



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES**

July 8, 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	Absent	

Committee members present: Chair Niedergang and Councilor Ewen-Campen. Councilor Davis was not present as he was out of the country.

Others present: Councilor-at-Large Mbah, Councilor Scott, Suzanne Rinfret, Brad Rawson, Lt. Polito and Sergeant Gobiell.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Niedergang and adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Approval of the May 15, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Dangerous Intersections/Areas: Policy and Specific Locations

207996: 8 residents submitting comments re: #207499, a proposal to accelerate traffic calming investments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.

Items 208031 & 208319 were discussed together. Mr. Rawson and Ms. Rinfret provided a brief update on actions taken by the Administration at Lowell and Albion and Hudson Streets. Flashing stop signs have been installed as Chair Niedergang requested. Mr. Rawson said he is not inclined to install a temporary rubber speed bump as that requires drilling dozens of holes into the pavement to hold it down. When the speed bump is removed for the winter, there is no way to avoid water getting into the holes and ruining the street surface. Since Lowell Street was just repaved, he doesn't think this makes sense. Mr. Rawson did agree, in response to Chair Niedergang's comment that there is \$220,000 available from the Maxwell's Green development, to have his staff look into the possibility of a raised traffic calming table at Lowell and Albion.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208319: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install flashing STOP signs at the intersections of Lowell Street with Hudson and with Albion Streets to prevent accidents caused by cars entering onto Lowell Street.

Items 208031 & 208319 were discussed together.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

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.

Items 208278 & 208378 were discussed together.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.

Items 208278 & 208378 were discussed together. Mr. Rawson said that he is aware of the high volume of traffic due to the bridge closures, and asked the Chair if speed was also a problem. Chair Niedergang said yes, he has heard from residents that speeding remains a problem during non-rush hours when there is not a lot of traffic. Mr. Rawson said that there is a street-painting contractor doing work in the City this week and that maybe painting the road will assist with traffic calming. The Chair urged him to do some street painting on Morrison Ave.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

Items 208117 & 203446 were discussed together.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

Items 208117 & 203446 were discussed together. Mr. Rawson said that he did not have an update on this location. Chair Niedergang stated that in his experience, this is one of the most dangerous intersections in the City, and he urged Mr. Rawson to take immediate steps to avert a tragedy there, perhaps by using the paint crew to lay down some traffic-calming treatments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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
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206189: That the Director of SPCD provide recommendations to improve pedestrian safety at the dangerous intersection of Walnut Street, Summit Avenue and Boston Street.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208252: That the Director of SPCD perform traffic volume and speed studies on Summit Avenue and Boston Street during morning and evening rush hours and report the findings to the Ward 3 City Councilor.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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 referenced a PowerPoint presentation about traffic issues on Prospect Hill that was created by a former OSPCD Transportation & Infrastructure staff member detailing the volume, speed and other data from 2017 based upon City staff members collecting data. Mr. Bogen, who has been a resident in the area for a long time, stated that cars come through the area without stopping. He suggested putting a sign with no passage except for abutters between 7-9 a.m. Mr. Rawson stated he would order data collection for the Boston St. and Greenville Ave. area and suggested neighborhood conversations about best steps to take. Lt. Polito suggested making Boston St. a one-way heading to Walnut which would stop all traffic heading eastbound.

Councilor Ewen-Campen will check with the neighborhood about this idea. He may make a formal request to the City Council at this Thursday's meeting for some signage changes.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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 stated he is waiting for staff capacity to work on this request.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.

Mr. Rawson has asked City staff to start investigating what is in the ground at this spot. He'd like to implement this request but wants to make sure there are no challenges in terms of utilities, tree roots, etc. underneath where the bollards would be sunk into the ground in concrete.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208481: That the Director of SPCD present safety interventions for the intersection of Washington Terrace and Washington Street in light of the recent accident there.

There are cars frequently parked in the fire lane in Washington Terrace and visibility is not great. Ms. Rinfret and Mr. Rawson have already been working to resolve this issue and they will continue to do so but it is not clear exactly what the solution is yet.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

207903: That the Director of SPCD discuss with this Council the use of "concurrent with leading interval" pedestrian crossing timing at major intersections that see high usage by school and pre-school children, particularly at the intersection of Beacon and Washington Streets, and consider reversion to pedestrian-exclusive crossing timing at several relevant intersections.

This item took the bulk of the time at the meeting. Councilors Scott and Mbah attended to speak on this matter along with four members from the community. Councilor Scott introduced the issue and gave a brief history of what has transpired. This request was initially submitted back in March with others that followed. The request is to revert the signal to include a much longer pedestrian-exclusive phase to allow more time for vulnerable residents to cross safely. It was stated that this crossing is a hazardous area for pedestrians and also that the intersection is challenging and dangerous for all users. Four members from the community spoke about drivers not seeing pedestrians trying to cross with some almost being hit by vehicles. The owners/operators of a local daycare appeared before the Committee and described how many times during the day they take the children out to the playground and how dangerous crossing

this intersection is for children, parents and day care staff. A petition was signed over the July 4th holiday by 90 members of the community to return the signal to the previous safer setting. Councilor-at-Large Mbah stated his inbox has been flooded with many requests to convert back to an “All 4-way” signal and/ to have crossing guards/police details. Lt. Polito stated that crossing guards do not work in the summer and would typically go out into the street when the light is green and help crossing children crossing by themselves, but would not help parents with children or other able-bodied adults. Lt. Polito stated he would speak to the Chief of Police about this matter and see what the SPD could provide and respond back to the Committee. Mr. Rawson said that he had already requested a change to the signal lights in this area, but that because this part of Beacon Street is under state control due to the ongoing street construction project, he can’t say by when it would be done. Councilor Ewen-Campen inquired about how long State DOT will be in control of the signals, due to construction in this area. Mr. Rawson said that the state hopes to complete their work and turn the street back over to the City by the fall. The project on Beacon Street is a \$10M project with federal funds administered by the state. It was agreed that returning to a 4-way exclusive pedestrian phase for the signal would be the best solution for Washington/Beacon intersection. Mr. Rawson said that he would do everything he can to get the State DOT, with whom the City has a good relationship, to make the change as soon as possible, but quite likely this would take somewhere between 3-6 weeks.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Bicycle and bike-lane related issues

207997: 10 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

See discussion of item# 208448.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208448: 2 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

Mr. Rawson began with an overview and some history. The Powderhouse Boulevard street reconstruction project started as a utility renewal project with a \$5M investment. Eventually the project was broadened and another \$5 million was added to the budget. There is a need for traffic calming especially around the West Somerville Neighborhood School. The original design called for painted, unprotected bike lanes, but discussion with the community and with the Somerville Bicycle Committee lead to creation of an option for protected bike lanes, which would be much safer for bicyclists, calm traffic better, and incentivize many more people to bike there. Mr. Rawson stated that as many as 200 parking spaces could be “repurposed” i.e. removed, if the most aggressive proposal for protected bike lanes were implemented, but the Administration is looking at options that will take away fewer parking spaces and also ensure that neighborhood institutions such as Doherty Funeral Home, the WSNS, and the church have adequate parking, especially when needed for occasional large events. . There have been several meetings, a great deal of discussion with and within the community, and bicycling advocates have been going door-to-door and conducting parking counts to discuss options with residents. City staff have also been conducting parking counts. Different sections of the Boulevard have

very different parking needs; there appears to be more than enough spaces between Powderhouse Circle and Packard Avenue but as one goes further down the Boulevard, parking gets much tighter. The Administration is considering a number of ways to resolve the parking concerns so that residents' parking challenges do not get worse and so that public safety can be enhanced through protected bike lanes. Mr. Rawson stated they are not prepared to make a recommendation to the Mayor as of yet, and there will be another community meeting, perhaps in August. This issue remains a work in progress.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208227: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

See discussion of item# 208448.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208110: 6 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

See discussion of item# 208448.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208313: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

See discussion of item# 208448.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208041: That the Director of SPCD and the Bicycle Committee update this Council's Traffic and Parking Committee on establishing a comprehensive city-wide bicycle plan.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206693: That the Director of SPCD or the Director of Traffic and Parking alter the cycle of the traffic signals at Lowell Street and Highland Avenue ASAP to allow more time for vehicles to turn onto Highland Avenue from Lowell Street, especially during the morning rush hour, to alleviate the traffic backup on Hudson Street when the Cedar Street/Highland Avenue intersection is closed for construction.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Parking 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.

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

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208483: That the Director of Traffic and Parking provide an update on progress regarding processing residential permits.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208480: That the Director of Traffic and Parking update the Ward 3 Councilor on efforts to update the Business Parking Permits in Union Square, and in particular to prioritize such permits for those local non-profit service providers whose service requires a vehicle.

Ms. Rinfret stated the City is not giving out business parking permits in Union Square at this time because they are at saturation level. It was stated that Bow Street Market and other businesses are also looking for permits. Permits are issued for up to one year. Ms. Rinfret also stated that there are 2-hour parking meters on Somerville Ave. which workers at local non-profits could use. Ms. Rinfret stated that no other municipality offers a business parking permit program like Somerville. Committee members requested that clearer language be put on the City's website about this program so that businesses would understand better the current status of the program. Ms. Rinfret said that would not be a good thing to do as it is complicated, may change, and people don't read complicated stuff on websites carefully so trying to explain the current status would likely lead to even more confusion. When businesses call to inquire, T&P staff explain to them in detail what is going on. Councilor Ewen-Campen said that he believes there should be a preference for non-profits that are helping needy people in the community, but Ms. Rinfret said that would be hard to define clearly as there are doctors, nurses, and many helping organizations in the City.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208475: That the Traffic Commission consider making Mt. Pleasant Street a 2 or 4-hour parking zone during work hours to discourage motorists from parking there to take the Orange Line.

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

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handouts:

- Prospect Hill Traffic Calming (with 206189, 207918, 208252)
- Petition to reinstate timing at Kirkland, Washing & Beacon St (with 207903)
- A Shapiro - email (with 208480)