

**SPECIAL MEETING
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC**

October 11, 2016

5:00 p.m.

In the absence of the chairman, City Clerk Normand called the meeting to order.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Barry, it was voted to elect Alderman Long as Chairman Pro-Tem.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Alderman O'Neil, Long, Barry, Gamache

Messrs.: K. Sheppard, K. Clarke, T. Arnold

3. [Discussion regarding traffic concerns on President Road.](#)

Chairman Long stated tonight's meeting is solely for discussion regarding the traffic concerns on President Road. Prior to starting I just want to note that the committee has reviewed all of the information given to us – the e-mails sent to us by both residents of President Road as well as from several other community entities who use that road. We reviewed all of that. The discussion will be in regards to what we have on our agenda and the scenarios with which to look for ways to improve the traffic flow if we can. I can either take questions from the committee or we can call Kevin Sheppard or Todd Connors forward to address the proposals. Are Mr. Sheppard or Mr. Connors here? Mr. Sheppard we have before us some proposals which I am sure you have seen. I would like to know if there is

one that is more favorable to you or are they all the same? Do you have an opinion on that?

Kevin Sheppard, Public Works Director, replied I will explain each of the proposals. One is making President Road a one-way as Alderman Shaw has proposed. These are all alternatives that have been put on the table in the past so we wanted to take a look at all of the alternatives and provide some information on those. Alternative #2 is to gate President Road. Alternative #3 is to open all gates, which was discussed. Alternative #4 was a one-way on Gold Street, Sewall Street and President Road as I believe Alderman Shaw discussed in the past as well. I think the aldermen realize that no proposal here or no alternative here will solve everyone's concerns in the neighborhoods whether it be Bradley Street, Gold Street or any of the streets in that neighborhood. I received a copy of a letter today that I believe was submitted by Hannaford. I am not too sure of the status of that legally but based on that letter I am not too sure we can make a...initially before I read that letter I was ready to say perhaps you start with a one-way street because I am not sure we can get a gate in before the winter at this point. I think that has been discussed before. Kristen Clarke, our Traffic Engineer, is with us today. She has been trying to get the cost of installation and the lead time necessary for a gate. I don't believe she has that information at this point. I am not sure whether a gate is possible to have installed before the winter months. In discussions, would a one-way President Road be something to consider for the winter months? We could do some more evaluation and traffic counts in the spring time once that is in place but it comes down to what neighborhood is going to be impacted with which alternative. The traffic is there. Some of the traffic is going to move to South Willow Street depending on the alternative you take a look at. There is traffic that is going to be coming from those residential neighborhoods onto those residential streets to get over to Gold Street and South Willow Street.

Chairman Long asked so what you are saying is that all four alternatives are going to affect another area?

Mr. Sheppard answered yes. We believe if you choose one alternative, it is going to push traffic somewhere else.

Chairman Long asked is there one that has less impact in your opinion?

Kristen Clarke, Traffic Engineer, stated our thought is that the alternative that Alderman Shaw has proposed with the one-way on President Road westbound at least disperses some of that traffic out to Bradley and the Connecting Road area whereas some of the other alternatives will have a direct hit to one of the streets.

Alderman O'Neil stated Kevin you made a statement or what I think I heard you say was some of the options move the traffic to South Willow Street. Is there any one option that you believe is more likely to move the most amount of traffic to South Willow Street?

Ms. Clarke replied it is hard to know. We can't predict that. Any of these options would make it a little more inconvenient to get through this area so I think all of them would push some traffic to South Willow. We really don't know which alternative would move more.

Mr. Sheppard stated it is important to note that pre-Walmart the numbers totaled about 12,000 vehicles going through these neighborhoods and post Walmart with the Gold Street relocation it is about 10,000 vehicles. The installation of the existing gates has reduced traffic based on the current counts by roughly 2,000 vehicles. It has increased traffic on some streets and obviously decreased traffic on other streets.

Alderman Barry stated I agree with you. I don't think there is one good answer or one good solution to this. The comparison I used was we have a dam and we have four holes in that dam and we are trying to plug one up but we still have three where water is coming through. That is the same thing happening with that neighborhood. If we don't plug all of them up, the water is going to find a way out and that neighborhood is going to be complaining next. The other concern I have is the businesses around there and how that is going to affect them. I am not sure what I want to do. I know that Alderman Shaw is leaning towards making it a one-way. I don't know what the impact is going to be. We were hoping to get some insight from you on what the impact may be if we do make it a one-way. One thing that I keep in mind and I am sure we will all keep in mind is if that doesn't work we can change it. The same thing with a gate. If that doesn't work we can come back to the drawing board. It is unfortunate because these people have been living through hell with all the traffic that they see on a daily basis, especially the trucks. Why these trucks are going through that neighborhood all of the sudden I don't know. I am assuming that it wasn't that busy with trucks but for some reason now it is. That is one thing I don't understand. I can understand people going to Walmart using it as a cut through but why trucks are going through there I don't know. You would hope that businesses that these trucks are going to and from would be telling them not to use that road and to go to South Willow Street. That is what South Willow Street was structured for.

Alderman Pappas asked what would be the advantages or disadvantages from your department standpoint on opening all of the gates?

Mr. Sheppard answered if you take a look at the numbers that were supplied, that would be Alternative #3 and what you would probably see is a lot of the traffic volumes going back to what they were before the gates were installed. I am just

looking at the numbers right now. On President Road you would probably see an increase in traffic. On Connecting Road you may see an increase in traffic. Bradley would be roughly the same as well as Gold Street and Sewall. It distributes traffic obviously over many streets versus just a few streets.

Chairman Long asked so if we have no gates you are seeing an increase on President Road but not as much on Gold and Sewall?

Ms. Clarke replied if you open all the gates traffic would primarily go back to Gold Street because that is the straight through route. The thought was that Walmart would have generated some additional traffic so the volume on all the streets in the area would go up a little from the pre-Walmart conditions because of the new development. That was our estimate. We thought that President Road would go up a little from that additional growth and it is just that people have started conditioning themselves to go that way and some people may keep going that way. It would probably go up a little above what it was before Walmart. The majority of the traffic though would go back to Gold Street.

Alderman Pappas asked going to a one-way on President Road, do you foresee any issues with accidents because of the traffic change?

Ms. Clarke answered I think we would make sure that we had adequate signage and do whatever we could to make it clear that it was a one-way.

Alderman Pappas asked what about the option of opening up all the gates through the winter months? That would make it a little easier for plows and we could also get a rough count during the holiday season instead of putting a gate there that would cost us substantially more than what it cost us to move the gate on Gold Street? Is that an option?

Ms. Clarke responded I think it is an option. I know that Alderman Shaw mentioned when she went out a letter to all the residents that the biggest response she got back was from the residents who fought so hard to get the gate on Gold Street to please not open it back up. You have to decide which way we want to go but that is the biggest concern.

Alderman Shaw stated I am just going to comment on a few things. The most important reason why...it isn't to be unfair to Gold but Gold is the narrowest of all the streets. It is barely wide enough for two pick-up trucks to go side-by-side and they do hit mirrors if they are not careful. That is one of the main reasons to keep Gold Street gated. If we open all the gates, Gold Street gets the brunt of the traffic. It is up to 6,000 cars if we open all the gates. President Road would still get 2,500. President is the main issue because they are the ones that are being invaded. A lot of it is the truck traffic. I cannot for the life of me Alderman Barry understand why they cannot curb that. I really think that the businesses have an obligation to the people. If they want pick-up trucks or private cars coming to their businesses that is one thing but it is a "No Trucks" road and the trucks should not be on those roads. If they are using GPS, 90% of the time they call for directions anyway. I have seen them stop and call if they are going somewhere and they can be told to use Exit 1. I am trying to get a few extra signs on the ramps that say "Use Exit 1". They don't seem to notice the one over their head. They don't seem to notice the one at the bottom of the hill or the one on each street or any other place. Maybe if we put it in the middle of the road they might see it. I really am tired of the truck traffic. There is no excuse for it on a residential street. I have already expressed that quite clearly to the owners of the businesses. My desire to do this as a one-way was because to me it is...I know that there isn't going to be a way to close the street before November or December. It would probably be in the spring by the time it goes out to bid. To

me, it is a compromise and it is doable for the school buses to go through. They can still do their route through there. I have already talked to the bus company and they can handle that. It takes safety into consideration. I don't think there is one person on President Road that would want jersey barriers because that is creating a safety hazard. Not only for the people who live on that road but for people or businesses beyond that. If there is a major fire or anything and you have jersey barriers, there is nowhere to go. I don't think it is a wise thing to do. I don't even know if it can be done. My plan is a compromise because I care. I don't want to open all the roads because it is not going to help President Road. It is just going to add another headache to Gold Street again. President Road might get 1,000 fewer cars or something but it isn't going to stop the trucks or anything. That is why I proposed my plan. I know that people are sick of hearing about it. I know the aldermen have gotten my emails and they are sick of hearing from me but I stand by it and I think it is the best alternative for now so that they get some relief and we can zero in on the businesses to keep the trucks off the road.

Chairman Long called Lt. Gallant forward. I know you have been doing some enforcement in that area. With respect to the truck traffic, have your citations been westbound or eastbound? Do you recall?

Jamie Gallant, Police Lieutenant, answered the majority of them are westbound.

Chairman Long stated Alderman Shaw's plan calls for President Road to be one-way westbound and you are saying that a majority of the citations were trucks going westbound.

Lt. Gallant replied the majority of the violations were the failure to stop at the stop sign. The commercial motor vehicles that we stopped, most of them were westbound.

Chairman Long asked so Alderman Shaw's plan would allow them to go westbound?

Lt. Gallant answered if the commercial motor vehicles are coming from the businesses, yes they would be going west.

Alderman O'Neil stated I have spent time down on President Road and Brown Avenue and I very much sympathize with the people who live on President Road. I live on a cut through street by the VA hospital. What we see on our street and these are from counts last year is what we saw in five days is what the people on President Road see in one day. The difference for me is on the road I live on speed is absolutely out of control. I cannot be out with my four year old son on his bike on West Haven Road because of speed. This is where I sympathize with them and I know speed is not the issue. This is from a snapshot last year for a five day period on my street. This is not actually officers issuing tickets but they put out a speed counter. This is Fairfield southbound at Bleven. This is coming up the hill to my house. There were 49 cars were doing 41-50 mph, 2 cars were doing 51-60, and 1 was doing 61-70. One according to the counter was doing 91-100. Now that could be a technical error but the rest of it paints a picture. This is within a block of me going northbound. There were 20 doing 41-50 mph, 4 doing 51-60 and 2 doing 61-70. Now I would love to have the police on my street every day like they are on President Road. That doesn't happen. Lt. did you have a chance to look up what Officer Harrington issued a citation for last year?

Lt. Gallant replied it was for speed and I believe it was 60 mph.

Alderman O'Neil stated 60 mph on the street I live on. This was at a bus stop where a Manchester police officer issued a ticket. There were kids out there at a bus stop. I sympathize with the people on President Road. It is two different stories. Theirs is volume and mine is speed. I appreciate what they are going through. All we can do is rely on the police being up there often as they can. I can tell you that because of President Road, I haven't seen a police officer. They are tied up on President Road all the time. I received a picture where they have state troopers working with them to try to enforce things on President Road. It is eating up resources that are needed in other parts of the City. To their credit the people on both sides of this issue have been very courteous and professional in their outreach to the aldermen but I got an e-mail from somebody whose mother lives on Sewall and has been there for 60 years. They no longer live there but they believe the only way we are going to get control of this is to gate every street and get people off of these streets and using the highway to get to South Willow Street. I have to be honest, I don't disagree with him. I respect the people that work there...Jack your brother Kevin when this whole thing started four or five years ago...Kevin and Dan Quirk were stand up guys and I remember there were discussions about a gate. We are trying to figure out a way to make this work for everyone but most importantly for me it has to be about the residents that live on President Road. For the people who work at some of those businesses, you still have a way to get to your job. These people have no option. They can't sell their homes. Anybody who is going to try to buy a home on President Road is going to Google it and see all of this that has been going on. Those of you who work in that area, you still have a way to get to work. One gentleman who I have been emailing back and forth with when I asked him where he lived he lived on Lindstrom Lane or Lindstrom Court off of Wellington Road and worked at Prestige Auto. He is on a dead-end street. He doesn't have to worry about all of this cut through traffic. He is on a dead-end street where he lives. I understand it

