



## **Finance Committee Report**

### **City of Newton** **In City Council**

**Monday, June 1, 2020**

Present: Councilors Grossman (Chair), Malakie, Humphrey, Kalis, Norton, Ciccone and Noel

Absent: Councilor Gentile

City staff present: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Comptroller Sue Dzikowski, Director of Planning & Development Barney Heath, Director of Transportation for the Planning Department Nicole Freedman, Commissioner of Public Works Jim McGonagle, Director of Human Resources Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, Treasurer Rosemarie Woods, Chief of Police David MacDonald and Director of Financial Information Systems Karen Griffey

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

**#256-20      Transfer \$100,000 for new Police Cruisers**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to repurpose and transfer the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from Comptroller's Reserve Acct #01C20107-585010 originally set aside for a Police Incident Command Vehicle to new Police Cruisers.

**Public Safety & Transportation Approved 7-0 on 05/28/20**

**Action:** **Finance Approved 5-0-1 (Councilor Humphrey abstaining and Councilor Ciccone not voting)**

**Note:** Chief of Police, David MacDonald, presented the request to transfer the sum of \$100,000 for new Police Cruisers. Chief MacDonald explained that they envisioned this vehicle to be an incident command vehicle and to double as a community outreach vehicle. The funds were originally allotted through Free Cash and the department had gone through the process to receive these funds for the vehicle. The City was in the queue for this fall to have the incident command vehicle built, but due to the budget restraints the decision was made to use this \$100,000 towards keeping the front-line vehicle maintenance plan as close to normal as possible. Additionally, Chief MacDonald noted that they will be purchasing one less front-line cruiser in FY21.

**The Committee asked the following questions:**

Q: What changes were made after the pandemic hit?

A: Chief Financial Officer, Maureen Lemieux explained that the City needed to pull over \$9 million out of the budget because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Ms. Lemieux explained that when looking at public safety, the administration wanted to make sure the City held the same number of

sworn in police officers and firefighters. The Police Department had budgeted \$350,000 a year to replace front line cruisers. This year the full \$350,000 was not going to be possible but because the incident command vehicle had not been built this was a project that could be put on hold. If COVID-19 had not happened, then the incident command vehicle would have been built and the City would still have budgeted \$350,000 for front-line vehicles. Chief MacDonald explained that there have been times where the fleet management plan has improved over the past 10 years to the point that the frontline cruisers are being rotated out after approximately 70,000 miles or 3 years. These vehicles do have a good resale value after they are used and repurposed to a second assignment. Additionally, Chief MacDonald explained that with the new plan the department will be purchasing one less cruiser than they had anticipated. This keeps the department close to the fleet repair and maintenance plan.

Q: Does the directed patrol number that has increased throughout the years influence the fleet repair and maintenance plan?

A: Chief MacDonald explained that there is little to no correlation between the cost of the directed patrols and fleet maintenance.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed 5-0-1, Councilor Humphrey abstaining and Councilor Ciccone not voting.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

#### **#255-20      Transfer \$400,000 to the DPW Roads Program**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to repurpose and transfer the sum of four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) from Acct #01C10402-579500 originally set aside for DPW 25% Design of Washington Street to the DPW Roads Program to repair the roadway section of Washington Street between Chestnut Street and Walnut Street.

#### **Public Facilities Approved 8-0**

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 5-0-1 (Councilor Humphrey abstaining and Councilor Ciccone not voting)**

**Note:**      Commissioner of Public Works, Jim McGonagle presented the request to transfer \$400,000 to the DPW Roads Program that was originally set aside for the 25% design of Washington Street. Commissioner McGonagle explained that the department had to make this change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Commissioner McGonagle explained that even if the City were to do the pilot program, this section of street would still need to be repaired due to the condition of the existing roadway. If the City waits too long to make these repairs, then the City will have to perform a full depth reclamation which can be time consuming, expensive, and a destructive process. The \$400,000 would be used to pave Washington Street from Chestnut Street to Walnut Street.

**The Committee asked the following questions:**

Q: Will the gas leaks be repaired before the City repaves the roadway?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that National Grid will perform test fits in this area to see if the gas main needs to be replaced. National Grid will come back to the department to tell them if they will be repairing or replacing the gas main before the City repaves the roadway.

Q: Will there be an opportunity to add more trees to the area through this project?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that he has been working with Marc Welch, Superintendent of Urban Forestry and Parks & Recreation to come up with plantings that they can do in that area that will survive. The Commissioner can provide the Committee with these plans when ready.

Q: Nathan Philips, a resident, provided the attached presentation about the gas leaks on Washington Street. Has this information been compared to the findings of National Grid?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that this information has been shared with National Grid.

Q: Is there an opportunity to narrow the lane markings on the roadway?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that this project will be brought to the Complete Streets Working Group to see what improvements can be made that are inexpensive.

Q: How long does the City have before they would have to perform a full reclamation on this section of Washington Street?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that this depends on the winter. The hope is to perform the road repaving before the winter and if this is not possible than the department will have to do some spot repairs.

Q: When will the department receive answers from National Grid? Can this vote be put on hold until the City receives these answers from National Grid?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that these should be answered in their meeting in June. Additionally, Commissioner McGonagle explained that they would prefer to have a vote on this because regardless of what National Grid does the road still needs to be repaired. The answers from National Grid may still not be available by the next Finance Committee meeting. If this was not moved forward by the Committee than the City may have to use \$400,000 out of the \$7 million that has been allocated for roadway repairs. Commissioner McGonagle explained that he is committed to ensuring that the gas main be repaired or replaced before the City repairs the roadway. Because National Grid reports to the Department of Public Utilities, the City's authority is very limited. The City does have a good relationship with National Grid and will be able to coordinate this repair work.

Q: Is there an opportunity to add green infrastructure to this project?

A: Commissioner McGonagle explained that they will be coming up with a policy for projects going forward to ensure that there is phosphorus reduction. The department will take this into consideration with keeping in mind that the pilot program on Washington Street may occur in the next couple of years.

Councilors made the following comment:

The answers from National Grid should be made available to the City Council as soon as possible.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed 5-0-1, Councilor Humphrey abstaining and Councilor Ciccone not voting.

**#253-20      Transfer \$30,000 for Citywide Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) Installation project**  
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) from FY20 Current Year Budget Reserve Act #0110498-5790 to Acct #01C40120 for the purpose of funding Phases 3 of 3 phases of the Citywide Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) installation project.

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 6-0-1 (Councilor Ciccone abstaining)**

**Note:**      Commissioner of Public Works, Jim McGonagle presented the request to transfer \$30,000 for the Citywide Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) Installation project. Commissioner McGonagle explained that this will be the third year of the program. This project was estimated to cost \$300,000 but with the proposed \$30,000 the City will have only expended a total of \$255,000. In the first year of the project the City did receive a \$50,000 grant. There are 26 units left to install to complete a total of 600 units. The project should be completed by the end of the summer. The units include buttons that are accessible to someone who is visually impaired, and the unit verbally expresses when it is safe to walk. The installation of these buttons is fairly simple and inexpensive. This was Jini Fairley's, ADA Coordinator, number one priority in the ADA plan.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve which passed 6-0-1, Councilor Ciccone abstaining.

**Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees**

**#260-20      Authorization to expend a MassDOT grant in the amount of \$80,000**  
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend an eighty thousand dollar (\$80,000) grant from the MassDOT's Workforce Transportation Program with twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) in match funding to expand the Bluebikes system.

**Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0-1, Councilor Malakie abstaining on 05/22/20**

**Action:**      **Finance Approved 7-0**

**Note:**      Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath and Director of Transportation for the Planning Department, Nicole Freedman presented the request to expend a MassDOT grant in the

amount of \$80,000 to expand the Bluebikes system. Mr. Heath explained that Newton previously had Limebikes that were a dockless system. The Bluebike system does have docking stations and this grant would allow Newton to participate in the program. There will be a total of six docking stations.

Ms. Freedman explained that the City has been working with Chelsea, Arlington, Watertown, and Revere to do this project jointly. The hope is to roll out this project by the fall but one of the challenges is the advertisement rules in Newton. The department is working to find alternatives to that issue. Additionally, Ms. Freedman explained that the total cost to bring the dock stations and bikes to Newton is approximately \$350,000, including the two years of operations. Lyft, who is the operator, is planning on subsidizing the system by \$250,000, the grant would cover \$80,000, and there will be a \$20,000 match by the City.

The Committee asked the following questions:

Q: Is this a one-time grant and is there a possibility for the City to reapply for this grant? If not, how does the City make this an ongoing program?

A: Ms. Freedman explained that the grant is for one-year but there may be an opportunity for the City to reapply. This is a two-year pilot and at the end of the program the whole industry might be different. The City will be looking for State funding in the long term.

Q: Will the Council be able to see the draft contract for this program before the City Council votes on accepting the grant funds?

A: Ms. Freedman explained that she is unsure on when a draft contract can be released to the public.

Q: What alternatives could the City use instead of the advertisements?

A: Ms. Freedman explained that Lyft is free to go through the City process for advertisements. Lyft may also be able to make this work by using sponsorships instead of advertisements. The main sponsor of this program is Blue Cross Blue Shield. There will be logos on the bike, which is not the issue. The stations usually consist of a map on one side of the frame and an advertisement on the other side of the frame.

Q: Lyft would want the City to be producing on average two rides per bicycle each day to be able to break even. Is there a plan to inform the residents about this program to be able to reach this mark?

A: Ms. Freedman explained that the City may never hit two trips per bike, based on the Limebike data and data from other cities using this program. One way to boost the uses is to have corporate memberships or partners. In terms of keeping the system running with no cost to the City, the department would be looking at state or federal grants and looking at less expensive equipment.

Q: What is the cost to a resident to use the Bluebike system?

A: Ms. Freedman explained the annual membership is under \$100.

Q: Are any of the bikes electric?

A: Ms. Freedman explained that these bikes are not electric. Additionally, Ms. Freedman explained that this pilot program is laying the groundwork to get to a system that is dockless and has electric bikes. Lyft is piloting an electric bikeshare program that is part of a dockless or dock system.

Councilor Norton motioned to approve which passed unanimously.

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

**#261-20      Accept six Bike Share Stations from MetroFutures Inc.**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept six bike share stations worth approximately two hundred twenty-four thousand two hundred fifty-seven dollars (\$224,257) in conjunction with the expansion of the Bluebikes system.

**Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0-1, Councilor Malakie abstaining on 05/22/20**

**Action:      Finance Approved 6-0 (Councilor Ciccone not voting)**

**Note:**            Director of Transportation for the Planning Department, Nicole Freedman presented the request to accept six bike share stations from MetroFutures in conjunction with the expansion of the Bluebikes system.

Councilor Norton motioned to approve which passed 6-0, Councilor Ciccone not voting.

**Chairs Note:** *Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux provided an update on the expenditure of funds for COVID-19 as related to item #239-20.*

**Note:**            Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux explained that the City has spent approximately \$730,000 to date on COVID-19 response. This does not include the funds the City has spent on employees that have been out of work due to COVID-19. The Family First Act does require the City to allow for 10 days of paid time off for employees affected by COVID-19. At the moment, there is not a way to be reimbursed for these funds. Ms. Lemieux explained that she does plan on putting these costs on any submissions that the City makes to FEMA, MEMA or the CARES Act.

Ms. Lemieux explained that \$85,000 out of the \$730,000 that has been spent will be charged to the Newton Schools Foundation because they provided the City with \$85,000 for chromebooks. About \$50,000 is being charged to a \$200,000 Department of Public Health Grant that the Health Department has received.

On June 5, 2020, the City's CARES Act application is due. The CARES Act funds are for the other extenuating circumstances that have happened as a result of COVID-19. Ms. Lemieux explained that she also needs to find out how many times the City can go to FEMA for reimbursements.

The Fire Department has spent \$235,000 in overtime. There is a protocol in place that does not allow firefighters to work at different fire stations which can add to the cost of overtime.

The School Department has spent \$122,000 with approximately \$74,000 of that being used for their food program for children. Ms. Lemieux explained that they have also spent \$27,000 for cleaning supplies and \$20,000 on preparing for some type of graduation. The administration and the School Department do have to figure out what costs can be reimbursed.

The City has spent approximately \$50,000 on their grab-and-go program which provides food for families. This program is one of the largest weekly expenditures the City will have but it should be covered under the CARES Act.

The City has spent \$51,000 on equipment for the Police Department so that they will be able to sanitize their uniforms and gear. This equipment can also be used for other departments that may need it.

The Public Buildings Department has spent just under \$100,000. Most of these funds have been spent on cleaning supplies, cleaning services, and finding ways to make it safe for employees to come back to work.

The Committee asked the following question:

Q: Will the rental assistance program be brought to the State for reimbursement?

A: Ms. Lemieux explained that this has not been brought to the State yet. There has been legislation introduced for some of that money to be allocated for revenue losses. The State has said the City would be eligible for approximately \$7.8 million through the CARES Act.

The Committee adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair**

City of Newton



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER**

1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

Ruthanne Fuller

Mayor

To: Newton City Council

From: James McGonagle – Commissioner DPW

Subject: Responses to Budget Questions

Date: May 29, 2020

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Please see the below answers and attached information in response to questions raised during the discussions on the request for funding to pave a section of Washington Street and the Public Works Department's budget on Wednesday, May 27, 2020.

Responses to Questions Raised on the Washington Street Paving Request

- 1) Is National Grid going to address the gas leaks in this section of Washington Street before the City paves it?

National Grid has decided to replace the gas main in Washington Street from Chestnut St to Walnut Street prior to the City paving it. They have identified 9 leaks in their 12" diameter gas main. National Grid is currently evaluating whether it is necessary to increase the size of the gas main.

- 2) How does National Grid determine whether to repair or replace a gas main?

National Grid make the decision on whether to repair vs replace based on the pipe material, age, condition, and number of leaks. They also make their decision based on Newton's road paving program. The City and National Grid meet on a monthly basis on paving projects to coordinate paving projects with repair or replacement of gas infrastructure.

- 3) Did National Grid reline or replace the gas line at Washington Place?

National Grid installed 2 new gas services to the buildings now under construction at Washington Place. They did not repair or replace the existing gas mains in Washington St or Walnut St at this location.

- 4) How is National Grid addressing the ongoing gas leaks at the corner of Lowell Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue?

James McGonagle  
Commissioner

Telephone: (617) 796-1009 • Fax: (617) 796-1050 • [jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov](mailto:jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov)



National Grid is aware of the ongoing leak at Lowell Avenue at Commonwealth Avenue. Their engineer is evaluating whether to replace this section of gas main and once a decision is made National Grid will let the City know.

### Responses to Budget Questions

- 1) How many ADA ramps has the city replaced and/or installed?

Number of ramps installed for the past five years:

FY 20 = 270

FY 17 = 270

FY 19 = 201

FY 16 = 176

FY 18 = 256

FY 15 = 308

- 2) Could you provide the status of the streetlight repair back log?

Please see attached memo regarding the streetlight repair back log.

- 3) Has there been a decision on whether to continue to install kiosks in municipal parking lots?

A request for a discussion on kiosks is being docketed.

- 4) Could you provide an explanation on the increases to the Engineering Division's budget and decreases in the Street Division's budget?

This year funding towards our Transportation Network Improvement Program (formally known as Accelerated Roads) was reduced as a direct result of the financial impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. In order to adequately address the needs of city streets and sidewalks within our reduced budget parameters, we shifted \$200,000 from our Streets Operating Budget to our Engineering Operating Budget. The reallocation was necessary in order to fund our engineering service contracts for the Transportation Network Improvement Program, which are managed by the Engineering Division.

Transportation Network Improvement Program Funding		
	FY2020	FY2021
Engineering Operating Budget	\$ 510,000.00	\$ 710,000.00
Streets Operating Budget	\$ 750,000.00	\$ 550,000.00
	<b>\$ 1,260,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,260,000.00</b>

How can the City improve street sweeping notification in dense areas of the City?

Public Works is looking at different solutions and will come back to the Public Facilities Committee with a plan.

James McGonagle  
Commissioner

Telephone: (617) 796-1009 • Fax: (617) 796-1050 • [jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov](mailto:jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov)

City of Newton



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Transportation Division

110 Crafts Street  
Newton, MA 02460

Ruthanne Fuller

Mayor

To: Public Facilities Committee

From: Jason S. Sobel, P.E., PTOE, Director of Transportation Operations

Subject: Street light repair backlog – status update

Date: May 28, 2020

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At the May 27, 2020 Public Facilities meeting, during the DPW operating budget discussion, a City Councilor asked for a status update regarding the street light repair backlog (both street light knockdowns and underground electrical issues) with funds that City Council had previously approved.

The initial focus of addressing the backlog has been replacing street light knockdown locations. In the past 18 months, the following is a list of street light knockdowns that have been replaced:

1. BEAC/839 – 845 Beacon Street
2. LANG/35 – 34 Langley Road
3. COMM/537 – 537 Commonwealth Avenue
4. COMM/1743 – 1750 Commonwealth Avenue
5. WASH/1496 – 1496 Washington Street
6. WASH/1180 – 1180 Washington Street
7. CENT/419 – Washington Street / Center Street (Newton Corner, south of hotel)
8. CENT/425 – Washington Street / Center Street (Newton Corner, south of hotel)
9. COMM/1200 – 1193 Commonwealth Avenue
10. COMM/140 – 140 Commonwealth Avenue
11. WALN/15 – Walnut Street at Crafts Street
12. WASH/1410 – Washington Street, just west of Putnam Street
13. COMM/1223 – Commonwealth Avenue at Wauwinet Road
14. COMM/193 – 194 Commonwealth Avenue
15. PUTN/39 – 39 Putnam Street
16. COMM/1063 – 1063 Commonwealth Avenue
17. HMR/371 – 1000 Commonwealth Avenue
18. Pole #7/12 – 101 ALBAN ROAD
19. WALN/472 – 472 Walnut Street
20. COMM/1700 – 1684 Commonwealth Avenue
21. COMM/1418 – 1418 Commonwealth Avenue
22. WASH/270 – 320 Washington Street
23. WASH/304 – 300 Washington Street
24. WASH/xxx – 337 Washington Street
25. WASH/xxx – 317 Washington Street
26. CENT/1230 – 1221 Centre Street
27. CENT/533 – 543 Centre Street
28. WALN/1138 – Walnut Street at Lake Street

29. WASH/550 – 550 Washington Street
30. CENT/xxx – 288 Centre Street
31. LEWI/10 – 20 Lewis Terrace
32. WASH/1236 – 1236 Washington Street
33. WASH/610 – 612 Washington Street
34. CENT/1200 – 1201-1217 Centre Street
35. LOWELL/367 – 367 Lowell Street

The backlog of street light knockdowns has been completed, and the only remaining street light knockdowns are recent and are currently in the process of being replaced. These current knockdowns include the following locations:

1. GAS/31 – 11 Kenwood (gas lamp knockdown)
2. COMM/1743 – 1750 Commonwealth Avenue
3. COMM/127 – 127 Commonwealth Avenue
4. WASH/680 – 680 Washington Street
5. COMM/1817 – 1807 Commonwealth Avenue
6. COMM/1860 – 1870 Commonwealth Avenue
7. Pole #F35 – Newton Corner, Centre Street SB merge onto Washington Street
8. WASH/533 – Washington Street at Jackson Road
9. WASH/370 – Washington Street, across from Honda Village
10. WASH/1339 – 1339 Washington St (being replaced as part of West Newton Sq project)
11. WASH/1309 – 1309 Washington St (being replaced as part of West Newton Sq project)

In the past year, the following underground electrical issues have also been repaired:

1. LANG/38 – 38 Langley Rd
2. COUN/150 – 130 Countryside Rd
3. BEAC/341 – Beacon St @ Hammond St
4. Pole 746/2 – 7 Hereward Rd
5. CHUR/201 – 200 Church St
6. Pole 681/1 – 59 Allerton Rd
7. WELLS/2 – 2 Wells Ave

The backlog of underground electrical issues has not yet been completed. The remaining backlog of underground electrical issues includes street lights at 41 different locations.

Please let me know if City Council would like any additional details regarding the street light repair work that has been completed or is being planned for the future.

Sincerely,

Jason S. Sobel, P.E., PTOE  
Director of Transportation Operations

cc: James McGonagle, Commissioner of Public Works  
Shawna Sullivan, DPW Chief of Staff

**Cassidy Flynn**

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**From:** Brendan Keegan <brendan@bikenewton.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 26, 2020 11:45 AM  
**To:** Cassidy Flynn  
**Cc:** Ruthanne Fuller  
**Subject:** Public Facilities Meeting 5/27 Agenda Item #255-20

**[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe. ]**

Dear Cassidy,

I'm writing on behalf of Bike Newton to express concern over the transfer and repurpose of \$400,000 that was intended to be used for the pilot of a road diet that would inform the 25% design of Washington Street. The redesign of Washington Street is a vital project to improve the safety of this dangerous corridor. Washington St. at Lowell Ave. is in the top 5% for motor vehicle crashes in Newton, according to MassDOT data. Recent speed data collected by the City of Newton shows that the 85th percentile speed on Washington St. at Cross Street is anywhere from 38mph to as high as 52mph.

Washington Street has been studied for the last 10 years by professionals in the field of planning like Peter Furth of Northeastern University and Stephanie Pollack of MassDOT. The city also undertook an effort to imagine the future of Washington Street called Hello Washington!. All of the studies of this corridor have identified the need for safer pedestrian crossings, protected bike facilities, and better access to bus stops. Data from Strava and Lime bike show that Washington Street is a heavily used route for bikes despite having no bike accommodations.

We understand that the city's budget has taken a hit because of the pandemic. This project is an opportunity to improve the safety of Washington Street, not just repave the same dangerous roadway. In order to improve safety the city can re-stripe the lanes to 11 feet, down from the current 13 feet. Wide lanes promote speeding and lead to more crashes and more severe crashes. The city should also install a temporary protected bike lane along the south side of Washington St. from Chestnut to Lowell. This will provide safer facilities for people on bikes and allow more space for people waiting at bus stops on a stretch where there is currently no sidewalk.

We would also like to know how the repurposing of this money would affect the timeline for the reconstruction of Washington Street and what the city's plans are to move forward with the pilot of a road diet and the 25% design for Washington Street. This is a vital corridor as we start to reopen the economy and we have an opportunity to improve Washington Street's safety and commercial viability. Simply repaving the street without any safety enhancements will be an opportunity squandered.

Thank you,  
 Brendan Keegan

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Brendan Keegan  
*President, Bike Newton*  
[www.bikenewton.org](http://www.bikenewton.org)  
 @bikenewton

*Bike Newton, a 501c3 organization promoting bicycling as a viable method of transportation in Newton, MA. Bicycling should be safe and convenient for all. Bike Newton is 1800 members strong.*

**Cassidy Flynn**

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**From:** James McGonagle  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 27, 2020 3:02 PM  
**To:** Cassidy Flynn  
**Cc:** Shawna Sullivan  
**Subject:** FW: Public Facilities Meeting 5/27 Agenda Item #255-20

Sorry Cassidy, meant to include you on this.

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**From:** James McGonagle  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 27, 2020 2:59 PM  
**To:** brendan@bikenewton.org  
**Cc:** Alison M. Leary <aleary@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Jason Sobel <jsobel@newtonma.gov>; Nicole Freedman (nfreedman@newtonma.gov) <nfreedman@newtonma.gov>; Jonathan Yeo (jyeo@newtonma.gov) <jyeo@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Public Facilities Meeting 5/27 Agenda Item #255-20

Dear Mr. Keegan,

Due to the situation we are all facing, the City had to make some extremely difficult budget decisions in a very short period of time. We share the same goals to improve safety along the Washington Street corridor, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. The decision to move this exciting pilot out until we have a true understanding of the impacts to the City budget is disappointing for us all, but it will move forward once funding allows us to do so.

The need to resurface the existing Washington Street is based on the current poor pavement conditions and will help extend the useful life the pavement structure for years to come. Any further deterioration of this section of Washington St will force the City to have perform asphalt reclamation which can be up to three times the cost of a normal paving operation. It is important to act now and avoid these additional costs. This needed maintenance work is not a lost opportunity to redesign the roadway as part of a long-term major construction project. That said, we are always looking to make improvements, and we now develop pavement marking plans for all roadways that are repaved, rather than simply replicating the previous pavement markings. While we won't be able to make any major changes as part of this roadway maintenance, we will bring this topic to our Complete Streets Group to review options prior to any work being performed.

Sincerely,

Jim

**James McGonagle**  
**Commissioner of Public Works**  
**City of Newton, MA**  
**617-796-1015**  
[jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov](mailto:jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov)

# Boston University

Department of Earth and Environment  
685 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215-1401



May 26, 2020

The Honorable Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor, City of Newton  
1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Dear Mayor Fuller,

We are writing to express concern about your proposal in the [Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan FY2021-FY2025](#) to transfer \$400,000 from the fund for a 25% conceptual design for the Washington St. Corridor, for “immediate road repairs” on Washington Street between Chestnut Street and Walnut Street.

Our concern stems from our [research](#) and [advocacy](#) on gas leaks in Newton and greater Boston over the last several years. In 2019, the Gas Leak Allies, convened by Mothers Out Front and including Dr. Phillips, published [Rolling the Dice](#), a report on the safety of gas pipelines in Massachusetts.

It is our informed opinion that public safety and best use of scarce resources requires repairing the leaking gas pipelines before paving the road. There are two leak prone gas mains underneath Washington Street. National Grid reports eight unrepaired gas leaks along this portion of Washington Street, and a leak survey Dr. Phillips conducted with Gas Safety USA over the last two weeks of May, 2020 found nine leaks.

For your review we created this [google slide deck](#) that summarizes results from our gas leak survey and other information about the presence and condition of leaking gas pipelines underneath Washington Street. We will be happy to walk you and other stakeholders through these slides.

Leaks only grow over time, and no leak can be considered indefinitely “safe.” Moreover, gas leaks degrade air quality. And, our recent survey found gas concentrations in the root zones of dead and dying trees on this portion of Washington Street.

National Grid needs to first repair the leaks to avoid future repairs that will puncture new pavement and seed potholes.

Requiring National Grid to repair the gas leaks prior to paving will cost Massachusetts ratepayers around \$50-\$100k, compared to replacing 0.9 miles of two pipelines, which may cost

Boston University

Department of Earth and Environment

ratepayers about \$2M-\$3.5M<sup>1</sup>. Triaging the leaking pipes by patching them extends the useful life of the old pipes and the road surface while avoiding locking-in fossil fuel infrastructure that is inconsistent with Newton's Climate Action Plan. Therefore we recommend pipeline repair rather than replacement.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Nathan Phillips

Professor

Department of Earth and Environment

Boston University

Rachel Adler-Golden

Cindy Calloway

Ellie Goldberg

Elaine Landes

Melanie Renaud

Karen Slote

on behalf of Mothers Out Front Newton



<sup>1</sup>[Rolling the Dice](#), p. 55

Cc:

Councilor Alison M. Leary, Chair

Public Facilities Committee

Newton City Council

Councilor Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair

Finance Committee

Newton City Council

David Olson, Clerk

Newton City Council

City of Newton



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER**

1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449

Ruthanne Fuller

Mayor

May 27, 2020

Nathan Phillips

Professor

Department of Earth and Environment

Boston University

And

Representatives of Mothers Out Front

Dear Mr. Phillips and Representatives of Mothers Out Front:

I am writing in response to your letter expressing concern regarding reallocating \$400,000 originally allocated for a 25% conceptual design of Washington Street from Chestnut Street and Lowell Avenue. The proposal is to reallocate these funds to pave this section of Washington Street, which is in danger of failing.

We are currently working with National Grid to coordinate the paving of this section of Washington Street with the repair of the gas main in this section of the street. Our Associate City Engineer John Daghlion is in contact with his counterpart at National Grid to ensure that these leaks are addressed before paving. National Grid is in the process of evaluating the main and developing a plan to address the leaks.

The Department of Public Works continues to hold a monthly meeting with National Grid to ensure that both parties are aware of respective projects within the City of Newton. These meetings enable the City and National Grid to work efficiently to replace mains and/or address leaks before paving roadways.

Please let me know if you have any further concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

James McGonagle

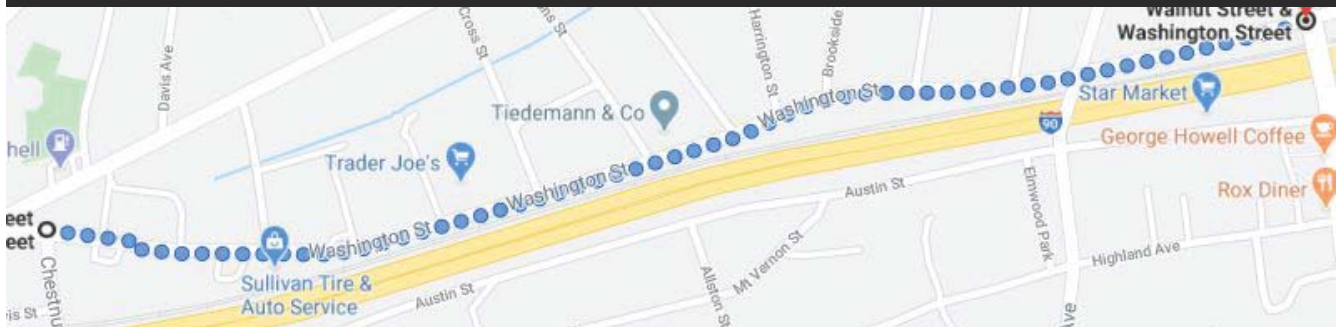
James McGonagle  
Commissioner

Telephone: (617) 796-1009 • Fax: (617) 796-1050 • [jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov](mailto:jmcgonagle@newtonma.gov)



# Washington St., Newton Gas Leaks: May, 2020

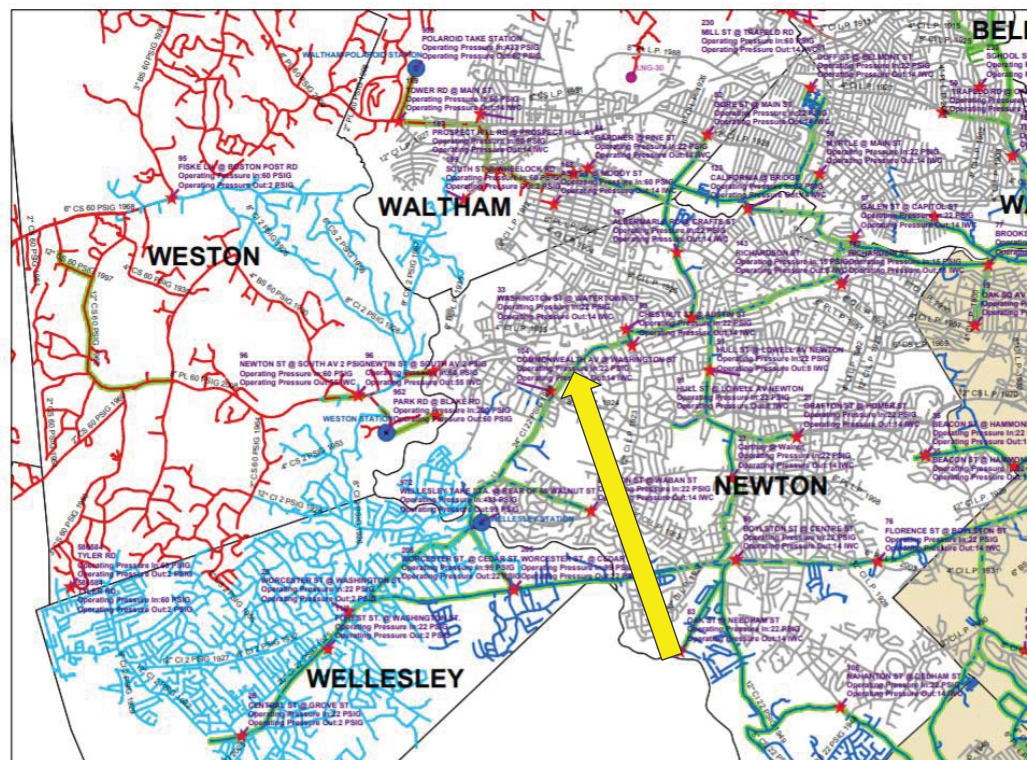
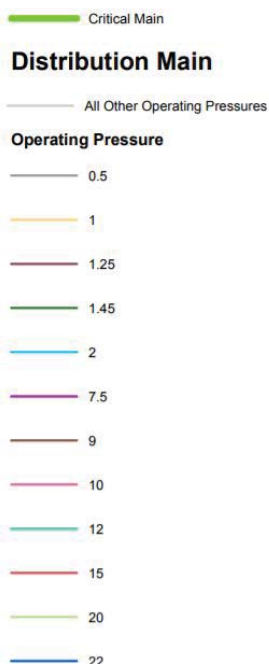
255-20



Nathan Phillips, Boston University  
Bob Ackley, Gas Safety USA

Washington St: “critical main” 255-20

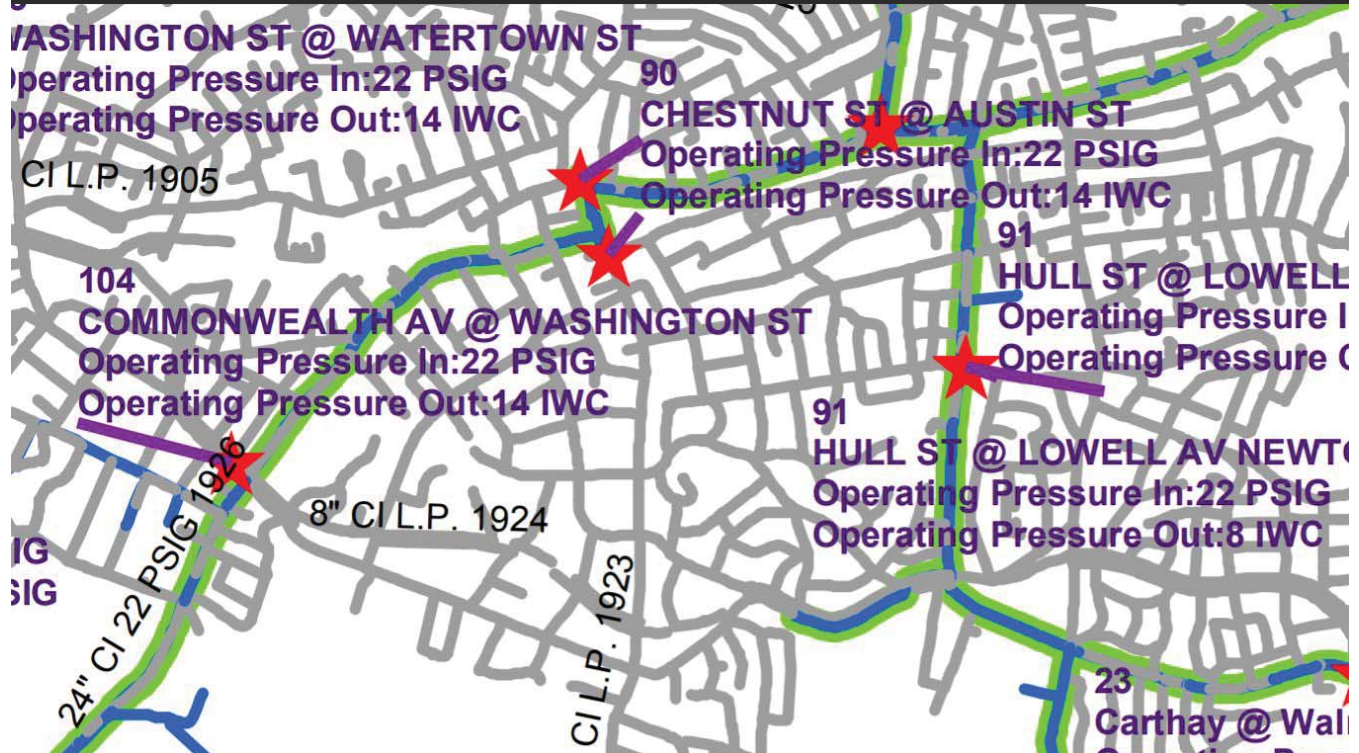
## LEGEND



# Leak-prone Gas Infrastructure

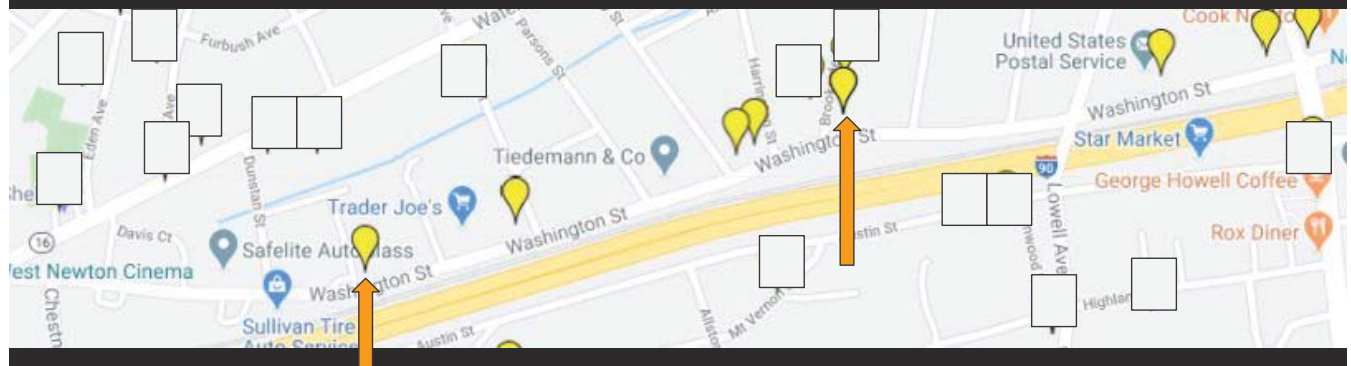
255-20

- One 24" Cast Iron "critical main", 22 psi main, 1926
- One 10" Cast Iron, 0.5 psi main, age unknown



## 8 utility-reported unrepaired leaks between Chestnut & Walnut

255-20



-Six leaks on Washington St.;  
two leaks at cross-street  
corners (Eddy, Harrington)

-Two leaks listed as "Grade 2"

- Six leaks listed as "Grade 3"

### National Grid leak grade definitions:

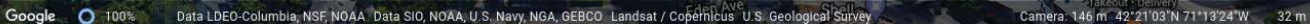
- Grade 1:** Leaks must be responded to immediately, and we do not leave the scene until they are repaired.
- Grade 2:** Leaks are non-hazardous and must be monitored every six months and scheduled for repair within a year.
- Grade 3:** Leaks are non-hazardous at the time of detection and rechecked periodically and there is no requirement to repair them outside of Gas Main replacements.



**255-20**



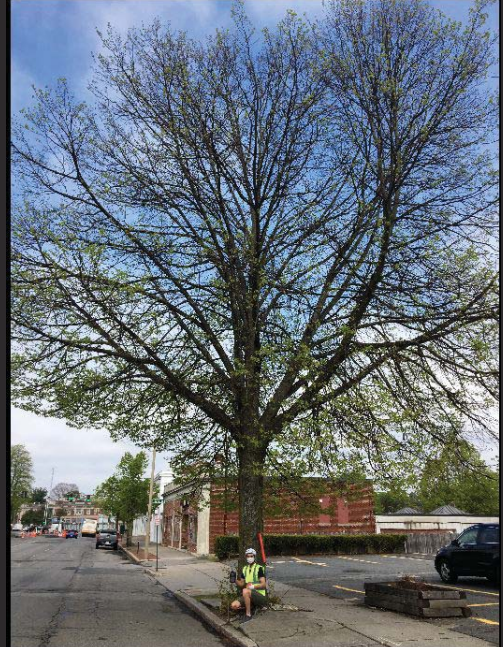
**255-20**





# Tree damage found

255-20



1 of 2 recently planted Larches (both dead, gas in root zones).

Mature Linden (dying, 25% gas in root zone)

255-20

## Takeaways:

- We detected 9 leaks on Washington St. between Chestnut St. & Walnut St.; NGrid reports 8 leaks.
  - Tree damage associated with gas in soil
  - There is no such thing as a “safe” gas leak.
  - Gas leaks only grow larger over time.

# Costs\*:

0.9 Mile pipeline replacement x 2 mains ~ \$2M to \$3.5M  
(ratepayers)

Repairing 9 leaks x \$5k-\$10k/leak ~ \$50-\$100k  
(ratepayers)

\*[Rolling The Dice](#), p. 55



# Extra slides follow:

Gas Safety Incorporated 16 Brook Lane Southborough, Massachusetts 01772 774-922-4626		Gas Safety Incorporated 16 Brook Lane Southborough, Massachusetts 01772 774-922-4626		Gas Safety Incorporated 16 Brook Lane Southborough, Massachusetts 01772 774-922-4626		Gas Safety Incorporated 16 Brook Lane Southborough, Massachusetts 01772 774-922-4626	
<p>Date: <u>5-18-22</u> Survey Type: <u>Grade</u></p> <p>Address: <u>WASHINGTON STREET FROM BRIDGE JUST WEST</u></p> <p>City/Town: <u>NEEDHAM</u></p> <p>Sketch:</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Surveyed By: <u>B. Bailey</u></p>	<p>Date: <u>5-18-22</u> Survey Type: <u>Grade</u></p> <p>Address: <u>WASHINGTON STREET FROM BRIDGE JUST WEST</u></p> <p>City/Town: <u>NEEDHAM</u></p> <p>Sketch:</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Surveyed By: <u>B. Bailey</u></p>	<p>Date: <u>5-18-22</u> Survey Type: <u>Grade</u></p> <p>Address: <u>WASHINGTON STREET FROM BRIDGE JUST WEST</u></p> <p>City/Town: <u>NEEDHAM</u></p> <p>Sketch:</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Surveyed By: <u>B. Bailey</u></p>	<p>Date: <u>5-18-22</u> Survey Type: <u>Grade</u></p> <p>Address: <u>WASHINGTON STREET FROM BRIDGE JUST WEST</u></p> <p>City/Town: <u>NEEDHAM</u></p> <p>Sketch:</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Surveyed By: <u>B. Bailey</u></p>				
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Extra slide: the receipts (leak reports)



# Gas mains aren't always straight



The 24" critical main shifts over here from south to the north side of the street