

Committee on Infrastructure and Public Lands
Meeting as a Committee of the Whole
Woburn City Hall
Committee Room – 6:00 p.m.
August 28, 2017

Voting Members: Chairperson Richard Gately, Alderman Mark Gaffney, Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Joanne Campbell, Alderman Edward Tedesco, President Richard Haggerty, Alderman Michael Anderson, Alderman Lindsay Higgins, Alderman Michael Concannon

Also attending: Mayor Scott Galvin, City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin engineer Tracie Lenhardt

On the Order of Land Taking associated with the Montvale Avenue widening project: Motion made and seconded to accept a revised copy of the order of taking as authored by City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette; all in favor, 9-0. Tracie Lenhardt, of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, the project engineer, said the changes in the plans acknowledge the need for an easement off Orange Street, at the Goodyear Elementary School. In response to a question from Alderman Gately, Ms. Lenhardt said the portion of Montvale Avenue east of the bridge spanning the Aberjona River is not being included in the project. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said the Order of Taking has to be approved by the council at its Sept. 5 meeting in order to comply with the steps laid out by MassDOT, because federal highways funds are being expended. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said the Order of Taking must be submitted by Sept. 9. Ms. Lenhardt said MassDOT is still accepting comments and changes. Ms. Lenhardt noted the federal fiscal year ends on Oct. 1, and if the funds for the project are not secured by then, they will probably be lost. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said she would appreciate it if the council voted for the funding for the land takings before it votes on the order for the takings. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said any property owner whose land is taken by eminent domain will have three years to challenge the valuation, but noted she is confident in the city's appraisals. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said Valvoline did not give the city the easement as stipulated in a special permit issued in 2002, and negotiations are still on-going with an attorney from Wendy's. Alderman Anderson said the city does not like to take property by eminent domain, but the project is great. Ms. Lenhardt said the dimensions of the project, including the width of the roadway, shoulders, and sidewalks, are being dictated by MassDOT, and the lanes will be 11 feet wide, the sidewalks will be 5.5 feet wide, and the shoulders are 4 feet wide. The width of the shoulders is one foot narrower than what MassDOT normally allows, according to Ms. Lenhardt. There is not quite enough room for a full bicycle lane, according to Ms. Lenhardt, who also said Mass DOT is adamant that if the city is using state funding for the project, MassDOT's guidelines must be followed. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said she is not a fan of eminent domain, but she is aware the businesses on Montvale Avenue have been lobbying the city to widen Montvale Avenue for some time now. Alderman Mercer-Bruen asked if the public has been included in the planning phase for the project. Ms. Lenhardt replied there was a public hearing last February, and the planning team has met with anyone who has wanted to meet with it. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said she is concerned

about the smaller businesses in the corridor being able to remain open during construction and that they retain their parking. Ms. Lenhardt said business owners will be compensated for any parking spaces they may lose. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said the planning team is working with property owners to accommodate them. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said she wants to ensure that residents who live in the area get the same consideration as the businesses during the construction phase. In response to a question from Alderman Gately about a water line at the intersection of Montvale Avenue and Washington Street, Ms. Lenhardt said the planners have been in contact with the MWRA. Ms. Lenhardt noted the utility poles along the corridor are being moved to accommodate the widening, and she believes three of the double poles are being replaced. President Haggerty asked why all the double poles in the area can't be replaced. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette acknowledged double poles are an issue across the state, while Ms. Lenhardt said double poles are supposed to be temporary, and that MassDOT is making an effort to eliminate them. President Haggerty said double poles are one of the biggest issues in the city and he doesn't understand why the utility companies don't work harder to get rid of them. Alderman Gately asked if any of the land takings will make any of the affected properties non-conforming. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette replied the land takings should not adversely impact the property owners from a zoning perspective. Ms. Lenhardt replied in the affirmative when Alderman Gately asked if the traffic signal at Montvale Avenue and Central Street will be synchronized with the traffic signal at Montvale Avenue and Washington Street. In response to a question from Alderman Gately about parking, Ms. Lenhardt said she thinks the lot at Champion Cleaners at the intersection of Montvale Avenue and Washington Street will be losing two spots, but he may be able to recoup them elsewhere in the lot. In response to a question from Alderman Gately about utility boxes, Ms. Lenhardt said they will be moved back into the new sidewalks. Alderman Gately asked if the project could include lighting on top of the bridges, as he has seen in other communities, so people know where the bridge is. Alderman Gately said he is all in favor of the project, and wished it would extend across the Aberjona River bridge. President Haggerty asked if the project includes an accommodation for the potential build-out of the Atlantic Gelatin site on Hill Street. Ms. Lenhardt said the traffic study accounts for a 1 percent increase in traffic each year for the next 20 years. Ms. Lenhardt added most of the improvements will occur in the area between Washington Street and the Aberjona River bridge. The improvements west of Washington Street to Central Street mostly involve the widening of lanes, shoulders and sidewalks, Ms. Lenhardt said. All the traffic signals will be new, and coordinated. Alderman Mercer-Bruen asked about construction work taking place at night. Mayor Scott Galvin said the city is not even entertaining the idea of working at night in the residential portion of the project. Ms. Lenhardt said the cost of night work would be higher, and contractor could request night work, but it would have to be approved by the city and MassDOT. Alderman Campbell asked if there will be a prohibition on left turns out of Dunkin' Donuts, which she said is a problem with traffic along Montvale Avenue. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette replied there are on-site signs placed by the developer prohibiting left turns, but there is no enforcement. Ms. Lenhardt said there are no plans in the project to put no left turn signs at Dunkin' Donuts. Alderman Concannon asked if the city has done all it can do to advise the public of the project. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said the city has been communicating with the affected property owners and she has accumulated piles of green cards in her office of registered mailings advising abutters about the project. In response to a question from Alderman Concannon about property

taxes being impacted by the project, City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said anyone with assessment questions should contact the city Assessor's Dept. Alderman Concannon asked if changing the configuration parking lot at Champion Cleaners will create a violation of a special permit. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said that would be a minor modification, since the use is not changing. Alderman Concannon said he hopes there will be some sort of abatement to property taxes for anyone who ends up with property they can no longer use after the project is finished. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said she is concerned the project could be creating a parking problem at the Lentini property. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said the assessor is confident the property owner has been adequately compensated. Motion made by Presidnet Haggerty to send the Order of Land Takings "back for action," seconded by Alderman Tedesco, approved, 9-0. Alderman Campbell asked if a big blue spruce tree at the Goodyear School would be taken down. Ms. Lenhardt said she believes that particular tree will remain, but there are a couple of tress on the other side of Central Street that are coming down.

Motion by Alderman Tedesco to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Anderson and approved, 9-0. Chairman Gately adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees