

# Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

## City of Newton In City Council

### Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Present: Councilors Downs (Chair), Markiewicz, Lipof, Oliver, Lucas, Malakie, Bowman and Grossman

Also present: Councilors Norton, Noel and Kelley

City staff: Sergeant Michael Wade, Captain Damien Doucette, Superintendent George McMains, Newton Police Department; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer; Jason Sobel, Director of Transportation Operations, DPW; Ellen Ishkanian, Director of Community Communications; David Koses, Transportation Coordinator; Isaac Prizant, Traffic Engineer; Linda Walsh, Commissioner, Health & Human Services and Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Director of Community Engagement and Inclusion

Others present: NewTV

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: <u>https://newtv.org/recent-video/107-committee-meetings-and-public-hearings/8145-</u> <u>public-safety-and-transportation-committee-june-21-2023</u>

 #148-23 Discussion regarding the security measures and any incidents during the 2023 Boston Marathon
<u>COUNCILORS LUCAS, NORTON, LIPOF, MALAKIE, NOEL, WRIGHT, BOWMAN AND</u> <u>OLIVER</u> requesting a discussion with the Chief of Police on security measures taken for the Boston Marathon, not limited to but including personnel hours and equipment used by the Police Department. Also requesting updates on any incidents, disturbances, interrogations, calls to dispatch, and/or arrests along the marathon route on April 17th.
<u>Public Safety & Transportation Held 8-0</u>

**Note:** Superintendent McMains, Ms. Kerwin Derrick, Councilors Norton and Noel joined the Committee.

Chair Downs stated that there would be no public comment tonight, perhaps in the future. Last week, this item was discussed in a public hearing format at the Human Rights Commission and other meetings. She encouraged those interested in commenting to email City Council (citycouncil@newtonma.gov) Mayors office, Chief Carmichael and Superintendent McMains. Superintendent McMains informed participants to email him at <u>GMcMains@newtonma.gov</u> or <u>chiefsoffice@newtonma.gov</u>.

Superintendent McMains provided a PowerPoint presentation, attached.

Superintendent McMains stated that security planning for the Boston Marathon is developed over many months and dozens of meetings between various departments including the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) and the State Police.

On the day of the marathon, several entities are stationed at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The two agencies working there are the Race Operation Center (ROC) which is maintained by the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) and the Unified Command Center (UCC), which is staffed by various members of seven departments as well as federal and state organizations who partner with us to maintain a safe marathon route that day. In Newton, it is run by Chief John Carmichael. One captain is in charge of the overall marathon route. Two other captains are involved: one maintains control east of Walnut Street, and one captain west of Walnut Street. When METRO LEC and the National Guard come to Newton, we provide portable radios allowing them to connect their officers directly with our dispatch center.

#### April 17, 2023 (Marathon Day) Sequence of Events

6:00 a.m. – Marathon day begins with roll call with police officers, coastal EMS, and other local partners who help throughout the day.

6:30 a.m. – NPD plain clothes officers with State Police and Federal law enforcement officers has roll call. They offer undercover resources during the day.

7:00 a.m. – Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council (METRO LEC) has roll call. METRO LEC is a conglomerate of approximately 50 communities in southern Massachusetts. We pool resources such as bike teams, motorcycle units, SWAT team, scuba team, etc.

7:30 a.m. - National Guard has roll. We use National Guard to help supplement our posts throughout the city.

8:00 a.m. - All road closures are in place including the heavy trucks to help block the main roads coming into the marathon.

Just before 12:00 p.m. - The BAA through the ROC in the UCC notified dispatch of spectators infringing upon the route in the area of the hydration station at 530 Commonwealth Avenue. The address is directly across from where people were encroaching the course. One bike

officer was sent to that call. The department procedure is to start with small interventions, and ramp up as needed.

Approximately 12:25 p.m. – The bike officer spoke to the group across from 530 Commonwealth Avenue. We identified the unofficial leader of that group. We spoke with him about keeping his folks off the course as best he could. They left on good terms.

Approximately 1:20 p.m. – The department was sent back to that same location for spectators infringing again on the course after receiving a call from the National Guard. At that point, a captain, a sergeant, and two to three officers went to inform parties near the hydration station that they need to stay off the course.

Approximately 1:46 p.m. - Another call was received for spectators on the course. METRO LEC sent six bike officers for crowd control. As the crowd became heated, bike officers left in an effort to deescalate the situation. They remained a short distance away in case they were needed later.

Approximately 3:00 p.m. - The tactical bike unit returned with additional bikes and formed barricades with bikes to keep spectators off the course. Spectators began yelling and taunting officers using the loud speakers and a PA system calling officers racist etc. At that point, spectators started going around the officers who had set up the bike barricade on Commonwealth Avenue. To supplement those officers on bikes we had motorcycles parked along the Carriage Road, which were used to watch the backs of those officers in case a runner trips, or any type of incident happens behind the officers who are facing the spectators.

After 3:00 p.m. – Police bikes arrived on scene, we started removing bike officers slowly, one at a time, two at a time three at a time.

4:00 p.m. - All bikes were off the course. This is nothing new for the department or any other department that works the marathon.

In 2013, we had an incident with Boston College where some of their students were encroaching the course. We asked BAA to install metal barricades to help maintain continuity and keep people off of the course. Several years later, we had an incident at Lasell College, where students were encroaching on the course and throwing things at the National Guard. We asked BAA again to install metal barricades.

Moving people back and keeping people off the course is nothing new. The reason why we do this is not to stop people from cheering, but to keep the course open for the runners.

In closing, Superintendent McMains stated that is essentially the timeline and how the department responded. This was the only incident of the day. We had no other incidents on

the course, no arrests, and no interrogations. We received calls about loss of property and a medical call.

#### Committee members questions, answers and comments:

Councilor Lucas, docketer, thanked Superintendent McMains for the clarification and transparency about the situation. He stated that he docketed this item after seeing videos on social media. On the morning of the marathon, the NPD Twitter account indicated that for the safety and convenience of residents, spectators and runners, all bags, backpacks, coolers, baby carriages, strollers are subject to search by the police. The twitter post is attached.

Were there any searches of bags or backpacks? Superintendent McMains answered not that he was aware of. There could have been a few by the undercover officers who perhaps saw something suspicious, but nothing got reported up the chain of command.

Are police allowed to search people's backpacks and baby strollers? Superintendent McMains answered I would suggest yes. I don't think we can just randomly ask people; we would need some sort of reasonable suspicion. In Boston, barricades are set up where bags are searched. Now, we perhaps maybe know what to look for a little bit better and we use drones. We have training about how to identify something suspicious.

When in Newton, who directs METRO LEC officers? Superintendent McMains answered that in most cases, we have a memorandum of understanding with METRO LEC and Middlesex County communities where if they're in Newton, they have the same powers of an NPD officer. In this case, specifically, a Newton sergeant was in charge of the bike unit, and he's the one who would direct them outside of the simple incidents where they may see something, or they may go talk to people.

How many total officers including Newton Police, State Police and METRO LEC were at 530 and 534 Commonwealth Avenue to de-escalate the situation? Superintendent McMains answered the first incident, one. The second incident, a sergeant, captain and two or three bike officers. The third incident, six bike officers. The final incident, ten to fourteen bike officers and several motorcycles. We had other officers in the area in case they were needed.

Do you think that was the appropriate number of officers? Were there too many, too little or just the right amount? Superintendent McMains answered he wasn't there. Chief Carmichael was in Newton that day. Superintendent McMains was not privy to conversations the Chief had with the command staff. A captain was sent the second time to talk to folks. A sergeant sent bikes the third and fourth time. There is supervision to make sure we do that correctly. The third time when we sent six bike officers, they felt that was not nearly enough. Spectators hopped on the course west of where the six bikes were set up and ran behind those officers. When they left, they came back with ten to fourteen bikes to make the barricade longer. At that point, spectators still went around those officers. METRO LEC does this all the time at

Gillette Stadium, Xfinity Center, and other events throughout the Boston area. They are experienced officers.

Did the department or any law enforcement officers learn anything from this marathon incident? Would you consider it solid community policing and a pillar of 21st century policing? Superintendent McMains answered that is a tough question, because we haven't had conversations with any of the affected groups. We would have to talk to them see what they thought. We haven't had an opportunity to have a conversation. Chief Carmichael reached out to the running groups and the BAA to try to coordinate a discussion. Ms. Kerwin Derrick added that the mayor has wanted to speak to the running groups. They were willing to speak in the beginning and didn't have that opportunity. We're happy to set up a meeting when that happens.

Councilor Lukas expressed the hope that Superintendent McMains, Chief Carmichael and any law enforcement agency that was in Newton that day will continue to reach out to the running groups and other spectators to try to find some common ground. Superintendent McMains answered certainly.

If the same incident replays itself exactly in 2024, will the department's response be the exact same? Superintendent McMains answered that it would depend on the situation. I suppose we would still do the same thing. We'd send one officer to talk to a group explaining the rules. The officers I spoke to who spoke to Sidney Batista, the leader of the running groups made a sincere effort to keep his folks off the course. Our concern with them was not how they partied but the encroachment. It is necessary to keep everybody on the course safe. We do that by maintaining security on the course and make sure that people don't encroach the course. Our conversation would be to be respectful requesting they do not go on the course.

Was the BAA talking to the running groups? Superintendent McMains answered that he didn't know.

Explain how a BAA call comes in? Superintendent McMains answered he did not know.

**Is the National Guard disbursed along the course?** Superintendent McMains answered that the National Guard provided dozens of volunteers to staff positions. We all use as many resources as we can.

Are National Guards volunteers or paid? Superintendent McMains answered they are not police officers.

**Was the 1:46 p.m. call from the National Guard?** Superintendent McMains answered no, that was a call received from BAA through the UCC.

**Are fences necessary on the entire course?** Superintendent McMains answered that is a bigger conversation that is necessary with the BAA and the mayor to address the situation.

Were there other reports of spectators on the course in Newton? Superintendent McMains answered that there were no other reports of spectators on the course. Officers may have seen people in other areas of the course and asked them to get off, but Superintendent McMains didn't hear of them. The incidents that happened at 530 and 534 Commonwealth Avenue, were not initiated by the NPD, but by the BAA, etc. If we had officers there, they probably would have done the same exact thing. They would have talked to that group or individual.

Was there any kind of racial diversity with the Metro LEC bike team and motorcycle crew? Superintendent McMains answered that he does not know as he was not there.

**Was fencing installed along the entire course?** Superintendent McMains answered that there are several parts of the course that are roped off and not fenced off.

**Did anyone consider putting up different types of fencing as opposed to the bike barricade?** Superintendent McMains answered that fencing is set up pre-race by the BAA. The city doesn't have those type of barricades to put up. At that point, there was no way we could have installed barricades at that location.

I'm trying to understand if there was some part of the response that occurred that contributed to escalation as opposed to de-escalation and if that's a learning opportunity? Superintendent McMains answered we sent one officer to talk to the group to keep them off the course; that didn't work. We sent a few more officers; that didn't work. I guess what I would ask is, what should we have done next? Not send anyone?

Has Newton ever had this type of response? Superintendent McMains answered not specifically with bikes. I don't know what our bike unit looked like last year, when we were with METRO LEC for the last two years. Prior to that we had NEMLEC, and they didn't send the bike unit to support us. In the past, some things used instead of bikes were motorcycles to stagger and push people back. Those are the types of tools we would use in the past versus somebody standing there with a bike motionless, where hopefully there's no injuries. If we use a motorcycle, somebody could get hit, bikes could fall, and somebody could get hurt.

It's wonderful that as a city, we've taken training very seriously, particularly with respect to this incredibly important issue of how we are responding especially in situations with the kinds of calls that you received. I appreciate that we are taking steps towards training and learning about racism, racist policies, racist responses, how we can improve and get to a day in the future where such trainings are not needed?

Superintendent McMains acknowledged the difficulty of establishing metrics and measuring the effectiveness of this training.

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Many bicycle manufacturers have stopped selling to Police Departments, because of this particular tactic, the use of a bike as a weapon as a level of intimidation. I don't believe that that was the intent of the officers but certainly, when you're facing off against a group of mainly black people, a bike can be seen as intimidating. This escalation, the bikes coupled with the many motorcycles that were behind it, just can't be good.

I thought we had a commitment that a meeting was going to happen between the two civil rights attorneys, the groups and the mayor. I heard the groups were then wanting to come to the Human Rights Commission. **Did you attend the Human Rights Commission, or did you receive a report?** Superintendent McMains answered that he attended the Human Rights Commission where seven or eight people spoke. Ms. Kerwin Derrick added that she attended the Human Rights Commission meeting. There were two recommendations. First, was a restorative conversation to include the mayor, the BAA and the running groups. The second was a run/walk to include all groups. The mayor wanted to ensure that we get through all of our meetings to hear everyone so that we have all of our recommendations in front of us to proceed. As an administration, we can't say yes, we're going to do XYZ, because we can't commit for the BAA and the running groups. Once we have those conversations, we can then move forward to determine the next steps.

The BAA statement following this incident, certainly made it seem as if they were not happy with the response. They felt that they needed to do more to ensure that that people were being respected, regardless of their color.

I hope that when we're reviewing policies moving forward, we look at our use of bicycles as weapons.

#### Councilor questions, answers and comments:

City Council received an email from the Police Union, saying this is a time to support the police. This is not about not supporting the police or supporting the police. It's about we are in public service, and we all are held accountable. My interest in co-docketing this item was to understand what really happened. It's not unusual for people to run along with their friends. My understanding, there was a breakdown where people did not obey but from that representation that seems reasonable.

Were there any calls from area residents regarding noise, disturbances, their looks etc.? Superintendent McMains answered he did not know if specific calls came from residents. We did not respond to that area for anything other than the BAA and the National Guard's request for assistance. All our officers, including the METRO LEC serve with honor and dignity, we try to do the best job possible in any given situation. When we get dispatched to a call, especially one like this, we have no idea what we're going to. We weren't told they were people of color, men, women or anything. We were told that a group of people were infringing on the course. We would respond the exact same way. The Union does not feel supported by the City sometimes when we respond to calls like this to ultimately keep everyone safe.

As part of our wider conversations about race and policing, it came out that dispatch would receive calls from residents complaining about a suspicious person. A disproportionate number of times all it meant was it was someone who was not white, it wasn't necessarily related to any behavior.

Why were officers along the Carriage Lane? Superintendent McMains answered that he did not specifically know why they were there. When we set up a bike perimeter, we have officers watching their back when officers are set up in the barricade fashion, they are simply there to watch the crowd. No one is watching their back, so officers watch those officers' backs.

**Did a citizen call the BAA with the complaint?** Superintendent McMains answered that he does not know who made the initial call.

What is the coordination for repeated calls and who coordinates that response? Superintendent McMains answered a sergeant would be involved supervising the bike unit.

Who coordinates the second call? Is there continuity of response or is each call taken like a unique situation with a unique response? Superintendent McMains answered that one or two calls to one location would be kind of unique.

We continue to see situations where someone is reporting suspicious behavior when it's just a person of color. Are officers trained to discern this an actual threat or is this racism of someone calling on somebody? What is the training? In Newton, 7% of the population is African American. Superintendent McMains answered the typical calls received for a suspicious person we respond and at least check that situation regardless of the race of the person. That's something we would do in every single instance, especially where schools are involved. People do call up and say there's a suspicious person walking down my street and we say, can you describe the person? Well, he is a black male. That absolutely happens. We respond to those calls, just like we respond to calls where we have somebody suspicious, walking in the neighborhood, carrying a backpack, etc. Can you describe them for me? I didn't really get a good look. We're going to respond to that call too. We respond to all calls and do receive more calls on people of color.

Watching the video is tough. To see that level of police force surrounding a group of people celebrating the marathon where no weapons were found, no violence happened is difficult. **What do you see when watching the video?** Superintendent McMains answered that those officers went to stop people from encroaching the course. If we didn't do anything, and someone got hurt, people would say the police didn't do enough to stop people from encroaching the course. We are there to protect everybody.

The Mayor and City Council have received emails from the running club asking for an explanation to what happened. I'm very disheartened to hear that they have not occurred.

Chair Downs stated that she listened to the Human Rights Commission meeting. Among things heard was a desire to acknowledge the harm, repair the injury and have a better outcome at the next marathon. As I'm listening to the committee and your thoughts, I think we are at a point where we could use a public comment session. More importantly, is to first do what we can to facilitate a conversation with the mayor, NPD and the running clubs and establish some direct communication before we open public comment. My goal, I think the administration and the committee's goal, is to heal and to allow the city to move on and to do better.

Without further discussion, Councilor Lucas made a motion to hold this item. Committee members agreed 8-0.

#149-23 Discussion regarding the residential parking program
<u>COUNCILOR DOWNS, LEARY, BOWMAN, MARKIEWICZ, LUCAS AND DANBERG</u>
requesting a discussion of the residential parking permit program costs, convenience and pricing.
Actions

#### Action: Public Safety & Transportation No Action Necessary 5-0 (Councilors Lipof, Oliver and Lucas not voting)

#### **Note:** Captain Doucette, Sergeant Wade and Mr. Yeo joined the Committee.

Chair Downs stated this item was docketed after a constituent asked Councilor Leary why residential parking permits can't be sold online and why people have go to Traffic Bureau during business hours to obtain permits. There was an indication that the cost of the permits didn't cover the price charged for the cost of issuing the permit. Our goal is to get a sense of how much it costs to issue permits, what it would cost to sell them online and to discuss if the price should be raised to cover costs and allow for greater resident convenience.

Captain Doucette stated it costs approximately \$2 to produce a permit. The city uses the NNHS print shop to print the permits. It is a complicated system where we have created nuances. Boston and Cambridge have resident-only permits and don't cater to businesses or visitors making it a simple system. Outside vendors are not interested in taking on the complexity of our system, and inform us that it's not worth them to devise such a system.

#### Committee members questions, answers and comments:

Our interest wasn't to solve commercial permits, just residential permits. Are visitor permits part of the issue? Captain Doucette answered yes, anyone can request and receive two free visitor permits without buying a residential permit. The cost for a resident permit is \$25, and any resident on a permit street is allowed up to two free visitor permits. It is not necessary to buy a permit in order to receive the two free permits. Last year, the department issued 958 visitor permits, and sold 240 residential permits.

Are we up to discussing the idea of not having visitor permits unless you purchase a resident permit? Captain Doucette does not have a cost from an outside vendor. We order permits as we need them and that is our current expense.

Some of the issues that colleagues have raised is that it requires a working person to take a day off to visit the Traffic Bureau to purchase resident permits or request free visitor passes. During the pandemic, we offered online ordering and then the process stopped. Captain Doucette answered that during the pandemic, people would submit their forms through the internet and Traffic Bureau would mail their permits.

Is there any reason why residents can no longer order online? Captain Doucette answered that it is necessary to verify their residence. We require residents to show proof of residence either by driver's license, vehicle registration or a bill.

Can residents show proof of residency online? Captain Doucette answered that Sergeant Wade informed him that during the pandemic, residents were emailing and attaching those documents.

Could permits could be issue through the department using an online method if it weren't too inconvenient for the department? Captain Doucette answered that he has not seen the online process. If it's as simple as it seems, or a specific program can be written for people to add their attachments allowing the department to verify. Sergeant Wade added that when permits are requested by email, it usually requires a back and forth over a day or two, because not everybody sends the required information or documentation. We were only mailing visitor permits. For purchases of resident permits, we can only accept check or money order, so a resident has to come in to pay. Issuing online permits was very labor intensive and the cost of an envelope and postage were added to the cost.

