

CITY OF WORCESTER
JOURNAL OF THE CITY COUNCIL
Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Esther Howland (South) Chamber
Convened: 6:33 P.M.
Adjourned: 7:29 P.M.

MAYOR

Joseph M. Petty

AT-LARGE COUNCILORS

Morris A. Bergman
Donna M. Colorio
Khrystian E. King
Thu Nguyen
Kathleen M. Toomey



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DISTRICT COUNCILORS

Jenny Pacillo - District 1
Candy Mero-Carlson - District 2
George J. Russell - District 3
Luis A. Ojeda - District 4
Etel Haxhijaj - District 5

CITY CLERK

Nikolin Vangjeli

CITY MANAGER

Eric D. Batista

CITY AUDITOR

Robert V. Stearns

City Hall - 455 Main Street Worcester, Massachusetts

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. STAR SPANGLED BANNER

3. ROLL CALL - All present with the Mayor as the Chair. Councilor Nguyen and Councilor Toomey participated in the meeting remotely.

4. PROCLAMATIONS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, MOMENTS OF SILENCE

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- 5a.** Order - That the City Council of the City of Worcester hereby approves the minutes of the City Council Meeting of December 19, 2023.

Mayor Petty read the item and moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 6a.** Mayor Petty read the item and recognized the following speakers:

1. David Webb, Worcester resident, spoke in favor of items #9c CC and #9g CC
2. Abby Ritter, Worcester resident, spoke in favor of item #9g CC

7. HEARING AND ORDER

- 7a. Hearing: NATIONAL GRID and VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC. for a jointly-owned pole location on: KENDRICK AVE.

Granting permission to NATIONAL GRID and VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC. for a jointly-owned pole location on: KENDRICK AVE.

Mayor Petty read the item and moved for a roll call vote to open the hearing. Mayor Petty's motion was approved on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty asked if any abutters wished to be heard on the item. Hearing no speakers, Mayor Petty moved to close the hearing. Mayor Petty's motion was approved on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Hearing held and Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

8. PETITIONS

- 8a. Katherine Sakaloglou request installation of a streetlight on Santuit Ln.

Mayor Petty read the item and moved for a roll call vote to refer items #8a CC through #8h CC to Traffic and Parking Committee. Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty moved to reconsider the item. Reconsideration approved on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to refer items #8a CC through #8h CC to Public Works Committee. Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 8b. Shaun Michael Manson request street resurfacing at the intersection of Pasadena Pkwy and Wayside Rd.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8c. Shaun Michael Manson request White Ave. be resurfaced.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8d. Shaun Michael Manson request Erie Ave. be resurfaced.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8e. Justin Anthony Giuliano request Dolan St. be resurfaced.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8f. Justin Anthony Giuliano request Randall St. be resurfaced.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8g. Justin Anthony Giuliano request Burncoat St. be resurfaced.

Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)

- 8h.** Fernando Cardoso request extension of sewer connection from Southwest Cutoff to 25 Eskow Rd.
Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8a CC)
- 8i.** John Yanczewski request traffic review on Dorchester St. from top of Dorchester St. to the intersection of Dorchester St. and Vernon St.
Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to refer items #8i CC through #8p CC to Public Works Committee. Referred to Public Works Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to reconsider the item. Reconsideration approved on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to refer items #8i CC through #8p CC to Traffic and Parking Committee. Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays
- 8j.** John Yanczewski request the Residential Parking Program be reviewed and a discussion be held to discuss the findings.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8k.** John Yanczewski request traffic review on Richland St.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8l.** Fernando Alvarez request installation of handicap parking space in front of 5 Perkins St.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8m.** Justin Rose request installation of handicap parking space in front of 147 Pilgrim Ave.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8n.** Mary Cronin request removal of handicap parking space in front of 7 Ruth St.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8o.** Councilor George J. Russell on behalf of Judy Verdolino request review of the intersection of Hamilton St. and Lake Ave. at the Lake Park entrance to determine options that are available for controlling traffic at the intersection.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)
- 8p.** Arnaldo Negron Rios request installation of handicap parking space in front of 132 Endicott St.
Referred to Traffic and Parking Committee on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #8i CC)

9. ORDERS

- 9a. Request City Manager provide City Council with a detailed financial report relative to the work that has been done and the work that is to be done at the Ernest H. Johnson Tunnel that includes the funding source for said project. (Russell)

Mayor Petty read the item and moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9b. Request City Manager request Chief Financial Officer provide City Council with a report concerning any process that exists for paying the Community Preservation Act (CPA) surcharge online, as well as the feasibility of combining the CPA surcharge with the city's real estate tax bills to ensure proper payment of both fees. Further, request City Manager request Chief Financial Officer include in said report information concerning the application process for exemptions relative to the CPA surcharge. (Pacillo)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor Pacillo, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Manager, who responded to questions raised by Councilor Pacillo.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9c. Request City Manager provide City Council with a staffing analysis of the Department of Sustainability and Resilience to determine whether there is a need for increased staffing and funding within the department to meet the Green Worcester Plan's benchmarks in the fight against climate change. (King)

Mayor Petty read the item and moved to take the item up collectively with item #9h CC.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Manager, who responded to questions raised by Councilor King.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9d. Request City Manager provide City Council with a detailed report as to accounting of the lease that is ending for the restaurant located at the Major Taylor Garage. Said report should include, but not be limited to, information relative to the feasibility of conducting future marketing for a lease on the premises, as well as an accounting of rents collected and due. Said report should also include an accounting of all personal property purchased by the City and provided to current tenant as part of the rental. (Russell)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor Russell, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9e. Request City Manager use the funds that would otherwise have been appropriated to District 4 City Councilor Luis A. Ojeda's annual salary for the purpose of beginning the process of establishing a Community Ambassador Program in each of the city's five (5) districts. Further, request City Manager consider allocating additional funds in the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget to begin such a program. Said Community Ambassador program would allow for additional services for district residents, including but not limited to trash pickup, community outreach with the districts' homeless population as well as implementing de-escalation and communication strategies within each city area. (Ojeda, Mero-Carlson, Russell, Bergman, Pacillo)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor Ojeda and Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Manager, who responded to questions raised by Councilor King.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor Mero-Carlson, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor Bergman, who moved to amend the item to include Councilor Ojeda's salary in Fiscal Years 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Mayor Petty moved to add the entire City Council as sponsors of the item.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item as amended. Order adopted as amended on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9f. Request City Manager provide City Council with a report concerning how many cars were towed in the city during 2023, organized by City Council district. Said report should also include any towing that occurred during the recent snowstorm in January of 2024. (Ojeda)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor Ojeda, who spoke concerning the item.

May Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9g.** Request City Manager work with the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to encourage and ensure each respective homeless shelter in the city establishes and/or adheres to a Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy. Further, request City Manager provide City Council with draft language for a city ordinance to ensure such a policy is consistently realized and applied in the city. (King, Haxhiaj)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Manager, who responded to questions raised by Councilor King.

Councilor King then moved to amend the item: “Further, request City Manager reach out to the State Delegation to determine any legislation that could be filed to ensure young folks have their own space in homeless shelters. Further, request City Manager provide in said report to what degree the city can ensure each respective homeless shelter in the city’s Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy is followed.”

Councilor King then moved to, “Request City Manager provide City Council with a report every six (6) months) relative to data collection associated with any Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy.” (See Item #13a CC).

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item as amended. Order adopted as amended on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays

- 9h.** Request City Manager establish and/or expand upon the city’s number of professional grant writers, whom would be housed in the Budget Office. Further, request City Manager evaluate the status and/or efficacy of the city’s current grant writing procedures and processes. (King)

Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #9c CC)

10. TABLED UNDER PRIVILEGE

- 10a. COMMUNICATION of the City Manager transmitting informational communication relative to the Worcester Knitty Council. (Tabled Under Privilege - Colorio January 9, 2024)

Mayor Petty read the item and recognized Councilor Colorio, who moved to Table the Item Under Privilege for a second time.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor King, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Clerk, who responded to questions raised by Councilor King.

Councilor King then moved to place the item on file.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor Russell and Councilor Bergman, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor King for a second time, who spoke concerning the item.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote on Councilor Colorio's motion to Table the Item Under Privilege for a second time. Tabled Under Privilege on a roll call vote of 6 Yeas and 5 Nays (Yeas – Bergman, Colorio, Mero-Carlson, Ojeda, Toomey, Petty) (Haxhiaj, King, Nguyen, Pacillo, Russell)

Tabled Under Privilege – Colorio

11. TABLED ITEMS

- 11a. ORDER of Councilor Konstantina B. Lukes - Request City Manager request City Solicitor provide City Council with a legal opinion regarding the process of instituting a residential rent control program and the resulting impact of implementing such a program. (Tabled Under Privilege - Lukes September 17, 2019 and September 24, 2019 and Tabled - Lukes October 15, 2019)

No action taken

- 11b. RESOLUTION of Councilor Khrystian E. King - That the City Council of the City of Worcester does hereby support Representative Rebecca Rauch and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz's SD 699 HD 1283, An Act effectuating equity in COVID-19 Vaccination Bill. (Tabled Under Privilege - Bergman February 9, 2021 and Tabled - Bergman February 23, 2021)

No action taken

11c. ORDER of Councilor Sarai Rivera - Request City Manager consider prioritizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for REC Worcester's capital project involving the development of the new REC Worcester headquarters and Center for Food Justice and Urban Agriculture (for Worcester and Central Massachusetts), in an effort to support community food security, as well as youth development and employment. (Tabled Under Privilege - Mero-Carlson October 26, 2021 and Tabled Under Privilege - Petty November 9, 2021 and Tabled - Rivera November 16, 2021)

No action taken

11d. CHAIRMAN'S ORDER FROM THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION - Request City Council work to ensure City Council and School Committee districts are parallel, so as to ensure public clarity. (Tabled Under Privilege - Mero-Carlson May 24, 2022 and June 7, 2022 and Tabled - Petty June 14, 2022)

No action taken

11e. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORTATION Upon the Order of Councilor Morris A. Bergman and Councilor Candy Mero-Carlson - Request Standing Committee on Public Service and Transportation Committee hold a public discussion with the WRTA Administrator relative to the removal of a bus route that passes the EcoTarium, 222 Harrington Way: recommend Communication be placed on file. (Tabled Under Privilege - Bergman January 17, 2023 and Tabled Under Privilege - Mero-Carlson January 24, 2023 and Tabled - Mero-Carlson January 31, 2023)

No action taken

11f. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORTATION Upon the Order of Councilor Sarai Rivera and Councilor Khrystian E. King - Request Standing Committee on Public Service and Transportation meet with the WRTA Administrator to provide City Council with a report concerning the WRTA's winter weather plan, especially including information as to how snow will be removed at each of the bus stops: recommend Order be placed on file. (Tabled Under Privilege - Bergman January 17, 2023 and Tabled Under Privilege - Mero-Carlson January 24, 2023 and Tabled - Mero-Carlson January 31, 2023)

No action taken

11g. ORDER of Councilor Etel Haxhijaj and Councilor Thu Nguyen - Request City Manager work with appropriate departments and stakeholders to establish an Office of Housing Stability in an effort to prevent the involuntary displacement of city residents who are in the process of being evicted or at the risk of losing their housing, as well as to enact policies to combat displacement, homelessness and enhance tenants' rights. (Tabled Under Privilege - Haxhijaj July 18, 2023 and Tabled - Haxhijaj August 22, 2023)

No action taken

- 11h.** Hearing: NATIONAL GRID and VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC. for a jointly-owned pole location on: APRICOT ST.

Granting permission to NATIONAL GRID and VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC. for a jointly-owned pole location on: APRICOT ST. (Tabled Under Privilege - Haxhiaj October 17, 2023 and October 24, 2023 and Tabled - Petty November 14, 2023)

No action taken

12. BUSINESS UNDER SUSPENSION OF RULES - Items brought forth under suspension at the January 9, 2024 City Council meeting.

- 12a.** ORDER of Councilor Donna M. Colorio – Request City Manager provide City Council with a report concerning the goals and directives of the Worcester Knitty Council, as well as the group’s affiliation with the city. – Item #28a CC Order adopted
- 12b.** ORDER of Councilor Donna M. Colorio – Request City Manager review ways the city can support the local business community with their real estate tax bills. – Item #28b CC Order adopted
- 12c.** ORDER of Councilor Khrystian E. King – Request City Manager request City Solicitor provide City Council with a report detailing protections provided to individuals by Massachusetts General Laws when a person reveals information about activity within a private or public organization that is deemed illegal, immoral, illicit, unsafe or fraudulent (i.e. whistleblowing). – Item #28c CC Order adopted
- 12d.** ORDER of Councilor Khrystian E. King – Request City Manager work to identifying any grants available to the city relative to synchronizing traffic control signals in the city. – Item #28d CC Order adopted
- 12e.** ORDER of Councilor Kathleen M. Toomey – Request City Manager provide City Council with a report concerning any contingency plan the city should implement for its budget should there be cutbacks due to reduced state revenue. – Item #28e CC Order adopted
- 12f.** ORDER of Councilor George J. Russell – Request Standing Committee on Public Works host a discussion with the Commissioner of Public Works and Parks, as well as other appropriate department heads associated with Worcester 311 to review the city’s current snow operations. Said discussion should include what, if anything, needs to be done to improve said operations. – Item #28f CC Referred to Public Works Committee
- 12g.** ORDER of Councilor Khrystian E. King – Request City Manager provide City Council with a report concerning the snow operations that occurred at Nelson Place School, as well as any impacts the snow had on travel in and out of the school. – Item #28g CC Order adopted

13. NEW BUSINESS UNDER SUSPENSION OF RULES - Items brought forth under suspension at the January 16, 2024 City Council meeting.

13a. Motion King @ #9g CC – Request City Manager provide City Council with a report every six (6) months) relative to data collection associated with any Gender Identity Non-Discrimination Policy.

Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays (See Item #9g CC)

13b. Motion Bergman – Suspension of Rules – Request City Manager request Commissioner of Public Works and Parks redouble the efforts for sanding and salting during snowstorms.

Mayor Petty recognized Councilor Bergman, who introduced the item.

Mayor Petty recognized the City Manager, who responded to questions raised by Councilor Bergman.

Mayor Petty moved for a roll call vote to adopt the item. Order adopted on a roll call vote of 11 Yeas and 0 Nays