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October 30, 2008

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY
MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened as a Committee of the Whole on October 30, 2008, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen John Connolly, Walter Pero, Rebekah Gewirtz, Maryann Heuston and Sean O'Donovan also present and voting. Also present were Administrative Assistant Jesse Baker, Robert Collins from the Solicitor's Office, Rick Willette and Stephen MacEachern from the DPW, James Kotzuba and Terry Smith from Traffic and Parking, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, and Steve Winslow and Sergio Lucien from SPCD.

Mr. Winslow discussed the Safe-START project and told the members that the project began in 2006 as a way to make the city more pedestrian friendly and has progressed with the help of the Traffic and Parking Department, the Health Department and the Board of Aldermen. Input was also sought and received from the city's senior community. Mr. Winslow went on to discuss the need for an environmentally sustainable plan for the city while noting that more people in Somerville travel by walking or bicycling as compared to motor vehicle travel. Alderman Gewirtz suggested that the bicycle lanes be connected to the city's bike path and Mr. Winslow stated that option is currently being evaluated. SPCD performed some research and determined the most dangerous intersections in the city to be at McGrath Highway and Broadway, Temple Street and Mystic Avenue, Alewife Brook Parkway and Broadway and Beacon and Washington Streets. Safety improvements implemented as part of Safe-START are the use of glow sticks, stop signs, new stripes on crosswalks and traffic/pedestrian light countdowns. Mr. Winslow and Mr. Kotzuba spoke about the effectiveness of raised crossings and said that their costs range from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Mr. Willette told the members that traffic calming devices and bump outs would present problems when dealing with snow plowing and he noted that these items have high maintenance costs.

Alderman Heuston suggested that the Law Department be consulted regarding the filing of a Home Rule Petition to reduce speed limits in certain areas of the city. Mr. Kotzuba stated that the Traffic and Parking Department has been working with Representative Provost to have speed limits reduced. Mr. Smith explained that speed studies could actually result in speed limits being increased.

Alderman Heuston's motion **that Representative Provost appear before the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety to provide guidance on reducing speed limits**, was approved.

Alderman Taylor's motion **that the Traffic and Parking Department research the methods used by other cities and towns to reduce speed limits to 25 MPH**, was approved.

Alderman Taylor expressed concern for public safety in Union Square, as a result of the construction there and Mr. Smith discussed the safety precautions taken to deal with the situation. Alderman Taylor inquired why the Safe-START Project isn't working on a truck route and Mr. Winslow stated that SPCD is aware of the concern and would include it in the future transportation study. Alderman Taylor asked that the intersection of Highland Avenue, McGrath Highway and Medford Street be addressed. Mr. Lucien stated that SPCD is currently working on a city-wide study that will ultimately improve many intersections.

Alderman Taylor's motion **that the Traffic and Parking Department and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development prepare a time-line and overall view of a truck route plan and study**, was approved.

Alderman Heuston's motion **that the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development provide the Board of Aldermen with a breakdown of the funding sources for the projects outlined on Table II of the Safe-START Proposed Project Locations**, was approved.

Chairman White requested that Mr. Winslow provide a list of the top ten crash locations, via email, and also requested that the Board of Aldermen be provided with detailed financial breakdowns of the city's major projects.

Public Hearing regarding Safe-START:

Chairman White opened the Public Hearing. Gregory Hill expressed concern about bicycles being ridden on sidewalks in the city's squares. Chief Holloway commented that he would begin enforcement to curtail this problem. Joseph Lynch spoke about traffic concerns in Ward 5 and suggested that calming measures be implemented at the VNA on Lowell Street and on Highland Avenue, at the Little Sisters of the Poor. Chairman White and Alderman Connolly expressed the need for safety at the city's senior buildings.

Alderman Heuston's motion **that the City Solicitor, or his representative, appear before the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety to discuss the issue of bicycles being operated on the city's sidewalks**, was approved.

Alderman Connolly's motion **that Public Works, Traffic and Parking and SPCD explore the possibility of installing traffic calming measures at the VNA on Lowell Street and on Highland Avenue at the Little Sisters of the Poor and Armory location**, was approved.

The Public Hearing was closed

No papers were acted on.

Alderman William A. White, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Public Health and
Public Safety, meeting as a Committee of the
Whole, October 30, 2008

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk