



**CITY OF MELROSE**  
**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**  
**AGENDA • OCTOBER 26, 2021**

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Web-based remote meeting  
, Melrose, MA 02176

Committee Meeting

7:00 PM

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The public should take notice that the Melrose City Council may, on certain occasions, have a quorum in attendance due to standing committees of the City Council consisting of both voting and non-voting members. Members attending this duly posted meeting are participating and deliberating only in conjunction with the business of the standing committee.

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Cory Thomas	Chair
Mark Garipay	Vice Chair
Shawn M. MacMaster	Voting
Jack Eccles	Voting
Robb Stewart	Voting
Christopher Cinella	President, ex officio

**Motion:** statement of remote meeting information

Pursuant to the suspension of certain provisions of the open meeting law, this meeting of the Public Works Committee will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will post a comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Melrose website and on MMTV/mmtv3.org. The public can find online access instructions to view this meeting at [www.cityofmelrose.org/remote-meetings](http://www.cityofmelrose.org/remote-meetings)

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **III. ORDERS**

1. **ORDER-2022-45** : An Order seeking information on the Administration's proposal to create permanent bike lanes on lower Main Street

*Sponsored by:* Voting Shawn M. MacMaster

## **IV. ADJOURNMENT**



because it would not be a regulatory measure. However, the design of the bike lanes on lower Main Street and details communicated to the public about them, makes clear that the lanes are anything but advisory.

As you know, M.G.L. c. 89, s. 4D prohibits parking any vehicle on “*an on-street path or lane designated by an official sign or marking for the exclusive use of bicycles, except in cases of emergency.*” Additionally, operating a motor vehicle in a bike lane may constitute a civil or criminal violation, depending on the intent of the motorist and the manner in which he/she operates. When considering that interfering with a bicyclist’s ability to ride safely and unfettered on a bike path -- whether willfully, negligently, or unknowingly -- can be enforced by the Melrose Police Department or any other agency with Chapter 90 powers, it seems to validate the argument that a dedicated bike lane is, in fact, a regulatory matter. Reflecting on the following question offers further validation: If the Traffic Commission considers crosswalks to be regulatory, why would bike lanes be any different? Both are designated pathways on public ways that are intended to protect the people who use them; and both have corresponding statutes under state law that provide an enforcement mechanism when motorists unduly interfere with them.

In the case of this pilot project, I am very concerned that this administration, like prior administrations, is cherry-picking what does and does not go before the Traffic Commission as a way to execute its vision outside of a deliberative and transparent public process. Although I appreciate the administration’s efforts to engage the public through an informational meeting held on July 26th and by scheduling an upcoming neighborhood meeting with the abutters, I believe that a formal public process is needed. Not only is it needed, but it appears to be required in the case of what has been proposed, for it is clear that what is pending would amount to a regulatory change, not an advisory one. As such, the decision-making process should play out in a public meeting; and the ultimate decision as to what should or should not happen to lower Main Street should rest with the statutory, authoritative body as elucidated by the Acts of 1998, c. 76, s. 4: An Act Establishing a Traffic Commission in the City of Melrose. In accordance with its responsibilities and authority, as established by the Board of Aldermen and as codified by the Massachusetts Legislature, there seems to be little question that the Melrose Traffic Commission should decide the merits of this proposal (or any modified version that follows) before any permanent changes to the roadway are made.

I look forward to receiving your legal opinion on this matter. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Shawn M. MacMaster  
City Councilor, Ward 5  
City of Melrose



# CITY OF MELROSE

## City Council

Shawn M. MacMaster  
Ward 5

City Hall, 562 Main Street  
Melrose, Massachusetts 02176  
smacmaster@cityofmelrose.org

August 17, 2021

Elena Proakis Ellis  
Director of Public Works  
City of Melrose  
72 Tremont Street  
Melrose, MA 02176

Dear Ms. Proakis Ellis,

I am writing as a follow up to my August 7<sup>th</sup> e-mail to you regarding the Lower Main Street Pilot Project. I very much appreciate the time you took in responding to me that same day. To be clear, the purpose of my e-mail was not to suggest that the process underway be paused, but rather that your team and I have a concurrent conversation, in the form of an in-person meeting, in order to account for the concerns that have been brought to my attention by residential and commercial abutters alike.

Considering the timeline you have laid out, I believe that it would be imprudent to wait until the conclusion of the pilot project to address some of the conspicuous issues that need not be validated by the pilot. Although data from the pilot will most certainly be instructive to this project, the historical experiences of those who live and operate businesses on Lower Main Street -- a number of them having been on Main Street for many years now -- *already* offers a deep and vast well of critical data to consider. Put another way, the abutters are best capable of familiarizing the City with the potential impacts of this project before the commencement of any substantive work.

While some of the abutters were heard at the July 26th virtual neighborhood meeting, others did not participate for a variety of reasons. From what I understand (as just one example), Metropolitan Credit Union, Melrose Glass, Stead Properties, and Simple Fitness were never notified of the meeting. Concerning to me is that there are three primary stakeholders with respect to this project (residential abutters, commercial abutters, and the bicycle community), yet two of the three (the neighborhood stakeholders) were not consulted before designs were commissioned.

Please understand that I convey this not in an attempt to play "Monday morning quarterback," but rather to help you and other members of the administration understand *why* the neighborhood feels left out of the process and why many believe that the fate of Lower Main Street has already been determined. These concerns are further buttressed by the fact that I myself was not briefed on the timing, nature, and scope of the project, nor did I see the schematics until the public meeting was held. In fact, on February 2, 2020, Patrick Prendergast from the Mayor's Office reached out to me to inform me that the administration was considering adding bicycle lanes to Lower Main Street. At that time, I informed Mr. Prendergast that, when more information became available, a neighborhood meeting should occur in order to elicit feedback from the abutters. It wasn't until July 15<sup>th</sup> (seventeen months later) that I learned anything further about this project, having received the same public e-notification that went out to residents that afternoon. When checking my e-mail later that day, I saw that a related e-mail was sent to the City Council -- as well as a follow-up e-mail directly to me -- the

prior evening. Although there were clearly many months of planning underway with respect to the pilot, which could have given ample time for the abutters and me as the Ward Councilor to weigh in before plans were drawn up, to dwell on this oversight would not be constructive, nor would it be productive. I would much rather use these next few months to advocate that the City prioritize abutter concerns *before* the pilot period concludes. Doing so would help mitigate some of the inevitable disruptions and impacts of any surface-level changes to Lower Main Street and hopefully mollify some of the neighborhood concerns that have arisen to date.

These concerns include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Safe access in and out of residential driveways
- Reduced/eliminated on-street parking for businesses
- Delayed access to properties in the event of an emergency (e.g., police and fire)
- Snow removal from bike lanes and street corners
- Loss of curbside parking for visitors, including home healthcare aides
- Loss of curbside access for contractors, service providers, and delivery workers
- Delivery trucks parking and/or idling on adjacent streets

Furthermore, from the bicycle lane examples depicted in the PowerPoint presentation, what is being considered does not seem to account for the unique characteristics of a *residential* neighborhood. In fact, the examples contained in the PowerPoint portray areas very different from Lower Main Street: i.e., a commercial area (Boston), rural areas (Natick and Wayland), and a divided highway (Somerville/Medford). This beckons the question: were areas comparable to Lower Washington Street considered during the pilot design process -- specifically, areas in communities where bicycle lanes exist in largely residential neighborhoods?

In addition, a few other questions come to mind. What, if any, anticipated costs will be incurred to fund any aspect of this project, whether that be direct or indirect costs? Moreover, do you expect there to be any ancillary costs, such as the need to purchase specialized equipment in order to remove snow from the bicycle lanes? If so, have funding sources been identified? Have there been any future expenditures (or any likely expenditures, for that matter) determined which will require City Council approval?

In light of the questions and concerns raised herein, there are several recommendations that I would like to offer. First, as the City embarks on this ambitious project, it would behoove us -- as I said during the neighborhood meeting -- to make a concerted effort to enhance the *entire* corridor, including making improvements to both stretches of sidewalk running from West/East Wyoming to Sylvan, and to better maintain the trees that currently line the street. Second, I recommend convening a business roundtable in which representatives from the City and myself meet with the business owners mentioned earlier to brief them on the initiative and hear out their concerns. Third, rather than conduct one large, general meeting at the end of the pilot project, I would encourage a separate meeting with the abutters, so that their concerns are not diluted by the voices of those who do not live and work in the neighborhood. That being said, as Main Street is not a private way and is used by residents from across the City, I do think that a general meeting to elicit broader feedback is certainly in order -- and important. Finally, I was pleased to hear that a post-pilot survey would be distributed. As I am sure you can appreciate, having a baseline survey from which to compare future data is paramount. With this in mind, I strongly recommend that the City consider developing and circulating targeted, pre-pilot surveys to the three primary stakeholder groups. As their concerns and needs are unique from one another, a universal survey would be far less reliable. For instance, having a better understanding of the ways in which residential abutters rely on curbside parking and knowing the frequency by which they have visitors to their homes is important. So too is having a better understanding of the challenges that Lower Main Street residents currently face when pulling into and backing out of their driveways, especially during the winter months. Similarly, for commercial

abutters, understanding how they rely on curbside parking is important, as well as the potential impacts on their business operations should on-street parking be reduced or eliminated. Data from a pre-pilot survey when compared with data from a post-pilot survey can ascertain the degree by which the pilot may have exacerbated existing problems.

Having worked together on past municipal projects and having enjoyed a strong working relationship with you, I am confident that we can work together to ensure that the individual and collective concerns of the abutters are weighed heavily before any final decisions are made, even if that means extending certain deadlines associated with this project.

I look forward to continuing this discussion with you. For now, thank you for your attention to the concerns that I have raised.

Sincerely,



Shawn M. MacMaster  
City Councilor, Ward 5  
City of Melrose

cc: Mayor Paul Brodeur  
Chief Michael Lyle  
Chief Edward Collina  
Margot Fleischman, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Communications