



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 16, 2019

REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Councilor Ballantyne, Brad Rawson, Councilor Clingan, Annie Connor, Suzanne Rinfret, Sgt. John Gobiell, and Lt. James Polito along with 20+ people from the community.

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

Approval of the September 18, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Broadway/Winter Hill Bus/Bike Lanes & Traffic Impact

Chairman Niedergang asked Mr. Rawson for an update. The Chairman stated he will open up the discussion to a half-a-dozen residents to speak on this matter. He also stated that the many emails he is receiving are running about even, pro and con, but there is a petition signed by more than 1700 people to get rid of the bus/bike lanes.

Mr. Rawson stated that the traffic light signalization was not optimal and was not sequenced correctly. This was challenging for the City to fix because it was developed and is maintained by a contracted engineer, not by City staff. Coordinating the street painting, traffic signal changes, and other aspects of the implementation of the bus and bike lanes was simply not possible, so the City moved ahead as best it could. He talked about the bus lanes and recognized that traffic has been worse this month. The signals have been modified on a few streets, including Temple and School, and residents should see less heavy traffic. MassDOT and the GLX Team have been out doing traffic light signalization changes on Broadway and McGrath; the City has been asking for this change for six months. The engineers will be back out this Friday to evaluate the traffic signal changes.

Mr. Rawson listed the following data on the Broadway bus and bike lanes that is being collected:

- Bus ridership
- Bus reliability
- Bus travel time
- Motor vehicle speed
- Traffic congestion and the length of lines waiting at lights and intersections
- Pedestrian safety
- Number of pedestrians and bikes
- Crashes and crash data

Chairman Niedergang asked Mr. Rawson to hold a community meeting when the data becomes available in a month or so, to share it with the community and to continue the discussion about improvements on Broadway, and that this meeting happen before the end of the year. Mr. Rawson said that he would do so.

Councilors talked about outreach efforts that should be used such as direct mailers, leaflets, and sign boards. Several Councilors stated that there is confusion by motorists on how to operate safely and legally with the new traffic infrastructure and that education is needed along with enforcement efforts. Some residents feel like they do not have enough information about how to navigate Broadway with the recent changes.

Chairman Niedergang mentioned he had sent a statement with his views to the Somerville News Weekly, the Somerville Times and Somerville Journal regarding this topic, so he would not be taking up time by repeating that at the meeting.

The Chairman asked Mr. Rawson how many busses, bus riders and trips a day there are on the Broadway corridor. Mr. Rawson replied that there are two lines with approximately 60 buses inbound and 60 outbound for a total of 240 buses on a weekday. Service decreases on the weekend to approximately 40 trips each way on the two lines for a total of about 160 trips. He said that total ridership on weekdays is about 7,000-7,500 with about 60% of that number (4,200 -4,500) on weekends. The motor vehicle traffic count can take approximately 2-3 weeks to gather, he said. Crash data will be submitted by the Somerville Police Department (SPD). An initial report with all this data will be available within 30 days. Councilor Ewen-Campen inquired about ride-sharing data from Uber and Lyft. Mr. Rawson stated there are major deficiencies with the data. But we do know, he said, that in 2018, there were approximately 3.3 million Uber and Lyft rides that began in Somerville. That breaks out to 12,000-13,000 per day. Mr. Rawson also stated that the ride-sharing has increased due to public transportation being unreliable.

Councilor Davis asked when to expect improvements on Broadway. Mr. Rawson stated that tomorrow will be better than today and they will continue to evaluate the traffic. He believes that the light signalization changes and commuters from out of town avoiding the area will lead to a steady improvement. Also, as residents who use Broadway frequently become more accustomed to and knowledgeable about the bus and bike lanes, that will also have a positive effect on traffic.

