

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Regular meeting of the Public Works Committee was held on Thursday, July 14, 2022 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino
Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
Councilman Matthew R. Reilly
Council Vice-President Robert J. Ferri, Chair
Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas

Absent: Councilman Richard D. Campopiano

Also Present: Councilman John P. Donegan
Councilwoman Aniece Germain
Paul McAuley, Deputy Chief of Staff
Richard Bernardo, Public Works Director
John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
Rosalba Zanni, Acting City Clerk
Heather Finger, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

I. COMMITTEE BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

None.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS* and/ or NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Gerard Bagosian, 1 Lowell St., appeared to speak regarding the speeding on Harmon Ave. He stated that speed on this road is extremely excessive. The means to deter speed on that road is extremely insufficient. This is a lively neighborhood with families. The speed on that road is a drag strip. It is a major cut-through between Reservoir Ave. and the Cranston Parkade.

A. *PUBLIC HEARINGS

B. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Request from National Grid for pole location at Crescent Ave.

Request from National Grid for pole location at Calef St.

Request from National Grid for pole location at Bryant Rd.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to vote on the above three requests as a block. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted approve the above three requests as a block. Motion passed unanimously.

Agreement by and between State of Rhode Island Department of Transportation and the City of Cranston for the Gratis transfer for streetlight facilities to D.O.T.

Director Bernardo stated that D.O.T. has finally gotten around to taking the last thing on State roadways. They maintain the State roadways, but for years communities have had to install, repair and pay for the streetlights on State roadways. The Legislature has seen fit that they change that and D.O.T. has come to Cranston. The Solicitor has reviewed the documents required by D.O.T. Basically, this would transfer approximately 628 streetlights from our responsibility to the State and we will no longer have to maintain them and no longer have to pay the electricity. We are looking at a potential savings of approximately \$65,000 a year.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilwoman Marino, it was voted to recommend approval of this agreement. Motion passed unanimously.

OAKLAND CEMETERY:

Request dated June 7, 2022 from GRA (GM2, Inc.) on behalf of Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) to conduct work at or near to the Oakland Cemetery.

Jason Pezzullo, City Planner, appeared to speak and stated that RIPTA is conducting a fairly modern recharging station at their turnaround on Broad St. The whole issue revolves around the proximity to the Cemetery so RIPTA consulted with RI HPHC on historic assets and there is no issue. There is no issue with building within the 25' buffer of the Cemetery. We have seen this before similar to the Fountains at Chapel View, but this is a fairly simple housekeeping matter at this point. Staff recommendation approves this.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to recommend approval of the above request.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Vargas stated that the actual document that was provided to the Committee does state what they are going to be doing such work as asphalt parking lot and so forth. There is a fence right on that same property that abuts the Cemetery and the actual lot. That fence she is being told belongs to that lot which folks are asking her with this charging station plan being worked on, whether or not they are going to put the entire new fence between the Cemetery and this actual property she is being told the fence does not belong to the Cemetery. Her question is who owns the fence.

Director Pezzullo stated that this was reviewed last week at DPR and he does not recall the fence issue. If it was discussed earlier, he would have pulled out the plans and have an answer for that.

Colby Owen, 159 Irving Ave., Providence, Representative for GRA, who is doing the engineering for this project, appeared to speak and stated that he is present this evening on behalf of RIPTA. As to the question about the fence, the fence is technically on RIPTA's property and is being installed exactly all along the property just the way it is currently.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this request and motion passed unanimously.

- ***Speeding on Harmon Ave.(Councilman Donegan)***

Councilwoman Donegan stated that in the past when discussing this issue, typically, discussion was greater enforcement and Police patrol, but he thinks with a new Director of Public Works in the City, maybe this is an opportunity to take a different approach, a more proactive approach and a fresh look at the situation on Harmon Ave. that hopefully can be transferable to Crescent and the surrounding area. From having lived around the corner and frequently walking the dog in the area, people fly by there and the two speed bumps that are there do not do anything. He is hoping that we can leverage the expertise of our Traffic Department, our Public Works Department in collaboration with residents and the School Department to try and figure out what we can do to increase safety right there and reduce the speeding.

Director Bernardo stated that he does not think that this would be an inhouse project. He thinks we would have to seek funding and get a traffic calming expert. We did have conversations with the State Traffic Commission as recently as this week. From his research, this roadway was a 2012 State Route to School Project, which was done in conjunction with the Department of Transportation and the State Traffic Commission. The height of those speed tables was based upon the approved design that was appropriate. Issues regarding bump outs or speed tables all have to be evaluated with the potential introduction of a hazard. When we talk about drunk drivers and speed hump, these are mostly enforcement issues. These are mostly bad behavior. If you have a speed bump or you have a bump out at an intersection, that drunk driver is still going to get into an accident. That drunk driver may try to avoid the speed bumps. The speed bumps that they have put in Providence have actually caused more accidents because people cross the double yellow to avoid them at high speed so we are introducing hazards. That is why you need some outside expertise. If it is the Council's desire to do that and the Administration has the money, by all means, there are traffic calming experts. You need to get Police and Fire involved because that is always an issue. From a Public Works point of view, introduction of a bunch of speed bumps does affect plowing. It does not affect the condition of the roadway even the temporary ones.

Chair asked what the best approach is that Councilman Donegan and the neighbors should take to start this process. Director Bernardo stated that if there is a particular time of day or particular day of the week that they see these things or any information that they can give the Police Department for enforcement that is what the State Traffic Commission is telling him. It is either Police enforcement or it is the speed cameras. Other things we could do, which we have done in a couple of locations, Broad St and Pontiac Ave., where you have the sign that flashes if you are going below 25 miles an hour. That kind of gives you a reminder you are going too fast. Unfortunately, it is not an enforcement, it does not give tickets, but that is another option. That usually costs approximately \$10,000 for two signs.

A member of the audience asked to speak. Chair indicated that public hearing was closed.

On motion by Councilwoman Renzulli, seconded by Councilwoman Marino, it was voted to reopen public hearing. Motion passed unanimously.

Ed Generali, 75 Harmon Ave., appeared to speak and stated that there are speed tables in front of his of his home and more towards the intersection down further. He walked the area with Councilman Donegan and he brought to his attention that once you hit the speed table at his property, you speed up at the crosswalk where the children are. This needs to be relooked at and maybe placing more speed tables there won't interfere with the plowing. He would be in favor of speed cameras in that area and thinks it would deter people from speeding.

Councilman Donegan stated that maybe a meeting can be set up with the Administration and the Public Works Director and Police and Traffic to meet with residents to talk about this and try to find a solution.

Chair closed public hearings at this time.

A prior speaker approached the podium to speak again.

Attorney Angell stated that if the floor has been open for another member of the public, out of abundance of caution, the floor has been reopened for public comment, he would recommend that the Committee allow additional speakers in the public comment section to speak.

Solicitor stated that he agrees with Attorney Angell, but he noticed the gentleman who has already spoken is coming up for a second time. He would, as caution, just say that it is probably not wise to let people speak multiple times. Chair agreed with the Solicitor. He will allow the gentleman to speak again and have up to three minutes.

Mike Mangasarian, 118 Harmon Ave., appeared to speak and stated that he has lived at this address all his life and has a lot of information. He can tell what the trends are every day and can volunteer something if it is feasible. When Councilman Donegan announced this meeting, it was a Saturday that he received the e-mail and in ten minutes, he took videos of approximately four people that went right through the stop sign, didn't slow down for the speed bump, which is all ineffective. The speed bump is the major problem because it does not do damage to the car. The Roger Williams Park speed bumps, he can state that they are avoided in every capacity because they damage cars. All the tools that are supposed to help do not do anything, but if you damage their car, they are going to avoid it.

Public hearings were closed.

