



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

City of Newton **In City Council**

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Present: Councilors Downs (Chair), Lipof, Malakie, Grossman, Markiewicz, Bowman and two vacancies.

City Staff: Captain Jeffrey Boudreau and Sergeant Daniel Devine, Newton Police Department

Docket items #495-20 through #505-20 were discussed together. Please refer to docket #505-20 for discussion of these items.

- #495-20** **Requesting renewal of taxi license**
GEORGE MARRY, 50 Union Street, Newton Centre, MA 02459, requesting **renewal of one (1) taxi license** for Holden's Taxi, Inc.
Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**
- #496-20** **Requesting renewals of taxi licenses**
GEORGE MARRY, 50 Union Street, Newton Centre, MA 02459, requesting **renewal of two (2) taxi licenses** for Newtonville Cab Co., Inc.
Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**
- #497-20** **Requesting renewal of taxi license**
GEORGE MARRY, 50 Union Street, Newton Centre, MA 02459, requesting **renewal of one (1) taxi license** for Newton Taxi Co.
Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**
- #498-20** **Requesting renewal of public auto license**
DHANRAJ MAHASE, 275 Grove Street, 2-400, Newton, MA 02466 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Mahase Livery Services, LLC. (MHS Worldwide, LLC).
Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**
- #499-20** **Requesting renewal of public auto license**
DONALD LAPLANTE, 395 Lexington Street, Auburndale, MA 02466 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Don's Car Service.
Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#500-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
MICHAEL GIMMELFARB, 274 Dedham Street, Newton, MA 02461 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for American Truck & Equipment Sales, LLC.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#501-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
JOSE GREGORIO CEDENO, 9 Elmwood Park, Newtonville, MA 02460 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Bace Limousine Services, LLC.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#502-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
NOEL DIAZ, 9 Elmwood Park, #2, Newtonville, MA 02460 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Newton Limos Company, LLC.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#503-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
ISMAIL UNKOC, 184 River Street, West Newton, MA 02465 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Izmo Limo, LLC.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#504-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
RAJIV KUMAR, 2323 Washington Street, #G3, Newton, MA 02462 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Om Sai Enterprises Inc.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

#505-20 Requesting renewal of public auto license
LAHCENE BELHOUCHE, 32 Adams Street, Newton, MA 02460 requesting **renewal of one (1) public auto license** for Boston Cool Ride Limo Inc.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 6-0**

Note: Captain Boudreau and Sergeant Devine, Newton Police Department joined the Committee for discussion on docket items #495-20 through #505-20 (taxi and public auto renewals).

A Committee member asked Sergeant Devine if there are any concerns with these renewals? Sergeant Devine answered although business is down amongst the public autos and the taxis, the Police Department has not received any calls or complaints. Due to the change of the environment, people are not using taxis, people are using public autos and Ubers. Taxi medallion requests have decreased, and public autos have increased. Each company passed their vehicle inspection in September 2020.

Without discussion, Councilor Markiewicz made a motion to approve these taxis and public auto renewals. Committee members agreed 6-0.

Chair's Note: The Committee will be revisiting priorities from March 2020 and updating each other on progress made.

Note: Chair Downs stated that in March 2020, Committee members set some priorities, and took on the following commitments. Chair Downs asked Committee members to provide a progress report and explain what may need to be adjusted due to the pandemic.

Transparency, Communication and the City's Website

Councilors Markiewicz and Malakie began the discussion by discussing transparency, communication and the City's website. Councilor Markiewicz stated that they met with Mr. Sobel, Director of Transportation, DPW and various other people from DPW earlier in the year to discuss the traffic calming process, the ability to enhance the website providing better information to the public, how the public may request a change and how requests are reviewed and prioritized. When Councilors Markiewicz and Malakie checked in with Mr. Sobel several months ago, Mr. Sobel informed them of the City website redesign and stated that the City will be doing many things differently on the new website.

Councilor Markiewicz then stated that now that the new website is live, they have a meeting tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 11, 2020 with Mr. Sobel. At this meeting, Councilors Markiewicz and Malakie intend to ask Mr. Sobel his ideas based on the questions asked previously and to explain what the requirements are to add pages and content to the website. Councilor Markiewicz said that he would forward the zoom link to Committee members to join the discussion if desired or they may forward any questions or concerns to them.

Committee members comments and suggestions:

Comments:

- The original intent of the discussion was to make the website more transparent explaining how the process works. It is necessary to provide an explanation and the process when a person has a request or problem with street safety.
- Residents are placing requests in neighborhoods that are well-organized. But there may be neighborhoods where people aren't as knowledgeable or comfortable coming forward with a concern or request. The City needs a data-based way to determine where changes are needed and to prioritize those changes.

Suggestions:

- It is necessary to be able to register a concern and that your request can be tracked.
- It is necessary to have information, links and descriptions consistent on all pages including the Planning and DPW Departments website.

- The City's website should include a library of terms, perhaps also diagrams of bump outs, stop signs, traffic signals, crosswalks etc. to help residents understand the options and their efficacy.
- Newer information is available from speed feedback signs, also crash data. Perhaps this information should be made available in a search engine.

Neighborhood Parking Plans

Chair Downs stated that Mr. Koses, Transportation Coordinator develops and updates neighborhood parking plans through Traffic Council.

Abolishing Parking Minimums

Chair Downs stated that she is working on a memo to summarize the research behind parking minimums including why they were established, why they may not be desired and where appropriate locations may be to have parking maximums.

Crossing Guards

Councilor Grossman stated that this issue is properly tabled for a number of reasons. Since the pandemic, walking to and from school has been quite different. She stated that walking patterns will need to return to normal for this discussion to continue. The important work of the Police Reform Task Force is going to be part of this conversation as well.

Vision Zero

Chair Downs stated that a Vision Zero resolution was approved. The Vision Zero discussion will be one to continue with the new Police Chief.

Committee members questions and comments:

Questions:

- Are Council members waiting for a new Police Chief to be hired before having a discussion with the administration on the next steps of Vision Zero? Chair Downs answered that she did not believe so, but thinks the priority needs to be committee on hiring a new chief.

Comments:

- It is necessary to find a new Police Chief who understands the concepts of Vision Zero. The sharing of data will be necessary. One criterion may be that the Mayor and the Police Chief Selection Committee inform the new Police Chief that he/she may need to be open to Vision Zero.
- It will be necessary for the new Police Chief to identify, assist and advocate with the City Council and the community about the need for safer roadway designs as a part of modern policing.

Newton South High School Parking Plan

Councilor Lipof stated that he met with the Newton South Principal and the School Transportation Department prior to the pandemic. It is necessary for patterns to return to normal for this discussion to continue.

Safe Routes to School

Councilor Bowman stated that Safe Routes to School is working on officially integrating SRTS into City government as it is in most other communities, because it has come up against a liability issue. Safe Routes to School is trying to officially designate certain ways people walk and bike, but it is difficult because the organization itself is not officially part of the City, making volunteers possibly liable if someone is hurt on one of the designated routes. Safe Routes to School plays a critical role in minimizing driving around schools. She then stated that the DPW and Planning Departments keep SRTS president Jenn Martin involved in planning, sidewalks and snow clearing routes so that Ms. Martin can provide advice on how they may move forward.

Bike Network Plan

Councilor Bowman stated that a bike network plan is necessary. There may be many obstacles, but it is clear that if you don't create safe and separate areas for bicyclists then you won't get an increase in people biking.

The Climate Action Plan states that we need to reduce driving and increase walking. This will not come to fruition unless we make a concerted effort to move forward on a bike network.

Councilor Bowman then stated that when the open space plan was created, one of the key requests was making park space walkable and bikeable from neighborhoods.

Committee members questions and suggestions:

Questions:

- Would a working group be advantageous to help develop a bike network plan?
- Would you categorize a bike network plan under the Complete Streets program? Councilor Bowman answered yes, Complete Streets is necessary if we want to meet our transportation goals.

Suggestions:

- Please forward Committee members the link to Watertown, MA on their completion of their bike and pedestrian network plan to review the differences between what Newton and Watertown have to determine if this is a plan this Committee would like to discuss this year.

The bike and pedestrian plan link to Watertown, MA can be found at <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/957/Bicycle-Pedestrian-Planning-2019-2020>

Bus Fleets

Chair Downs stated that in June 2020, the committee renewed bus licenses. Committee members requested Boston College return at their next renewal in June 2021, with a plan to add more sustainable buses.

Committee members comments and suggestions:

Comments:

- A Committee member stated that in June, the Committee asked Boston College when they renew their license in June 2021, that they have electric buses or a plan putting the onus on them.
- It would be beneficial if Committee members knew the status of Boston College purchasing electric buses including the purchasing cost, charging capabilities and mechanical hurdles.
- It would be beneficial to have additional information and knowledge to determine whether what is being asked is reasonable.

Suggestions:

- It may be helpful if a Committee member contacted Boston College informing them that when they renew their licenses in June 2021, they will be asked how their fleet plan is coming along and to inform them of what this Committee expects to see in June.

Councilor Grossman volunteered to contact Boston College regarding their fleet plan. It will be beneficial to remind Boston College that they have six months to come back to us and have this information in place for our discussion. She then stated that it may be necessary to allow Boston College additional time to complete their fleet plan due to the pandemic.

At approximately 7:50 p.m., Councilor Bowman made a motion to adjourn. Committee members agreed 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Andreae Downs, Chair