There was a question about using bus lanes only being used during rush hour as on Massachusetts Avenue in Arlington. Mr. Rawson stated he has considered this use during peak hours for Clarendon Hill and Washington Streets. But doing this on Broadway would not be a preference for the MBTA. It would require DPW having to move the cones for the bus lanes several times a day, which would be labor intensive, and DPW does not have staff who have time to do this, so it is just not workable.

Lt. Polito and Sgt. Gobiell were asked how they are handling the traffic issues. They meet daily with Chief Fallon and are issuing verbal warnings, written warnings and fines. Councilor Clingan stated he did not think people understand how to use the bus lanes. He has also received feedback from residents that police officers do not seem to understand about bus lanes, as drivers are getting conflicting information about the rules of the road from different police officers.

Mr. Rawson stated that education materials will be produced by his staff. On Monday, there will be new electronic message boards. It was suggested that the police officers hand out the materials to those stopped by the police. Mr. Rawson also stated that the MBTA will have more buses and drivers in 2020 which should help with some of the traffic issues by making commuting by bus more desirable.

The Chair allowed half-dozen members from the public to speak on this issue:

- A resident asked how giving out tickets would improve traffic. Instead, the SPD should educate motorists with regards to the rules about right-hand turns and other traffic maneuvers on Broadway.
- Others complained about pedestrian safety crossing the streets and inhaling exhaust fumes from the cars.
- Comments about MBTA buses going by with only a few people on the bus.
- Comments about a police escort needed to cross the street, and that it is risky for children to cross the street on their own.
- Traffic signals are not long enough to cross streets
- Cars run through traffic lights even though the light has turned red
- Ride sharing traffic is being redirected down side streets, to avoid the congestion on Broadway, and this is causing dangerous conditions on small streets in the neighborhood.
- Question asked what will happen to the bus/bike lanes when the snow comes in the winter, and how will the traffic be managed when snow makes everything more difficult.

Councilor Clingan raised the issue of the Thurston Street crosswalk on Broadway that was part of the project design, but has not yet been implemented. He said he had heard that there was a shortage of funds and that putting in the curb ramps for accessibility for the crosswalk was the holdup. Mr. Rawson stated that he is working with DPW and city engineer on this matter. Councilor Clingan said that this is a priority for the neighborhood and that the City should install this crosswalk before the winter construction moratorium. Chairman Niedergang stated he wants an answer on this matter by the next City Council meeting on October 24th and that if funding is an issue, the Mayor should ask the Council for the funds, he is sure they will be provided.

208888: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on the effectiveness of the Winter Hill in Motion plan and its impact on congestion.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209002: That the Director of SPCD assess the implementation of the Winter Hill in Motion project and how the city can better roll out such a new experimental set of changes.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209001: That the Administration provide an update addressing the Winter Hill in Motion project, including links to the educational materials created.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208991: That the Director of SPCD report on the bus and bike lanes on Broadway on Winter Hill, including an assessment of their effectiveness, a response to the many complaints that have been received, and a description of any changes that are planned or being investigated.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208845: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on the safety of pedestrians at the intersection of Broadway and Norwood Avenue, following serious injury to a pedestrian there, and whether a crosswalk is needed.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207660: That the Commissioner of Public Works clean or replace the right turn signal at the corner of Broadway, turning onto Temple Street, as it is not visible during the day.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206202: That the Director of Traffic and Parking share how it enforces the prohibition of cars and trucks parked in bus lanes and bike lanes.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Union Square Traffic Problems

These items were not discussed because the Broadway/Winter Hill bus and bike lane items took 1 ½ hours and Mr. Rawson had to leave to attend the Ward 1 Resistat meeting.