Is it required to have a car registered in the city? Sergeant Wade answered only proof of residence is necessary (college students might live here but not register their car here).

There is a difference between living in the city and having a car registered. We are collecting vehicle excise tax. Perhaps a sub working group is necessary. Perhaps we need to look at the same way we collect taxes and excise taxes using that information to simplify the process.

When are resident and visitor permits issued? Captain Doucette answered that permits are issued in January and are good for the calendar year.

Do you verify if the car is registered in the city? Captain Doucette answered yes, but there are also renters that are entitled because they live in the city. Renters usually show a rental agreement or utility bill. Most renters don't change their vehicle registration.

Are people required to change their registration if they live in Massachusetts for more than 30 or 60 days? Captain Doucette answered it is not necessary for a student to change their registration. I believe others are required to change the registration within 30 days.

The Traffic Bureau is open Monday – Friday making it difficult for working people to obtain a residential permit or visitor permit. Is the Traffic Bureau open weekends? Captain Doucette answered Traffic Bureau is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The city should charge for visitor permits. Was the online process done through the police IT or City IT department? Mr. Yeo answered the Police Department website.

An online process is feasible, but should we continue the process as is? Mr. Yeo answered that he will ask Mr. Mulvey, Chief Information Officer to discuss with the new police IT Director to determine if an online permit registration is feasible. We are moving NewGov into other areas and are trying to prioritize the list.

Perhaps the resident permit fee should be raised but first need to determine the cost. It is necessary to cover the cost of service.

Chair Downs stated that an action item will be docketed and perhaps a sub group to review how to work this out with the administration. Chair Downs, Councilors Markiewicz and Bowman offered their assistance.

Without further discussion, Councilor Bowman made a motion for no action necessary. Committee members agreed 5-0, Councilors Lipof, Oliver and Lucas not voting.

#### **Referred to Public Facilities and Public Safety & Transportation Committees**

- **#71-22** Requesting an update on the Weston Newton Square Enhancement project <u>COUNCILORS MALAKIE, NORTON, DOWNS, GROSSMAN, WRIGHT, KELLEY, AND</u> <u>NOEL</u> requesting an update on the West Newton Square Enhancement project and discussion with Public Works, Planning, Police and Fire, with opportunity for public input, regarding traffic conditions in and around West Newton Square, status of signal timing and other adjustments, and measurement and mitigation of traffic impacts on neighborhood streets.
- Action: Public Safety & Transportation Held 6-0 (Councilors Lipof and Bowman not voting)
- **Note:** Mr. Sobel, Mr. Prizant and Councilor Kelley joined the Committee.

Chair Downs stated that there would be no public comment tonight. Mr. Sobel will provide an update.

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Mr. Sobel provided a summary of past events, how we got to this point and what the plan is moving forward. The goals of the West Newton Square project were and remain to maximize safety and convenience for all travel modes, enhance the pedestrian experience & village character, and to include environmental benefits (trees, stormwater retention).

During the design process, we anticipated modest traffic delays, as a result of the removal of some turn lanes to create better bike facilities, better sidewalk facilities and to make it a safer experience. Since the substantial completion of the Square, we've heard many concerns from the public, councilors and businesses. Many of those concerns have focused on traffic operations, including the progression, traffic signal coordination and timing throughout the square. The lane shifts on Washington Street that are required with dedicated turn lanes create some longer vehicle queues from side streets. Complaints included the lack of space on Washington Street for vehicles turning from side streets.

With any major infrastructure project, we anticipate and conduct observations and traffic signal fine tuning. In October 2021, we completed the traffic signal inspections, these were constructed per the plans. At that time, we also collected new traffic data. In January, April and June 2022, adjustments were made to the traffic signal timing and coordination. We continue to hear complaints and concerns being raised. In October 2022, we held a public meeting allowing people to share their thoughts. Since October 2022, we collected additional traffic count data. Usually, traffic volumes and patterns are fairly consistent. But the pandemic certainly changed travel habits. We didn't want to rely on data from October 2021. Based on the number of concerns, we wanted to take a deeper look and not just do additional traffic signal timing adjustments. New data allowed us to make additional recommendations. Mr. Sobel's graphic is attached with proposed changes.

#### Committee members questions, answers and comments:

**Do you anticipate tweaking the square again?** Mr. Sobel answered yes, when we implement this plan, we would have revised signal timing and a coordination plan. Observations will continue.

**Would adaptive signals cost more than 1 million dollars?** Mr. Sobel answered that he doesn't want to put a figure on the cost because there are many different types of adaptive systems but is probably not more than 1 million dollars.

What will happen with the bike signals? The north side has a fully protected lane, where people might feel like they have more of a right of way. On Cherry Street, do bikers have a green signal or is it a dedicated bike signal? Mr. Sobel answered that the westbound movement across the Cherry Street intersection is a protected bike signal. Per the requirements of the Manual on Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), we cannot have any conflicting traffic go at the same time as a green signal.

Are you going to remove the text only from the street or black it out? Mr. Sobel answered the graphic was meant to be a graphic illustration of the changes that we're proposing, not meant to illustrate the exact pavement markings and signage changes.

With the Washington Street, Lowell to Chestnut Street diet, when those plans start to develop how is that going to play into this intersection before you reach Chestnut Street, because there is discussion about reducing two lanes to one lane? Mr. Sobel answered that nothing is definite, the project is in its early stages, and we don't know the exact cross section of that project.

The intersection at Cherry and Elm Streets when exiting is there a no turn on red when making a right turn? Mr. Sobel answered that the Elm Street approach has an electronic no turn on red sign that comes on indicating that vehicles can't turn on red during the pedestrian phase. When Washington Street has the green indication, vehicles are allowed to turn right on red. On Cherry Street, we do not have an electronic sign. The right-hand lane on Cherry Street allows you turn either left or right with more left turns out of Cherry Street. Even if it were permitted, it would be infrequent because often someone turning right would be behind for the green to turn left.

Is there a reason why straight/turn lanes are a good idea now, but weren't a good idea in the past? Mr. Sobel answered that there are various opinions and different ways to look at this. When there are dedicated turn lanes, it allows a traffic signal overlap. Today, when the Cherry Street southbound has the green, the westbound right lane has a green arrow to allow that movement to happen at the same time. Those types of overlaps wouldn't be effective with this lane configuration change. The original design focused on trying to get extra traffic signal efficiencies by having those dedicated turn lanes. Based on our observations, we found that the lanes aren't being equally used and there's more demand for through traffic.

Is there more of a demand for traffic heading east/west or north/south on Washington Street? Mr. Sobel answered that there is more demand for east/west traffic on Washington Street. Sudden lane change movements can cause sideswipe crashes, a possible concern with a plan like this. We're seeing activity because people either don't realize or realize too late that they are in a turn lane, or intentionally go into the turn lane to try to bypass the long queue. I'm not anticipating a major increase of last-minute lane changing behavior.

Have you monitored traffic counts going through West Newton Square? Mr. Sobel answered some data was collected, but not to the extent in the core of West Newton Square. We can review the current data we have, before and after data when we go to implement changes.

It can take a long time for pedestrians to cross with the pedestrian crossing lights even when there are no vehicle queues. Is there any way to correct this? Mr. Sobel answered that there's a few different changes that will happen. With pedestrian delay and pedestrian timing, there's two primary factors that play into how long a pedestrian waits before they get the walk Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report Wednesday, June 21, 2023 page 14

sign. First, whether or not this exclusive pedestrian phase or a concurrent pedestrian phase. The challenge is that if we do go to an exclusive pedestrian phase, generally the wait times increase because pedestrians don't get the light. When pedestrians have to wait, many pedestrians then choose to walk against the light when Washington Street has the green signal and cross anyway.

**Do we have all stops for pedestrians?** Mr. Sobel answered it's a mix depending on the crossing. When crossing Washington Street, it is an exclusive pedestrian phase because the side streets tend to be T intersections. The other big consideration is overall cycle lengths. Generally, shorter cycle lengths are better for pedestrians because it's a shorter cycle. If you miss it, it's a shorter amount of time before the pedestrian phase comes on again. Generally, longer cycle lengths have more vehicle capacity. During peak periods, we have longer cycle lengths. During peak periods we're running 120 second cycles and during the off peaks, we are running 90 or 95 cycles. We are looking to implement another set of timing plans in what are called shoulder hours. We may be running the afternoon peak timing from 2pm to 6pm, or 2pm to 8pm. We are looking to change that 120 second cycle maybe to run from 2pm to 6pm and not the offpeak time period. A shoulder time period has an entirely different timing plan from 2pm to 4pm and from 6pm to 8pm with perhaps a 100 or 110 second cycle trying to minimize the pedestrian delay and have as short of cycle lengths as possible.

As a cyclist, it's 100%, better post reconstruction than it was pre reconstruction. There are many fewer conflicts and a greater feeling of safety which is necessary to retain while improving the project.

#### Councilor questions, answers and comments:

It is great to hear the goal remains maximizing safety and convenience for all travel modes, enhancing the pedestrian experience and village character and environmental benefits.

There remain ongoing problems. We continue to hear from people using this roadway in all modes. The maximum safety for all modes is really important to remember.

The tweaking of traffic signals and allowing some rights on red have improved vehicle queues from side streets.

When heading west bound Cherry Street, are you considering changing that right lane, which right now is right turn only on Cherry Street to both straight ahead and right turn only? Mr. Sobel answered yes.

The crosswalk at Cherry and Washington Streets is concerning. The light flashes for pedestrians and cars entering from Washington Street. **Are you saying that they will no longer have a green light at the same time as the pedestrian crossing?** Mr. Sobel answered that the crosswalk across Cherry Street is a concurrent crossing. They will have an indication of a flashing yellow arrow. Please explain traffic signal priorities for emergency vehicles. Mr. Sobel answered that it's

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traffic signal preemption for the emergency vehicles to preempt the regular signal timings. There are two preemption systems. First, obstacle preemption system, which is widely used throughout Massachusetts and Newton. Second, we also installed a GPS preemption system in large part because when emergency vehicles approach from the west, they don't necessarily have a line of sight to the traffic signal until they're very close. All of that GPS equipment is fully functional in the traffic signal cabinets. The GPS devices were delivered to both Newton Police and Newton Fire. I can't speak to whether or not all of those devices have been installed.

Mr. Prizant added the biggest holdup with Newton Fire was the thickness of the roofs on their fire ladder trucks. It is necessary to install antennas onto the fire ladder trucks. The GPS manufacturer manufactured a new type of antenna to work for fire ladder trucks. I'm not aware of there being an issue with the police vehicles. Mr. Prizant then stated that he has personally tested that equipment with the manufacturer, and knows all the signal equipment works in West Newton.

In closing, Mr. Sobel stated he would return and discuss further. DPW's next steps are to finalize the striping plans, pavement markings, signs and traffic signal timings.

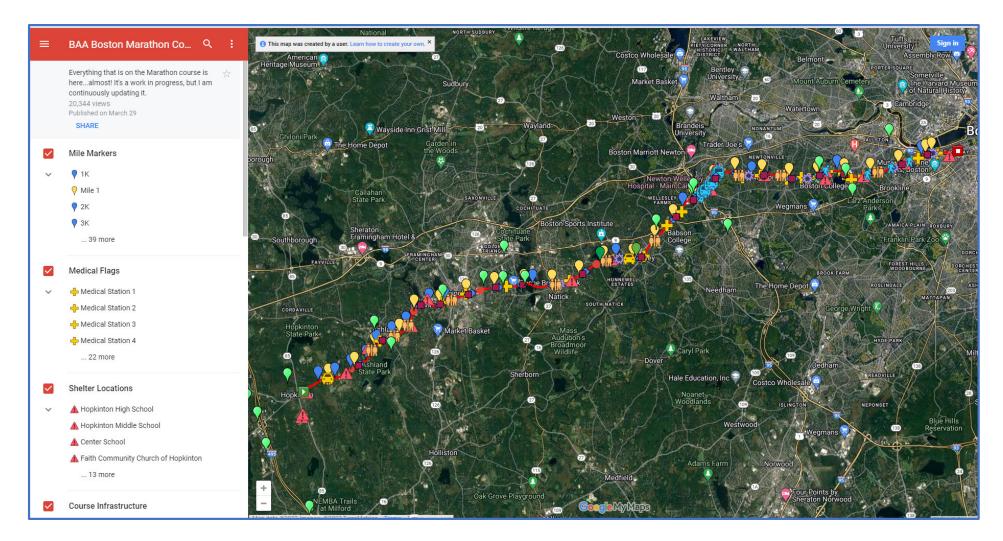
Without further discussion, Councilor Malakie made a motion to hold. Committee members agreed 6-0, Councilors Bowman and Lipof not voting.

