



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 15, 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	

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chairman Niedergang at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:18pm.

Others present: Laura Pitone - Ward 5 School Committee Member; Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison; Suzanne Rinfret - Traffic & Parking; Sgt. John Gobiell - Police; Brad Rawson - OSPCD; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees; about 8 Lowell Street-area residents.

Chairman Niedergang asked the Committee members about their priorities, to provide some guidance to Mr. Rawson in terms of what should be addressed in his budget presentation. Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that a more rapid response to implement traffic-calming measures in particularly dangerous locations, to both enhance safety and demonstrate that the City is capable of responding to incidents in a visible and effective way, is a primary concern. Councilor Davis added that capacity is clearly a challenge and a need for more staffing is important, as these issues literally affect lives. He would also like to focus on prevention, rather than “legislating by tragedy.” Chairman Niedergang's top concerns include an organizational restructuring within OSPCD to better manage the huge workload that Transportation and Infrastructure has, as T&I is responsible for traffic and roadway safety as well as open space and trees, all of which are hot issues and top priorities.

**Approval of the April 3, 2019 Minutes**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED</b>
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**Top Strategic Priorities for Making Our Streets Safer**

**207499: That the Administration respond to the requests outlined in the attached resident petition, organized by the Pedestrian and Transit Advocacy Group, to accelerate traffic calming investments and improve coordination and oversight.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**207996: 8 residents submitting comments re: #207499, a proposal to accelerate traffic**

calming investments.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**206946: Requesting the formation of a Resident Transit Advisory Committee as first proposed on February 8, 2018 (see #205100).**

There will be a call for volunteers put out in June and this will move forward.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206691: That the Director of SPCD prioritize for this Board the traffic calming projects in the City, and the process to determine those priorities.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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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.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**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.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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#### **Especially Dangerous Intersections/Areas**

**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.**

Chairman Niedergang said that between 2014-2016 there were a number of neighborhood meetings about Lowell Street, after which several radar speed readers were put in place, along with other traffic calming measures that reduced complaints on the north side of the bridge, but there are still issues on the southern side. In recent months, the volume of concerns and complaints has risen.

Several residents were present to voice their concerns. Mr. Lynch shared that it would be easy to include a flashing stop sign similar to the one located at Porter Street and also on Boston Avenue. Ms. Molloy agreed that since the bridge closures, the traffic volume and speed have gotten worse. Mr. LaFlamme added that the pedestrian traffic is also high there due to the playground. The number of accident reports is excessive. Mr. Haile included that the types of accidents at Hudson and Albion Streets are all very similar, which points to systemic issues, including visibility challenges. Ms. Claudy noted that with crashes, vehicles can also end up on the sidewalk, which poses an extra concern for pedestrians.

Mr. Rawson commented that Lowell Street has been an area of emphasis for a decade or more. The City conducted some low-cost interventions to influence behavior, including painting chicanes and decreasing

the speed limit. The effort culminated when the street was rebuilt in 2015. The City Administration is aware that issues persist that may need more of an engineering intervention. Mr. Rawson confirmed that the speeding is occurring on both the downhill and uphill sides of the street. Chairman Niedergang had previously asked to get the timing on the light at Highland Avenue changed to prevent drivers from trying to speed through it. Mr. Rawson added that the narrow nature of the street can have traffic calming benefits, and inquired whether there were crashes since the curbs were reset last year. The residents present confirmed that there have been two just this year. There are on-call engineering contracts, but the Engineering department is short-staffed, and Mr. Rawson said that they will put together a small scope to evaluate some options. Chairman Niedergang asked for a short-term (1-month) plan, such as bolted pop-ups in the middle of the intersections or speed tables. Mr. Rawson noted that a quick solution to improve visibility at Albion Street might be to reduce parking spaces. Chairman Niedergang would support that but would prefer a physical solution. Traffic & Infrastructure will report back on what can be done.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for clarification on how a stop sign would be implemented procedurally. Mr. Rawson detailed that the regulations are set by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) which is mandated by the federal government. There are a series of criteria that must be met, including site distances and crash history. There is no reason yet to believe that a stop sign would not be permissible here, but it is possible that it may be too close to the next signal. However, he added, a stop sign is intended to control turning movements, and is not specifically designed to be a traffic calming device.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**196311: That the Administration report to this Board the timetable for using the \$220,000 in traffic mitigation funds paid by Maxwell's Green in 2011 for traffic-slowing measures on both sides of the Lowell Street bridge.**

See #208031

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**196436: That the Administration report to this Board on plans to slow traffic on Lowell Street, make its intersections safer, and use the \$220,000 contributed by Maxwell's Green for traffic calming.**

See #208031

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**208033: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install new, vehicle-safe, bolt-in-place YIELD FOR PEDESTRIANS IN CROSSWALK signs at the intersections of Lowell and Hudson Streets and Lowell and Albion Streets, as soon as they are available.**

See #208031

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**208117: That the Director of SPCD immediately install flex posts at the intersection of Holland Street and Cameron Avenue to ensure pedestrian safety.**

Mr. Rawson shared that there is a striping plan for Cameron Avenue, which has the highest observed speeds of any of the 30-40 streets for which there are recorded data in Somerville. There are also efforts to establish a new bike lane, and to recess the stop line to accommodate a bike box. The flex posts have seen success on significant arterial roads, and may be suitable for Holland Street as a short-term measure. Sgt. Gobiell noted that this would also be helpful for out-of-town drivers, to draw their attention to the need to slow down. Holland Street is also on the paving list for next year, and there may be additional changes made at that time, based on feedback from a community process which will be undertaken soon.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**203446: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install additional pedestrian safety measures at the intersection of Holland Street and Cameron Avenue.**

See #208117

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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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 noted that this is a long-standing issue and some action needs to be taken. Mr. Rawson agreed that the width of the street and the confusion of the offset intersection is significant. After a meeting with counterparts in Cambridge, they have agreed to joint financing to excavate the splitter island and move toward a more traditional four-way intersection. It will require significant construction which can probably not be completed within this construction season. There may, however, be a striping solution that could help in the shorter term (i.e. in the 2019 season). Councilor Davis added that this would all be helpful, but the other side of Beech Street is an even greater concern. Flex posts, lighting, and bump-outs could all be useful short-term solutions.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**207487: That the Director of Traffic and Parking update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for crosswalk safety improvements at the locations specified within.**

Councilor Davis wondered if there are any crosswalks on the list submitted where the issue is NOT the need to establish an ADA compliant ramp. Mr. Rawson stated that this is the challenge for all of the College Avenue locations. Councilor Davis asked for a written update on each specific location and if there are timelines for updates to be implemented.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**207486: That the Director of Engineering and the Director of Traffic and Parking update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for crosswalks at locations specified within.**

Councilor Davis asked for a written update on each specific location and if there are timelines for updates to be implemented.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**200640: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a flashing PEDESTRIAN CROSSING sign and/or take other measures to ensure pedestrian safety at College Avenue at Kidder Avenue.**

A flashing sign has been installed, which helps one side more than the other, but has been useful.

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

**208008: That the Director of SPCD implement traffic calming and pedestrian and cyclist safety measures on Broadway from Powder House Circle to Teele Square.**

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**206687: That the Director of Engineering build a crosswalk to allow pedestrians to safely cross Washington Street at the Public Safety Building.**

Mr. Rawson stated that there are some sidewalk concerns, stormwater issues and utility work that have hindered any efforts to build a crosswalk in this location, so no progress has been made. Chairman Niedergang pointed out that private development is likely at some point in the next 5 years on the block where the Public Safety Building is located, and we can demand changes at that point, but it would be better if it were to happen prior.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**204965: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a crosswalk at Woods Avenue and Route 16.**

Mr. Rawson noted that there is no progress to report at this time, but this will be revisited with DCR.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**207918: That the Director of Traffic and Parking urgently prioritize pedestrian safety at the intersection of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue, which was identified as one of the most unsafe intersections in the city.**

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that there is a long-term vision for this area, but wondered if any progress had been made. Mr. Rawson added that with the construction of the High School, issues including striping, parking, and site lines are all being considered. There has been some success working on traffic signal modifications with the MBTA and GLXC; this is an area that the City has asked them to review.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**207919: That the Director of Traffic and Parking prioritize pedestrian safety at the intersection of Vinal and Highland Avenues with re-painting and additional signage.**

Ms. Rinfret delivered a second pedestrian sign for this intersection, which Councilor Ewen-Campen said seems to be helping.

**RESULT: WORK COMPLETED**

**208044: That the Director of SPCD place speed bumps across Craigie Street near the entrances to the Morse Kelley and Dickerman playgrounds.**

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that given that there are two parks there, traffic calming is important in this area. Raised crosswalks were an option suggested by Mr. Tremblay, and should be pursued further. Mr. Rawson added that a Blue Bikes site will be in this location as well, and additional pavement marking solutions will be explored.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**208045: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 3 City Councilor on plans for raised crosswalks on Summer Street at Belmont and/or Lowell Streets, as well as other nearby traffic calming improvements.**

Mr. Rawson noted that drainage is a limiting factor, and engineering.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**Somerville Police Enforcement Issues**

**207738: That the Chief of Police report to this Council how, in this time of bridge closures and traffic frustrations, the Police Department can assign more Officers to the Traffic Enforcement Division, instruct more Patrol Officers to prioritize traffic enforcement, and increase the ratio of payable to warning citations.**

Sgt. Gobiell said that there are four new officers on bicycles that were assigned beginning in April, and there have been positive results, including removing two guns from the streets. They have been asked to do more enforcement on the Beacon Street and Somerville Avenue corridors, which are difficult to enforce in a cruiser. This includes speed enforcement, with the addition of more Lidar units. This program will remain in place for at least a year.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**207882: That the Chief of Police discuss the feasibility of detail officers issuing moving violation citations during detail work connected with detours and road reconstruction.**

Sgt. Gobiell reported that the main part of the safety officer's duty is to focus on the traffic flow, but in egregious circumstances, there may be violations issued.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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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.**

Chairman Niedergang commented that this is an entrenched issue and that it will take time to change the culture of driving in the City, but it would solve a lot of problems if drivers would stop when they are supposed to. Sgt. Gobiell shared that there is an \$8,000 grant received by the Department to conduct enforcement using a human decoy, which will provide a useful educational tool. It would also be helpful to find a way to enforce pedestrian utilization of the crosswalks, he remarked. Councilor Davis noted that

this is why there are so many requests for new crosswalks and he supports placing them where they need to be for pedestrians to actually use them. Councilor Ewen-Campen wondered if the issues were primarily with residents or people passing through. Chairman Niedergang asked for a breakdown of the data from the citations, and what percent of them are issued to residents, to help inform how to best direct a public relations campaign. Councilor Davis added that a further issue is that the marked stop line is not always the most helpful place to stop, so the education should focus on encouraging drivers to stop there first.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**204572: That the Chief of Police, the Director of Traffic and Parking and the Director of SPCD monitor traffic speeds on North Street, High Street, Fairfax Street, Sterling Street, Gordon Street and Woods Avenue and suggest traffic dampening measures.**

Sgt. Gobiell noted that there are not many complaints, and subsequently not much enforcement, on these side streets, as enforcement is mostly focused on the intersections and adjacent Alewife Brook Parkway.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**Pedestrian Safety Issues (for the Traffic and Parking Dept.)**

**205691: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on the possibility of re-striping faded crosswalks whenever necessary, instead of once a year.**

Ms. Rinfret noted that the painting can only be done in specific weather conditions due to the nature of the paint, so is typically not started until April at the earliest. It is the responsibility of the contractor to replace pavement markings if they have altered them, though this does not always happen in practice. Councilor Davis suggested that this be included in the contracts and that some marking, however interim, is important. Traffic and Parking is responsible for maintenance; it is Engineering that is responsible for any new markings after a contractor has done work on a street. Any new pavement must wait several weeks before painting can be put down, though there is an option for temporary tape.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about center lines and Ms. Rinfret responded that yellow center lines are typically not re-painted because it tends to increase speed. The City is moving away from using these types of center lines, even on two-way streets, to discourage speeding.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**202105: That the Administration develop a process for interim crosswalk painting and/or other measures to protect pedestrians when road work or other conditions prevent the immediate re-striping of road markings.**

See #205691

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**202104: That the Director of Traffic and Parking and the Director of Engineering report to this Board on the timeframe for re-striping crosswalks that are erased due to repaving or construction.**

See #205691

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**203859: That the Director of Traffic and Parking limit cut through traffic on Hanson Street by installing signage that allows abutters only at 7–9AM and 4–7 PM at identified locations, and ensure that this matter is addressed at the Traffic Commission's next meeting, on July 20, 2017.**

Ms. Rinfret stated that the requested sign is up.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**207893: That the Director of Traffic and Parking replace the NO TURN ON RED sign at the intersection of Day and Elm Streets with a sign allowing RIGHT TURN ON RED AFTER STOP – YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS, or similar wording.**

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**207927: That the Director of Traffic and Parking reset the NO LEFT TURN (at certain times) sign at the corner of College and Kidder Avenues so it's clearly visible to traffic traveling south on College Avenue. (2nd request)**

Ms. Rinfret stated that a second sign has been added about a month ago, so there are now signs facing both ways.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**207894: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on the timeframe for acquiring new signal switching equipment to allow additional traffic/pedestrian cycles in Davis Square.**

Mr. Rawson commented that a third party engineer completed a memo relative to phase one of these improvements. With new and returning staff in his department, a phase two process can now be started. Councilor Davis asked what sort of timeline this would entail. There is a plan from the engineer, so the next steps are to get a quote for installation. The signal timing plan has been extended as far as possible with existing equipment. Mr. Rawson suggested that a cost estimate can likely be provided within 30 days, with implementation taking place in late summer.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**202933: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking advise this Board whether diagonal crosswalk markings can be painted at certain intersections.**

Sgt. Gobel noted that curb cuts would be an issue, and it would be difficult to comply with ADA requirements. Ms. Connor added that there may be state restrictions as well. She will research further. Ms. Rinfret added further that it would also have to be a four-way stop.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**Housekeeping - Items to be marked Complete**



**208032: That the Director of Traffic and Parking place flexible YIELD FOR PEDESTRIANS IN CROSSWALK signs at the intersections of Lowell and Hudson Streets and Lowell and Albion Streets.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**207331: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board in writing no later than February 4 about traffic calming measures to be deployed in the Ball Square area to slow down cut-through traffic before the Ball Square Broadway Bridge closes, currently scheduled for about March 1.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**207163: That the Director of SPCD make lane markings on Broadway in Winter Hill a top priority for next year's construction season.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206851: That the Director of SPCD develop a physical traffic calming infrastructure on Morrison Avenue between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue, before the Broadway/Ball Square Bridge closes in January 2019.**

Councilor Davis's motion *that the Director of SPCD advise the Committee of the plans to create traffic calming infrastructure on Morrison Avenue between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue* was approved.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**200052: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on the feasibility of a traffic light at Foley Street and Middlesex Avenue.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**200146: That the Director of Traffic and Parking, the Chief of Police and the Director of SPCD review the traffic problems in East Somerville and develop a traffic improvement plan.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**200153: That the Commissioner of Public Works NOT paint the double yellow line on Kidder Avenue when the road is repaved and instead, add a clearly marked bike lane.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**200232: That the Director of Traffic and Parking explore speed reducing measures on New Washington Street, behind Cobble Hill and by the dog park.**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**200247: That the Director of Traffic and Parking explain the policy of guest parking passes expiring on Saturdays.**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**202984: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report the number of guest passes and resident parking stickers issued for FY15, FY16 and FY17 to date.**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**204126: That the Director of the Traffic and Parking erect signs at strategic points of entry to the City which state: "Entering a bike community, be aware of cyclists and bike lanes."**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**Handout:**

- Letter - T Lynch (with 208031)