206685: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on when various necessary improvements to the Union Square traffic pattern, including an "All-Walk" cycle and left-turn arrows at certain intersections, will be implemented.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208834: That the Chief of Police post a traffic detail at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Prospect Street for the duration of the traffic detours in Union Square that reroute Washington Street traffic through that intersection.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208835: That the Director of SPCD return the intersection at Webster Avenue and Washington Street to an exclusive pedestrian crossing interval to increase safety for schoolchildren and other pedestrians.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208836: That the Director of Parking, the Director of SPCD and the Chief of Police increase traffic signage and enforcement at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Somerville Avenue to prevent northbound traffic on Webster Avenue from continuing north onto Bow Street or entering Somerville Avenue going in the wrong direction.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208837: That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately reassess the signaling at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Prospect Street due to the current unsafe and frustrating conditions there.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Mystic/McGrath/I-93/Kensington Area

These items were not discussed because the Broadway/Winter Hill bus and bike lane items took 1 ½ hours and Mr. Rawson had to leave to attend the Ward 1 Resistat meeting.

208694: That the Director of SPCD work with the City of Boston and MA DOT to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety at state highway intersections including Sullivan Square, McGrath Highway at Broadway and at Washington Street, and the Northern Expressway at the Kensington Avenue Underpass.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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201510: That the Director of Traffic and Parking request that MA DOT address traffic hazards at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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200181: That the Director of Traffic and Parking communicate to MA DOT the need for painted lanes and signs to slow traffic along I-93 and Mystic Avenue along the underpass by Stop and Shop.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208844: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on actions, communications and collaboration with State agencies to improve pedestrian safety in the Mystic Avenue area by I-93, following the death of two pedestrians hit by motor vehicles there.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Other Dangerous Intersections

With the exception of items 27 and 28, these items were not discussed because the Broadway/Winter Hill bus and bike lane items took 1 ½ hours and Mr. Rawson had to leave to attend the Ward 1 Resistat meeting.

208031: That the Director of SPCD use the \$220,000 in traffic mitigation funds paid by Maxwell's Green in 2011 for traffic calming on Lowell Street, between Highland Avenue and Albion Street, by constructing a traffic-calming table at the Albion Street crosswalk.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206064: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board and the Ward 5 Alderman on plans to expend the \$220,000 contributed by the Maxwell's Green developer for traffic calming in the Lowell Street area.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208378: That the Director of SPCD install traffic calming infrastructure on Morrison Avenue, such as a speed bump between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue, as soon as possible to protect pedestrians crossing Morrison Avenue, especially at Highland Road near Lexington Park and the Community Path.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208278: That the Director of SPCD advise the Committee on Traffic and Parking of any plans for traffic calming on Morrison Avenue between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207570: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install STOP signs and YIELD TO PEDESTRIAN signs in the Summer Street intersection with Prescott Street, and provide additional safety recommendations for this intersection.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208814: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 3 City Councilor on placing a digital speed board on School Street, just south of Highland Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208253: That the Director of SPCD suggest traffic calming solutions for Sycamore Street between Highland Avenue and Medford Street. (2nd request)

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207279: That the Chief of Police enforce the speed limit on Sycamore Street, between Highland Avenue and Medford Street, and inform the Ward 3 Alderman on the outcome.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208383: That the Director of SPCD install sturdy steel posts around the southeast corner of Nunziato Park, in light of the May 25 car crash that sent a vehicle through the fence and into the picnic tables where children often gather.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202108: That the Administration work with the City of Cambridge to improve pedestrian safety at the intersections of Elm Street with Beech Street and Willow Avenue, including consideration of a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon.

Councilor Davis stated this was previously discussed back in May and Mr. Rawson had talked about using bollards to calm traffic in this location. Mr. Rawson stated a new pedestrian flasher being installed. Ms. Rinfret stated a radar feedback was installed last summer. Councilor Davis will have data in 2-3 weeks on this matter. He also inquired about bump out to make it safer since trees block the traffic light.

Mr. Rawson stated that the city will not be putting any more flex posts with the winter season coming in.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207488: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for improved vehicle and pedestrian signal timing and design in and around Davis Square.

Councilor Davis inquired about taking away the “No turn on Red” signs and looking at some other measures to improve signal timing in the Davis Square area. Mr. Rawson said that this work is in process.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208990: That the Commissioner of Public Works install traffic dampening tools at the intersection of Broadway and Simpson Avenue to slow the traffic speeding on Broadway.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Traffic Enforcement and Somerville Police Dept.

208992: That the Chief of Police redeploy as soon as possible at least 6 Police Officers full-time into the Traffic Division, to conduct traffic enforcement to regain control over our increasingly chaotic streets in the interest of public and especially pedestrian safety.

Lt. Polito and Sgt. Gobiell spoke to Chief Fallon this week. There will be 2 additional officers assigned to the Traffic Bureau. There are currently 5-6 officers in the Traffic Division. The Bravo Unit of six officers that did traffic enforcement from bikes were pulled off that assignment due to assignment and contractual requirements. They will not be replaced.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208996: That the Director of SPCD or the Chief of Police discuss whether or not "residents only" and "abutters only" driving restrictions are enforceable, and whether this information can currently be reflected in mapping applications like Google and WAZE.

Lt. Polito and Sgt. Gobiell stated that this is essentially impossible to enforce. The courts would dismiss cases, based upon constitutional issues. They said that to try and enforce this, police officers would have to pull over many cars to find out if the driver was a resident or abutter. Police officers cannot stop cars without having a reason, so this would be unconstitutional as well. The signs may have some value to deter drivers from going into local, small, neighborhood streets, but the SPD cannot enforce the restrictions.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207652: That the Director of SPCD, the Chief of Police, the Director of Traffic and Parking, and/or the Director of Communications report to this Council on developing a citywide campaign focused on getting motorists to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks and to fully stop at STOP signs.

Sgt. Gobiell is in the process of writing some grants, which he expects will result in funds being received on November 1st. Grants can be used for education of drivers about respecting crosswalks. Councilor Clingan stated that people need to be reminded to be civil, have patience and slow down. Lt. Polito stated it has been difficult with the construction in the city. Councilor Niedergang talked about a campaign to "Stop on the line." He asked Ms. Connor if the Administration would assign staff from the Communications Department and allocate other resources for this matter.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208818: That the Chief of Police provide a list of fatal or debilitating crashes for the past ten years by victim's mobility method, including car, bicycle, and pedestrian and including both local and state-managed roads.

Lt. Polito will have the crime analyst provide this information and email to Ms. Connor when available.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

206943: That the Chief of Police inform this Board how decisions are made to balance enforcement of cyclist violations, and the enforcement of vehicles driving or parking in bicycle lanes.

Lt. Polito reviews the crime stats from the crime analyst, who goes through accidents, where the hot spots are need attention. Pedestrian, motor vehicle and bike accidents are included. It was stated that 70% of police enforcement resources go to motor vehicle violations, which includes crosswalks and distracted drivers.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

Parking and Parking Dept. Issues

208321: That the Mayor convene a committee to make recommendations by early 2020 for changes in City and residential parking permit policies such as those suggested by the Nelson/Nygaard consultant, as presented to the Land Use Committee on April 30, 2019.

Ms. Connor stated she is putting together the call for applicants for a parking committee and hoping to have this committee in place by early November. The scope will be parking policy and street inventory, detailing all the parking spaces in the City and how they are used. She expects to have full update at the next meeting on November 20, 2019. She said that the meetings of this committee will be public meetings.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208575: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking provide a quarterly update regarding implementation of deed-based parking permit restrictions.

