

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
March 13, 2006 – Monday

Present: Arthur Mathews, Chairperson
Thomas J. Lacey
Gregory Shanahan
Michael Smart

Absent: Susan Kay, Councilor

Also Present: Paul J. Leary, Councilor
Patrick O'Connor, Councilor
Kevin Whitaker, Councilor
Jane Hackett, Chief of Staff
James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer
Robert O'Connor, Director, DPW
Tom Slattery, Maintenance Director, WPS

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

Chairman Arthur Mathews called the Public Works Committee Meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Street Paving –

Jane Hackett, with Bob O'Connor and Tom Slattery, briefly outlined the process of street paving, at the request of Town Council members. A list was initially generated under the new Administration, under Chapter 90 in FY'02, and is updated yearly. It is then prioritized based on input from the Town Council. Citizen requests are passed on through District Councilors. There are 210 miles of roadway and 308 miles of sidewalks in town. Chapter 90 funds for FY'07 have not been released yet therefore plans are not available yet.

Update on Sewerage Capital Improvement Plans –

Jane Hackett and Bob O'Connor reported on progress. Chairman Mathews noted that the Council is provided with a quarterly update on sewer projects and semi-annually on the Consent Order projects.

- Jane Hackett noted that the Essex Street Project is about 2 months away from completion. Flyers were distributed along the route notifying of significant detour (but not closure) daily of the roadway.
- Libby Industrial is open for residents only while construction is in process-due to the fact

that there is a 19 foot deep ditch which has been dug. Work is completed during the day, while the roadway is plated at night. Mr. O'Connor reported that although there were unanticipated ledge issues near Route 3, resulting in minor delays, the project remains on schedule. It is about 60% complete, with walls up and pipe in.

Chairman Mathews asked if the parking issue had been resolved, which was brought up at a public hearing by a resident of Sundin Road. Mr. O'Connor responded that detour signs were to be posted within the next few days so that drivers were not using streets as cut-throughs.

Councilor Lacey noted the number of sewer projects that were in District 2, and commended the efforts of Department crews, in conjunction with MWRA. He asked about reconfiguration in the Weymouth Landing project scope of work, and Mr. O'Connor responded that it had been discussed- the reconfiguration was Contract 5, and there was also discussion of extending the sewer to Brookside, and that is still in discussion stages. Councilor Lacey asked if the Landing work is complete at this point, and Mr. O'Connor responded that the major work between Commercial and East Streets, other than the Brookside extension, is done.

President Smart asked for an update on the water trucks and the status of the small pump station on Adria, and Mr. O'Connor responded that there were some maintenance issues which have been addressed.

Ms. Hackett noted that the Town Council has been extremely active in support of all of these capital projects, over the last five years, and noted in particular the Project Manager for Water & Sewer, Dan Annaccone. She reported that the Mayor noted in his State of the Town address that the cooperative efforts of the Public Works Department, the Council and the Administration were instrumental in minimizing the impact to residents, and wanted Ms. Hackett to convey his thanks.

Mr. Mathews agreed that the Council is proactive, and that the ultimate goal of everyone despite the inconvenience of construction is to get rid of the Consent Order and alleviate the sewerage overflows that have plagued the Town for years.

Maintenance of Streets and Common Areas -

A constituent, Linda MacDonald, appeared before Council in the Citizen's Concerns/Council Response item at the last Council meeting. She requested responses to questions concerning town maintenance issues, and the general appearance of the town. Chairman Mathews read each of her questions, and asked that each bullet point be addressed by Ms. Hackett, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Slattery.

- (coordination of school/DPW maintenance) Mr. Slattery explained that three years ago the Mayor introduced a centralized maintenance department, combining the town and school departments to streamline maintaining school and town property as one property.

Mr. Slattery and Mr. O'Connor met to figure out the best way to utilize the department.

- To best utilize resources and manpower for mowing school properties and park fields, the town has been divided at Washington Street. A school department worker is assigned the north side and a DPW worker is assigned the south side of town. A schedule is maintained at both the school department garage and the DPW office, and work is logged. Because soccer and Little League fields are most active on weekends, they are cut on Thursday or Friday. The 8 smaller fields and Central, are mowed twice a week, irrigated and fed. The normal cycle for cutting is 5-6 days for all of the town properties. Four full-time and two part-time workers cut each day. This program has worked particularly well with streamlining maintenance.
- (overview of maintenance calendar) Mr. O'Connor gave a brief overview of street sweeping. He explained that starting April 1st and weather permitting, the street sweeping is initiated, and the entire town is done. In addition, all five business districts are swept weekly; all main roads are done approximately every three weeks after the initial sweep, and residential areas are swept as needed. During April vacation week, all equipment is focused on school properties.

