



# CITY OF FITCHBURG

## PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Public Works Committee was held on Tuesday October 25, 2022, in person at the Legislative Building 700 Main Street at 5:00 PM.

Committee Members Present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Marisa Fleming, Bernie Schultz (Chair), Sam Squailia; DPW Commissioner Nick Erickson; Superintendent Gary Withington.

Committee Members Absent: Councilor Sally Cragin

Other Participants: Councilor Andrew Van Hazinga, Mary Jo Bohart

- 1) Vote to approve minutes from previous meeting (9/27/22): Minutes were approved unanimously.
- 2) DPW Updates: Commissioner Erickson provided updates on the DPW Divisions. On the water side work is underway on the Boulder Dr water main design. There was a break on Exeter St on Saturday that had to be repaired. Wastewater has JA Polito wrapping up the sewer separation project which will include paving the areas where the work has been done for the separation work. Councilor Beauchemin asked if we were paving curb to curb or just where the work was done and where it was being paid from. Commissioner Erickson explained we are paving curb to curb and that it would be paid partially from the wastewater enterprise and partially from Chapter 90 funding. Councilor Beauchemin asked about the water/sewer rate study. Commissioner Erickson explained we are working on a water and sewer rate study right now which will be presented to Council as has been done in the past. Councilor Beauchemin stated he will wait until the meeting to discuss the rate study but wants everyone to know that he doesn't feel like the water and sewer rate payers should be paying for paving curb to curb when work has been done. Commissioner Erickson explained that having a permanent trench restoration done on a road where it is already bad doesn't solve the overall problem and feels that permanent restoration is what should be done so we prevent the problems we have from the patches done in the past. If the road is in good condition and a permanent trench patch is acceptable then we would absolutely allow that. Councilor Schultz asked when the rate study would be completed. Commissioner Erickson stated we are anticipating early spring. Commissioner Erickson stated the design has started for the next sewer separation project and anticipate it will bid in spring. On the parks side we hired a new recreation director a few weeks ago who has been a great addition. Parks are getting ready for the winter. The expansion project at Forest Hill Cemetery just wrapped up and should get us another 5 years at the cemetery. On the engineering side we are working on finalizing the paving contract to get it out. Clarendon St and Industrial Rd will be the first priorities next year. Councilor Squailia asked about Lunenburg St. Commissioner Erickson explained the 4D separation project took care of the separation in the Lunenburg St area in 2016. There are still 6 combo manholes that we are working with MassDOT on to work on how to go about separating them with other issues involving an undersized pipe. Councilor Squailia asked about the backlog of streetlights. Commissioner Erickson explained the contractor is working diligently through the list but we are struggling with supply chain issues.
- 3) NEW petitions for review:
  - a) **258-22. Councilors Sam Squailia and Bernie Schultz on behalf of Janet Rivera to remedy the sidewalk area in front of 367 Water St per the following: Remove the existing tree that is causing significant sidewalk heaving, repair the sidewalk to allow for accessible access, repoint the mortar joints on the granite block wall in that area. (REFERRED from City Council on October 18, 2022)**

**Discussion:** Roxanna Mayas spoke on behalf of Janet Rivera of 367 Water St who has been asking the tree to be removed for quite some time. The tree has caused the sidewalk to heave which is causing pedestrians to have walk in the street. The wall at the front of the property has also been impacted by the tree. Superintendent Withington stated that the tree is still alive and well. We could trim the tree and remove the areas of sidewalk that are causing issues. The wall is owned by the homeowner. Councilor Beauchemin asked if the tree is causing an issue to the wall, wouldn't that be a City problem. Commissioner Erickson stated that the wall is on private property and we can't really spend public funds on private property. It is unfortunate that the tree may have caused damage but it isn't something we can necessarily fix. Ms. Mayas stated that they aren't asking for the wall to be fixed they are asking for the tree to be removed. Councilor Fleming asked if we would be trimming the tree and when it was last done. Superintendent Withington stated we trimmed it 2 years ago. Councilor Beauchemin made a motion to approve

cutting the tree down, seconded by Councilor Squailia. Councilor Squailia asked if the area between the tree and wall was handicap accessible. Commissioner Erickson explained that he hasn't measured it out but it needs to be 36" to be considered accessible. Councilor Schultz agrees we should remove the tree even if it is healthy if it is causing problems. Councilor Squailia asked if there is a more appropriate tree we could put in under the Greening the Gateway Cities grant. Commissioner Erickson explained that no matter what tree we put in once we touch it we have to make it ADA accessible and there just isn't enough room to put in any tree there. Commissioner Erickson had been in discussions with former Director of Community Development Skwierawski regarding improvements to the sidewalks, lighting, and roadway in the entire corridor. Councilor Fleming explained if we approve removing this tree we are opening Pandora's Box and will have to start removing any trees that are put in via petition. Councilor Schultz asked Councilor Squailia if she would like to amend the petition to remove "repoint the mortar joints on the granite block wall". Councilor Squailia would like to amend to remove the language for the wall. Amendment approved 4-0. Councilor Fleming is against removing the tree and replacing the sidewalks, Councilors Squailia, Schultz, and Beauchemin approve removing the tree and replacing the sidewalks.

**Recommendation:** The Committee voted 3-1 that the petition be APPROVED AS AMENDED to remove the tree and repair the sidewalk.

- b) **259-22. Councilor Sam Squailia suggested amendments to the Main St/Boulder Dr Layout.** (REFERRED from City Council on October 18, 2022)

**Discussion:** Councilor Squailia spoke to her petition. Each item will be taken up individually.

- 1. Remove the stop sign at the Eastern End of Boulder Drive.** Councilor Van Hazinga spoke that historically there has been and hasn't been a stop sign at this location and would suggest that if the sign is removed then additional markings are done to better identify the lanes. Councilor Schultz agrees with the addition of a stop sign at this location and is not in favor of removing it. Commissioner Erickson stated that it was a stop sign before the 2 way conversion and prior to that it was a yield sign. Tighe & Bond is the traffic engineer who put together this design and Commissioner Erickson has a hard time going against their traffic study and engineering design. If we were going to remove the stop sign we would want to go back to Tighe & Bond and have them look at their traffic study. Councilor Beauchemin stated that before the conversion most of the traffic was coming down Boulder Dr with a little coming over the bridge but now there is way more traffic coming down that lane and if people don't stop it causes traffic backups and issues merging into traffic. Councilor Fleming wants to leave it as the engineers designed it. **Item 1 voted 3-1 to BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**
- 2. Add a 'don't block the box' traffic painting and signage at the Boulder Drive and Main St Intersection.** Councilor Squailia stated she is open to any suggestion to improve this location. Councilor Van Hazinga spoke in favor of this change as it has always been a problem especially during rush hours. Commissioner Erickson stated he agrees with Councilor Van Hazinga and that it has always been an issue at peak travel hours. He talked to Sgt. Boudreau about the issues here. Sgt. Boudreau is concerned with enforcement. If we do paint something then they have to enforce it. By the time an officer arrives, the light has changed to green and the issue is cleared. His main point is there is no real way to enforce it if people don't follow it. We will also have to keep up with painting it yearly and making sure the paint is visible. Councilor Beauchemin stated the problem is the parking spaces on the right hand side causing cars to block traffic and doesn't think painting this will solve the problem. Councilor Squailia stated that police enforcement shouldn't be a reason to not put something like this into effect. Councilor Fleming has no comment. **Item 2 voted 3-1 to APPROVE.**
- 3. Make both lanes on Main headed East at Day St and Water St straight, left lane should be left alternate. Adjust light configuration as required.** Councilor Squailia spoke that this was a suggestion from the community. Councilor Van Hazinga stated that the problem with allowing 2 lanes going straight that there is only enough width for 1 lane, not 2. Commissioner Erickson visited the site with Sgt. Boudreau and have a suggestion that will improve the location but not quite as petitioned. The proposal is to modify this item to have 1 lane that is straight or left onto Day and eliminate the second lane completely which will allow cars to go by and allow cars to go through onto the Water St Bridge. We would need to eliminate 1 parking spot in front of Tacos Tequilas to accomplish this. It could be done with some line painting fairly easily with no need to put in new traffic islands or change light timing. Councilor Fleming asked if any of the parking spaces in front of Tacos Tequilas are handicap accessible. Commissioner Erickson answered that there is no ADA ramp in that location and we are in the process of looking at all ADA accessible ramps in the corridor. If we maintain a handicap parking spot in front then we need to construct an ADA ramp to allow wheelchairs onto the sidewalk and we don't want to push access out into the travel lane. Councilor Van Hazing spoke that not all people who

