



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 24, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:03 PM by Chair Sait and adjourned at 7:32 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Burnley and Sait), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Director Brad Rawson – Mobility, Director Brian Postlewaite - Engineering, Deputy Chief James Donovan – SPD, Suzanne Rinfrett – Parking, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0361](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Traffic and Parking Committee Meeting of February 24, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Wilson

2. Order (ID # [25-0511](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld That the Director of Mobility install speed humps on Elmwood Street.

Director Rawson said that Elmwood Street will be added to the evaluation list and that the next will be the collection of data, which now is about 6-12 months out, so hopefully data can be collected 2025. Councilor Wilson asked what pro-active evaluation takes place on surrounding streets after a street get traffic calming and the Director responded that staff tries to anticipate any effects of traffic calming in the surrounding areas prior to implementation, noting that resources and staff time are finite, and every dollar spent on traffic calming is a dollar that could be spent on design.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

3. Order (ID # [25-0490](#)) By Councilor Sait That the Director of Engineering provide an update on the construction of the Lowell Street crosswalk facing the Magoun Square Green Line station.

Director Postlewaite reported that the city has engaged a consultant to work on both the Lowell and School Street crossings. The projects have been

coupled because both have Complete Streets components, and both are at or on MA DOT bridges. Although the projects are on the same timeline, they are not linked. Currently, the project is in the data collection phase and the design options should be ready in late spring or early summer. Following that, there will be meetings with MA DOT for a final solution. If everything goes perfectly and plans are approved by MA DOT, this could be constructed sometime in 2026, however it's more likely that MA DOT will require additional adjustments, so a more realistic timeline for construction would be during the summer of 2027.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [25-0480](#))

By Councilor Sait

That the Director of Engineering and the Director of Mobility shorten the cycle time of the traffic light at the intersection of Medford Street and Lowell Street.

Director Postlewaite said that staff is working to simplify and improve this signal. He explained that this signal interacts with the signal at the intersection of Broadway and Medford Street, so changing one affects the other. This signal box was updated last year to allow both intersections to be coordinated on a 2-minute cycle. Adjusting only the Lowell Street signal would cause more problems at the Broadway/Medford Street intersection, causing a traffic backup on Medford and creating more gridlock and coordinating the signals minimizes the effects. Director Rawson explained that signal cycle lengths are determined by the amount of time required to cross a street using the longest pedestrian crosswalk, (calculated at 3 feet per second) so in order to have short cycles, narrow streets are needed, and that's why the city is focused on lane reductions.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [25-0479](#))

By Councilor Sait

That the Chief of Police increase traffic enforcement at the intersection of Broadway and Medford Street.

Deputy Chief Donovan said that the department will monitor the area and increase enforcement. He asked the Chair what infractions she was concerned about. Chair Sait replied that among the fundamental issues were vehicle speed, running red lights, and left-hand turns. Councilor Wilson reported that a car has been parking in the intersection at Dexter Street and Broadway and that there is also confusion about how to exit the municipal parking lot in Magoun Square. Deputy Chief Donovan explained that the parking lot signal is triggered by a sensor at the exit of the lot and if a vehicle does not pull up far enough to trigger it, it makes it seem like the traffic signal has an extended timing cycle. Councilor Burnley noted that the

bike lane on the other side of the street is often blocked and needs more enforcement.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [25-0478](#))

By Councilor Sait

That the Commissioner of Public Works install two safety bollards on the sidewalk at the intersection of Medford Street and Broadway.

Director Rawson explained that bollards are a design treatment that is handled in several ways. Chair Sait noted that the bollard in question was knocked down by a truck almost a year ago, with the truck ending up on the sidewalk. She believes that a single bollard does not provide enough protection, and she pointed out that there is nothing there now. Director Rawson didn't have a response but said that he will contact the Engineering and Public Works Departments to determine what can be done. Director Postlewaite commented that the DPW is aware of this matter, however, there has yet to be conversations about the long-term vision. Director Rawson noted that this area is on the city's 5-year plan, so more long-term choices may be available when that gets underway.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-0472](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Parking update the Ward 1 City Councilor on the recently installed signs prohibiting parking during snow emergencies on Otis Street.

