



Councilors:

- Ward 1 City Councilor Maureen Carney
- Ward 3 City Councilor Jim Nash

**and the Northampton City Council**

**COMMUNITY MEETING WITH WARD 1 CITY COUNCILOR MAUREEN CARNEY ON PROPOSAL FOR  
STATE STREET/FINN STREET INTERSECTION**

**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
WALLACE J. PUCHALSKI MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
212 MAIN STREET, NORTHAMPTON, MA  
OCTOBER 30, 2018**

Members present: Councilor Maureen Carney, Councilor Jim Nash

At 5:30 p.m., Councilor Carney called the meeting to order. She thanked residents for coming and thanked Mayor Narkewicz, DPW Superintendent Donna LaScaleia and Councilor Nash for their help in coordinating the meeting. She announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded and outlined the format of the meeting. The King Street Corridor Improvement is a MassDOT project, she clarified.

Councilor Bidwell arrived (5:33 p.m.).

Councilor Carney introduced DPW Superintendent Donna LaScaleia, who was joined by consultants Nick Lapointe and Rekha Korlipara of Fuss & O'Neill.

Ms. LaScaleia clarified that Fuss & O'Neill is contracted by the city, not MassDOT. As background, she explained how a traffic signal at State Street and Finn Street came to be proposed as part of the project.

In 2003, the King Street project was originally put forth as a cooperative project between the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Office of Planning and Sustainability (OPD), she related. The idea was to enhance this gateway/entry to the city's downtown.

In 2010, the city contracted with Fuss & O'Neill to develop a conceptual design to update the main intersection. The project was fairly limited at the time, however, as a result of the conversation, it was decided that the project scope may need to be expanded to look at multiple intersections within this corridor.

In 2011, the Planning Department contracted Nelson Nygaard to design corridor improvements along King Street. As a result of these efforts, in 2013, then DPW director Ned Huntley submitted a Project Needs Form to place the project on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a program administered by MassDOT.

Projects on the TIP are required to follow strict procedural guidelines and timelines. On August 16, 2013, MassDOT notified the city that the project committee had evaluated the project and assigned it a project number. At the time, the project included improvements to the intersection at Finn and State Street since this was a documented high-crash intersection.

The project involved conducting traffic counts and turning movement counts at a number of intersections, including State Street/Finn Street. Inclusion of State Street/Finn Street was due to the fact that there were years of data indicating service problems. It is responsible on the part of the city to identify all intersections feeding into a corridor scheduled for improvement, she asserted.

In 2013, a preliminary design meeting was held with Fuss & O'Neill, the Planning Department, etc. The result of the turning movement and traffic cueing data collected was that the State Street/Finn Street signalization proposal was added to the project design.

In 2017, a full set of 25% design documents was submitted to MassDOT with justification provided by the city through Fuss & O'Neill for everything in the design documents. There were subsequent conversations between Fuss & O'Neill, the Planning Department and the DPW in which consultants and city officials looked at the designs. It is common for there to be internal conversations between city departments and the city's consultant throughout the design process, she indicated.

On March 17, 2018, MassDOT recommended holding a 25% design hearing. The hearing was held on September 25, 2018. About 40 people attended and no concerns were expressed about this intersection. The purpose of the 25% design hearing is to provide information to the public about the project and to hear the concerns of residents. Information gathered through this public process is then taken by city and state officials and used to make the best possible decisions about how the construction process is to proceed. It is very clear that public input is necessary and important and all input is taken under advisement. As a result of 25% hearings for other large projects, (i.e. - the Conz Street roundabout) significant changes have been made to the design.

Ms. LaScaleia gave examples of other projects that were modified as a result of feedback from the 25% hearing and comment period. It is important to note that, based on comments and feedback heard, project proponents can move in a different direction. Comments are not always followed but are always taken under advisement, she stressed.

Ms. LaScaleia expressed her understanding that she is here to explain the process and that this is an informational meeting for that purpose. The comment period around this project is closed; there having been a deadline for written and verbal comments.