is convenient for people to get off at Exit 2. We are a world of convenience but we need to come up with something that addresses the people who live 24/7 on President Road. I hope people respect that. I will say that I was disappointed that Prestige Auto Body decided to try to take me on and two different people from President Road saw their truck out there putting up signs about calling me. That is a very classy business I must say in support of their neighbors. I don't think Kevin McDevitt or Dan Quirk would ever do that. We have to come up with something for the quality of life for those people who live on President Road. That is why I opening said I support the gate. Months ago I asked the question about resolving this because I knew the winter season was going to come upon us and we were going to be told it can't get done until spring time. Well, it is the middle of October and now we are being told even if we voted on it it can't get done until spring. I am very disappointed in that. We should have cut this off before Walmart opened. We didn't. We put faith in the Planning Board. They didn't do their job. They concentrated on traffic on South Willow Street and not enough on South Beech Street and President Road and Gold Street and Sewall and all the other streets that go through there. Mr. St. Hilaire was in last week talking about Connecting Road, Kenberma Street, Thomas and Frontage Road. First if you can ever get through that intersection you are lucky. I think it is highly unlikely and this is my opinion and I can't base it on any data but people are less likely to do that and will hopefully stay on the highway. I commit to Mr. St. Hilaire and any of the people on those roads like Connecting, Kenberma and St. Thomas that if this gets out of control I will do everything to make sure your streets are protected as well. That has to come first. The business community, and it seems that Ryder is the biggest culprit in this...it is almost like now they are telling us "go to hell" and "we don't care." I know some folks who live on President Road and in all the years I have never heard a complaint from them. Now almost every day it is about Ryder trucks. So Jack McDevitt I don't know if there is anything you can do about Ryder. I think maybe there was one example

from someone from your business. I know that you and your family have tried to be good neighbors to the residents on President Road. They need some help with some of these businesses. They need some help. You need to be respectful that people live on this street and if you can take an alternative, please take it.

Alderman Barry stated I would like to have our City Solicitor address the letter that we received today from the law firm that represents Hannaford. In the letter it cites RSA's and City codes and so on and I just want to make sure that we are on the right track and that we don't run into any legal issues as we are doing this.

Chairman Long stated I don't know if we want him to weigh in specifically on the letter but the question to ask is if we change President Road to a one-way is that under our purview with regard to the state statute?

Thomas Arnold, Deputy City Solicitor, replied gating or one-way is a traffic regulation that is under the purview of the Traffic Committee and ultimately the Board of Mayor and Aldermen who can only act on a recommendation of the committee.

Alderman Barry stated obviously we have in front of us to change President Road to a one-way, keep it the same or gate it. My recommendation is that we have three votes and see what we want to do. Keep in mind that this is not going to end here. It will go before the full board. I think this is something we should consider before we vote to make sure that the full board has the ability to weigh in on this.

Alderman Pappas asked Mr. Arnold if this went to the full board and didn't pass could another motion be made from the full board or does it have to go back to the Traffic Committee?

Mr. Arnold answered as I said, the full board can only act on a recommendation from the Traffic Committee.

Alderman Pappas asked so we can't make a motion?

Mr. Arnold responded they could approve it or not approve it but for further consideration under most circumstances it would have to go back to the Traffic Committee for consideration and additional recommendations.