Mr. Mathews asked Mr. O'Connor to explain the rotation process that is used to decide which side of town is done first. Mr. O'Connor responded that they have been rotating so that not any one part of town is done first each year. East Weymouth is first this year because it was last the prior year.

Councilor Shanahan asked how many sweepers the Town has; Mr. O'Connor responded that there are three sweepers; two are operational at the moment.

President Smart asked if a similar schedule exists for water main flushing. Mr. O'Connor responded that flushing is done semi-annually; spring and fall, and neighborhoods are notified ahead of time as it can sometimes cause dirty water.

Chairman Mathews asked if any thought had been given to using the Town Council meeting forum to notify of scheduling when town maintenance services would be conducted; so the possibility of having to work around parked vehicles to clean a street wouldn't be an issue. He noted that other towns put up cones and signs. Mr. O'Connor noted that parking isn't usually an issue, with two exceptions; one is at Middle Street in front of the School Administration building, and the other is in Weymouth Landing, from Taber Court to Commercial and Washington. Sweeping is done in those areas as they are noted to be free of parked vehicles. Putting out barrels or notices would be both time consuming and costly.

Chairman Mathews noted that if he could help by making notification on television, he would do so during a meeting. Jane Hackett responded that street sweeping takes from April until July depending on weather and reliability of equipment. If aggressive

notification were implemented it could be affected by equipment failure. A general notification could be given, with anticipated scheduling.

- (constraints of labor contract) Mr. O'Connor reported that there are no constraints to what workers can pick up (other than a bees' nest). If workers are sent out to pick up trash, they are provided with gloves and the appropriate tools.

Chairman Mathews asked Mr. O'Connor to explain the time frame for how a citizen complaint relative to trash is handled. Mr. O'Connor responded that one call will generate a response. It may just be that a foreman checks it out initially, to see how it compares to other areas waiting to be cleaned. A log or list is kept of all resident complaints.

- (budget constraints) Jane Hackett reported that there are budget constraints, as there are with every other department in town. The DPW and the town is functioning with a significant decrease in state assistance, less by \$3M since fiscal year 2002, and it results in an impact both from manpower and equipment perspectives. The Mayor has submitted a Capital Improvement Plan to the Council which includes several DPW item requests, from vehicles to street sweepers to equipment in the FY06 calendar. Every department is experiencing challenges and the DPW is focused on maximizing their manpower at every level for both the daily maintenance issues spoken to tonight --to the issues that come up like severe rainstorms, sewer overflows and water main breaks. When those things happen the entire department pools their resources to get the job done.

Councilor Whitaker noted there is a form on the website that residents can use to communicate with the office.

- (benefit to privatizing services) Mr. O'Connor noted that this has been researched on a few occasions (and he noted that the City of Cambridge, which was cited as the example in the constituent's letter, is not using American Cleaning, and had contracted for \$198,000 to do their initial spring cleaning). Weymouth, which has roughly double the amount of road miles, can do the job with town forces and town equipment, although it may take a little longer.
- (plowing policy) Jane Hackett asked if the area in question is assumed to be the East Weymouth/Town Hall/Academy Avenue area where the constituent resides. In an effort to clarify this Chairman Mathews asked that Mr. O'Connor give a brief overview of the schedule. Mr. O'Connor responded that the same crews who plow roads then go back out and plow sidewalks. The crews finish up roads at different times, so then they start sidewalks at different times. The plan is to get all sidewalks in front of schools plowed, primary schools initially, and then branch out from there. He also noted that the reference to where sidewalks were being plowed in the constituent's letter is a walking route to the high school in South Weymouth. Primary schools are the first focus, then middle schools and so on..

- (sanding policy and impact on sewer system) Mr. O'Connor noted that he is out before snow begins, and although this may have been a mild winter in terms of mild temperatures, it is average in terms of snowfall- as of today; just over 40 inches in 17 different incidents. The town has to respond to each incident, whether it's a dusting, or the 20+ inches a few weeks ago. The crews are sanding with one inch of snow. After each incident, there is melting of the snow but the sand remains, and what's there now is an accumulation of all sanding efforts. There are separate systems in town for storm waters and sewer, so the sand does not enter into the sewer system at all. There is no connection.

Chairman Mathews noted in his opinion that it would be a waste of taxpayer money and misuse of manpower resources to send out sweepers to clean sand between incidents during the winter season.