Projects on the TIP are excellent opportunities for the city to leverage federal money, she continued. Projects are dynamic enough that consultants can look at different alternatives during this process. It is a great opportunity for the city to take money available to it and address long-standing traffic issues. The King Street Corridor Improvement project is a \$3.3 million project scheduled for 2021. She wanted to make it

clear to everyone that a lot of thought goes into this. This has been years in the making and the decisions they make are based on data, she confirmed.

Director LaScaleia turned the presentation over to project manager Nick Lapointe. Mr. Lapointe identified himself as a professional engineer and introduced colleagues Rekha Korlipara and the Springfield Office manager in attendance. The Springfield office has about 30 employees, primarily traffic engineers.

The meeting is an important opportunity for them to gather feedback from residents, he confirmed.

Mr. Lapointe described the project limits: the King Street corridor project starts at the Northampton bike path crossing and goes to Dunkin' Donuts. The primary goal is to improve congestion and pedestrian and bicycle safety along the King Street corridor.

He referred to a '1,000-foot view,' noting that consultants wanted to take a 'complete streets approach' and make sure they not only think about vehicles but about pedestrians, bicycles and public transit. Goals of this '1,000-foot view' include reducing peak hour congestion, improving safety for all users, replacing obsolete traffic equipment and improving paving conditions, landscaping, etc.

With regard to the State Street/Finn Street intersection, Mr. Lapointe reviewed the criteria for warranting a traffic signal.

For a street with such a residential character State Street has very high traffic volumes: 8,000 vehicles per day, which is quite a bit of traffic for a residential street. Finn Street accommodates 9,000 vehicles a day. In addition, 219 cyclists were counted in one day on Finn Street.

Problems at the intersection include accident history; there is a trend of crashes and long vehicle queuing, Mr. Lapointe indicated. The queue can extend 600 feet on State Street, he reported. MassDOT requires them to look at the time vehicles spend idling with a view to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Engineers also looked at ways to improve pedestrian safety and achieve ADA compliance.

As far as the justification for a signal, traffic engineers look at level of service; i.e. – the industry standard for looking at the delay at an intersection. Intersections are assigned grades of A, B, C, D, E or F, with F being a delay of more than 50 seconds. When they get toward the E/F category, the perception is that something is not right. MassDOT requires them to use this system of grading.

In assigning a grade, engineers look at the 'build' condition. MassDOT requires a 20-year investment, so they grow traffic volumes 20 years into the future and compare the project with what conditions would be like in 20 years if the city did nothing.

Right now, in 2018, this intersection operates at a level of service F. In 2035, it will be a really bad F. They look at different peak hours, i.e. – the morning (7 to 9 a.m.) and evening commute (4:30 to 6:30 p.m.). In the 'build' condition, the vehicle cue is reduced from 665 feet to 140 feet - a significant improvement. That is a level of service B.

The next factor engineers look at is accident history. It isn't the highest prone intersection in the city but its accident experience is still notable. From 2012 to 2015, there were 11 accidents, including one pedestrian accident. Multiple accidents involved personal injury. MassDOT makes them prepare a special diagram to

look at the nature of the crashes. They also develop an accident rate. For this intersection, the rate is .67 per million vehicles entering the intersection. The District 2 average for un-signalized intersections is .62. Typically when intersections get a crash rate of over 1, additional funding is available. The crash rate is higher than the state average.

Mr. Lapointe reviewed 'signal warrants,' i.e. – factors needed to justify signal installation. Warrants do not relieve professional engineers and duly-appointed officials of the responsibility for making recommendations; however, signal warrants are typically what they fall back on in warranting a signal.

In this case, State Street/Finn Street meets two of the nine warrants for a signal: warrant #1 and warrant #2. Warrant #1 is the warrant most used to justify a traffic signal and is the eight-hour vehicular volume. Warrant #2 is the four-hour vehicular volume. There are standards for major street volume and minor street volume, he explained. To qualify, an intersection has to exceed those volumes for an eight-hour period in one day. Afternoon/evening is when the intersection has the highest volume exceedances.

The intersection did not meet warrant #7 for crash experience.

To address the issues, engineers looked at multiple alternatives such as adding a right-turn lane, four-way stops, etc. and ended up with the preferred option being traffic signal installation. The design also includes a pedestrian signal

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Lapointe opened the floor to comments and concerns.

