

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

January 21, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:04 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	
John Cartledge, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Carolyn Misch, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	Absent	
Alex Jarrett, City Councilor, Ward 5	X	
Deborah Klemer, City Councilor, Ward 2	X	
Vacant, Citizen		
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	
Diana Day Foskett, Citizen	X	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	Absent	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, Principal Account Clerk	X	

2. Public comment

- The following residents spoke:
 - ❖ Hillary Gardner of Meadow Street in Florence
 - ❖ Jim Drisko of Crescent Street

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting(s): December 17, 2024

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

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the December 17, 2024 meeting.	Jami Albro-Fisher	Alex Jarrett	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- Department of Public Works (DPW) – Director Donna LaScaleia
 - a. High School update project
 - There has been a lot of good feedback regarding the traffic flow in the parking lot and thoughts about where students can be picked up and dropped off;

- Some people have taken the rendering of the project and marked it up with suggestions and comments;
 - Many emails have been received community-wide;
 - Directors LaScaleia and Misch attended a PTO meeting about the proposed alterations to Main Street and got some good feedback;
 - Director LaScaleia and Mayor Sciarra did an interview with the student leader of the high school's YouTube channel to talk about the project;
 - Director LaScaleia has gone back to engineering design firm Fuss & O'Neill to further work through suggestions such as could separated bike lanes be done and if so what would that look like, would the maintenance be affordable long term and would they have the desired effect;
 - The DPW is also working its way through a water main break at the intersection of Milton Street and Riverside Drive that is potentially problematic for our water main in the area that is still leaking. It has been sectionalized and shut off right now but will have to be repaired as soon as the weather is more favorable;
 - The project has not been delayed and they intend to bid the project this year and will continue to try to work through some of the details around the project;
 - The project will be discussed by City Council again tomorrow night because they need to appropriate the funding for the project;
 - There is a FAQ page up on the DPW's page of the City website to address questions that keep coming up over and over;
 - TPC will continue to have discussions, as will sub-committees and the PTO again once we have anything substantive to report.
- Department of Planning and Sustainability – Director Carolyn Misch
 - a. Rocky Hill Greenway – The RFP went out earlier this time and therefore it got more responses. MassDOT will be making a decision after reviewing the 12 bids that were received. Work is to begin in Spring 2025.

5. Matters before the Commission

- a) Discussion of the 2025 Paving Project
 - i. Streets List
 - Director LaScaleia said that this list is now shifting into streets in neighborhoods. The last time this happened was in the 1950s or 1960s;
 - Primarily, the plan is to do mill and overlay for most of the streets on the list, as reclamation is more complicated. Terrace Lane is an exception. Because it has had several water main breaks over the last year, it will be repaved once it is complete.
 - ii. Complete Streets Policy Design Exception Vote in accordance with City Ordinance 285-51
 - Director LaScaleia said that this guideline for roadway construction was implemented in 2016. It can be problematic as sidewalks and roadways are being dealt with. Concrete sidewalks must be on both sides of almost every street in the City because they lead to schools and/or the Downtown Business District. It is a challenge to comply with the Ordinance while addressing streets that are in straight up disrepair and need paving to address deferred maintenance issues;
 - Directors LaScaleia & Misch met to discuss potential tweaks to the Ordinance that could avoid having to spend large amounts of money on one small side street. They

hope to use limited resources to accomplish as much as possible on as many streets as possible;

- Director LaScaleia then gave a Design Exception presentation:
 - ❖ She said that many municipalities do not have any in-house Engineering staff. The City of Northampton has top notch, capable in-house Engineering staff which lets us do the amount of work that we do. If we had to contract out for every project it would be much more expensive and therefore we would accomplish less;
 - ❖ Typically, plans are scheduled through February and at the same time we have to oversee projects and compete with everyone else for paving resources. The capacity for paving resources is finite, and staff time and financial resources impact the in-house Engineers and push for rapid turnaround. In January, we are working on finalizing projects from last year and making plans for the summer construction season. If we outsourced all this work, there would be far fewer feet paved. This is all on a very compressed time scale;
 - ❖ They will be coming to the next TPC meeting to request an exception for paving Florence Street. They will be paving the street from Route 9 to the center of Leeds;
 - ❖ Several million dollars have been approved for funding the paving of streets and sidewalks;
 - ❖ The price of concrete is three times the cost of asphalt. Concrete is more typically used in urban settings. It is longer lasting if treated well. If it is not treated well (for example if salt is heavily used on it) it will last only approximately 25 years;
 - ❖ Director LaScaleia then went through the Streets List presented in Agenda item 5.a.i., and detailed the conditions on each street, the proposed options considered and the reason some of them are not cost effective, a proposed correction, what the Ordinance requires and the reason that an exception is being requested. She clarified that any sidewalk that is currently in place will be renewed rather than removed;
 - ❖ She then asked that the TPC vote on the entire list as a block, rather than having a separate vote for each street;
 - ❖ She then opened the floor for discussion and questions:
 - Director Misch said that the photographs that have been presented show the conditions on each street well. She noted that Hillcrest Drive is very wide, and wondered if lanes could be striped to slow traffic down and give all travelers some clarity. Director LaScaleia responded that, yes, they will do as much as possible;
 - Councilor Jarrett asked if rain gardens could be used even if some sidewalks could be too narrow. This would provide green space and absorb run-off. Director LaScaleia said that in general utilities are located right at the gutter line. They must be careful where they plant trees because roadway drainage is challenging and must be looked at very carefully. There is an expense to working around all trees, in order to accommodate for structural soil which prevents roots from ruining asphalt within five years;

- Councilor Jarrett then suggested that each year, the November TPC meeting be used for a general discussion of little in advance, giving the TPC members time to think and give feedback for the January meeting of the next year. He also suggested that traffic calming measures could be installed since the street would already be in the process of being torn up;
- The following members of the public spoke:
 - ❖ Steven Goode of Northampton
 - ❖ Alex Bowman of Northampton
 - ❖ Terry Reynolds
 - ❖ Dani McKahn
 - ❖ Chris Stratton
 - ❖ Phil Korman
 - ❖ Hillary Gardner
 - ❖ Terese Hammerle of Hillcrest Drive
 - ❖ Louise & Alan Swider of Hillcrest Drive
 - ❖ Fidela and Ronald Blank
- Directors LaScaleia and Misch are working on a revision of the Ordinance but would like more public input before continuing;
- Director LaScaleia then proposed that, per Ordinance, the TPC vote to send these design exceptions to City Council with a positive recommendation;
- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no additional discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send these Complete Streets Policy Design Exceptions in accordance with City Ordinance 285-51 to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Deborah Klemer	John Cartledge	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0

6. New business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 5:24 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.	Deborah Klemer	Alex Jarrett	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0