



CITY OF FITCHBURG

FITCHBURG CITY CLERK

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PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Public Works Committee was held on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, in person at the Legislative Building, 700 Main Street at 5:00 PM.

Committee Members Present: Councilors Marisa Fleming (Chair), Bernie Schultz, and Sam Squailia (remotely); DPW Commissioner Nick Erickson.

Public Comment:

Carrie Harris spoke regarding petition 212-23. She noted that the damage is starting further up from where they originally thought and requested that she be contacted when the DPW comes to take a look at the site.

Mike Hurley spoke regarding petition 192-23. He noted that he had requested this berm be repaired in the past and this is the second petition that has been submitted to address the damage.

Catherine Tucker spoke regarding 204-23. She explained that there is one section of the sidewalk that she is requesting be repaired because it has broken into pieces and is concerned that someone will get injured.

1) Vote to approve minutes from previous meeting (5/30/23): A motion was made to hold the minutes until the next committee meeting was approved unanimously 3/0.

2) DPW Updates:

Water Division:

Commissioner Erickson mentioned that the supervisory control and data acquisition system upgrade project is in progress and Fall River Electric is planning to do the cutovers between the two plants later this year. He noted that this project replaces all of the controls and telemetry systems at the two water treatment plants and various remote sites throughout the water supply system. He explained the project has been many years in the making due to delays with obtaining electronic components and that they are excited to get this project back on track as it will provide much needed resiliency and better reliability in communications within the control systems at the two treatment plants.

Commissioner Erickson noted that another project the Water Department is undertaking is the design of water main replacements for Main Street and Boulder Drive. He explained that both projects are being funded through money that was allocated from ARPA funds and that both projects are estimated to go out to bid for construction in early 2024.

The last project Commissioner Erickson mentioned is the replacement of the Oak Hill water storage tank. He noted the contractor DN Tanks has performed two large concrete pours to get the tank constructed and it is expected to be online and operable in the next month or so.

Wastewater Division:

Commissioner Erickson mentioned the combined sewer separation project (CSO) in the northwest Main Street area which is contracted to J.A. Polito and Sons has begun. Currently they have a detour in place for a small area on Main Street between the boulder and River Street roundabout and traffic will be redirected around this area for the next several months. He explained that the excavation in this area is about 16 feet deep and as a matter of public safety traffic must be detoured. He mentioned they are also in the design phase for the next CSO project which will be moving further east along Main Street and will encompass the area from Prospect Street east to Blossom Street. He noted that with these CSO projects they are upsizing the drainage system to improve resiliency and account for the increase in rainfall due to climate change so it involves construction of very large drainage systems in these areas. A question was asked about when Mass DOT will begin the River Street bridge

project. Commissioner Erickson explained that it will most likely begin right after the current CSO project is finished. The anticipated bid schedule is this fall with construction beginning early next year.

Commissioner Erickson also mentioned that they have also begun a design project for the East Plant. He explained that they are performing locker room and control room upgrades and the project should be going out to bid soon and construction will begin in the next several months.

Cemetery Division:

Commissioner Erickson mentioned that they completed the Memorial Gardens which is the new section of Forest Hill Cemetery. The only outstanding items for the expansion project are paving of the pathways and final landscaping. He also noted that the Superintendent has begun selling plots in this new area.

Parks Division:

Commissioner Erickson stated that they had heavy storm damage in many of the parks as a result of the rainstorm on July 16th, particularly Cogshall Park, where the access road washed out pretty heavily and the walking path around Mirror Lake also sustained washout damage. He explained they are working to allocate resources to fix the issues, but it will take some time due to the magnitude of damage throughout the City.

Streets Division: Commissioner Erickson explained that there were two areas of the City that were particularly hit hard by the recent rainstorm. One being a culvert that runs underneath Forest Hill Cemetery to the intersection at Rollstone Street and Franklin Street and underneath Nikitas Field before it discharges into Park Hill Park. There was a section of the culvert that collapsed and after further investigation it was revealed the entire bottom of the culvert has washed out which he believes is due to the heavy rainfall. He mentioned that they have made a spot repair where the roadway collapsed at the intersection of Rollstone Street and Franklin Street and the road is now back open to traffic. He noted that they are still working on a plan to fix the section that runs under Nikitas Field.

Commissioner Erickson explained that the second area of the City that was hit hard was the area downhill of Hobson Street. There is a culvert on Hobson Street that is undersized and was plugged up with debris that washed downstream and clogged up the inlet. When that happened, the stream jumped its banks and flowed downhill through backyards, St. Anthony's School parking lot, and through another building along Heywood Street. It heavily damaged Heywood Street, Birch Street, Hobson Street, and a few other roads. He mentioned they have temporarily patched the road and got the culvert back open and removed all the debris and are working on a coming up with permanent repairs including upsizing the culvert to make it more resistant to be able to handle more storm flows. He explained that the culvert is rather long and runs through private property so it's going to require a lot of design work to make it more resilient. In the meantime, they are working on bringing a contractor in to permanently repair the roads that were heavily impacted. He mentioned that retaining a contractor to perform the work will have to follow the procurement process. A question was asked whether the emergency declaration would allow them to expedite the procurement process. Commissioner Erickson explained that our Chief Procurement Officer has been in touch with the Attorney General's Office for guidance and they allowed us a pathway to avoid the public bid process but we still have to follow best practices. This means we have to treat this area by area, come up with detail scopes of work for each area, and solicit quotes from at least three contractors that have the ability to perform the work. He noted this will take a lot of time and effort so they are also exploring an option to retain an on-call construction contract but both options are going to take some time.

Commissioner Erickson explained that they are still assessing other areas of the City that were damaged by the storm and encouraged the City Councilors to forward any concerns they receive from residents to the DPW so they can include these on the repair list.

Commissioner Erickson provided an update on paving and stated that he is currently working on contract documents for Clarendon Street. He acknowledged that paving is an important issue but explained that currently he is the only person that can work on these contract documents due to a shortage of engineering personnel. He noted in addition to Clarendon Street he is also working on a three year on-call paving contract which will allow us assign paving jobs to the contractor as deemed necessary in accordance with our available funding. He also noted that they recently completed paving of Kimball Street and Industrial Drive and explained they still have more work to do on Industrial Drive in the Game On area.

3) NEW petitions for review:

- a) **182-23. Councilor Beauchemin and Councilor Schultz on behalf of residents, on Kimball Street to remove overgrowing trees pushing on existing wall, causing the said wall to lean.**

(Referred from City Council on June 6, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he agreed this issue needs to be resolved and that he would need to retain a contractor to remove the trees as this work will require equipment that we currently do not have. He also noted work like this will need to be performed on all of the large granite retaining walls throughout the City.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be APPROVED.

- b) **191-23. City Councilor Bernie Schultz, on behalf of Linda and Mike Brousseau of 116 Belmont Street, to install a berm to prevent Mt. Carmel Street runoff from damaging the grass sidewalk in front of 116 Belmont Street.**

(Referred from City Council on June 20, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he agreed with this petition. He noted the roads are on the side of a hill with a decent slope and there is erosion that is beginning and he believes a berm would solve the erosion.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be APPROVED.

- c) **192-23. City Councilor Andrew Couture, on behalf of Mike Hurley, to repair the berm in front of 152 Highview Street.**

(Referred from City Council on June 20, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson explained that according to their records, a crew went out to the location on June 5th to prep the site for the berm installation but they never went back to install the berm. He apologized for the breakdown in internal communication and stated they would schedule to get the berm replaced. A motion was made to amend the petition to read “to replace the berm” was approved 3-0.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the amended petition be APPROVED.

- d) **193-23. City Councilor Andrew Couture, on behalf of Bev Hofer, to replace the berm in front of 466 Franklin Road to combat runoff from Oak Hill Road.**

(Referred from City Council on June 20, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he had visited the site and there is not a berm on this stretch of road from Franklin Road to Oak Hill Road and beyond and that he believes that installing a berm in front of 466 Franklin Road will not solve the problem. He mentioned the resident seemed to remember a berm being there in the past so he went through all of the Google street view images back to 2009 to see if there ever was a berm in this location. He noted that he did not see a berm in this location, rather it appeared that as some point someone had installed an apron at the end of this driveway. He acknowledged that Franklin Road is in need of repaving and explained that it is on their five year paving plan. He suggested the petition be amended to read “install a berm in front of 466 Franklin Road when the road is repaved” or give the petition leave to withdraw knowing that once the road is repaved they will address any runoff issues at that time. Councilor Shultz asked whether they could amend the petition to address the apron at the end of her driveway. Commissioner Erickson noted that if the resident’s concern is making sure the water runoff ends up in the catch basin at the end of the driveway that they could modify the apron to address ponding in the driveway. It was suggested that they hold the petition and ask the constituent to address their concerns with the committee.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be HELD.

- e) **194-24. City Councilor Andrew Couture, on behalf of Joyce Moretto, to repair the berms at the end of Parker and Hollywood.**
(Referred from City Council on June 20, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson noted that the petition did not specify which end of these streets the petitioner is requesting be addressed. He stated that there are damages to the berms at both ends most likely due to plowing through the intersections. He recommended amending the petition to include both ends of Parker and Hollywood. A motion was made to amend the petition to read “to repair the berms at both ends of Parker and Hollywood Streets”.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the amended petition be APPROVED.

- f) **195-23. Councilor Fleming on behalf of several residents, employees and non-residents of Fitchburg, MA. A petition to add streetlights or roundabout to the intersection of North Street / John Fitch Highway and Pearl Hill Rd / John Fitch Highway to mitigate traffic concerns (accidents) and pedestrian crossing (safety) during daytime hours. With the increase in traffic this discussion needs to take place before a tragedy occurs.**
(Referred from City Council on June 20, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he currently has an engineering consultant under contract to design a solution to these areas and is being funded by ARPA. He explained that he has four to five concept designs for a roundabout at this intersection with various configurations that he needs to circulate to both the Police and Fire Departments for input. He also noted that as part of the design they looked at the option of installing signals but the intersection does not meet the warrants for a signal and explained that one of the focal points the designs take into consideration is pedestrian traffic. Councilor Fleming read a letter from constituent Patricia Steinhauer into the record.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be HELD.

- g) **204-23. City Councilor Bernie Schultz, on behalf of Catherine Tucker of 308 Milk Street, to request a sidewalk repair in front of 308 Milk Street.**
(Referred from City Council on July 5, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he agreed that the sidewalk is in need of repair.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be APPROVED.

- h) **212-23. City Councilor Bernie Schultz on behalf of Jimmy Cordero of 58 Forest Street and Carrie Harris of 70 Forest Street to request an improved berm at 70 Forest Street to prevent rainwater from running down the Forest Street hill and damaging property at both the 58 Forest Street and 70 Forest Street addresses. There is also a sidewalk repair needed in front of 58 Forest Street.**
(Referred from City Council on July 19, 2023)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that he visited the area and noted that the existing curbing has sunken down to the same elevation as the roadway and is not providing any treatment of the stormwater and he agreed the work needs to be performed and the sidewalk be repaired.

Recommendation: The Committee voted 3-0 that the petition be APPROVED.

5) HELD petitions for review:

- a) **093-22. Councilor Sam Squailia on behalf of resident Nick Hains, to add a 4-way controlled stop at the intersection of Victoria Lane, Industrial Drive and Game-On Way. During times of heavy traffic flow in or out of the Game-On facility, residents of Victoria Lane do not have the right of way to cross, and thus must wait for long periods while the traffic lines go through. If a 4-way stop sign is not feasible, an alternate solution shall be investigated by the City. (HELD at the 5/31/22, 7/26/22, 9/27/22, 10/25/22, and 1/31/23 meetings).**

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson stated that they had a consultant study the intersection and it doesn't meet the warrants for a signal or a four-way stop except during peak game day traffic and noted that Game On has been diligent in hiring police detail officers to control traffic at the intersections. He also explained that Sgt. Boudreau had put together a temporary traffic control plan for these large events which seems to be effective and the no parking signs that were installed throughout the corridor has hopefully alleviated some of the problems. He recognized that some residents weren't happy with the signage that was installed so they have been working with them to improve the location or remove them in some cases. He also mentioned that when they repave Game On Way the plan is to make the intersection larger to allow for the temporary traffic control to be assembled and allow for the traffic to bypass around the game day traffic.

Recommendation: The committee voted 3-0 that the petition be given LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.

- b) **127-23. City Councilor Bernie Schultz and Police Sgt. Dan Boudreau request that the Department of Public Works and the School Department work collaboratively to ensure the widening of Munroe Street to accommodate increased vehicular traffic from South Street School.**

(HELD at the 5/30/23 meeting)

Discussion: Commissioner Erickson mentioned that the committee had been in favor of this petition in previous discussions. He noted the school department hasn't had a chance to clear the vegetation in order for them to push the edge of pavement back. A suggestion was made to have the Chair formally communicate with the School Department regarding this petition.

Recommendation: The committee voted 3-0 that the petition be HELD.

- c) **128.23. City Solicitor Vincent Pusateri to layout and accept as gift or donation, as a public way, a certain parcel of land known as Either Street Extension also known as Either Street as described in the attached plan.**

(HELD at the 5/30/23 meeting)

Discussion: Councilor Fleming placed a letter on file from resident Jacquelyn Wehtje opposing the petition. A motion was made to amend the petition to correct the spelling from Either Street to Ethier Street was approved 3-0. Commissioner Erickson noted that he understood the concern with the resident regarding accepting another road, but explained that this development goes back years and it was agreed that the City would accept the road as a public way as long as long as the developer adhered to the conditions set forth. He explained that he believes they have satisfied all of the requirements of the special permit approval which was discussed at the last Planning Board meeting. Vice Chair of the Planning Board, Paul Fontaine, Jr., mentioned that they had already recommended about three years ago approval of the street because the developer had done everything required of them at that time. He noted that there was question about payment for I&I and that they are forgoing the requirement in exchange for work that has already been done. He noted that the Board did recommend the detention basin fee of \$500/lot still be contributed by the developer and that the recommendation letter from the Board would be forthcoming.

Recommendation: The committee voted 3-0 that the amended petition be HELD pending Planning Board's recommendation.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Schultz and seconded by Councilor Squailia.