use the handicap spot are in wheelchairs and the other option involves parking at the back of the restaurant and travelling a steep grade and would like to keep the handicap spot in front of Tacos Tequilas. Commissioner Erickson would have to refer leaving/taking out the handicap parking spot to the police department as that is their jurisdiction. Councilor Squailia would like to amend this item to Commissioner Erickson's suggestion to make 1 single, combined straight lane. Councilor Schultz asked if this would still work without removing a parking space. Commissioner Erickson will have to look at it with Sgt. Boudreau and see if there is a way to still accomplish the desired result without removing the handicap spot and removing another spot instead. Committee voted to approve the amendment; approved 4-0. **Item 3 voted 4-0 to APPROVE AS AMENDED.**

- 4. Change the ordinance for the Loading Zone in front of Fitchburg Jade/Tiki Tiki 333 Main St to be Loading Zone Mon-Sat 8AM-11PM.** Councilor Squailia stated the main issue is the misunderstanding as to the ordinance. Sgt. Boudreau has stated that after 4PM anyone can park in these spots for as long as they want to currently. The parking clerk interprets it that after 4PM people can park there for no more than 15 minutes and before 4PM no more than 30 minutes. Councilor Squailia would like to clarify the interpretation. Councilor Van Hazinga spoke that the loading zone restrictions are defined in the City Code and any car can park there for up to 15 minutes. If they are actively loading/unloading they can park there longer, but no more than 30 minutes between 8AM and 4PM. Any changes to the loading zone ordinance would have to be Citywide and not just this 1 location. Sgt Boudreau dug into the City code and determined he has been misinterpreting it and has gone and talked to the patrol officers about enforcement. After 4PM it is police department patrol officers and not parking enforcement who handle this type of issue. Councilor Squailia asked that we share the information from the police department about the interpretation of the ordinance. Mary Jo Bohart from Community Development spoke that the loading zones are shared amongst the businesses on Main St and not just the ones directly in front of the loading zones so any information should be shared to all businesses. **Item 4 voted 4-0 to BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**
- 5. There should be a legal crosswalk added between 470 Main St and Academy St.** Councilor Van Hazinga spoke that he isn't opposed to adding crosswalks where they make sense but that they shouldn't be added in locations that create a hazard. There are a lot of hazards in this location that would put pedestrians at risk of being hit. Councilor Fleming asked about engineering studies that need to be performed before adding new crosswalks. Commissioner Erickson agrees that we need to make sure it is safe and an engineering study should be done. The location in question was part of the engineering study performed and crosswalks were not recommended because there is a lot going on there already. If the committee feels strongly that a crosswalk is needed we would want to go back to Tighe & Bond and have them review their traffic study. The existing crosswalks at Academy St and in front of City Hall aren't that far away from this location and allow pedestrians to cross safely. **Item 5 voted 3-1 to BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**
- 6. No right on red at Putnam St at Main St.** Councilor Van Hazinga stated that per MGL any car turning right on red must first stop. Commissioner Erickson spoke with Sgt. Boudreau about this request. There have not been any reported accidents or issues at this location. Commissioner Erickson agrees with Councilor Van Hazinga that all cars must first stop before turning and that there is enough visibility at this location that it shouldn't be a problem. **Item 6 voted 4-0 to BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**
- 7. Make Newton Place one way from Main to Boulder Drive.** Councilor Squailia received this request from the former library director Sharon Bernard. Councilor Van Hazinga stated from a planning perspective he would reject this request because it would limit the connections between Main St and Boulder Dr. Commissioner Erickson agrees with Councilor Van Hazinga and also stated that as part of the library renovations there is a study going on which includes looking at Newton Place. **Item 7 voted 4-0 to BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**
- 8. Replacement of missing light pole at Blossom St at Main St should be prioritized for pedestrian safety.** Commissioner Erickson stated that it was an old concrete light pole that was taken down due to safety concerns. The streetlight contractor is on board and we are experiencing unprecedented supply chain delays to get some of these lights replaced. **Item 8 voted 4-0 to be APPROVED.**
- 9. Lengthen light timing at Academy at Main and Mechanic and Main.** Councilor Squailia stated this was a suggestion from the community. Commissioner Erickson explained that at Academy, Main & Rollstone we recently replaced the cameras and made sure the connections are working correctly between the lights and there should be significant improvements seen compared to what it was previously. Commissioner Erickson suggests waiting to see if the repairs recently made improve the situation and if not revisit in the future. **Item 9 voted 4-0 BE GIVEN LEAVE TO WITHDRAW.**