The Committee adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

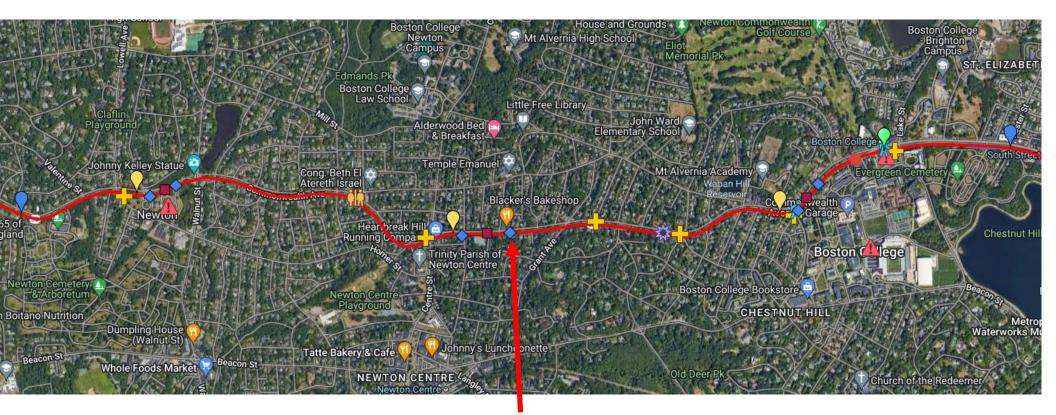
#### Respectfully submitted,

Andreae Downs, Chair

# **Detailed Boston Marathon Course Map**

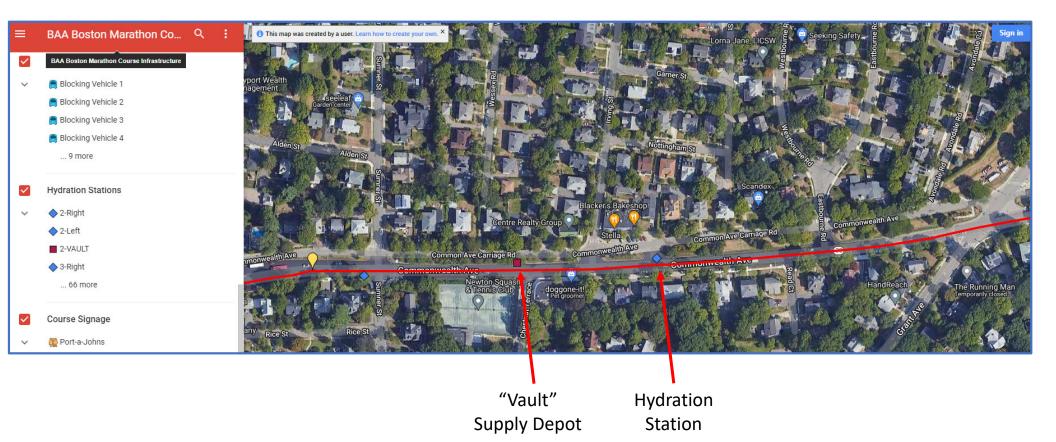


Newton City Hall to Boston College Details



**Location of Incident** 

# Sumner Street to Grant Ave Section Map with Hydration Station Location



**Dispatch From BAA** 

Request from ROC for Newton PD to help with crowd control (infringing) on race course at Hydration Station 530 Commonwealth Ave, cross street Sumner Street.

Newton PD assisted.

530 Commonwealth Ave, Newton, MA

Units request Newton PD for crowd control. Units in route.

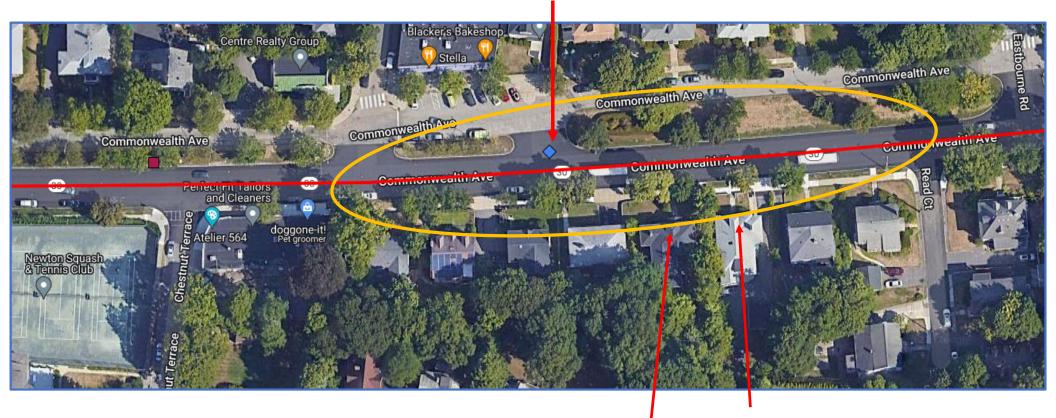
1420 Hours: Units arrived and used their bikes to block the crowd from the raceway. They will remain in place till crowds dissipate.

**534 Commonweath Ave Newton** 

Less

# Detail Map of 530-534 Comm Ave Area

Hydration Station



530 Comm Ave 534 Comm Ave

# NEWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT 2023 BOSTON MARATHON PUBLIC INFORMATION NOTICE

On Monday April 17<sup>th</sup>, the running of the Boston Marathon will take place once again. Participants will be running through Newton, entering from Wellesley on Washington Street heading east, then traveling onto Commonwealth Ave, heading east to the Boston line.

Please be advised that road closures along the route will be in place starting at 8:00 AM and be in place until approximately 6:00 PM. Expect traffic delays as no vehicles will be allowed to cross the Marathon Route or access the Carriage Lane of Commonwealth Ave until the route is reopened.

Parking Restrictions and tow-zones will be in place along the entire Marathon Route including the Carriage Lane of Commonwealth Ave as well as several streets around the course route. Parking restrictions will also be in place on portions of all streets that feed into the Marathon route.

All effected streets will be posted with No Parking- Tow Zones signs.

For the safety and convenience of residents, spectators and runners, all bags, backpacks, coolers and baby carriages/strollers are subject to be searched by Police. There is no alcohol allowed on public property along the course route.

In the week prior to the Marathon there will be Low Flying Aircraft(s) along the entire Marathon route conducting Surveillance / Safety checks that have been authorized by the F.A.A.

The Newton Police Department in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety, US Department of Homeland Security, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Massachusetts State Police and the Boston Athletic Association are asking for the public's help prior to and on Marathon day by reporting suspicious activity and persons.

Throughout the entire marathon route, cities and towns are participating in a public relations campaign called:

## "SEE SOMETHING - SAY SOMETHING"

If anyone in the public sees suspicious activity or a suspicious bag or package, please call the Newton Police at 617-796-2100 or dial 9-1-1 immediately.

