



City Council Committee on Legislative Matters

Members

Councilor Marissa Elkins, Chair

Councilor Garrick Perry, Vice Chair

Councilor Alex Jarrett

Councilor Rachel Maiore

MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 10, 2025; 5:30 p.m.

**Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Northampton, MA**

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call:** At 5:31 p.m., Councilor Marissa Elkins convened the meeting. On a roll call, the following members were present: Councilor Marissa Elkins, Chair; Councilor Garrick Perry, Vice Chair, Councilor Alex Jarrett and Councilor Rachel Maiore. Also present was Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.

2. **Announcement that Meeting is Being Audio/Video Recorded**
Councilor Elkins announced that the meeting was being audio/video recorded.

3. **Public Comment**

Chris Stratton, Ward 6, noted that, while he will be serving in government next year, he is speaking right now as a private citizen. The city has recently been through the most contested election in some time, capping off an 18-month period when the people of Northampton have grown wonderfully interested in understanding the function of their government. As they move from contest to collaboration, he hopes they can bring the people of the city along on that journey by continuing to encourage and support broad civic interest in both the bounds of decisions available to local vs. state or federal government, and the process by which conclusions are reached.

All-way stop signs are a topic of the moment. Many believe that their placement is a political decision, unaware that there are objective federal and state criteria, called traffic warrants, which are supposed to guide the decision. It's raised some eye brows that an intersection near the Mayor's home is about to be upgraded to a four-way stop.

He hasn't been able to find the specific engineering study, but from his own searching of state data, it appears that the crash warrant likely was satisfied during a bad stretch a few years ago, so that process is as it should be.

Tonight, this committee will deliberate an intersection in Leeds. During the Traffic and Parking Commission's (TPC's) recent consideration, a retired traffic engineer raised concerns if a crosswalk in the post office exit might be too close to the intersection. He also requested the engineering report, which does not appear to have been made available.

And in his own Ward 6, residents have ongoing concerns over the terrible intersection of West Farms and Glendale with Westhampton Road. He's confirmed by his own search that the crash warrant does not appear to be satisfied there. It is bad, but not bad enough. He doesn't believe the traffic volume warrant is satisfied either. "That does leave open the possibility of a sight occlusion issue, or just an engineering judgment determination," he acknowledged.

He did not come tonight so much to debate the details of these, but is here to suggest that their civic process would be best-served by posting the engineering reports and then walking the public through the process by which a decision is reached. This is especially true so that if people are dissatisfied with an outcome, they can focus their attention either on reform of the external guiding principles or on improvement of their local implementation.

Heather Craig, thanked sponsors for looking at bus stops in Florence. She sent some photos and a transcript of a voice recording she made with observations about the bus stops. She is hoping that, in addition to the stops themselves, people will take up asking PVTA to change its route so the bus doesn't turn where the Pie Bar is but instead makes that turn right near the Florence Bank bus stop. She has a video of literally sitting and waiting for 15 minutes while the 44 bus is blocked both by traffic and loading/unloading at Cooper's. The information she sent to Councilor Jarrett is available if anybody wants to take a look at it, she said.

Benjamin Spencer, Rust Avenue, said he is checking in to offer his support for these improvements. He thinks it is really great to see their public transit elevated; it is such an important resource for so many in the city and it is great to see a continuation of the improvements coming for Main Street downtown. Where the stop signs are going makes a lot of sense to him, so he is here to voice his support for what's on the agenda.

4. Approval of Minutes

Councilor Jarrett moved to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2025 Joint Planning Board/Legislative Matters Committee meeting. Councilor Maire seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote.

5. Items Referred to Committee

A. 25.320 An Ordinance Relative to Bus Stop Locations

Councilor Elkins reviewed the legislative history, noting that the ordinance received a positive recommendation from TPC with the request to expand the bus stops beyond the actual length of the buses.

As a regular bus rider himself, Councilor Jarrett said he noticed that many of the city's bus stops are 'stealth' bus stops; i.e. - unmarked. He is excited to move this project forward so each of these are properly signed so they can enforce no parking restrictions and make a few adjustments. He was happy to work with the planning department and, in particular, ADA Coordinator Keith Benoit.

Keith Benoit referred to three documents he sent out. The city has 83 bus stops and only about 20 are officially designated in the ordinance on a schedule for that purpose, thereby defining them as 'no parking' areas. If the stops are signed 'no parking,' parking enforcement officers can issue tickets. All the bus stops are operational. Some currently on the ordinance have been shifted due to changing street patterns but 63 are not currently in the ordinance at all, so he and Councilor Jarrett went out and measured them so they could be defined by a distance from a fixed reference point. It is mostly an administrative exercise but they have worked with PVTA, which advised them to remove two bus stops and shift others. The removals are to consolidate stops to avoid duplication and the shifts are for safety reasons. PVTA prefers their buses to stop after intersections and some stops were before intersections.