Chairman Long stated so by statute this committee has the authority to make recommendations. When it goes to the full board, the full board can't overturn that recommendation. They can send it back to the committee if they aren't happy with the recommendation. So if any of the alternatives do not pass here, they don't go to the full board. By statute this committee has to make the recommendation to the full board. We can't send something to the full board without a recommendation. It needs to be a recommendation from this committee. Another committee started this in 2009 when they changed the zoning. To me there is no fix for anybody. It was soon found out that this wasn't going to be a pretty picture. We are charged with looking at a way to make everybody happy and that is not going to happen. I clearly lean towards the residents in scenarios like this, however, I do have consideration for the businesses. I agree with Alderman O'Neil that alternative routes are there for somebody needing to get to work. In the world of construction I worked in some strange places where my route of travel changed on a weekly basis. I don't think there is a fix however gating would send the problem somewhere else. I am convinced of that and then we would be back here addressing that neighborhood also. My concern is that it is never going to stop. There was a decision made in 2009 that brought us to 2016 and we are still looking to fix that. I don't think we are ever going to find a fix. I would entertain a motion.

Alderman Shaw stated maybe the citations were issued to trucks going westbound but every email that was sent to me in the last two years regarding this issue, and I can guarantee you that the biggest trucks that are coming westbound are coming off the highway and they are the rogues or the ones that come occasionally. They can't be there all the time. They don't see all of those. The ones that are leaving Ryder we could crack down on. We could find a way to meet with them and do something about that to stop that. The other thing is that the alternative I proposed is I feel fairer and faster. As far as Connecting Road, we can actually see by just having it be one-way what the impact will be on that road. That is the last of the Mohegans over there. I don't think personally that because of the access to go up Connecting Road that it is really going to have as much of an impact as we think. We have to train people to use the highway. We could start by making it a one-way and making it an easier transition. That is my position on this and I just had to reiterate it one more time.

Alderman Barry moved to send all three plans to the full board.

Chairman Long stated well we have four. So you are looking at alternatives 1, 2 and 3?

Alderman Barry replied yes.

Alderman Gamache duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Barry stated this just goes back to what I was saying. It is all about being fair and I am a stickler for safety. I understand that a lot went into this prior to me becoming an alderman. I don't know how I would have addressed this issue. Obviously people couldn't foresee the future and see what a headache this

was going to cause but my feeling is if you are going to gate one, unfortunately you have to gate them all. If don't gate one then you don't gate any of them. I am not picking on Gold Street or Bradley Street or President Road or Sewall. It is just all about being fair. Again, like the analogy I used about the dam if you want to stop the water you have to plug all the holes.

Alderman Pappas asked if we are talking about fair why not move all four proposals to the full board instead of only three?

Chairman Long stated I need to check with the Solicitor. Essentially what we are saying is that we are recommending alternatives 1, 2 and 3. Can we do that?

Mr. Arnold replied I am not sure what you mean by 1, 2 and 3.

Chairman Long responded we are recommending Alderman Shaw's proposal, the gating of President Road or opening all gates. We are recommending that all three of those alternatives are okay with the Traffic Committee.

Mr. Arnold stated the committee has to make a recommendation to the board because as I said the board can only act on recommendations. I don't think it envisions that the committee makes conflicting recommendations and leaves it up to the board. I look at these alternatives and Alternative #1 is a one-way on President Road. Alternative #2 is to gate President Road and Alternative #3 is to open all gates.

Chairman Long asked so you are saying we can't send three recommendations that Conflict with each other?

Mr. Arnold answered correct. The full board couldn't implement all three.

Chairman Long replied they could implement all three right?

Mr. Arnold stated they could make President Road a one-way and gate it but opening all gates is inconsistent with gating President Road.

Chairman Long asked so what are you telling me? You don't recommend we send this motion to the full board?

Mr. Arnold answered not all three alternatives.

Chairman Long stated so we have to pick one of these alternatives?

Mr. Arnold replied well one or two depending on what you do. For instance, you could have President one-way and open all gates. I believe that having President Road one-way and then gating President Road...

Chairman Long interjected so we can't have one that conflicts with the other. Is there another motion?

Alderman O'Neil moved to gate President Road. Alderman Gamache duly seconded the motion. Chairman Long called for a vote. The motion failed with Aldermen Barry and Long duly recorded in opposition.

Alderman Barry moved to open all gates. There was no second.

Alderman Barry moved to make President Road a one-way going westbound. Alderman Gamache duly seconded the motion. Chairman Long called for a vote. The motion carried with Alderman O'Neil being duly recorded in opposition.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman O'Neil**, duly seconded by **Alderman Barry**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Clerk of Committee