



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 24, 2017

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Robert J. McWatters	Chair	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Vice Chair	Absent	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Late	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Present	

Others present: Alderman William White, Alderman Dennis Sullivan, Stan Koty - DPW, Jackie Rossetti - Communications, Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Rich Raiche - Engineering, Paul Maloy - MassDOT, Paul Stedman - MassDOT, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:30 PM and adjourned at 7:50 PM.

President White appointed Aldermen Heuston and Rossetti to the committee for this meeting only, to effectuate a quorum.

Approval of the April 5, 2017 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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204263: That the Commissioner of Public Works request that the appropriate utility company address the low hanging wires on Mt. Vernon and Washington Streets.

Mr. Koty informed the committee that letters were sent to the utility company and that the city has not yet received a response. Mr. Koty will request that representatives from that utility company appear before the committee.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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203983: That the Mayor report to this Board by August 31, 2017 on ways to improve the poor communications from Eversource to residents around gas meter replacement, street construction, and other utility work. (2nd request)

204361: That MA DOT, Newport Construction and all other parties with knowledge of the cutting down of trees on Beacon Street on October 6, without any public notice, appear before this Board at its next regular meeting to respond to concerns about the surprise tree removal.

Mr. Rawson, Mr. Maloy and Mr. Stedman addressed this item. Members questioned what the city knew about the cutting down of the trees. Members were told that there was a signed contract that gave the contractor authorization to remove the trees.

The committee was told that 17 trees were removed in May and one tree was removed in October and one in November due to unforeseen circumstances. MassDOT representatives said that they walked the site with the tree warden to review the plans of the work to be done. The utility work took place on Washington Street (to Cambridge) and was wrapped up a little quicker than expected. Newport Construction came to MassDOT requesting to get started on the next phase of the project. There were bi-weekly construction meetings and the message was to delay and defer work until the spring of 2018. At a later date, Newport provided a 3-week look ahead schedule showing no tree work and no work in the southern area of Somerville.

Alderman Davis inquired about the meeting on September 20th when the decision was made not to go forward with the project and asked Mr. Rawson what would have been the communication plan if the trees were to be removed. Mr. Rawson replied that there would have been community engagement, including emails blasts, from January through March. Alderman Davis also asked at what point was Northern Tree informed about the revised schedule to remove the trees and he asked for a document to provide greater details on who told Northern to take down the trees. MassDOT representatives said they will confirm whether Newport Construction gave Northern the approval to remove the trees. MassDOT said that Newport reached out to them and they followed up with the city regarding the work. The September 20th meeting was not a scheduled bi-weekly meeting, (when minutes are usually taken by DCR), adding that there was a breakdown in communication with the contractor.

Alderman Heuston mentioned pieces of wood with nails protruding from them that were left out by the contractor on the northern side of Somerville. She went on to say that streets were not swept, dirt blows into peoples' windows, there's no signage saying where to cross the street, people had to walk in the street and bike lanes and there is no safe passage for people and baby carriages. Alderman Heuston said that the city needs to hire someone to oversee the Beacon Street project, noting that she originally made this request at a Planning Board meeting. Mr. Rawson said that city staff are at construction sites constantly. She also mentioned the loophole (re: notification) in the tree ordinance, that was discussed in the Legislative Matters Committee meeting and asked if closing the loophole would apply to MassDOT projects. Alderman Heuston stated her concern with the lack of notifications on the street about the project and the holding of parking spaces for the project's trucks and commented on the communications from the Administration that MassDOT and the Administration are reviewing recourse options regarding the trees and that the Administration would work with the BOA to enhance the tree

ordinance.

Chairman McWatters stated that not having a police detail on the project was a failure on everyone's part and he asked if the contractor will be allowed to continue with this project. MassDOT representatives said the removal of the trees wasn't supposed to happen until the spring and that the contractor didn't violate any laws. MassDOT said that Newport forgot to call off the contractor after the September 20th meeting and the MassDOT resident engineer had no idea the trees were being removed. Phone calls started coming in from the city on Thursday and on Friday, MassDOT shut down the contractor.

Alderman Heuston asked Mr. Rawson to provide an accounting of the trees scheduled to be removed in 2014 and 2015. Alderman White would like the Administration review the plans to see how they changed and how many trees were scheduled to be removed. Both Aldermen White and Heuston asked about the difference of the 75% plan and 100% plan, who was alerted to the change and what was the rationale of the change of plans. There was also a discussion about trees being preserved, raising a question about when that changed.

Resident Adam Pordereny asked if the trees were going to be removed anyway and if the city knew that they were being removed. He raised a question about the tree stumps and their removal pointing out that they could create a dangerous situation should they become covered with snow. Resident Tori Antonio asked about the tree replacement fund and how much would go into that fund.

MassDOT said there are 198 replacement trees scheduled as part of the project.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204362: That the Director of SPCD work with Mass DOT to cease all work on the Beacon Street reconstruction project until a full report on the removal of trees from the street is received and presented to this Board and until city staff is assigned day to day responsibility for oversight.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204363: The Administration assign or hire city staff to oversee the daily operations of contractor and utility company activity for the Beacon Street reconstruction project, and adopt a policy of such oversight for every state funded street reconstruction project going forward.

The committee would like to hear from the Administration on their plans to handle future projects.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204365: That the Director of SPCD estimate for this Board the cost to move overhead wires

underground on Beacon Street from Washington to Hampshire Streets, identify potential funding sources, and discuss the feasibility and impact of such an endeavor on the current Beacon Street project.

Alderman Heuston requested this estimate and said that it should have been considered as part of the Beacon Street project. The original request came from a resident and Alderman Heuston believes that other residents will want the information, as well.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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203413: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted 4/27/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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203813: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted 5/25/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204188: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted 7/13/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204288: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted 8/24/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204335: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted 9/28/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204423: Chris Dwan submitting comments re: the October 6 Beacon Street tree removal.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204445: City Engineer submitting responding to #203496 re: Pitman Street pavement.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Handout:

- Tree removal summary - (with 204361)