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January 28, 2021

Public Works Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Public Works Committee was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, via Zoom conference hosted by FATV, at 5:00 PM. The video is available from FATV here: <https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/yycCAZPb0NN3zj2o5qio-YFMNC43NjCG/media/616641>

Committee Members Present: Councilors Marissa Fleming (chair), Andrew Couture, Bernard Schultz, and Andrew Van Hazinga.
Commissioner Nicolas Bosonetto
Superintendent Gary Withington

Committee Members Absent: Paul Beauchemin

Other Participants: None

- 1) **Minutes** from 10/28/2020 meeting were approved unanimously.
- 2) Vote to approve remaining meeting dates for 2021 approved unanimously.
Tuesday, February 23
Tuesday, March 30
Tuesday, April 27
Tuesday, May 25
Tuesday, June 29
Tuesday, July 27
NO MEETING in August
Tuesday, September 28
Tuesday, October 26
NO MEETING in November
NO MEETING in December
- 3) DPW Updates: Commissioner Bosonetto gave the Committee a brief update on upcoming DPW projects. Six Engineering Consultants firms have been contracted to provide support services for the DPW Engineering Division, Wastewater Division, and Water Division. The sidewalk bid (IFB) has been sent to procurement for 2021 sidewalk work including crosswalk construction along Electric Avenue from Mt. Elam to the Knights of Columbus and Summer Street from Moran Square to Harvard Street. Paving contracts are being prepared for this year's paving including Summer Street from Harvard to Moran Square and Williams/McIntire/Alpine/Ashburnham Hill Road. Chair Fleming commented that newly paved roads attract speeding and asked what strategies we are using to slow

traffic down on newly paved streets. Commissioner Bosonetto explained that we repaint the road with 11-foot wide lanes, for example Crawford Street was repaved and repainted with 11-foot lanes and 5-foot shoulders to slow traffic down. The 5-foot shoulder is to provide safe biking and walking areas. Commissioner Bosonetto also informed the Committee that the John Fitch Highway project will be starting soon with a public information and participation campaign. Commissioner Bosonetto also commented on the great job DPW has been doing cleaning up the yard and looks forward to hosting DPW Days next year.

4) Action was taken as follows on NEW petitions:

228-20. Toriano and Mariah Pridgen and various residents of Fitchburg, to petition for a Black Lives Matter Banner to be put up on the stone wall on Kimball Street passing through the intersection. (REFERRED from City Council on 11/2/20)

Discussion: Commissioner Bosonetto explained that DPW has many infrastructure assets including bridges, retaining walls, traffic signals, roadways, etc. DPW does not allow any advertising, political slogans, painting of messages on our infrastructure. DPW does allow murals and art on some park properties if its related to the park. Allowing one group to use the DPW infrastructure for advertising their message creates an opening for equal space/time for all messages. Chair Fleming asked how this policy applies to political yard signs during elections. Commissioner Bosonetto answered that technically any yard sign placed within the ROW is trash, but since most people don't realize where their property lines are, DPW doesn't enforce it. However if a political candidate wanted to place their message on a DPW bridge or wall we would not allow it. Councilor Van Hazinga inquired as to the location and type of sign being proposed. Commissioner Bosonetto read the petition which request the "banner painted on the Stone Wall on Kimball Street passing through the intersection." Councilor Schultz commented that location is directly across from FATV on Kimball Street. Commissioner Bosonetto explained that wall is a historic granite wall and if someone was to paint graffiti on it DPW would remove it. Councilor Couture made a motion to withdraw the application. Councilor Van Hazinga seconded and ask to speak on the motion. He explained he has no problem with the BLM message or movement but asked who would maintain the mural and has concerns the public infrastructure is not the correct place for it. He also asked if the DPW Committee was the correct place to discuss the petition. Commissioner Bosonetto agreed that the message is irrelevant to the decision and DPW will deny any request to advertise on public infrastructure. Chair Fleming, Councilor Van Hazinga, and Councilor Schultz discussed if the DPW Committee was the correct place to discuss this issue and if it should be referred to another committee. Councilor Schultz brought up the example of the BLM mural painted on the street in Washington DC. Commissioner Bosonetto explained that no-one can paint the roadway – all roadway markings have to follow the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) yellow and white paint have specific meanings, lines have specific meanings, crosswalks have to be white paint and size/shapes and the FHWA has already decided that random

colors/patterns on roadways are prohibited. This is due to motorists expectation and safety, a roadway painted over with all different colors is confusing to motorist and pedestrians. Furthermore, any decision regarding DPW infrastructure has to go through the Commissioner of Public Works because DPW has sole jurisdiction over the public infrastructure. The Commissioner used crosswalks as an example – they cannot be painted rainbow colored, or green, or black – there are rules and regulations regarding colors and shapes.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-1 that the petition be WITHDRAWN. Councilor Schultz objecting.

246-20. Councilor Marcus DiNatale and Councilor Marisa Fleming on behalf of resident Tyler Scipione to petition the City to repair/replace the sidewalk in front of 89 Highland Ave. (REFERRED from City Council on 12/1/20)

Discussion: Commissioner Bosonetto reported that DPW has a minimal sidewalk budget of \$17,000/year and there is a long list of sidewalk repairs. DPW is not opposed to fixing the sidewalk, but it would take quite some time before it was addressed. Chair Fleming inquired into the sidewalk tree grant. Commissioner Bosonetto explained that DPW applied for and was granted a \$20,000 Greening the Gateway Communities grant for tree planting on the sidewalk. For the Summer Street IFB DPW has included items to place tree pits on the north side of Summer Street with smaller trees placed there due to overhead utilities. The tree pits will also serve as green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff. Councilor Van Hazinga made motion to approve the petition and Councilor Couture seconded.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be GRANTED.

5) Previously HELD petitions for review:

046-20. Councilors Marisa Fleming and Marcus DiNatale to declare Ethier Street a Public Way. (REFERRED from City Council on 2/4/2020 to Property Committee, Planning Board, and Public Works Committee) (Held during February and June DPW Committee Meeting)

Discussion: Still awaiting developer’s response. Petition was continued.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD.

089-20. Councilor Bernie Schultz and resident Alex Freeman to remove the “No Turn on Red” sign at the intersection of John T. Centrino Memorial Drive and Water Street. (REFERRED from Public Safety Committee 10/20/20).

Discussion: The petition misspelled the name of the fallen firefighter for whom the bridge is commemorated – it is Cetrino. Councilor Van Hazinga made a motion to amend and Councilor Schultz seconded. Voted

unanimously to amend petition to correct misspelling. All DPW maps and records show the correct spelling.

Commissioner Bosonetto reported that the sign and ordinance prohibiting right-turn-on-red at the bridge originated in 1992 and the reason for the prohibition is related to the traffic signal having a separate phase for the Boyle Court/old fire station entrance. When Boyle Court receives the green signal they have the right-of-way across the intersection and allowing a right-turn from the bridge would create a conflict. Councilors Schultz and Van Hazinga inquired into the feasibility of replacing the signal for Boyle Court with a STOP sign or a right-turn only. Commissioner Bosonetto has spoken with FPD and they did not think removing the signal for Boyle Court was a good idea. Commissioner will look further into the matter. Chair Fleming inquired whether this petition should be referred to the Safety Committee. Commissioner Bosonetto answered that this is traffic engineering issue to be dealt with by DPW Engineering.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD.

177-20. Councillor Paul Beauchemin, to petition the City to add a berm in front of 78 St. Joseph Ave., in order to address water and sand issues faced by residents in the winter. Berm should be placed from the start of the sidewalk to the berm on Daniels St. (HELD during July 2020 meeting).

Discussion: DPW has to investigate further. Petition was continued.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD.

6) Any Other Business: No other business was addressed.

NICOLAS BOSONETTO, COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS

Name and title of person submitting minutes