- ***Rodent Control – discussion of how the baiting program is going and discussion on any proactive measures that can be taken as a City to deal with the issue. (Councilman Donegan).***

Director Bernardo stated that he has done quite a bit of research on this. We average approximately five new appointments for baiting per day and approximately ten appointments per day for rebaiting. We have a backlog of indemnification forms of approximately 115. We have a backlog of auto rebate program of 786. We currently have almost 3,000 bait boxes out averaging approximately 25 per week. Unfortunately, this is not a staffing issue and this is not a public issue. The rats are breeding at a faster rate than we could possibly kill them. This is again a situation where we need to change the

public's attitude towards composting, roosters, chickens, animal waste, bird feeders, wood piles and other nesting sources. We have done everything we can and we are just about to start a program of changing the bait to a more potent bait, but all that is going to do is perhaps kill them quicker. This is not a staffing and this is not budget proactive. You can double the budget, you can give him half a million dollars, if people continue to feed them and provide them nesting areas, you are throwing good money after bad. We just have to try to change people's attitude. If you look at the City of Providence's website, in Providence, they only do one baiting and if it does not work you are on your own.

Councilwoman Vargas asked Director Bernardo the following questions:

- Is there is a particular section of Cranston that he is seeing that there is more bait being requested?
- If when the Rodent Inspector goes out to bait a property and happens to see an overflow of trash or overflow of a dumpster, if there is more than four units or so, are we then also coming back being proactive on that end?
- What are your thoughts of possibly outsourcing while we have staff in place, which may be costly, would that even take care of some sort of the situation to speed up to keep up with the amount of rodents being reproduced?

Director Bernardo addressed the last question of Councilwoman Vargas and stated that if you had \$50,000 - \$100,000 or more to hire Griggs and Browne to help take the backlog, he personally thinks it is a waste of money because the rodents are reproducing too fast. It has to be something that stops the rodents. He addressed the second questions and stated that if when the Rodent Control Officer goes to any site he is baiting and there is something there, he will tell that resident that they need to take care of the wood pile, they need to stop feeding the birds, they need to pick up the dog waste. He can't go back. He does not have the time to go back to see if they are actually doing that. In some cases, if the yard is pristine, if we are not invited into the yard 300' down the road that is the source, we can't even report that to Inspections, but it would be Inspections that we would report something to if he saw it and then Inspections would have to go to that property. As to the first question, there is a higher concentration in the urbanized section of Cranston where the houses are close together then in Western Cranston, but we are baiting quite a bit in Western Cranston because of chickens or roosters, but when you have the Midwood area, once it is in that area, every one of those houses is getting calls.

Councilwoman Marino stated that with respect to the rat issue, she understands it is not a DPW issue when it comes to abandoned homes, but she has seen herself, residents nearby have a nice clean property, have lived there for decades and never had a problem and there is one home that is abandoned for a variety of reasons that is the cause of the problem. She thinks that we, as a City, the Administration make a better effort and coordinating between the individuals who go out for the pest control when there are obvious situations like an abandoned home and communicate with Inspections so we can timely address it. There should be more communication between the two departments to make that happen.

Director Bernardo clarified that if the Inspector sees something, he does report it, but he is running from one appointment to the other because he is so far behind that he is not riding in the neighborhood looking for the source. He just does not have that time.

Deputy Chief McAuley stated that we have seen a dramatic increase through Constituent Affairs and his Office for Inspections to go out and deal with matters such as this. He would say, on average right now, probably six requests per week for Inspections to go out. DPW and Inspections are doing an amazing job in keeping up and we are citing people and we are bringing people to Court.

- ***Painted Lines at Dyer Ave and Cranston St. (Councilman Donegan).***

Councilman Donegan stated that he had reached out about this in May and then again in June. He stated that as you are coming up to the intersection at Dyer and Cranston St., there is currently one lane in each direction and people tend to go to the right lane or go to the left and it creates a potential for people passing on the right when someone on the left where the lane really is who wants to turn right and that could cause an accident in the shoulder. He thinks that potentially, just painting some lines there whether or not we create two lines where there is a right turn only lane or a left turn only, something to help better direct the traffic there within the existing intersection could hopefully prevent injury or accidents.

Director Bernardo stated that we have looked into it and we will be painting on all four approaches not a second lane, but we will be better delineating the shoulder area and a width that is less than a travel lane for many reasons. We can't add the second lane because of the roadway geometry, the signal equipment does not support an additional phase and the preemption for Fire Station #3, but we believe that the striping, which we will go out with this year's crosswalk striping contract, which is already in the purchase order, has been pulled and we are waiting for the contract to go out and when he is doing the Statewide paving including the crosswalks, he will be doing this.

- **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Acting City Clerk