ball squares.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207592: That the Commissioner of Public Works direct the appropriate utility to remove and/or bury the utility poles on Trull Lane prior to upcoming construction there, and that the Commissioner express in writing to the Committee on Public Utilities and Works the feasibility of this work prior to construction.

Mr. MacEachern went out to the site. There are 5 poles in total with 3 in the road and 2 on private property. He stated it would cost \$200,000 to remove the poles. Trull Lane is a private way and the city does not have any responsibility for the lane. Mr. Raiche stated there had been discussions with the developers to replace the water main and putting the utilities underground. Chairman White asked for someone to review the permit. Councilor Scott found the permit and it has standard language with no mention of underground poles. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated there had been substantial contributions made to the city by the developer and maybe the funds could be used to relocate the poles.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207904: That the City Solicitor update this Council as it relates to the communication received from Newport Construction Corp. on March 25, 2019.

Ms. Pappenheim has spoken with different staff members at City Hall and with Mr. Grossfield. A complaint by the city has been drafted and is ready to be filed. Ms. Pappenheim will send an email to all City Council members when the suit has been filed.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208240: That the Commissioner of Public Works replace the sidewalk at 50 Dartmouth Street as it poses a significant safety hazard. (2nd request)

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208276: That the Director of SPCD provide a written response to #207193, for the Arts Council to host events to bring pedestrians to Union Square and Ball Square during construction detours.

Ms. Webber distributed an email from Mr. Galligani answering the committee's questions. Chairman White asked for future written responses to be sent to the committee prior to the meeting to give the councilors time to read the response. See attached document.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208287: Assistant City Solicitor responding to #207904 with an update on Newport Construction communications.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208431: Arts Council Director responding to #208276 re: Arts Council activities to bring pedestrians to Union Square and Ball Square during construction detours.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208687: That the Director of Public Works inform this Council of any recent challenges relative to yard waste pickup.

Mr. MacEachern stated there had been an uptick in calls regarding yard waste. He reached out to Russell Disposal about this matter and was informed there was a new driver who was unfamiliar with the route. The complaints have since dropped off.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208780: That the Director of Engineering ensure that gas leaks along Pearl Street and Washington Street are addressed before reconstruction of said streets is completed.

Mr. Raiche stated that National Grid is finishing up the work on Washington Street. Also they will be able to get a head start on Pearl Street. Mothers Out Front have been notified about this matter.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208812: That the Commissioner of Public Works instruct all utilities to clearly mark potholes, even temporary ones, created in the course of work in order to prevent bicycle and pedestrian accidents.

Mr. MacEachern stated he could add this requirement to all permits. Mr. Raiche states that his department has added a condition that contractors use high resolution spray paint for such markings to all permits that his department approves. Councilor Ballantyne has talked to the purchasing director about having this information added to bid documents.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208822: That the Director of Public Works and the Director of Inspectional Services discuss how trash pickup and enforcement occurs during the high-volume move-in weeks.

Mr. MacEachern uses an extra inspector to monitor trash during high volume periods and have violators ticketed. He will also works with Russell Disposal to remove larger items.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208824: That the Commissioner of Public Works discuss ways of cleaning sidewalks in neighborhoods that have experienced sewage-contaminated flooding on sidewalks.

In these situations, DPW will use a vacuum truck to wash down the sidewalk so that the sewage contaminated water flows into the street and the street is then swept. Mr. MacEachern will establish a new email process so that resident complaints of such flooding are directed to the DPW so that action can be taken.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208838: That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately re-evaluate for usability, the placement of benches on Beacon Street.

Mr. Rawson stated the evaluation was completed and sent to DOT, which is responsible for the benches. Councilor Scott asked to see the information from DOT.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208839: That the Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (Mobility) address this Council regarding handicap accessibility protocols for bus boarding at stops along Beacon Street and other routes in the city and propose remedies for resident concerns.

Mr. Rawson stated the MBTA is obligated to bring the bus stops into compliance. The MBTA went out to look at several bus stops. The outbound 83 bus stop has been relocated to a temporary location due to being in an inaccessible condition but will be accessible once work is complete.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208840: That the Director of SPCD provide this Council with an updated project schedule for the Beacon Street reconstruction project including the current timeline and project milestones being monitored.

Mr. Rawson stated that the work is scheduled to be completed within the next couple of weeks and the sidewalk panels in 2020. MassDot will withhold payment for any incomplete or defective work to insure completeness of work. Councilor Scott reviewed his original request for a Gann chart and asked that it be updated at least weekly. Councilor Scott requested that Mr. Rawson send the current Gann charts to him the following day along with project milestones.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208890: That the Commissioner of Public Works clean inside the metal barrel holders in and around Foss Park in addition to emptying them.