Director Rinfret reported that the signs have been in place for 2 years and that new DO NOT BLOCK DRIVEWAY signage has been added.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Order
(ID # [25-0471](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson

That the Chief of Police prioritize Otis Street for traffic enforcement during school drop off and pick up times.

Deputy Chief Donovan reported that the Police Department collaborated with the School Department to encourage parents to pull over during those times. Councilor Wilson noted that parking in front of driveways has also been an issue there and Deputy Chief Donovan said that he would ask the School Department to advise parents on this.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Order
(ID # [25-0461](#))
- By Councilor Mbah
- That the Director of Engineering and Director of Mobility install a traffic signal light at the end of Woods Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway.
- Director Postlewaite explained that this is not a city street, therefore the city does not have jurisdiction. The matter needs to be taken to DCR and the city's state delegation for action. The Director commented that technically it's doable and there are no "red flags", but the state would have to pull the needed resources together and that's more challenging. Director Rawson commented that the city is working with the state to improve overall safety on Alewife Brook Parkway.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
10. Order
(ID # [25-0394](#))
- By Councilor Wilson
- That the Director of Mobility and Director of Engineering discuss with this Council the effectiveness of speed cushions as a traffic calming measure and potential applications on key Fire Department response routes.
- Director Rawson explained that these are speed humps with cutouts that could allow vehicles with wider wheelbases, e.g., fire trucks, to traverse those cutouts. The city has thought about these as a treatment, and, as always, plans speed humps in consultation with the Fire Department. The Director informed the members that it's been observed that when a speed hump does not go to the curb, motorists tend to move to the curb to avoid the bump. Councilor Wilson questioned if the speed cushions might create more difficulty for snowplows by leaving snow in the gaps. Director Rawson said that any trials of the calming measures would be performed on lower traffic volume and relatively flat streets.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
11. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-0362](#))
- Director of Parking responding to item #25-0084 regarding the Citywide Parking and Curb Use Study.
- Councilor Wilson asked about a recommendation to revise the parking permit fee structure being off the table. Director Rinfret explained that the department is trying to change the behavior of residents with respect to the reduction of parking spaces in the city. She feels that an increase in fees would anger some people and appear to be a case of the city getting more and giving less. She reported that there has been an increase in illegal parking complaints, i.e., a vehicle being parked in the same place for 48 hours, due to the additional demand for parking. Director Rinfret noted that it's been several years since the fee was increased and that ultimately, any

fee increase would have to be done at the administrative level.

Director Rawson commented that the implementation of the study's recommendations could be phased in over time since multiple city departments would need to be involved. He also noted that there was also talk about different fees for larger vehicles as well as an income verification process. Director Rinfrett explained that the fee structure would have to be changed if income verification is implemented and said that the current system does not have the capacity to do that. She went on to say that renewals are done in 8 zones to spread out the workflow, pointing out that the city doesn't know when someone with a permit moves out of the city. Councilor Wilson said he wonders how helpful it would be to have a central hub to adjust fees across departments.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

12. Order
(ID # [25-0352](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of Mobility design measures to improve pedestrian safety at Summer Street and Porter Street.

Director Rawson said that the Mobility Department would be happy to add this location to its list and noted that the work for this year is already booked. He will investigate any quick build options that might be available and will update the committee.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

13. Order
(ID # [25-0351](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of Mobility design measures to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Prospect Hill Parkway.

Discussed with 25-0231

Director Rawson said that the Mobility Department would be happy to add this location to its list.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

14. Order
(ID # [25-0231](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Mobility prioritize North Street for speed humps and other traffic calming measures.

Discussed with 25-0351

Director Rawson said that the Mobility Department would be happy to add this location to its list.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

15. Order
(ID # [25-0139](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Parking place NO IDLING signs on New Washington Street, behind the Cobble Hill complex, to discourage large truck idling by the senior homes.

Director Rinfret reported that the signs are in place now.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

16. Order
(ID # [25-0038](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Chief of Police, the Director of Parking and the Director of Mobility discuss the previous and ongoing strategy for implementation and public education of drivers violating the NO LEFT TURN signage at the Somerville High School exit on Highland Avenue and Vinal Avenue.

Deputy Chief Donovan verified that signage is in place, a crossing guard has been assigned to this location, and that officers will perform enforcement. He noted that there may be visibility issues with the signage, thus requiring additional signage.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED