



Appointed by Joseph A Curtatone, Mayor

Date: Thursday, December 17, 2020

Time: 6:30-8:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting using GoToMeeting: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445>

Community Representatives:

*Ted Alexander

*Ginny Alverson – Vice Chair

*Jessica Bellow

Emma Blaxter

Georgy Cohen

Laura Evans

*Jessica Ferguson

*Rauvin Johl

Paola Massoli

*Audrey Orenstein – Secretary

*Vitor Pamplona

*Zach Rosenberg – Chair

*Julia Toof

*Emily Vides

Ex-Officio:

Katjana Ballantyne, *City Council*

*Alexandra Kleyman, *Mobility Division, OSPCD*

*Justin Schreiber, *Mobility Division, OSPCD*

*=present

Guests:

Arah Schuur

Tom Lamar - Bike Committee Chair

Stephanie Galaitsi - Somerville Woman's Commission.

George Schneeloch

Jarred Johnson - Executive Director, Transit Matters.

Acting Secretary: Vitor Pamplona

Call to order: 6:30 PM

Agenda Item 1: Approval of November 19th minutes

Comments:

- Audrey: Did we document the vote to request the Mobility Dept to move forward on quick-build island treatment on College Ave.
- Zach: Yes, I added before sending it out. We do not have the names for the motion and second
- Ted: My experience is that we just do our best to represent the vote
- Audrey made a motion to approve; Jessica Ferguson seconded
- No one opposed or abstained; minutes approved

Agenda Item 2: Approval of Dec 3rd Meeting minutes

Comments:

- Jessica Bellow: The chat was included in the minutes, are we always adding the chat log to the minutes?
- Zach: I added because we said it would be part of the record. But we do not need to do this moving forward.
- Jessica Ferguson: If we are doing that, it's important to let everyone know the chat will be in the record.
- Jessica Bellow: I think it was just about the size and documenting the chat for those that did not or could not participate verbally.
- Audrey: Minutes are just an outline. Our minutes are usually very detailed. It's quite impressive. Generally, I would expect only an outline of the discussion and vote registration.
- Rauvin made a motion to approve; Jessica Ferguson seconded
- No one opposed or abstained; minutes approved

Agenda Item 1.1: Recruiting new Members.

Zach: We are possibly down 2 members: Cohen (too busy) and Blaxter (moving out of Somerville).

Tom: The procedure of the Bike Committee is to ask for an email formalizing they are stepping down.

Ali: Zach should follow up with the City Clerk to let them know that this is happening.

Zach: I will reach out to the members.

Justin: PTAC Bylaws says no fewer than 14 members, but it doesn't really speak about empty seats.

Zach: We should advertise the seat availability and recruit more members.

Agenda Item 1.2: Ginny participated on the Disability Committee

Ginny: Several projects that were in the City agenda for 2020 ended up being cancelled because of COVID. One of them was to repair Central vs Highland and repainting the sidewalks on David Square. There will be a rebid on those projects. That committee is looking for members. The discussion was about: Accessible bus stops, accessible parking, affordable housing for disabilities, moving from plastic strips to metal strips (to hopefully last longer), etc.

Ginny: I intend to continue participating and report back from those committees to PTAC.

Zach, thanking Ginny: It's always good to see what others are discussing.

Ginny: What benefits folks with disabilities, benefits everybody. And sometimes that's lost.

Julia: I can help participate in other committee meetings and report back as well.

Agenda Item 3: City Update

Ali goes through an Update on 2020 projects and Vision Zero action plan.

2020 Projects:

- West Washington: bus and bike lanes were completed in late november.
- East Washington: not much changed. Implementations in McGrath to Joy, Underpass were completed. Tufts to Franklin new pavement markings are going to happen in the spring.
- Mystic Ave, a partial implementation was completed this week.
- Wellington Bike Lanes: Moved to Spring.
- Shore Drive pavement markings were completed
- Medford St Sidewalk was also completed.

Vision Zero update:

Ali: We are splitting the plan into Planning and Policy Oriented vs Physical Infrastructure actions.

Ted: Has the plan officially approved?

Ali: It has been finalized. I don't think it requires a city council action.

Ted: Is this the official policy of the mayor?

Ali: Yes, the mayor adopted Vision Zero and we will be reporting to the mayor and the city council on the plan. There will be many opportunities for feedback on the actions. Public review and outreach happened earlier in the year. And was finalized in March. In Spring, there was an internal process to prioritize and create a way to track (spreadsheet), organize and choose internal leaders for the actions.

Completed according to the plan: Establishing PTAC and public reports for construction zones.

On-going highlights: Expand 20mph zones, collect feedback from PTAC and SBAC, work with advisory committees to incorporate new mobility devices (eg. scooters, etc)

Mobility has broken the Vision Zero plan into 4 main categories

- Data Framework
- Safe Street Design
- Operate Safe Streets
- Culture of Safety

Ali presents the progress of 2020 on the plan for each category: What we have done well is to publish the data and show how it relates to the Vision Zero actions, tracking the project over several years and show how the impacted speed and safety in specific locations.

Jessica Bellow: What Somerville uses different websites for?

Ali: SomerVoice is managed by Mobility and it gives us freedom to edit at any time. The City website is managed by the city and more bureaucratic to change.

Justin: SomervilleByDesign is managed by the planning division.

Jessica Bellow: Somerville websites have a lot of resources. It's just spread out into many websites, which makes information hard to find.

Ali: Yes, there is a need to keep the Vision Zero website updated.

Ali goes through updates on Physical Infrastructure actions, splitting the work between the Engineering division and the Mobility Division. Highlights to curb extensions by the Eng division and Shared streets, traffic calming, bike lanes, enhanced crosswalks by the mobility division. One place that needs more focus is the planning and action on traffic calming improvements.

Ted: Are those speed humps on Beacon St implemented?

Ali: Yes.

Ali: We now have a better understanding of traffic signal inventory and upgrades due to the COVID-19 hands free automatic signal upgrades as well as a public list of bike lanes and sidewalks for snow removal.

Tom: Is the general Vision Zero progress report public?

Ali: This is a working draft of our internal tracking. Nothing formal or final yet.

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Ted: Please send them to the PTAC list. We can add them to the website.

Ali: Just remember this is just an initial brainstorm for this meeting.

Committee offers general support to make these reports public.

The city thanks PTAC and SBAC for spending time to work with the city on the issues along this year. Ali: Looking forward to working with all of you next year.

Ali shows a visual of where all those projects were done. The map shows the city's focus on communities of concern and of the highcrash network, highlights where Safety Zones were covered and implemented in 2020, and suggests Spring Hill will be done in 2021.

Mobility raised the following Learning and Challenges for 2020:

- Interdepartmental work required multiple funding proposals as well as staff capacity for each of them and thus generates friction to move fast
- Storing and installing materials, equipment and functions is also an interdepartmental issue. e.g. Mobility does not have their own storage facility. Employees are storing some flex posts in their homes. e.g. 2: Flex posts are better when bolted, but we do not have equipment for that. We are always dependent on other department time and funding to work.
- Contractor communications issues. e.g. Overseen painting on Mystic generated several opportunities for failure between multiple contractors, such as wrong paint, for instance.

Emily: When would the signage go up on mystic?

Ali: Staff time availability is the issue at this moment.

Emily: It is confusing. We don't know what it is. And now it's covered by the Snow.

Ali: Neighborhood members should have received a call or email to alert when the work would happen.

Emily: I didn't get a call or email.

Ali: At this point is really just weather dependent to finish. Hopefully it can happen by mid january.

Zach requests the city to publish the Vision Zero progress report online.

Agenda Item 4: Discussion of the Holland/College feedback:

Jessica Bellow: Was there any work done on West Broadway?

Justin: We asked the contractor for a draft plan, but they are not going to finish or implement the plan in this project. But we have it now if anyone wants to see it.

Zach: The plan after feedback is to expand the scope and split the project in two phases to allow more comprehensive changes (e.g. islands, raised crosswalks). I'd like to see more parking removed (e.g on Holland, on the North side, in front of Tufts, it would be a good place to get full length bike lanes).

Julia: I have seen the same feedback on social media to remove more parking.

Zach: I will be happy to talk to businesses to find common ground if removing parking is a concern they have.

Justin: I think it will be worth talking to them or planning an activity where we can openly discuss the benefits and hear their concerns.

Julia: There seems to be evidence that if you are on foot or on a bike, the chance of stopping on a business is higher.

Justin: We are also going to meet business and large property owners of close to Holland/College early next year to involve them in the process. Even though there was sufficient exposure of the changes, we feel we can do better. We will try calling them directly this time, as flyers seem to have not worked.

Ali shares the mayor's letter to the MBTA discussing their budget cuts:
<https://somervoice.somervillema.gov/7601/widgets/22943/documents/16271>

Agenda Item 4.1. Spring Hill Discussion

Zach: We are happy with the suggested proposals presented on the Dec 3rd meeting. However, we should take a look at removing more parking on Highland, especially in the front of the High School.

Julia: Due to the new infrastructure, the School could be used to the earlier grades during COVID, which could represent more young kids walking in the nearby sidewalks and/or using bike lanes to and from the School. Bus on Highland st is slow. Too many stops, asphalt is no good. Removing parking could speed it up.

Justin: There might be an earlier study, decades ago, that suggested that removing parking impacted the green surface and the city went with something more conservative for Highland. The School was supposed to have a parking lot, which would facilitate the proposal of removing parking from the street, but the parking lot was prohibitively expensive. Somerville Parking Working group needs to be on board if you are planning to advocate for aggressive parking removal in front of the school.

Zach: Yes, I would be happy to connect and discuss.

Tom Lamar: the SBAC definitely doesn't think bikes should share the lane with cars on Highland.

Agenda Item 5: Review: Draft letter on Additional Mobility Dept Support by Audrey

Audrey reviews the Letter to the Mayor to request more resources for the Mobility Department into Safe Street projects in an accelerated time frame as well as alleviating existing bottlenecks.

Link:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10iR0r4wVQOUEOdtOh6xBt2p7GUpQQdR8cN2TQqPQzBk/edit?usp=sharing>

Ravin: The letter is great. Thank you for taking the lead. I added a line to urge the mayor to adopt the policy order from the City Council's meeting on Tuesday, November 12 by Councilman Niedergang [Ward 5] and Councilman Davis [Ward 6], which is a supplementary budget request to immediately add staff and funding to the Mobility Department.

Audrey: Who signs the letter?

Zach: I usually sign myself as chair. But I am happy to have the author sign.

Ted: We should sign it as a committee and add all names at the bottom.

Zach: This is good timing because I am not sure if Mobility has all the funds it needs to Implement Vision Zero.

Ted makes a motion to approve the letter. Vitor seconds it.

- No one opposed or abstained; letter approved.

Audrey to e-mail the letter to the mayor, CCing the city council and transportation dept.

Ali: Thanks for the budget advocacy. We are also having internal discussions to increase the staff size of the mobility division and how to position ourselves better to receive additional funds. FYI: City Council is taking a vote tonight to move funds from operations to COVID emergency funds. It's important to remember that we are still fighting a pandemic.

Agenda Item 6: Parking and parking permits

Zach presents his pitch to advocate for higher parking permits, which should decrease the amount of cars, the need to use public space for parking and increase the use of the public space for other means. Street parking pricing is \$40/yr, which subsidizes the public space to store cars, which is much less than private parking.

Emily: You cannot equate what the city charges and what a landlord charges for parking.

Zach: Is the amount we charge today fair? How do we value our public land? Not all vehicles are equal (trucks are more dangerous). Could the city offer a low-income parking permit? Data is available in street parking permits.

Audrey, Julia: How often the fee is raised? And are we close to what other cities are charging? Those are all questions worth investigating.

Ted: We could refine some of the calculations to make the case to increase the rate. The policy subcommittee is also working on a similar pitch.

Tom, Julia: Other ideas can include a shorter number of spaces, maybe with a lottery system. Or scaling parking permits progressively for each additional car.

Zach will take this discussion back to the Policy committee: We should also restart Somerville's parking study, which was paused.

Jessica Ferguson proposes a discussion about getting sidewalks cleared after snow storms at January's meeting: we need to prioritize sidewalk experience after a snow storm instead of just prioritizing the cleaning of streets.

Ted: ADA access is a major problem during a snowstorm.

Ginny: I would add a proposal to talk about heated sidewalks. Other cities have it. Why can't we?

Zach: I will put it in the agenda for next month.

Meeting ended: 8:13 PM

