

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

January 18, 2022

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jamila Gore, City Councilor At Large	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	X	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	Absent	
Diana Day, Citizen	X	
Vacant, Citizen	Absent	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	Absent	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment

- None.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (s): December 21, 2021

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the December 21, 2021 meeting.	Wayne Feiden	Karen Foster	Yes, 6 No, 0 Abstain, 2

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- Department of Public Works (DPW) – Director Donna LaScaleia
 - A new all-way stop has been installed at the intersection of Maple Street and Pine Street in Florence. There are warning signs for the new traffic pattern;
 - **Paving** – The current DPW paving project has stopped for the winter and will resume in the spring. The DPW is working on the streets list for the 2022 construction season;
 - **MassDOT projects** – The Exit 19 at Damon Road project and I-91 Bridges over Route 5, the railroad and Hockanum Road projects are ongoing. The Damon Road Reconstruction project and King Street Corridor Improvements have paused for the winter and will resume in the spring. Any questions about these projects should be directed to MassDOT District 2.
- Department of Planning and Sustainability – Director Wayne Feiden
 - Construction projects on Pleasant Street, Leonard Street and the PVTA bus stop are suspended for the winter;
 - The Complete Streets Prioritization plan is out of date so they are working with a consultant to update that. They are using the Northampton Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee as a sounding board. Once they get input from that group, they hope to be on the Agenda for the next TPC meeting to get the TPC’s input;
 - They have a contract for bike path feasibility that is underway to plan what to do in the future;
 - They are looking at a new round of Valley Bike expansion involving the potential for two new Valley Bike stations in either 2022 or 2023.

5. Matters before the Commission

- a) Proposed Ordinance Relative to Stop Signs in the Village Hill Neighborhood
 - Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
 - A motion for a positive recommendation was proposed and seconded;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 22.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Stop Signs in the Village Hill Neighborhood to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Karen Foster	Jody Kasper	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 1

- Background (from Director LaScaleia): There is currently no stop sign at the intersection of Ford Crossing and Higgins Way. This Ordinance is intended to add a stop at that intersection and to correct and codify a number of stops that currently exist but which are not in the Code of Ordinances;
- Director Feiden will not be participating in the discussion as he lives in the neighborhood;
- Director LaScaleia and Councilor Foster walked around all of the Village Hill neighborhood. They observed that the traffic volume at all of these intersections was not heavy, but that it can be confusing for both drivers and pedestrians to know what to do at the intersections;
- Outside consultants have reviewed all of the proposed changes, so the DPW feels confident that each of the recommended signs are appropriate;

- Director LaScaleia said that although Higgins Way is a private road (the City has no authority to install signs on private property), she believes that the residents understand the reasons the stop signs are needed;
 - A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.
- b) Discussion of Additional Accessible Space at 22-34 New South Street
- This topic was added to the Agenda by Keith Benoit, who is not present today, so the issue was tabled until such time as Disability Coordinator Benoit can be present.
- c) Discussion of Parking Request for Stoddard Street
- This request was submitted in July of 2021;
 - The first part of the request states that usually people know to park so that drivers can weave through the parked cars to make it safely down Stoddard Street. From time to time, when cars are parked on both sides of the street it is difficult for a small car to drive between them and emergency vehicles would not be able to pass down the road to get to a residence. The request is to consider the possibility of allowing permitted parking only on one side of the road;
 - The DPW did a brief Engineering survey which showed that Stoddard Street is about 900' long and 20 - 23' wide. It connects State Street and Prospect Street and parking is currently allowed on both sides of the street for its entire length;
 - It is the opinion of the DPW that parking should be prohibited on one side of the street. A typical parking space is 8 feet wide, so if parking was allowed on only one side of the street, emergency vehicles would be able to get by;
 - Laurel Rogers of 17 Stoddard Street is concerned that one side only parking will lead to speeding as cars use the street as a cut-through;
 - Diana Day said that the most urgent issue is the ability of emergency vehicles to get through when there is parking on both sides of the street, and Director LaScaleia agreed;
 - Councilor Nash, Adam Novitt and Director LaScaleia discussed the possibility of a parking chicane (a Traffic Calming measure that creates a slalom effect), but since the road is only 900' that is likely not practical;
 - Forest from Stoddard Street said that when there is both-sided parking it does slow the traffic down and he has the same concerns as Michael and Laurel about Stoddard Street becoming a cut-through;
 - Director LaScaleia said that the DPW generally decides which side to allow parking on based on a number of factors such as input from residents and which side has the fewest numbers of curb cuts, hydrants, ramps, crosswalks and driveways. They try to go with the side that has fewer obstacles and is therefore the "cleanest" from an infrastructure standpoint;
 - The DPW will assess the area and then make a recommendation in the form of a proposed Ordinance which they would share with the City Councilor so that there can be a conversation before anything further happens;
 - Director LaScaleia asked residents to email (dpwinfo@northamptonma.gov) or call the DPW (413-587-1570) to provide their contact information and request that they be updated about this issue on an ongoing basis;
 - The second part of the request concerns the larger issue of speeding and the potential cut-through due to the traffic light;
 - Michael Klein-Berndt from Stoddard Street agrees that parking on this street is at times an issue, but he is concerned that once the stoplight is installed at State Street and Finn

Street, people will shoot down Stoddard Street and cut down Church Street to get to King Street and avoid the traffic light completely;

- Director LaScaleia said that a consultant to the City did extensive modeling of what the proposed light at the intersection of State & Finn Streets could potentially do to adjacent side streets. That has to do with the timing of the light. People will only cut through the side streets if the light cycle is problematic, so if we are seeing major queuing at that intersection, then people are going to look for alternate paths. Queuing right now is more significant than it is expected to be once the light is installed. The question is, psychologically will people feel like they are actually “beating the light;”
- In order to get the light through the MassDOT process, all of these concerns had to be addressed previously;
- The situation will be watched closely to see how it develops once the light is in place.

d) Discussion of Parking Request for Parsons Street

- This request was submitted in both 2019 and 2020;
- The request was for a no parking zone one house length long on Parsons Street at the intersection with North Street;
- The DPW found that Parsons Street is 2,000’ long and 20 – 30’ wide. There is currently no parking from the intersection of Union Street to Bridge Street;
- Because the street is extraordinarily narrow, especially near the corner, people end up driving their vehicles on residents’ lawns;
- Councilor Nash said that trucks often get lost in this neighborhood, and school buses also travel on Parsons Street. These large vehicles quite frequently cross the sidewalk and go onto the requesting resident’s lawn leaving deep tracks;
- Councilors Nash & Foster and Director LaScaleia discussed the pros and cons of various potential sizes of the proposed no parking area;
- Director LaScaleia will have the DPW Engineering Department do a survey and also look at the number of parking spaces that would be lost under the different scenarios;
- After the survey has been done, Director LaScaleia will bring the findings and a recommendation forward to a future meeting.

6. New Business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Karen Foster	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0