In measuring the stops, they took the length of the buses into consideration; all are 60 feet except for the B43, which is 80 feet and only stops at a few stops. All stops have numerical ID's now for easy identification for communication with PVTA.

In shifting any bus stop locations, they were looking for places optimized for safety and to not remove parking spaces. They are not proposing to remove any parking, and some stops have been shifted further to avoid loss of spaces, he stressed. They want to be respectful of businesses and the users of those businesses to maintain their parking.

The ordinance is not proposing physical upgrades, he clarified. He had the opportunity two years ago to do a full accessibility analysis of a few bus stops for a grant and it's very labor intensive. There is no staff time for similar analyses and funding is not available for the improvements, so no physical upgrades are proposed. They are also not looking at accessibility although they tried to line stops up with a curb cut if possible. Where there are obstructions, bus drivers are very good at making sure to come to a stop in a safe place.

The Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC) asked that they look at enforcement. No enforcement mechanism is proposed in the original schedule and they are not proposing one here. TPC also asked for installation of signage. They noted where no signage currently exists and PVTA has some money to install new signs.

For this ordinance, they are just trying to formalize the location of the stops so they know where there's no parking.

There was some concern about the location of bus stops in Florence and on King Street, Mr. Benoit continued. On King Street, they are proposing to move one of the benches at 129 King Street in front of Servicenet because there is no good alternative for a bus stop there that doesn't remove parking.

Councilor Jarrett expressed his understanding that, although no enforcement mechanism is specifically mentioned, once 'no parking' zones are created, they can be enforced by the parking department.

Clearly, there is more work to be done, but getting every stop designated and signed with route numbers is a great step, he observed. They do need to do the work of upgrading the stops, installing sidewalks around them and shelters in places of high ridership and advocating for increased service, he confirmed.

Heather Craig has a number of good suggestions, but most of them involve changes PVTA itself would have to make, Councilor Jarrett said. This is not something they can do in the short time they have and changing the route is a more time-intensive process. He said he would certainly bring those issues up to PVTA.

She also talked about the stop closest to Parson's Block where Bird's store is. There was some talk about shrinking the size of some of the parking spaces there, Councilor Jarrett recollected.

There is space to shift them without reducing any parking, Keith confirmed. That would be a conversation with the DPW, he said.

Councilor Jarrett said that in the time between Legislative Matters and the City Council meeting, perhaps they could have a conversation with the DPW to see if it is possible to do some shifting to give the bus stop a little more space.

Councilor Maiore noted that the relocation of the bus stop in front of Tandem Bagel was brought up by a local business as being problematic.

Councilor Jarrett explained the rationale for shifting the Tandem Bagel stop further down the street as being so as not to have to eliminate a parking space. If no one is parked there, bus drivers can lower the ramp to let people off onto the sidewalk, he explained. If people are parked there, the bus has to park in the middle of the street. Shifting it would require eliminating a parking space so they decided instead to move the stop down the street toward Florence Hardware.

Councilor Maiore said she is concerned about conflict with the hardware store's loading area. She asked the number of times a day buses use the stop.

Councilor Jarrett screen-shared a photograph of the proposed location to show that the stop is being moved just beyond the entrance to the Florence Hardware loading area. It starts just beyond the telephone pole and ends at the 35 mph sign. The bus comes once an hour. He believes trucks unloading items for Florence Hardware don't on the street but pull into Florence Hardware's loading area. "I'm not aware of direct conflicts," he said.

Councilor Maiore said she thinks some concerns may or may not come to fruition, such as concern for products stacked there. Maybe someone could put something there to divide the stop from stacked supplies.

Councilor Jarrett said he also heard concern that people would leave trash. They have to balance various needs. Wherever this is located, there may be impacts, he acknowledged.

There will be some people waiting at this stop but a lot of folks will be getting off here after coming down from Leeds. This isn't set in stone, they could make another adjustment, he observed.

Councilor Perry said that when he was campaigning, he watched as a number of trucks pulled into this space to unload.

Councilor Jarrett said he wasn't aware trucks were stopping there given that it's a 'no parking' zone.

He and Mr. Benoit will work with PVTA to make sure signs are posted letting people know the stop will be moving, he assured.

Councilor Elkins noted that anyone who's stopped in at Tandem knows there is a conflict between parking and the bus stop. If there has to be a balancing, she would balance in favor of the bus stop and safe disembarkment for people with disabilities.

She thanked Councilor Jarrett and Keith Benoit for working so hard on this.

They are not adding bus stops on private property; i.e. Meadowbrook, the VA Medical Center, the Hampshire County Jail, etc., Mr. Benoit noted.

Councilor Jarrett said he would be happy to talk more with Councilor Maiore about the Florence Hardware stop.

Councilor Perry moved a positive recommendation. Councilor Jarrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

B. 25.331 An Ordinance Relative to Crosswalk Parking Prohibition Enforcement

The ordinance received a positive recommendation from TPC October 21st, Councilor Elkins reported. The gist of the change is to strike the words 'where posted' in §312-27 C indicating that no parking is allowed "Upon any crosswalk or within 10 feet of either side of a crosswalk ~~where posted.~~"

Councilor Jarrett explained that this came out of discussion with Parking Administration, DPW and the Planning office about the crosswalk near Chestnut Street and the rail trail. People tend to park along Chestnut Street near the crosswalk, creating some sight line issues. At TPC, members discussed that education about the change would be important, such as news alerts and posting of parking rules on the city website. Parking administration seems amenable to issuing warnings for a period of time, he volunteered.

Councilor Elkins asked if there was any thought of mailing notices to properties near the crosswalks. Councilor Jarrett said 'yes,' but he thinks that number would be quite large. It would be a challenge so issuing warnings would be a good way to go instead.

Councilor Perry asked if they considered having signs for problem areas such as Chestnut Street.

Councilor Jarrett said that is an implementation question for Parking Administration and the DPW. It is an option but there is an expense. He hopes they would be amenable to taking some kind of action for problem areas.

Councilor Maiore said she suspects some parkers may be Pie Bar customers so she suggested having the Pie Bar distribute flyers.

Gwen Nabad, Ward 1, said her idea is to spread the word through a public relations campaign such as through the city newsletter.

Chris Stratton expressed his understanding that the goal is to be able to enforce violations without it having to be explicitly marked. He doesn't think that means it couldn't be temporarily marked with a ground-mounted sign where there are recurring problems. Particularly for the Chestnut Street rail crossing, he has long had a concern that two-thirds of people would imagine a stop sign being on the road when it's actually on the rail trail. He worries that the degree to which drivers imagine a stop sign on the road invites people to think it's okay to proceed into the intersection when it isn't. He mentioned the importance of thinking about whether they are encouraging a behavior that's not quite safe. He would love to put a stop sign on the road but he doesn't think they could satisfy the warrants for it. He supports this, he said.

Councilor Jarrett moved a positive recommendation. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

- C. 25.335 An Ordinance Relative to Stop Control on Bedford Terrace, City Council referral pending - 11/6/2025
- D. 25.336 An Ordinance Relative to Stop Control at Various Locations, City Council referral pending - 11/6/2025.

Councilor Elkins proposed taking these together.

With regard to the proposal for stop control on Bedford Terrace, the intersection is at an angle and there is a wide turning angle, Councilor Jarrett explained. The city contracted with a firm to do a study of a number of problem intersections. Here, consultants identified that the city would be better-served liability-wise to have a stop sign. Improvements are coming to this area to tighten up the intersection to make the crossing distance shorter and prevent people from taking the turn too quickly, he volunteered.

For Corticelli Street, it is presently missing a stop sign on one side.

Re: the proposal for all-way stops at Mulberry, Audubon and River Roads and Blackberry Lane and Prospect Avenue, these intersections met warrants for all-way stops, Councilor Jarrett advised.

Councilor Maiore said she got a lot of feedback on the Mulberry, Audubon and River Road intersection and everyone was overwhelmingly in favor of adding the two stop signs. She mentioned hearing a concern about exiting the post office but said she doesn't think adding the two signs will make anything worse. She said she didn't know if that was addressed in the safety assessment, and it may be something she wants to follow up with the DPW director about. She wholly supports the additional two signs there and the sign at Corticelli.

Councilor Jarrett says he has requested those studies in the past and the DPW has given them to him. He agrees with Chris Stratton that these studies should be posted to the website since they are very helpful in showing that data has been collected and warrants have been met. He encourages the DPW to do that.

Councilor Elkins said she agrees these changes look like very straightforward. They are known trouble stops so the recommendations make sense.

Councilor Maiore moved to send a positive recommendation for the two as a group to the full City Council. Councilor Perry seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.

6. New Business

None.

7. Adjourn

There being no new business, **Councilor Perry moved to adjourn. Councilor Jarrett seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call. The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.**

Prepared By:

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