



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 30, 2021

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jesse Clingan	Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	

Committee members present: Chairperson Jesse Clingan, Councilor Katjana Ballantyne and Councilor-at-Large Bill White.

Others present: Khushbu Webber-Mayor's Office, Luisa Oliveira-OSPCD, Eric Weisman-DPW, Councilor Mark Niedergang, Richard Raiche-IAM, Nick Antanavica-ISD and Jill Lathan-DPW.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Clingan and adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Approval of the February 9, 2021 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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211259: That this Council discuss the costs of placing overhead power and utility lines underground as part of any street reconstruction or resurfacing project, and consider requiring such placement by ordinance, in light of the risks and costs of proliferating utility connections and leaning or doubled poles.

Mr. Raiche stated this is not the first time this has been brought up. He has not found what the costs are and it's not the only factor. He also stated that the underground corridor is a challenge. The corridor they do have on Somerville Ave, was challenging to coordinate. Mr. Raiche also stated that the sidewalks are very narrow and hard to find locations. Cutting through the sidewalk could cut through the tree roots. He said there would also be a challenge of cutting over to other services. The city will need to coordinate service outages to do switch over from one pole to another, which is extremely disruptive in the neighborhoods. Historically there has been issues with leaning double poles in the city but the engineering relationships with Eversource has improved over time. Chair Clingan asked about constructing an ordinance of putting the utilities underground. Mr. Raiche stated pursuing this request could make other projects cost prohibitive.

Councilor White stated this was discussed a couple of years ago and that the city would have to pay for it.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

211383: That the Director of Capital Projects appear before this Council to discuss whether the OSHA record of violations is used as a factor in determining the successful bidder for City contracts.

Mr. Raiche stated that successful bidders must be DCAM certified and OSHA compliant. OSHA compliance is a factor in our contractor selection.

Councilor White asked about the decertification process for DCAM and when would DCAM get involved. Who submits violations to DCAM? Mr. Raiche stated that all construction projects must complete an evaluation form to DCAM. The state compiles all the information about the contractor and provides a score. Safety is one of many factors in scoring and a failing score in any category gives the contractor a failing score. Councilor White asked for information about contractors to consider when deciding to contract with a vendor. Mr. Raiche stated they are consistently reviewing reviews of the contractor and consider the information before selecting contractor for a project. Mr. Raiche also stated the city can set its own requirements and then can select lowest price, but that may not be the deciding factor. Chair Clingan asked for an update from purchasing and IAM on the requirements to making selection of contractors.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

211134: That the Commissioner of Public Works present this Council with a detailed financial analysis of the cost for a municipal program to clear snow from sidewalks in business districts and major thoroughfares.

Councilor Ewen-Campen previously put this order in. He has met with Ms. Lathan and the chair has also spoken with her. Mr. Weisman prepared the analysis and presented to the committee. Back in 2018 or so the first time this conversation came up, he reached out to the city of Newton MA and Rochester, NY who were doing partial or complete snow removal for their cities. They have very different sidewalk dimensions than Somerville. We have narrow sidewalks around trees and benches. At the time, he took what the cities had done and estimated \$270,000 and \$940,000 to do all the sidewalks in the city. The Mobility department suggested different targeted focus, as requested by Councilor Ewen-Campen. It was suggested to look at smaller approaches and pilot from there. Councilor Ewen-Campen was in the audience and added additional feedback on this request. He stated that this is not just about convenience but also about residents who have mobility issues. Engineering has done a city-wide inventory on sidewalks and Mobility has done analysis on the important routes to hospitals. He suggested to focus on the parts of the city that are pedestrian based activities. And as budget allows, to extend to other areas including bus stops. The city's website speaks to clearing of sidewalks. Ewen is waiting for flushed out analysis from mobility and engineering to discuss the budget for clearing the sidewalks. He hopes to continue discussion or at least the plot in this year's budget planning.

Councilor White inquired as to where the plowed sidewalk snow would go? Mr. Weisman stated the cities of Newton and Rochester goals were to put the snow in the space between walking part

of sidewalk and street avoiding pushing to residents' properties. Ms. Lathan stated the city would have to be careful of where to put the snow due to the many bike lanes in the city.

Councilor Ballantyne asked if there is a rough plan on where the pilot would happen? Mr. Weisman state that they have not identified a geographic area yet. Councilor Ballantyne suggested that it would be nice if they target an area such as major thoroughfares around public and senior housing. Councilor Ballantyne asked that these areas be made a priority.

Councilor Ewen-Campen would like to encourage the administration to coordinate the efforts with the various departments to prioritize the areas for a pilot.

Councilor Niedergang was also in the audience to speak on this order and suggested maybe a team to shovel in certain areas.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

210996: That the Director of SPCD, the Director of Parks and Recreation, or the Commissioner of Public Works discuss with this Council the installation of electrical outlets in parks, playgrounds and other public places to charge cell phones, computers, and other such equipment.

Ms. Webber spoke on this item on behalf of Ms. Oliveira who had a conflicting meeting tonight. She requests for additional time to research on this request. There are a number of ways to do this and could include solar. Additionally, Ms. Oliveira would want to make sure the product used are cost effective and that do not grab other data from your cell phone.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

211384: That the Director of Inspectional Services appear before this Council to discuss whether his Department does or may use the OSHA record of applicants for permits as a factor in determining whether to issue the permits.

Mr. Antanavica stated they do not check OSHA records and there are no requirements to do so prior to issuing permits.

Councilor White asked if there is anyway to issue this requirement. Mr. Anatanavica stated they brought this up last budget season which approved the addition of two safety inspectors for this reason of construction safety. Part of the application process would be to review the safety documents as part of their safety application and permit would be issued based on their reviews. Then there would be a field follow up after issuing the permit. Mr. Antanavica also stated this would be educational, not punitive and would be looking for input from the city councilors.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

211338: That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management discuss with this Council a maintenance plan for the city's school buildings, in light of the attached communication.

Mr. Raiche stated there are letters submitted by Councilors Ballantyne and Nierdergang.

The city building maintenance and school committee knew that ventilation improvements were needed in response to COVID. They had encountered problems with the system and brought in Honeywell to address the items. There were 300 deficiencies identified and the city followed up with Honeywell to address. The 200 deficiencies were simple to address and Honeywell took care of them immediately. Honeywell is awaiting parts for the five items at the East Somerville Community School and Winter Hill school is also awaiting parts. Mr. Raiche stated that Honeywell has a contract to maintain and provide services. They are supposed to bring issues to the city's attention. DPW is responsible for the day-to-day operations and IAM is responsible for long terms projects, which require different skills for both departments.

Organizationally, capital projects is a division of IAM with a group of PM overseeing construction projects. They added a position last year for a green building manager, which was needed to bring on the new high school building. They are looking to add a deputy director for capital projects for schools and municipal buildings to assist with the next stage of execution of the Honeywell contract.

Ms. Lathan discussed their organizational chart and their responsibilities with city buildings and schools. They are looking at ways to better support repairs and maintenance for the buildings. The city and school buildings are more intense in terms of their needs for oversight. The DPW side needs someone to handle contracts to insure the work gets done and to improve the building maintenance from over the last several years. Councilor Ballantyne's letter had some criticisms about the buildings. Mr. Raiche stated that even before the deficiencies were discovered and that Honeywell had been underperforming, the city had already started writing the scope of work to create a new contract for the ongoing maintenance. DPW would continue to manage the contract. They are looking to have a new contract in place for the new fiscal year.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about the contract with Honeywell which is coming up on a decade. Mr. Raiche stated the contract was not aligned with managing the buildings. They did not know the extent of the issues until contractors started looking at the systems. Ms. Lathan stated that historically, DPW oversees and manages the Honeywell contract. Ms. Lathan also stated there are some lessons learned to do better such as: missing monthly reports and lacking recommendations from Honeywell. The DPW superintendent position who would oversee the contract, has been vacant for some time. DPW is working closely with Honeywell and they are aware that the city is not pleased with the work. Ms. Lathan now receives monthly reports from Honeywell which had not been happening on a regular basis.

Councilor Niedergang asked if the city has sufficient staff to adequately monitor the buildings. Mr. Raiche stated there is a position for a deputy director that has been vacant for a while. This position has a broad scope and will need a higher salary to attract the right candidate. Additionally, this position is CARES Act eligible due to being COVID related.

Councilor White asked how to deal with a new contract and how to make sure issues do not happen again. Ms. Lathan stated that DPW and IAM are working closer together and the goal is to have the city positions able to detect any issues. There are ongoing communications with DPW from the school with custodians and other issues. There will be some budgetary issues to do the public work needed for the city. Councilor White wants to makes sure there is a smooth working relationship and a flow of information from the schools to DPW to take immediate actions. Ms. Lathan stated the schools can also use the 311 system which is a valuable tool and good way to track the workorders. Councilor White stated there should be a person within DPW

that the schools can reach out to report any issues. Chair Clingan also stated there should be some sort of flagging system for the schools and routed to a liaison for schools. There definitely needs more support for the school maintenance and repair issues.

Councilor Ballantyne commented on the goal of working across departments. She heard the frustration from teachers of understanding of who oversaw the various responsibilities relating to the repair issues for the schools.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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211394: That the Mayor, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, Commissioner of Public Works, and Director of Health and Human Services respond to the attached questions regarding ventilation and school-building readiness from public school parents.

Mr. Raiche continued his slide presentation on the school building COVID-19 readiness addressing questions from Somerville school parents. See attached slides. There were discussions about the potential benefits from the windows, PPE, vaccines, social distancing and testing. They are working with the Incident Commander on these issues to plan for spring, summer and fall re-entering into the schools. IAM is looking to do some work at the Winter Hill school to get them back on track. Mr. Raiche stated they are looking to make the buildings healthy for all for the students and teachers to return to school.

Councilor Niedergang asked for confirmation that social distancing will be three (3) feet as the new standard for COVID-19 social distancing. Mr. Raiche stated the question of six (6) feet has been answered in writing from the city's consultant. The remainder of the questions are being addressed by this presentation.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about revising the plan because the information is changing. She asked what is Mr. Raiche's goal/metric to revise the plan and is there a contingency plan if the city does not meet the goal. She would like to see a contingency plan and to understand the city's goals which should be posted on the city's website.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Housekeeping

210829: That the Commissioner of Public Works address the streetlight outage on the entire length of Fellsway West, resulting from the work being done by DCR at Foss Park.

The chair stated the lights have changed to LED, but only 1/2 the street. Ms. Lathan has discussed this with DPW leadership team and developing a plan to get this done.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Referenced Material:

- Recommendations reasonings memo (with 211338, 211394)
- CC PUPW FinCom School Buildings 2021Mar30 (with 211338, 211394)