



Committee on Legislative Matters and the Northampton City Council

Members

Councilor William H. Dwight, Chair

Councilor Maureen Carney

Councilor Alisa F. Klein

Councilor David A. Murphy

MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 12, 2018, Time: 5 p.m.

Location: City Council Chambers, 212 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts

1. **Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call:** At 5 p.m., Councilor William H. Dwight called the meeting to order. On a roll call, the following councilors were present: Councilor Carney, Councilor Dwight and Councilor Klein. **Absent:** Councilor Murphy. Also present were Council President Ryan R. O'Donnell and Director of the Office of Planning and Sustainability Wayne Feiden.

Councilor Dwight announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded for broadcast by Northampton Community Television.

2. **Public Comment:** No members of the public were present.
3. **Minutes of February 12, 2018 and February 27, 2018**

Councilor Carney moved to approve the minutes of February 12, 2018. Councilor Klein seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0.

Councilor Carney moved to approve the minutes of February 27, 2018. Councilor Klein seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0.

4. **Items Referred to Committee**
 - A. **18.043 An Ordinance related to bicycling on sidewalks, defining multi-use trails, and regulating bike lanes - referred by City Council 03/01/2018**

Councilor Dwight referred to the two versions of the ordinance included in the packet; one as referred by the city council and one as amended following review by the city solicitor. If the attorney's recommended changes are accepted, members should move to put the amended version on the floor for discussion, he suggested.

The ordinance received a positive recommendation from the Transportation and Parking Commission (TPC), Mr. Feiden advised.

The ordinance proposes three basic changes to the existing ordinance, Mr. Feiden related. Years ago, during Councilor Dwight's original tenure, public discussion resulted in the determination that bicycling is not allowed on sidewalks in the downtown district and in Florence. Planners are simplifying the text to use the terms Central Business District and General Business District rather than listing specific streets. More significantly, in places where the bicycle path coincides with the sidewalk, the ordinance is being clarified to specify that no bicycling is allowed on sidewalks "except on marked bicycle paths." He cited an area near the Peter Pan Bus Terminal and another area on Pleasant Street as places where a section of the bike path coincides with the sidewalk.

The second change is to amend the definition of low speed electric bicycles. Recently, City Council approved changing the code to allow low speed electric bicycles on the bike path but didn't define these well. The revised language improves the definition, he presented.

The final change is to allow the designation of a bike lane by the physical creation of a bike lane with pavement markings and signage rather than by having the City Council individually designate bike lanes on a case-by-case basis, Feiden continued. Along with this, planners are proposing to allow the Police Department and Mayor to allow parking in bike lanes for short-term special events.

Councilor Carney moved to put the revised version of the ordinance on the floor with a positive recommendation. Councilor Klein seconded.

Once upon a time, bicycles, skateboards and rollerblades were not allowed on sidewalks anywhere in the city, Councilor Dwight reminded. In fact, any wheeled conveyance, including strollers and baby carriages, were technically prohibited. Julie Spencer Robinson's middle school class took exception to that and actually called a number of city councilors to come address it in their class, he advised. Mass-Bike came out and supported them with a caveat about driveway approaches and the importance of a hierarchical system whereby pedestrians have the right-of-way. The city eventually created an ordinance that allowed bicycles and skateboards and wheeled conveyances on sidewalks with the exception of designated streets in downtown Florence and Northampton. Skateboarders had t-shirts with the names of disallowed areas where they couldn't ride bikes, he recalled.

Now the city is moving towards the ethos of establishing bike lanes where ever and whenever it can.

He expressed his awareness that some councilors have taken exception to the Mayor allowing parking in bike lanes without ticketing for some large events, thinking the Mayor was encroaching on their authority by ignoring the bike lane designation. To be perfectly honest, he disagreed. He thought it was a somewhat excessive territorial marking and that it was far more appropriate for the police to make a determination to allow parking in bike lanes on a case by case basis.

Councilor Carney asked if this applied to multi-use trails on King Street, etc., and Mr. Feiden said yes.

MassBike would no longer make a recommendation for bicycles on sidewalks anywhere because of the frequency of so-called "right hook" accidents where turning cars cross sidewalks, inadvertently hitting cyclists, Feiden asserted.

The Northampton Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee informally considered the ordinance and also voted in favor of it, Feiden reported. Councilor Dwight called the motion to a vote, and it passed unanimously 3:0.

Councilor Klein moved to adjourn. Councilor Carney seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Prepared By:

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