

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

July 20, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	Absent	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	Arrived at 4:15 p.m.
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jim Nash, City Council Vice President	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	X	Arrived at 4:50 p.m.
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	
Diana Day, Citizen	X	
Vacant, Citizen	Absent	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment

- None.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (s): May 18, 2021

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the May 18, 2021 meeting.	Nanci Forrestall	Jim Nash	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- Department of Public Works (DPW) - Director Donna LaScaleia
 - **Atwood Drive Water Main Replacement and Roadway Reconstruction** - This project is substantially completed.
 - **Masonic Street Parking Lot & Amber Lane** - This project will remedy a failing sewer line which passes through both the Masonic Street parking lot and Amber Lane and serves multiple Main Street businesses and residents; the project will also upgrade the water main to allow for enhanced fire flows and future fire sprinkler connections. Construction has begun and will be ongoing throughout the summer months. As of June 1st, the Masonic Street parking lot is closed to the general public.
 - **Roundhouse Parking Lot** - This project is for rehabilitation and expansion of the Roundhouse Parking Lot. The work is expected to be completed by early fall 2021. The parking lot will be closed for the duration of the construction.
 - **Paving Contract 2021** - The following streets will be improved: Pine Street (Maple Street to South Main Street), Warfield Place, Hayes Avenue, Meadow Street, and Loudville Road. This project includes pavement reclamation, drainage work, bridge repairs, intersection reconfiguration, pavement markings, sidewalk and curb ramp improvements, and curb work. The contractor has mobilized.
 - **North Farms Road** - This 2 mile road was repaved last year. The contractor may be on North Farms Road to finish up various punch list items.
 - **MassDOT projects** - King Street Corridor Improvements, Damon Road Reconstruction, and Exit 19 at Damon Road. Any questions about these projects should be directed to MassDOT District 2.

5. Matters before the Commission

- a) Main Street for Everyone Steering Committee: presentation on parking, transportation and snow removal for Main Street
 - Ben Weil, who is a Building Science professor at UMASS and an active member of the group that formed “Main Street for Everyone” gave a detailed presentation. He mentioned that the group has members who bring a lot of expertise to the issues of parking management and snow removal including urban design and sustainability as well as prior experience working with City government;
 - There will be a reduction in parking regardless of which of the three Main Street redesign proposals are chosen. This is why preemptive parking management is so important. This group supports parallel parking which gives more space to people rather than angle parking which gives more space to cars. Data analysis shows that angle parking also involves 37% more crashes than parallel parking. He discussed the marketing effects on parking behavior of different scenarios, such as the cost of parking, dynamic pricing and signage, price elasticity and other measures that can be used to push people to make changes that lead them to park where we want them to park;
 - Managing snow is another major factor impacting any redesign of Main Street. The group feels that it would be more effective to use the center lane for turning and emergency vehicles than it has been to use it to store snow. They also recommend parallel parking rather than angle parking for vehicles since it reduces the number of DPW truck trips and therefore the snow removal costs. Ben also presented the details and the pros and cons of managing snow melt with hydronic tubes. Director LaScaleia

talked in detail about current DPW snow removal practices. Commissioners and members of the public had many questions for Ben and also expressed their opinions on the issues.

b) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request on North Street

- The Traffic Calming Request (TCR) expresses concerns that the yellow stripe down the center of the road is a problem. They would like to see it removed;
- The DPW measured the street and noted the existence of three raised parking tables, a speed limit of 30 mph dating back to 1986, and that the pavement is in good condition;
- The PD assessed speed data and found that the average speed of over 13,000 vehicles was 27 mph and therefore there was no significant speeding issue. They also found records of 12 collisions from 2015-2020;
- Director LaScaleia explained that line striping is a Traffic Calming measure. It is used to visually narrow the roadway and show drivers where they should be;
- Councilor Nash mentioned that the road was rebuilt 12 years ago, and is now considered a model street. Traffic calming measures were incorporated into the rebuild;
- Director LaScaleia said that the PD & DPW will issue their recommendations for this TC request at a later date.

c) Discussion of Traffic Calming Request on High Street

- This request maintains that drivers are speeding which leads to danger for young children.
- The DPW looked at the area and made relevant measurements. They found no posted speed limit signs and no record of speed regulations, so the statutory speed limit is in effect;
- The PD assessed speed data over a one week period in the beginning of March 2021 and detected no speeding problem. They also did a five year look-back of collision data and found records of 13 collisions. Speed was not a factor in any of the collisions;
- Jeremy Gantz of 24 High Street, who submitted this TC request, said that he would like to have the speed limit posted and lowered;
- Kathy Wroblewski of 29 High Street (corner of Garfield and High Streets) has noticed that the rate of speed has increased significantly since the start of COVID-19. She also noted that the sidewalks are in terrible condition so that pedestrians walk in the street and are then in danger from speeding drivers. She would like to have the PD do a longer speed study in the summer;
- Director LaScaleia reminded all attendees that the DPW cannot post statutory speed limit signs. When an area is “thickly settled,” the speed limit is 30 mph. She would like to have the collision data studied in more detail to determine why there seems to be a crash cluster in the area. She will follow up with the PD.

d) Proposed ordinance to create Armory Street Parking Lot loading zone

- Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Off-Street Service Areas to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Adam Novitt	Jim Nash	Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- Nanci Forrestall said that this Ordinance is in response to concerns expressed by Thornes Market business owners that they are having difficulty getting deliveries to their stores. The back door is the best place for deliveries, and delivery drivers must park while making deliveries, but the current Ordinance prohibits parking there;
- The manager of Thornes Market, Jody Doehle, said that the 30 shops and restaurants in Thornes Market receive multiple deliveries 6 days a week. She would like the entire pad by the back door to be available for deliveries;
- There was additional discussion about the current level of parking enforcement, signage, marking the delivery area, and ways to safeguard pedestrians entering through the back door;
- Questions were raised about the need to specify the dimensions of the proposed area, getting input from the Fire and Police Departments, reviewing the ownership of the sidewalk, public versus private property issues, and whether some spaces should be striped. Several members felt that this Agenda item should be tabled until further research has been done and input gathered before voting on the proposed Ordinance;
- A new motion was proposed and seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To withdraw the previous motion re: 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Off-Street Service Areas from the floor, and table the topic pending further study.	Adam Novitt	Jim Nash	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

6. New Business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Jim Nash	Nanci Forrestall	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0