A man who did not identify himself noted that Director LaScaleia had said that the comment period was closed. He asked if any of their comments would have an impact.

The official comment period of MassDOT is closed, Ms. LaScaleia confirmed. They are still taking comments under advisement, she clarified.

The man asked if the outcome is "a fait accompli."

What's important for her to say is that they take all comments under advisement, Ms. LaScaleia said. To answer his question; not necessarily, but depending on their analysis of the comments, it may be.

**Mike Netto, the owner of North Shore Seafood at the corner of King and Finn**, said it looked to him like Finn Street is going to be widened for another lane and that the current sidewalk will be removed and replaced with a new sidewalk.

That is correct, Mr. Lapointe agreed.

One of the concerns he would have is that he has two entrances to the building, one on Finn and one on King. During a construction project in the 80's, the previous owner almost went out of business because people couldn't get in and out. His main question is how the project is going to affect his business and the package store in the building. He asked when the project would start.

The project will be advertised in September of 2020 and construction will start in the spring of 2021, Mr. Lapointe said.

From his storefront window, he sees people coming down the street everyday who are handicapped; they can't cross and he could see where a pedestrian could be hit, Mr. Netto commented. The courtesy of people coming around that corner is nonexistent, he insisted. He asked how long the construction period would last.

Mr. Lapointe expressed his understanding that they are anticipating a 20-month construction period, including the winter shut down. There are no incentives or disincentives [for early or late completion].

As part of all MassDOT projects, it is a requirement that all access to businesses remain open at all times, Mr. Lapointe assured. There might be short periods during the day when workers are making improvements such as when the contractor is paving the driveway apron. From 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. there might be some disruption but after that the contractor is required to keep the entrance open.

Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra arrived at 6:15 p.m.

Councilor Nash noted that four pedestrian crosswalks will be added as part of the MassDOT project.

**Steven Goode of 20 Aldrich Street** said he was there primarily about the State Street/Finn Street signalization proposal. He sees a lot of Aldrich Street residents, he noted. Their concern is primarily about safety. He has a baby and a four-year old. Their concern is that if traffic is impeded on State Street drivers may cut through Aldrich. He asked if consultants had looked at the impacts to other streets of this work. He is a little concerned that the proposal for Finn and State Street is being added somewhat in a vacuum. "This feels like it's being tacked on a little bit," he commented.

In looking at State Street between Serio's Market and Finn Street, there are wide sections with no parking. Those are sections where people speed. If engineers are going to look at State and Finn he would really like to know if they have considered the whole context of State Street, he remarked.

In these projects they try to look holistically but the problem is, where do they stop? Mr. Lapointe responded. With funding available through DOT, they have to look at what they can do with this funding.

Mr. Goode said he was a little concerned by what he is saying; i.e. "We've got this money; let's use it."

In terms of looking at the general State Street corridor that was not done as part of this project Mr. Lapointe acknowledged. He agreed that a planning project and study needs to take place to address those issues. However, the State Street/Finn Street intersection is integral to King Street traffic problems, he maintained. Now, people use State Street to avoid King Street. If engineers move some of the expected traffic volume back onto King Street, traffic on State Street is still really bad. The way people commute, they are trying to avoid downtown by going onto State Street. It looks a little isolated, but it is really integral in terms of the approach to King Street, he assured.

Because the level of service is going to be increased so much at State and Finn, he doesn't think people are going to see the need to cut through any of these side streets, he continued. The data is telling them that, because service is going to be improved by such a wide margin, people won't feel the need to cut

through. Going northbound, they are expecting that people will want to go to that intersection because they can safely get onto Finn Street.

**Karen Foster of 155 Grove Street, Executive Director of All Out Adventures** at the corner of State and Finn, which serves individual with disabilities, asked about the dedicated pedestrian light. Now, she dedicates staff time to walking people across the intersection, she reported.

As of now, the State Street and Finn Street intersection will have an exclusive pedestrian phase, meaning all traffic will stop for pedestrian crossing. What is trending is concurrent pedestrian phasing where pedestrians walk along with traffic movements, Mr. Lapointe shared. They are looking at this because it allows them to not stop all traffic but to keep some traffic moving.

Ms. Foster mentioned that people with disabilities sometimes have recumbent bikes that are very low. People have mentioned to her that they can't reach the buttons on the crosswalk, she said.

All signals will be APS (Accessible Pedestrian Signals), Mr. Lapointe assured.

**Risa Silverman of 28 Aldrich Street** said her macro comment is that she thinks communication may need to be changed in the city because a lot of people didn't know about the traffic proposal. She happened to have a friend in another part of town who asked if she knew about this State Street/Finn Street traffic light. She asked him to comment on how a four-way stop got ruled out.

This was ruled out fairly quickly primarily because they found in their analysis that traffic backed up significantly into King Street, Mr. Lapointe advised. [A four-way stop] is still having 8,000 cars stop on State Street. They primarily ruled it out because of the impacts it would have on King Street, he advised.

Ms. Silverman reiterated the concern about how the proposal will affect Aldrich Street. "We all want to be represented in this discussion," she added.

Curb bump outs can be used to mitigate cut-throughs on Aldrich Street if they become a problem, Mr. Lapointe responded.

**George Kohout of 234 State Street**, who was accompanied by his wife, Deb, said they are 100% in favor of the signalization of this intersection because they use it so often as pedestrians and cyclists. Even though they have only lived there six years they constantly hear of conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians at that intersection. It is very dangerous. Anything that could be done they feel is going to be a real benefit, especially if it can be activated at either end by pedestrians.

He expressed his understanding that there will be a feature that keeps the light green if there are no cars coming. In some ways dispersing traffic down different streets is 'traffic equity,' he suggested.

**Sarah Partan of 51 Summer Street** said she has a 10-year old who plays on Aldrich Street all the time. People go on State Street to avoid town and to avoid the light at King, she claimed. If the city moves the light to State Street, people will go on Aldrich to avoid the light, she asserted.

That certainly might happen but the traffic on King Street is so bad that people avoid King Street anyways, Mr. Lapointe responded. By fixing the congestion on King Street, they are hoping that some of the traffic

transfers back over to King Street, he explained. However, "there is no way 8,000 vehicles are ever going to leave State Street," he acknowledged. They are hoping to maybe take 1,000 vehicles off. It would be great if they could eliminate all vehicles and people could walk everywhere, he observed.

If they need to put a light there, how about also putting a light at the horrible intersection of Summer and State Street? Ms. Partan suggested. If they put a light at Summer and State as well it would dissuade people from using State, she opined.

They did look at putting a light there. They found that that intersection was a level of service B so it didn't meet the vehicular warrant for a signal. There is warrant for a pedestrian signal there, he confirmed.

Ms. Partan asked if that was something that could be added to the next phase of design.

'Certainly,' Mr. Lapointe responded. They could definitely go back and look at it. It is part of their study area. It is unlikely that warrants will be met to justify a signal, he cautioned.

Ms. Partan asked about things they could do on Aldrich Street to reduce traffic.

Basically they try to dissuade people from driving down there. Things that can be done are narrowing the roadway/reducing the roadway width, signage, curb extensions, etc. There are certain measures that can be implemented.

Ms. Partan read a petition started by her daughter. "We bike and play on Aldrich Street and we don't want a lot of cars coming down our street," the petition stated.

**Meg Robbins of 33 Aldrich Street** said she was really concerned that Risa was notified by somebody else about there being a proposed traffic light one block from her house. She lives behind Outdoor Adventures. Her perception of the traffic on those two streets is that it's not good, but it's a lot better than a lot of other streets.

She is really, really concerned about the process of this decision because it totally went over the head of anybody that should have had input, she observed. The 25% design hearing was listed in city meetings and there was nothing in there about a traffic light. She is really nervous because it sounds like somebody decided that in addition to the King Street renovation - which everybody is in favor of - they should consider adding traffic lights to other streets. When a project starts to have an impact on other city streets that is a whole different conversation. She referred to a letter submitted by James Lowenthal. Ten years ago he put in an application for State Street traffic calming. The city has not done anything about traffic calming on State Street, she reminded.

What she has read about stop lights is that motor vehicle accidents go from being angle collisions to being rear end collisions, which are really dangerous, Ms. Robbins continued. (Mr. Lapointe said earlier that most of the collisions at the State Street/Finn Street intersection were angle from people trying to get out onto the main roadway in a break in traffic.)

If there is going to be a discussion about how to signalize the greater Northampton, it needs to be a bigger discussion. We should have been part of that discussion from the very beginning, she asserted. She had a lot of trouble finding any notes about this discussion. She didn't know when the decision was made to

include the traffic light, who in the city made the decision, who seconded it and how it became part of this bidded project. It would be nice if their city councilors were made aware of this information and could share it publicly. It would also be nice if, in the future, when there is something important that involves neighborhoods, it be more than just an item on the city agenda that residents have to look up.

Mr. Lapointe agreed this is an important issue that might go beyond this specific project. We don't want to signalize all of Northampton, he assured. We need to take a look at how we address these things in the future, he concurred.

Ms. Robbins asked city councilors if there was a way they could somehow go back and address the question of signalization of this intersection again. "It can't be in a charrette that happened in 2010 that results in a traffic light that happens in 2021," she commented.

Engineers do look at roundabouts as an alternative they have to consider, Mr. Lapointe said. However, roundabouts usually come with significant property impacts. Roundabouts are the first option they look at in every project; they would love to implement roundabouts and non-signalized improvements at every intersection. "These aren't decisions that we make without looking at a lot of different alternatives," he assured.

**Tracy Adamski of 26 Aldrich Street** said she appreciated the overview regarding the history of the project but to her it is a history of the King Street corridor. Even though they have been thinking about King Street since 2003, this signal just came into play within the last few years without a whole lot of public information. It would be very helpful to have some of the data supporting the decision on line so that those impacted by it have the opportunity to review it, she suggested.

There is a full report which is a public document so he is sure the city would be happy to post it to the website, Mr. Lapointe said.

Regarding the option of a roundabout, although there is limited land on the north side there is some open land on the south side, Ms. Adamski advised. She asked whether consultants explored the option of a smaller roundabout that didn't necessarily have to accommodate 18-wheelers

Because the streets are functionally classified as arterial roadways they have to be able to serve trucks. The roundabout would be designed for a 40-foot long, single-unit truck (the largest moving truck). Regardless of the size roundabout, it would require property-taking. To layout this roundabout, the sidewalks would be in people's porches, Mr. Lapointe noted.

Ms. Adamski said she also has two young children - three and eight - who often ride their bikes. Their street is currently used as a cut-through. She thinks putting this light there will encourage more people to use this as a cut through. Before this goes in she would like to see that they have thought about impacts to traffic down their street and what mitigation they can provide. She thinks they need other mitigation measures before a light is put in.

Consultants could work with the city to develop some countermeasures to implement, Mr. Lapointe agreed. For now, the data is showing that the queuing and the delay at this intersection is going to be an improvement over what it is now. If people are cutting down the street now, hopefully, there will be less cutting through. If people are not cutting down the street now, data is showing that they are not going to be cutting down once the signal is installed. The data reaffirms that the level of service is going to be improved.

Cars do cut down there now, Ms. Adamski asserted.

If there is cut through traffic now he cannot say for certain it will stop, Mr. Lapointe acknowledged.

Ms. Adamski asked if traffic would queue up beyond Aldrich Street.

Their analysis shows that the queue length during the worst traffic period will be 190 feet, he said

That's another piece of information they would like to have, Ms. Adamski noted.

The average queue length for people going east is 71 feet, Mr. Lapointe presented. The worst case is 202 feet, he corrected.

Consultants have spent 15 years studying the King Street corridor and she is very supportive of the proposed improvements there, Ms. Adamski observed. She would say that if they are looking at the State Street/Finn Street intersection, they should look at the entire corridor. "Look at that as a full corridor," she urged. It warrants a holistic approach, she suggested.

PVPC actually studied State and Finn Street in 2002, Mr. Lapointe stated. There have been some studies done, but he agreed that the State Street corridor "warrants a holistic approach."

Ms. Adamski asked how putting a traffic light at Finn Street impacts King Street.

Because they will be promoting more traffic on King Street, more people will be making left turn movements onto Finn Street, causing even worse delay at that intersection, Mr Lapointe explained. They weren't finding an increased delay at any other intersection on State Street.

**Leah Kunkel of 101 Prospect Street** said it did seem from their design that making the right-turn lane from Finn onto King Street is going to help significantly. Her problem is with what consultants have proposed for State and Finn. She asked Mr. Lapointe if he knew the speed limit on Finn Street. When he responded incorrectly, she told him it is 20 mph. The speed limit on Prospect Street between Elm Street and Finn is 20 mph. If they want to find a dangerous intersection, "Go to Summer and Prospect."

Her personal experience is that she doesn't see how this is going to fix one thing. "It's going to make more problems and cost a lot of money," she alleged. She would suggest putting speed limit signs on Finn Street. It doesn't seem worth it to tear up that intersection and destroy the integrity of that neighborhood. She would ask them to consider some traffic calming by posting and enforcing the speed limit on Finn Street and maybe doing a safer pedestrian crossing. "I just feel like this is overkill," she concluded.

The state of Massachusetts does not allow communities to post a speed limit without a valid traffic study, Mr. Lapointe said. If there is an established speed limit, the DPW can post signs.

If it's any consolation, this is not going to be a rip up or tear up of the intersection, Mr. Lapointe said. Literally, the roadway is not going to be touched at all.

Ms. Robbins informed those present that there is a traffic calming process in place in Northampton.

Mark Moggio of Leeds admitted to being a culprit of cutting through but not on Aldrich. He usually goes up Summer and down Prospect, he related. He came here originally to say it should be a four-way stop. If there was a light there or a four-way stop, his tendency would be to go to Finn Street and take a left, he shared. He thinks maybe it would work to alleviate some traffic [rather than causing more cut-throughs on Aldrich.]

There are an awful lot of lines painted on the road on King Street, which is concerning to him. "If we do all this stuff, let's start to maintain the lines on our roads. I think they're in terrible shape," he remarked.

**Hedwig Rose of Round Hill Road** thanked the folks who made this meeting possible. It is also the first time she heard anything about the traffic light, she volunteered. She commended the last few speakers who basically expressed what she wanted to say. It seems to her that there is nothing worse than lines of cars for air quality, so the idea of two stop lights within two very short blocks on the face of it doesn't seem to make much sense.

By broadening the King Street project, they may be creating another set of problems, she suggested. She is convinced the traffic light is going to cause much more backup than they've ever had before. She thinks the single greatest improvement is the right-turn lane onto King Street. She would support a greater emphasis on Summer and urge them to think about moving the whole elaborate system to Summer Street rather than putting a signal at State and Finn. Also, the residential street is going to feel much more like the center of the city with a basic highway design within one block.

Mr. Lapointe stressed that one of the goals is to not make it feel like a signalized intersection. He acknowledged that having a traffic light will create a stop on what is now a free-flowing road (Finn Street). The tradeoff to some delay on Finn Street is making State Street a lot better, he pointed out.

Ms. Rose mentioned the idea of changing the direction of Summer Street or making it one way for a longer distance.

They looked at Summer Street with the Planning Director early on, Mr. Lapointe related. Reversing the direction of Summer Street has significant benefits to the King Street corridor, however, they felt it would have negative effects on the overall neighborhood. Making Summer Street one way for a longer distance "certainly could have a positive effect," he suggested.

**Garrett Adams of 148 Crescent Street** said he was glad he waited because one idea he came here with was the consideration of some one way streets. Living on Crescent Street, he bikes a lot. Coming down Crescent Street and down Summer Street, he knows the difficulty of that intersection for pedestrians. He suggested calming the pedestrian crossings at the intersections of Summer Street and State Street and two places on Finn Street in conjunction with making Summer Street one way for more of its length.

That exact discussion was had with the Planning Department and it was decided this was not a nut they were going to crack with this project, Mr. Lapointe said.

Mr. Adams urged consultants to really really consider what another person said. He thinks bike and pedestrian use has spiked. He came here in 2000 from Seattle having moved from Boston to Seattle. They don't have lights anywhere in Seattle and it works, he shared. He agreed with comments that the light is

probably overkill. He appreciates their wanting to use the funding and suggested using it for either a right-turn lane from State Street onto Finn or a flashing light for pedestrians. Based on this feedback he would suggest replacing the light with safety features for pedestrian crossings.

They did look at creating a right-turn lane and primarily the reason it isn't shown is that it involves the taking of private property, Mr. Lapointe said. He commended Mr. Adams for 'great suggestions.'

**Reed Schimmelfing of 29 Aldrich Street** said his primary concern is Finn and State. One of the things that hasn't been talked about is light pollution. He has bedrooms on the second floor with a clear view of a red light changing to a green light, etc. He doesn't want to see a flashing light or hear a chirping bird.

Mr. Lapointe said he could promise him there will not be any chirping birds.

People on the corner of State and Finn where property would need to be taken for a roundabout are "not sitting in their front yards," Mr. Schimmelfing asserted. He advocated for constructing a small roundabout and taking trucks (other than moving trucks or delivery trucks) off State Street altogether.

There is a dedicated turn lane at King and Finn, so traffic is not going to back up on King Street if people can't get onto Finn as fast as they would like. If there is a roundabout or a four-way stop, it might slow some people down getting off of King, but it's not going to block King, he contended.

"If we get a traffic light in there we're never going to get rid of it," he added.

Half a mile up the street Prospect Street and Jackson Street was a problem intersection with backed-up cars. The city tried a four-way stop, and it worked great. "I can't imagine how we've jumped to a traffic light when we haven't really looked at other things that may very well work," he asserted.

It's not too late to try some of these low-cost tests, so to speak, Mr. Lapointe said. It is a great suggestion to try out the possibility of a four-way stop before putting in a traffic light, he conceded. But to be clear, it's not as simple as liberally putting up stop signs; they have to study it.

**Laurie Fenlason of 15 Aldrich Street** asked what list serv or mailing list she should have been on to have learned about this project.

City officials do a terrific job of outreach around projects that come out of the Planning Department but there tends to be a disconnect when it comes to MassDOT projects, Councilor Nash suggested. "What you're seeing here is a response to that. There is an acknowledgment that 'we could have done a better job,'" he confirmed

He was at a meeting where the public hearing was announced and it went over his head. It didn't get his attention until it was announced at a City Council meeting, he admitted. The night of the 25% hearing there were not a lot of hard questions about that intersection because 'most of you weren't here.' But they're here tonight and he thinks they're going to get some answers, he concluded.

A four-way stop sounds less intrusive and more benign, but it does mean that every single time drivers have to stop, Ms. Fenlason noted. The advantage of a light is that sometimes traffic does not have to stop because the light is in its favor.

That is a trade-off of a four-way stop, Mr. Lapointe confirmed. With regard to light pollution, he assured those present that consultants are sensitive to this issue. There are measures they can take to minimize its impact.

Mr. Adams offered an additional comment.

Ms. LaScaleia informed the audience that, every Friday, the DPW posts an update of every current project. It is cross-posted on the City of Northampton's Facebook page. It includes notices of public hearings.

Ms. Adamski said she recognizes that the comment period is over but hoped that, because of the lack of outreach, meeting notes from this meeting will be forwarded to the state. Another residents asked if they could be assured of that.

Ms. LaScaleia stressed that the official comment period is over. She wanted to make clear that this meeting is in no way a substitute or a 'do-over' for the 25% hearing.

Although it is a MassDOT-funded project, it is still a city project, Ms. Adamski insisted. Residents want to make sure their voices are heard on this specific project.

A resident said if she could get the minutes of the meeting, she would be happy to forward them to the state. Since this is a public meeting, minutes will be made available once they are transcribed, Councilor Carney announced. They will be posted to the website under the City Council heading.

Participants discussed ways to improve the notification process for similar projects. One suggestion was that, in the future, public hearing notices should identify side components along with the primary project.

Ms. Robbins said it would be a really good idea for councilors to have a list of people in their ward who want to be made aware of issues in their district. She thanked everyone for coming tonight and thanked the city councilors for arranging the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.