



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

April 3, 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	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Chief David Fallon - SPD, Lt. Jim Polito and several other SPD officers and staff, Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

Councilor McLaughlin was absent due to his attending a park development meeting in his ward.

The meeting took place in the Council Chamber and was called to order at 6:06 PM by Chairman Niedergang and adjourned at 9:24 PM.

There were approximately 30 members from the community in attendance of whom 20 signed up to speak at the public hearing.

Chairman Niedergang explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to hear from the community on the petition signed in February by 350 people. He stated there will be a Vision Zero meeting on Wednesday April 24th at 6 p.m. at the East Somerville Community School auditorium at which there will be an opportunity for extensive discussion by community members. Written testimony can be submitted to citycouncil@somervillema.gov and to cityclerk@somervillema.gov to be included as an official record by Friday, April 12th.

Approval of the December 5, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

Approval of the February 19, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

Public Hearing - Item # 207499

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.

Chris Allen, one of the petitioners, presented slides on behalf of the Somerville Pedestrian/Transit Advocacy Group which has been meeting for over a year. The slide presentation is attached to these minutes. Mr. Allen stated that Somerville's streets, already dangerous for pedestrians, are becoming even more so as more larger vehicles like SUVs and pickup trucks are on the roads.

He talked about the following items to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety:

- Changing signal timing of lights
- Lack of police enforcement
- Cultural changes in government
- Priorities for changes (how to balance interventions)
- A permanent City-staffed pedestrian advocacy committee by June 2019
- Crosswalks

Mr. Rawson stated that the slides from tonight's presentation are available on the City's website. (They are also attached to these minutes.) He talked about the huge changes in street infrastructure put into effect in the past decade such as: raised traffic-calming tables back in 2007, restriping Bow Street in 2009, work completed on East Broadway in 2015. He described the Vision Zero program and said that it is rooted in good data, such as vehicle counts and crash reports. . He talked about Somerville's Vision Zero Action Plan and when the taskforce was first formed, street team outreach and drafting a final plan for public comment. Mr. Rawson's presentation focused on the key strategic areas of setting and enforcing safe speed limits, separate bike lanes, modernizing signal equipment, safer pedestrian crossings and the risks from large trucks and ride-hailing services.

The public hearing began at approximately 6:55 p.m.

Approximately 20 community members signed up to speak . Their comments are summarized here:

- No traffic or police enforcement in residential areas
- Need to ticket people who do not stop for pedestrians in crosswalk
- Need more crosswalks
- Make pedestrian safety a priority
- Lack of drop off areas for parents/students at some schools

- Speed limit should be 20 mph citywide
- DCR local speed limit should be 20 mph
- Racial profiling on local level
- Cycling infrastructure has come a long way
- Need to better educate drivers
- Collecting data will help to let the City know which streets need more attention
- No safe areas for children to walk
- Overlapping signals makes it hard to cross if you cannot walk quickly
- Flex posts may calm traffic, but are flattened due to traffic

Public Hearing ended at 7:38 p.m.

Following the Public Hearing, there was extensive discussion between Councilors and the Administration about policy, programs, priorities, budgets, and a range of specific problems.

Councilor Rossetti asked if there is a comprehensive plan for traffic calming that Mr. Rawson and staff are on working to present to the Council. There was a question about enforcement of traffic laws by the SPD. Chief Fallon responded that he has assigned four additional officers to the Traffic Department, and that they will be deployed on bicycles to be able to get around more quickly in congested areas. Councilor Rossetti inquired if the four officers would be sufficient for the entire City and asked that Chief Fallon reassess this matter in 6 months. Councilor Ewen-Campen was pleased with the news of the new officers and said he hoped it will be helpful with distracted drivers. There was also a discussion about racial profiling in Somerville. Chief Fallon reported that data was submitted to the Registry of Motor Vehicles and state officials found nothing wrong. Other discussions were about Mr. Rawson's team and does he have enough staff to get the requested work done. Councilor Ballantyne referenced a previous City campaign to teach drivers about pedestrians in crosswalks, saying it had been effective and could there be a similar campaign now. Mr. Rawson discussed concurrent traffic signalization and in response to criticism by Councilor Scott said that he is working to refine the policy framework and improve the timing of the signals on Beacon Street. Councilor Scott inquired about the staffing level of the three positions for Mr. Rawson's team and Mr. Rawson replied that they expect to have them filled this spring. Councilor White suggested establishing metrics to see what areas need the most help. Additionally, he suggested Mr. Rawson present his budget request and plan with goals during the annual budget meetings in June.

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

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202862: That the Director of Traffic and Parking explain its policy of reporting back to citizens who submit traffic calming petitions.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204323: That the Director of SPCD, the Director of Traffic and Parking, and the Commissioner of Public Works suggest additional measures to slow the speeding traffic at the crosswalk in front of the West Somerville Neighborhood School.

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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handouts:

- 2019-4-3 Public Hearing Staff Presentation (with 207499)
- Somerville Pedestrian _ Transit Advocacy Group (with 207499)