

**City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission**

January 15, 2019

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. Councilor Jim Nash called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this meeting.
2. Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Councilor Jim Nash, Chair	X	
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Vice Chair	X	
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
David Pomerantz, Director of Central Services	X	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	X	
Gary Hartwell, Citizen	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	X	Arrived at 4:04 pm
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	.
Alan Verson, Planning Board	X	Arrived at 4:04pm Left at 5:34 pm
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement	X	
Maggie Chan, Traffic Engineer	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment:

- Michelle Miller of 374 Old Montague Road in Amherst said that her vehicle was booted in Northampton two weeks ago. She did have five parking tickets that had not been acted upon. She found the experience scary and uncomfortable. When she returned to her car, she found a seizure notice on her vehicle. She didn't know what it meant, didn't realize that the boot was on, and didn't know who to call. She suggested that the seizure notice be revised for clarity (possibly including a graphic of a boot on a tire) and that a detailed message be on the voicemail of the number to call for more information. She also suggested that a warning notice be given to the driver (either by mail or on the vehicle) before the seizure notice is issued and the booting takes place.

3. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the December 18, 2018 meeting.	Gary Hartwell	Jody Kasper	Yes, 11 No, 0 Abstain, 0

There was an amendment proposed to the minutes by Councilor Nash, followed by a brief discussion.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes as amended from the December 18, 2018 meeting.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Jody Kasper	Yes, 11 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations:

- Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates – Director Donna LaScaleia:
 - **Paving Contracts 2018**
 - a. Work for this contract has stopped for the season;
 - **Jackson Street Signal Upgrades**
 - a. Dagle Electrical Construction Corporation is working on upgrading the traffic signal equipment at the intersection of Jackson Street, Bridge Road and Cooke Avenue. This project also includes the installation of school zone flashing beacons on Bridge Street by the elementary school. The contractor will continue work through the winter as weather allows;
 - **Burts Pit Road**
 - a. The bid opening for the Burts Pit Road paving project is on January 16, 2019. This is a \$2 million project which includes repaving approximately 1.7 miles, curb work, culvert rehabilitation and drainage improvements.
- Department of Planning and Sustainability Updates – Director Wayne Feiden:
 - A contract has been awarded for \$100,000 of repairs to the bike path to correct damage caused by tree roots;
 - They are looking at trees to determine which ones might need to be cut down.
- Councilor Nash announced that he and Gary Hartwell met with PVTA. PVTA will be attending the next TPC meeting to provide reports on ridership in Northampton. They will also present a concept that they are developing that would turn the Bus 44 route into a loop rather than the current crescent shape.

5. Matters before the Commission:

a. Review and approve 2019 TPC meeting dates:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the 2019 TPC meeting dates as presented.	Gary Hartwell	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 11 No, 0 Abstain, 0

b. Discussion of Pine and Maple intersection in Florence:

- Kate Kelly of 22 Maple Street (the corner of Maple Street and Pine Street) said that she is thrilled that this is on the Agenda. She has called in a number of crashes to the Police Department over the years. She feels that the use of GPS devices has modified the traffic on Maple Street. There are now lots of tractor-trailer and other trucks going down the street and then turning around and coming back, not realizing that it is not a good cut through for trucks. The truck traffic causes a dangerous situation for children walking to the bus stop (there are no sidewalks). She has spoken with Tammy in the School Department about the situation. She feels that there is at least one “near miss” accident every day. She would be happy to provide additional information;
- James Saccento of 5 Mann Terrace agrees with everything that Kate Kelly said. He thinks that there should be a four way stop at the intersection. He is going to put in privacy plantings on his property (it is a new house) that may make the situation worse by further restricting visibility. He saw two accidents the day he moved in a month ago;
- Chief Kasper did a five year look-back. In that period, there were 33 accidents. A good amount of them involved either drivers who stop and assume it is a four way stop intersection and then pull ahead into another vehicle, or those who don’t stop at all. Almost all accidents occurred during the daytime. She would like to see the existing Stop signs and the fact that it is NOT a four way stop intersection highlighted in some way. It is really a case of the need for more driver education, which might be addressed by more signage;
- Kate Kelly added that she would like to see a small rotary at the intersection for traffic calming;
- Director LaScaleia said that the DPW can look at visibility, striping and signage. There is currently a sign that says “Cross traffic does not stop.” An engineering study would have to be done to determine if the criteria exist to meet the warrants for a four way stop (these would include the average daily number of vehicles coming from all four directions, as well as the number of crashes and whether they would have been mitigated by a four way stop). The DPW will investigate and report back.

c. Discussion of Glendale, West Farms, and Westhampton Road intersection:

- Councilor LaBarge is very concerned about this intersection. She has had a number of TPC members out there to walk around the intersection in order to understand what’s going on there. Director LaScaleia has visited the area on multiple occasions with her;
- Chief Kasper said that there have been 18 accidents in a five year look-back period. High speed (40-50 mph) has frequently been a factor. The last accident was in

September 2018. There are usually 3-4 per year. She feels that it is only a matter of time before there is a fatality;

- The DPW painted “Stop Ahead” on the pavement in the approaches leading up to the stop signs at the intersection in October 2018. Director LaScaleia noted that the upcoming Glendale Road paving project will not be affecting this area. She also said that again they would have to look at warrants and might need an engineering study;
- Chief Kasper then gave details to Director LaScaleia that indicated that the warrant criteria would likely not be met. There would need to be 5 crashes a year, and/or indications that the number of accidents per year is increasing. At this intersection, the rate has been fairly steady at 3 - 4 accidents per year;
- Debin Bruce suggested that the TPC wait at least three months to assess whether the “Stop Ahead” painted on the pavement has had a positive effect;
- Chief Kasper will bring updated data in September/October 2019;
- Director LaScaleia noted that the current Stop sign is oversized (and has been for a while).

d. Discussion of parking in front of Coopers Corner:

- Rich Cooper of 136 South Main Street said:
 - ❖ He is worried that now that Florence will have two hour rather than one hour parking, the six spaces in front of Coopers Corner will be taken up with long term parking and therefore not be available to his customers. He would like to see those spaces designated as 15 minute spaces, or perhaps they could be made into a 15 minute “zone.” He talked to the owner of the Pie Bar, who supports this idea;
 - ❖ He stated that he has purchased the lot where the bike shop was located and intends to remove the building and construct a 9 or 10 space parking lot for the employees of Coopers Corner;
 - ❖ He has also talked to Councilor Nash and Councilor Murphy. The Pie Bar has put up signs advising its customers not to park at Coopers when they are coming to the Pie Bar;
 - ❖ Coopers serves 900 - 1,100 customers/day, each of whom spends an average of 11 -12 minutes/visit;
 - ❖ There are 18 spaces in the parking lot on the left side of Coopers and 6 spaces in the parking lot on the right side of the building (on Chestnut Street). Two of these spots (one on each side of the building) are designated handicapped parking spaces;
- Councilor Nash suggested that the Parking Department think about the issue. There will be no decision made today. The topic will be on the Agenda for next month’s TPC meeting. This will also give the businesses/residents in the area a chance to weigh in;
- Councilor Sciarra asked Nanci Forrestall if there are any other places in the City that have a designated 15 minute zone and she replied that there are not. There are four 15 minute spaces right next to each other in front of Synergy by Cracker Barrel Alley. People very often park there for more than 15 minutes – for it to be more effective, there would need to be more enforcement. Adam Novitt commented that those spaces are all “nose in.” At Coopers, he mentioned that if the 6 spaces in front of the store are made short term, it would be a long distance before there are any

longer term spaces – a “mini desert” for long term parking. He wondered about the possibility of making two spaces in front of the Pie Bar short term;

- Several members suggested that the topic be addressed again at the next TPC meeting. Councilor Nash tabled the topic until the February TPC meeting. He will talk to Rich Cooper, the DPW and Nanci Forrestall before then.

e. Discussion of NETA Parking

- Councilor Nash noted that Leslie Laurie of NETA had planned to be here today but is unable to attend.
- Current parking and enforcement needs, long term plans & Wright Avenue parking request:

- ❖ Carol Raisler of 9 Wright Avenue (which is directly behind NETA) said that they have created a Facebook group for the neighborhood. Many of these residents do not have off-street parking and feel that the street is unsafe. Just before NETA opened to recreational users, Wright Avenue was narrowed for traffic calming reasons. There is now not enough room for two way traffic as cars are parking on both sides of the street. Most of the traffic on the street now is caused by people looking for parking. NETA did put up sandwich boards saying “Resident Parking Please” on Wright Avenue, but these have not been effective. There has also been an increase in pedestrian traffic due to people going to NETA who have not parked on Wright Avenue. She would like to see a 6 month trial of resident-only parking on Wright Avenue. This situation with NETA is new for Northampton, so perhaps new solutions could be considered;
- ❖ Councilor Nash says that he has been checking the area out daily. He has seen a change since January 1, 2019. He said that on one day, 80% of the license plates were from out-of-state. He has been in touch with various parties. There has been a noticeable drop-off of enforcement needs from Monday – Wednesday, but Thursday – Sunday remains busy. He would like to see a limited run of resident-only parking. Currently, the only resident-only parking in the City is on Kensington Avenue and that is only between midnight and 6:00 a.m.;
- ❖ If resident-only parking were instituted, there would likely be a maximum of two permits per unit, and each permit would cost \$25/year;
- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that after carefully considering the issues, the DPW does not support one-side-only parking on Wright Avenue. The road was recently narrowed and trees were put up in the tree belt as traffic calming measures. If this is changed again, it would lead to an increase in speeding. Councilor Nash concurs with Director LaScaleia;
- ❖ The traffic volume now is much higher than it was when Wright Avenue was a cut-through street;
- ❖ Councilor Sciarra will email Caroline Raisler a copy of the Ordinance which she can share with the other residents;
- ❖ There was further discussion of short, medium and long term solutions, including the possibility of shuttle parking. Adam Novitt wondered if parking solutions are really the answer to the reality that NETA is in the wrong place;
- ❖ The fact that NETA has just been bought out was discussed, which could cause additional changes to the situation;

- ❖ Councilor Sciarra wondered if NETA could be asked to enforce/police the area;
- ❖ Councilor Nash noted that NETA is already providing lots of parking on private lots and said that NETA can give residents stickers to park in their paid lots. He sent flyers to the Wright Avenue residents two weeks ago to inform them of this option because it could be immediately implemented. He has not heard back from any residents;
- ❖ Caroline Raisler responded that parking for residents is not such a problem that they'd want to park far away (such as at the Gazette). Their concerns are more about the "zoo-like quality of the street" and that the street now feels like a big parking lot;
- ❖ Councilor Nash said that he will meet with the Wright Avenue residents, review the Ordinance, and talk to NETA about overnight parking;
- ❖ Director Feiden said that he has been working on plans for bike lanes and parking lanes on Pleasant Street (which is only 40 feet wide). He will be sending ideas to the DPW for an opinion;
- ❖ Chief Kasper is concerned about the fact that there have been 10 accidents around NETA from the time they opened to recreational users on November 20, 2018 to today. There is now very poor visibility at many places in the area due to parked cars. She has also observed many cars circling while looking for parking as well as drivers making U-turns on Hockanum Road (many of the drivers are from out-of-state and do not know the area). She noted that there have been many accidents on Mount Tom Road by the rotary and near the I-91 ramps. She will be compiling more data for a future discussion;
- ❖ Adam Novitt and Debin Bruce discussed the possibility of blocking the Pleasant Street end of Wright Avenue either some of the time or all of the time.

f. Pace car rollout

- Councilor Nash thanked Cyndi Roberge at the DPW for updating the online information for the Pace Car program. He encouraged all TPC members to become Pace Car drivers and put a yellow sticker on their vehicle. The program is designed to encourage a citywide 25 mph speed limit throughout the City whenever there is not a posted speed limit. The speed limit is currently 30 mph on those roads. Councilor Nash and Councilor O'Donnell have been working for over a year to encourage the City to accept the State's 25 mph limit. The Pace car program can help educate residents about the change. The stickers are available at the DPW.

6. New Business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	David Pomerantz	Gary Hartwell	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0