



## City Council Committee on Legislative Matters

### Members

Councilor Alex Jarrett, Chair

Councilor Marissa Elkins, Vice Chair

Councilor Stanley Moulton, III

Councilor Jim Nash

### MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 3, 2023, 4 p.m.

#### **Virtual Meeting**

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call:** At 4:01 p.m., Councilor Alex Jarrett called the meeting to order. On a roll call, the following members were present: Councilor Alex Jarrett, Chair; Councilor Stanley W. Moulton, III and Councilor Jim Nash. Councilor Marissa Elkins was not present for roll call but joined moments later (4:01 p.m.). Also present was Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler.

2. **Announcement that Meeting is Being Audio/Video Recorded**

Councilor Jarrett announced that the meeting was being audio/video recorded.

3. **Public Comment**

Councilor Jarrett opened the floor to public comment on matters other than those listed on the agenda.

**Claudia Lesko of 40 Valley Street** said her comment has to do with a sign at 107 Williams Street. She thinks there is a city ordinance around the size of signage and she believes the 5' by 8' sign there is illegal.

Councilor Jarrett referred her to the building department since it deals with enforcement of the zoning ordinance relative to signs.

4. **Approval of Minutes of June 12, 2023**

**Councilor Moulton moved to approve the minutes of June 12, 2023. Councilor Nash seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

5. **Items Referred to Committee**

**A. 23.378 An Ordinance Relative to Parking on Locust Street, referred to LM - 9/21/2023**

The item was referred to Legislative Matters September 21<sup>st</sup> and received a positive recommendation from the Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC), Councilor Jarrett reported.

As the Ward 5 councilor, Councilor Jarrett spoke to the ordinance. The adjustment has to do with sight line issues as people pull out of Straw Avenue and three other parallel dead end streets off Locust Street, he explained. The DPW has hired Fuss & O'Neil to do a full traffic study of the corridor from Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH) to Florence Center, but that may take a year or more, so in the meantime they are

considering limited 'No Parking' restrictions which are currently in place under a temporary police order. These have improved sight lines; however, the temporary restrictions have completely removed parking on a stretch of Locust Street and this has caused congestion on the side streets, particularly Sumner Street. If the ordinance passes, it will return to more limited parking availability rather than a total restriction which should resolve the congestion issue while still addressing sightline issues. There is also an issue with a bush at another corner separate from the parking concerns, he noted.

**Freeman Stein, a Fairfield Avenue** resident for 36 years, said he is delighted the city is looking into the corridor from CDH to the village of Florence and also delighted with the initiative to add 'No Parking' zones since it results in far better sight lines. He would like to point out though that those sight lines are still not quite adequate. Sight lines coming out of Fairfield Avenue to make a left in particular are still not adequate to see oncoming cars especially since the speed limit is still 40 mph until past Fairfield. To take a left out of Fairfield is still a little risky especially at times of day when the traffic is heavy. When the city looks more carefully at this, he asks that it consider moving the sign further east at least one parking space. Ultimately, he hopes the city makes the decision to reduce the speed limit when entering heavily congested areas as happens once drivers get to Straw Avenue.

Councilor Jarrett said he would speak to the DPW director before the council votes on this on Thursday to discuss Mr. Stein's suggestion/request to remove an additional space to improve sight lines even more.

**Jane Myers, 74 Straw Avenue**, said that the temporary 'No Parking' signs have made a big difference. There is a notable improvement in coming out of Straw Avenue but she doesn't think it is sufficient. She knows that the speed limit issue takes time, but, particularly in the mornings with cars coming down fast from Florence, pulling out [is problematic]. She thanked councilors for the big improvement but said she thinks more still should be done.

**John Sears, a Hawley** resident married to Jane Myers, said he always feels like he is taking a risk when he makes that left turn because he can't put his nose far enough out to see cars coming from the right without risking being hit from the left. Removing those parking places makes a big difference he agreed.

Councilor Moulton thanked Councilor Jarrett for his work, applauding the step of getting temporary 'No Parking' in place and proposing making limited restrictions permanent to improve sight lines even while the more lengthy study of the Elm Street corridor takes place. He confessed to some self-interest for Ward 1 since this is exactly the remedy he is seeking for side streets on Prospect Street. He was up there today and definitely sees the same problem coming out onto Locust Street as he sees on Prospect Street. He will enthusiastically support this. He still thinks the bushes at the corner of Straw Avenue and Locust are an impediment to viewing oncoming traffic.

Councilor Nash agreed it was excellent work from Councilor Jarrett and the neighbors who provided feedback. What he sees with this particular situation is that they have a lot of streets that are out of the ordinary and present interesting things to consider in terms of making them safe. These tweaks are terrific. He appreciates that the DPW has stepped up and figured out how to implement this change in a timely manner and is going to support it.

**Councilor Elkins moved to forward the ordinance to the full council with a positive recommendation. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

**B. 23.379 An Ordinance Relative to Parking on Williams Street, referred to LM - 9/21/2023**

In the course of discussion related to a construction project, neighbors raised a lot of concern about traffic flow on Williams Street, Councilor Nash related. Although he was asked by the city solicitor not to involve himself in matters related to that particular project, since the concerns predate the construction project and involve a public way, he feels comfortable moving forward with recommendations from the DPW. The intersection where Montview Avenue meets Williams Street is a 'T' intersection and the ordinance proposes a 'No Parking' restriction directly across from Montview, he presented.

Williams Street at that point is very narrow. With cars parked along the street, something Director LaScaleia calls courtesy traffic flow results. The 'No Parking' zone will allow two lanes of travel at the intersection with the thought of making things safer by preventing southbound traffic from venturing over into the northbound lane as vehicles come out of Montview.

He thanked the DPW for putting up temporary 'No Parking' signs since the ordinance was delayed in making its way to council after being approved by the TPC last May. If approved, temporary 'No Parking' signs will be replaced with permanent ones. As of now, this restriction is essentially in place.

The administrative assistant screen-shared a diagram of the proposed change. It seems like a very small property in a very crowded neighborhood so when big trucks are parked there it is kind of a nightmare to get around, Claudia Lefko said. She has talked to Carolyn Misch and Director LaScaleia. Heavy trucks with construction materials are being parked along Montview and Williams. One night there was even a huge backhoe left on Williams. At some level she is wanting to register with the council that construction dangers that accompany projects like this should play into decisions as to whether the projects are good or not.

She doesn't know the solution but is just registering her unhappiness. There is too much heavy equipment. Williams Street is a big pass-through street and people drive very fast there. Even with drivers observing friendly driving, sometimes it isn't that friendly. It worries her.

Councilor Moulton said he was down there today and this is only going to improve safety. It was needed anyways but with construction there it is doubly needed.

**Councilor Elkins moved to forward the ordinance with a positive recommendation. Councilor Moulton seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.**

Both items will be on the City Council agenda Thursday night.

**6. New Business**

None.

**7. Adjourn**

**Councilor Moulton moved to adjourn. Councilor Elkins seconded. The motion carried 4:0 by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 4:28 p.m.**

*Prepared By:*

*L. Krutzler, Administrative Assistant to the City Council  
413.587.1210; [lkutzler@northamptonma.gov](mailto:lkutzler@northamptonma.gov)*