**10. Add street sign at Boulder Drive headed westbound on Main St.** Commissioner Erickson agrees with this because the Boulder Dr sign is after the bend and should be in the area of Depot Court. **Item 10 voted 4-0 to be APPROVED.**

4) HELD petitions for review

- c) **089-20. Councilor Bernie Schultz and resident Alex Freeman to remove the “No Turn on Red” sign at the intersection of John T. Cetrino Memorial Drive and Water Street.** (HELD on the 10/28/20 meeting and the 1/26/21 meeting and the 7/27/21 meeting and the 10/26/21 meeting and the 3/29/22 meeting and the 4/26/22 meeting and the 5/31/22 meeting and the 7/26/22 and the 9/27/22 meeting). (Amended the spelling of Cetrino at the January 2021 meeting).

**Discussion:** Commissioner Erickson has received draft reports regarding the traffic study but has not reviewed them with the Engineering firm that completed them and would recommend holding until the next meeting when he has reviewed.

**Recommendation:** The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD PENDING TRAFFIC STUDY.

- d) **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 meeting and the 7/26/22 meeting and the 9/27/22 meeting).

**Discussion:** Commissioner Erickson has received draft reports regarding the traffic study but has not reviewed them with the Engineering firm that completed them and would recommend holding until the next meeting when he has reviewed.

**Recommendation:** The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD PENDING TRAFFIC STUDY.

- e) **243-22. City Councilor Bernie Schultz and Judy Perla of 236 Walton Street to install a yield sign on Pole 1615 facing out on Munroe Street at the intersection of Fairbanks and Munroe Streets to improve traffic safety when motorists depart from South Street Elementary School** (HELD at the 9/27/22 meeting)

**Discussion:** Hold until public safety committee has reviewed.

**Recommendation:** The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD PENDING REVIEW BY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE.

- f) **244-22. City Councilor Derrick Cruz on behalf of Tyrone and Sheila Tines, residents of Clyde Street. I request that the City of Fitchburg implement either “No Parking from Here to the Corner” or “No Parking Signs” at the corner of Hancock and Summer Street, an appropriate distance on both sides. As residents exiting Hancock Street cannot see past the row of cars parked there, it has become a public safety concern for them.** (HELD at the 9/27/22 meeting)

**Discussion:** Hold until public safety has reviewed.

**Recommendation:** The Committee voted 4-0 that the petition be HELD PENDING REVIEW BY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE.

5) Any Other Business: Motion to adjourn by Councilor Beauchemin seconded by Councilor Squailia.