- President Smart asked if sanding is done on all 210 miles of roadway, or is it prioritized. Mr. O'Connor responded that the initial focus is getting main roads cleared and when they are, then branching out to the others as needed. Each truck is assigned specific routes, and eventually all roadways are done.
- (leaf removal from grates) Chairman Mathews referenced and read the Ordinance for point of information - Section 8-406, subsection B.

Ms. Hackett noted that there was an extraordinary event in the fall and that both town workers and residents were out clearing catch basins so the storm drains could be used and water drained from flooded roadways. There were multiple streets in town that were impassable, some for more than 24 hours, and the Mayor recognized and thanked the crews and residents for their efforts. DPW workers were instructed to clear the catch basins, pile the leaves where they wouldn't be likely to relog the basin and get on to the next one as quickly as possible to deal with the heavy rainfall.

Chairman Mathews noted it had been referred to as a "50 year storm". He asked Mr. O'Connor if this would be treated the same by the DPW as any other constituent request. If a resident called or emailed via the website on a clogged storm drain someone would be out to check it within a week? Mr. O'Connor responded that Constituent Services, or use of the Mayor's hotline both are acceptable ways to get a response.

Jane Hackett noted that many of the situations that were handled during that weekend storm were as a result of calls to the Mayor's hotline, and monitoring trouble spots. Both long time trouble spots and areas which had previously not had problems were affected by the storm, which was why it was categorized as a "50-year storm", and FEMA relief became available for many businesses and residents.

President Smart reminded Mr. O'Connor that there was an issue with a storm drain on

Union Street and he thanked him and the DPW for their efforts in resolving a drain issue for the resident. The resident had called many times, and President Smart called Mr. O'Connor, and it was a tough problem that was worked through. Mr. O'Connor will pass the Councilor's thanks along to the crew.

Councilor Shanahan thanked Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Slattery for appearing before the committee to respond, and for the many times he was given their assistance during his first year on the Council. His biggest learning experience was getting a constituent's concern back to the town and then resolved, and he is grateful for their efforts. Not long ago his street was under water, and the situation was resolved within two days.

He also noted that the bigger issue this letter addresses is the litter problem in town. He hopes that in the future they could look to town-wide support such as fines for tossing litter out of automobiles, and stiffer fines for dumping.

Jane Hackett noted that the Mayor has noted that it seems like there is more litter. His intent is to set an example by aggressively addressing the litter problem on town property, both by maintaining and providing appropriate covered receptacles to discourage littering. One area where this has been done and that was a problem is Whitman's Pond along Middle Street, and through a cooperative effort with the town, businesses and volunteers -- the situation has improved. The vast majority of businesses in town do an excellent job maintaining their properties, and as businesses come up before licensing or jurisdictional authority, issues of litter maintenance will be raised.

Tom Slattery noted that it was brought up at several meetings over the winter with the DPW and Mike Doyle of Parks Department- that many of the groups including school groups are not adequately policing themselves. As a result, he, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Doyle will be more vigilant. This is going to be addressed by a letter drafted to all groups who intend to have use of fields or facilities.

Councilor Shanahan also urged fellow Councilors to contact the state about the litter on state maintained roads. Litter disposed of on state roads eventually backs up onto town roadways, and becomes an eyesore . The state could be doing a better job of maintaining. He sent the Councilors a copy of correspondence he received from Mass. Highway concerning this very issue.

Councilor Lacey thanked Ms. Hackett, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Slattery for appearing. He has contacted each on different issues for his constituents. He feels that 90% of all calls to the town eventually fall to the DPW. The number of weather events over the last few years has been unusual, and each episode means a shift in priorities and manpower. He feels the DPW has been extremely responsive, within a reasonable time. He commended them for their efforts.

Councilor Shanahan noted that the newer trash collection vehicles have a front lift which

is raised up and over the truck to empty trash, and often loose trash becomes debris and flies all around the neighborhood. If residents would make an effort to better bag their trash, it will minimize this.

Ms. Hackett noted that about a year ago there was a marked increase in resident complaints about trash collection. Since Mr. O'Connor and the Mayor met with Waste Management, there has been significant improvements. The 4-5 complaint calls per day to the Mayor's office a year ago are now down to less than 2 per week. (A copy of the Mayor's correspondence was provided to the councilors.)

Chairman Mathews thanked Ms. Hackett, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Slattery, and noted that he will be forwarding along a copy of the minutes from this meeting with a formal response from the Council to the constituent whose letter precipitated the meeting.

Adjournment

At 7:20 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION to adjourn was made by Councilor Lacey, and seconded by Councilor Shanahan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by: _____
Arthur Mathews, Chairman