Mr. MacEachern stated the property in question belongs to DCR, not the city. He has asked Ms. Webber to get the contact person's name at DCR to discuss this problem. The Committee suggested that Mr. MacEachern also send a copy of the request to the state delegation about the issue. Mr. MacEachern will also send a follow up communication to the City Councilors.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208918: That the Director of SPCD place signage on Medford Street letting pedestrians know where they can walk.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

208963: 28 residents commenting on the completion of the reconstruction of Beacon Street, and next steps.

Councilor Scott talked about a punch list dated 11/11 with 71 items on it. It was stated that the punch list is 20% completed. Councilor Scott stated the staff did a four (4) hour walk through with MassDot 3 to 4 weeks ago. Mr. Rawson will email the residents week after Thanksgiving about the results of the walk through. Councilor Scott asked Mr. Rawson to reach out to DOT to find out when the punch list will be closed and to schedule a walkthrough thereafter.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208995: That the Chief of Police and the Chief Fire Engineer provide an update on upcoming and past meetings with Spectra Energy (now Enbridge) related to the Algonquin Gas Transmission line and the J2 loop and any communications on risks and safety procedures related to those pipelines.

Ms. Webber reached out to police and fire and neither were available to come to the meeting. Chairman White's motion that a written response to the Order be sent to the Committee and Councilor Ballantyne's amendment that this motion was to have the response submitted in writing by the next City Councilor meeting on Tuesday, November 26, 2019, was approved by the Committee

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

209048: That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, the Chief Fire Engineer, the Chief of Police and other necessary departments advise this Council of the impacts of any further development along Alewife Brook Parkway on the Algonquin Gas Transmission Pipeline running along Alewife Brook.

Mr. Raiche responded that the requested information was not available. The only jurisdiction that the city has over the utility company is when a permit is requested to perform work or to inspect the pipe and those requests do not have a long lead time. There is no record of any permit request for this particular pipe. Councilor Ballantyne attached seven questions to this order which were not answered. A resident, Ms. Karina Wilkinson, sent a file to Councilor Ballantyne that is attached to this item. Ms. Wilkinson will also send a map to the committee and Mr. Raiche to follow up on an email that she previously sent to the committee.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

209076: That the Administration inform this Council how, if it all, the city may recoup

from utility companies its costs for a public safety response to gas leaks.

Ms. Webber asked for clarification behind this order. She stated it's hard for the city to determine the cost incurred and will follow up with Councilor Hirsch.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209079: That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management or another representative of the Administration report to each Councilor by November 1, 2019, on the placement of concrete for electrical equipment at the Brown School, and what alternate locations could be less impactful on the school's limited physical space.

Councilor Davis and Mr. Raiche stated the Brown School will have air conditioning and potential installation of an elevator. They also discussed the green space on the Willow Avenue side of the school which is coordinated with the help of Groundwork Somerville. The location of the transformer was discussed and the Administration believes is the most logically, efficient space to get electricity to the building. Councilor Davis expressed concern about its location in the School's green space. Councilor Davis requested that the Administration find other locations instead of in the green space in front of the school. A parent from the Brown School attended the meeting and spoke on the importance of the green area and concerns about losing the space. Mr. Raiche mentioned potential options for moving the transformer: 1) around the corner but it presented issues with costs and substantial trenching, 2) moving the transformer to the Kidder side of the building and would require trenching which might impact the life of the tree, and 3) keeping it in a similar location but moving it closer to the sidewalk. Mr. Raiche hopes to have cost data and tree mortality data by end of the month. Councilor Davis stated he wished the City had held a conversation with the Brown School community prior to the installation of the transformer. There will be a community meeting sometime in January on this matter.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209082: That the Commissioner of Public Works replace all of the streetlights along Fellsway West between Mystic Avenue and Broadway with new LED lights, and, in the meantime, replace the bulbs of the 11 streetlights that are out.

Mr. MacEachern stated the property in question belongs to DCR, not the city. He has asked Ms. Webber to get the contact person's name at DCR to discuss this problem. It was suggested that Mr. MacEachern also send a copy of the request to the state delegation voicing the city's concerns. Mr. MacEachern will also send a follow up communication to the City Councilors.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Handouts:

- Memo (with 208276, 207193)
- C Dwan Comments & Attachments (with 206959)
- K Wilkinson Comments (with 209048)