Items 36-39 were discussed together. The Chair raised the possibility of discharging the items to the Land Use Committee, since parking policy around resident parking permits is a key part of the zoning overhaul. Ms. Connor stated that Mr. Bartman in the Planning Dept. is working on this matter and its relation to the zoning overhaul. There have been many meetings about policy, parking and affordable units without parking within the Administration. Ms. Connor will talk with Mr. Bartman to attend the November 20th meeting to discuss these matters. Councilor Ballantyne had talked to Mr. Proakis about projects in process. There was discussion about the role of the Traffic Commission in approving policies in this area. Ms. Rinfret stated she has not received anything from OSPD on this topic to be discussed at the Traffic Commission. Both Councilors Ballantyne and Clingan have projects in their wards regarding parking that needs to be addressed at the next Traffic and Parking Cmte meeting on November 20th.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208833: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking provide this Council with a timeline for implementing resident parking restrictions for certain new developments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207575: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking immediately implement "only onsite parking" requirements for those proposed projects which have been confirmed during neighborhood meetings as not being granted residential or guest parking permits.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204876: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking meet with the Committee on Traffic and Parking to discuss policies and procedures to limit residential parking permits for residents of properties that are granted relief from parking requirements by the Zoning Board of Appeals or the Planning Board.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208384: That the Director of Traffic and Parking temporarily suspend the policy of not painting curbs, in order to add yellow paint and a NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER sign to the curved sidewalk on the southeast corner of Quincy and Summer Streets, to improve visibility. (2nd request)

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207061: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on the progress of pro-rating residential parking permits.

Ms. Rinfret stated that pro-rating residential parking permits may be impossible to do with on-line signups for permits. Councilor Ewen-Campen said that it seems unfair that residents moving in should have to pay the full amount for a permit with only a couple of months of use. Ms. Rinfret said that rearranging things to be able to pro-rate parking permits would cause an end to some processes that are popular and effective.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207877: That the Director of Traffic and Parking consider restricting parking along parts of Temple Street during morning and evening rush hours, on a temporary basis, to help the traffic flow during the city's bridge closures.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207713: That the Director of Traffic and Parking place a NO OUTLET TO WASHINGTON STREET sign on the corner of George Street and Broadway to prevent cut through traffic due to the GLX bridge closures.

Ms. Rinfret stated this is a matter for GLX and OSPCD.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207501: That the Administration consider adding parking ticket data to the Socrata portal.

Ms. Rinfret stated that maybe the city's IT department can assist with this request and she will get back to Councilors Hirsch and Niedergang with a response.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206853: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on the enforcement of 311 complaints about illegal parking, and what provisions exist for enforcement against illegal parking on Sundays and holidays.

Ms. Rinfret stated there has been some spot enforcement on Sundays and holidays, especially in Davis Square when the budget allows. If residents put in a 311 request about a Sunday parking violation, then a Parking Control Officer will check that area the following Sunday. Lt. Polito stated that residents with blocked parkways should call the SPD business line, 617-625-1212, and a cruiser will come down and will have the vehicle towed, if the officer cannot find the driver of the vehicle.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Housekeeping -- Items to be marked Completed

207915: That the Director of SPCD explain to the Traffic and Parking Committee why strategically-placed temporary speed bumps would not be more effective in calming traffic than plastic flex posts, many of which have been down and out-of-service within a day or two of the recent bridge closures.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207916: That the Director of SPCD evaluate with the Traffic and Parking Committee the value and impact of flex posts for traffic calming, and on plans going forward for their use and maintenance.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207737: That the Director of SPCD work with the City of Medford and the GLX Team to adjust the traffic lights in Magoun Square, as traffic is getting backed up even more than usual due to the Ball Square Bridge closure.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207571: That the Director of Traffic and Parking and the Director of SPCD review the attached Police report suggesting traffic safety improvements at the intersection of Summer and Cherry Streets, including a fourth crosswalk, and indicate which of these improvements can be made and when.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

207361: That the Director of Traffic and Parking enhance the STOP signs on Summer Street at Cherry Street with solar-powered blinking lights, similar to those at Summer and Lowell Streets.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

206774: That the Director of SPCD send a mailer and place flyers on doors and cars to all residents within the High School parking zones, informing them of the ongoing survey for parking needs.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED
