



Operations Committee - Board of Representatives

Virgil de la Cruz, Chair

Sean Boeger, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday, March 21, 2021
Time: 6:30pm
Place: This meeting was held remotely

The Operations Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair de la Cruz, Vice Chair Boeger, and Committee Members Reps. Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Stella, Tomas, and Watkins. Rep. Baxter was excused. Also present were Reps. Adams, Berns, Campbell, Gilbride, Moore, Morson, and Nabel; Mayor Caroline Simmons; Dana Lee, Law Dept.; Matt Quinones, Director of Operations; Bill Brink, Ann Brown, Rhudean Bull, WPCA; Nesin Merritt, WPCA Board Member; David Winston, Parks & Recreation Commission; Erin McKenna, Planning Dept.; Bridget Fox and Janeene Freeman, Mayor's Office; Paul Zeiss and Moira Sawch, Anti-Blight Dept.; Katie Haas and Melanie Hollas, Pollinator Pathways; Brian Teitelbaum, resident; and four members of the public.

Chair de la Cruz called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
11. O31.010	ORDINANCE for publication; Amending Chapter 146 Article III of the Code of Ordinances, Blighted Properties, to add Section 146-46.1– Managed Natural Meadow Landscape. 03/08/22 – Submitted by Reps. Sherwood, Jacobson, and Nabel	Approved, with scrivener's error correction, 7-0-0

Rep. Sherwood gave background on this amendment. Most residents in Stamford have conventional lawns, however these are poor habitats for animals and plants, and the country is losing pollinators such as birds, bees and other insects. When residents have only grass, pesticides are used to prevent everything else. The alternative to conventional grass lawns is managed natural meadows landscapes. These are beneficial to the environment as they increase water absorption which prevents flooding, and they attract pollinators.

The invited guests spoke on the item, and there was discussion.

- An entire section has been added to the proposed ordinance stating how the Blight Officer will distinguish between someone not mowing their lawn, and someone with a plan for a managed natural meadow landscape.

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:01:40

- One of the objectives of the Pollinator Pathways organization is to ask people to reduce the amount of lawn they have through ornamental garden beds or meadows. They did not want to tell residents to create meadows if residents are going to have blight concerns.
- This ordinance is a compromise between the City and the homeowners.
- Mr. Lee explained this creates a special defense to a blight violation. It gives the property owner the chance to prove an exception for natural managed meadow landscape, and the language carefully defines what that is.
- The idea is to create a landscape that benefits Stamford. The landscape cannot obstruct right-of-ways or sidewalks, and must be certified by a landscape professional, a position that is defined in the ordinance.
- There are organizations that can help if a person wants to do this but it is not financially feasible for them to have it certified. **This should not be something that only a person who can afford it can do.**
- It will not be possible for someone to use this as a way out of a blight violation. There is very specific language written in the ordinance to prevent this situation.

It was noted that there is a scrivener's error in Sec. 146-45 Definitions, Landscape Professional.

A motion to approve Item #1, with the scrivener's correction, was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 7-0-0 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Tomas, and Watkins in favor).

²2. O31.011 ORDINANCE for publication; Amending Chapter **Held 8-0-0**
146 Article III of the Code of Ordinances, Blighted
Properties, to Clarify Notice Requirements.
03/09/22 – Submitted by Rep. Berns

A motion to hold Item # 2 was made, seconded, and approved by a vote of 8-0-0 (Reps. de la Cruz, Boeger, Coleman, Ley, Sherwood, Stella, Tomas, and Watkins in favor).

³3. [O31.004](#) REVIEW; Perna Lane Area Sewer Project: Project **Report Made**
Status; Alternatives to Facilitate Implementation in a
Cost Effective and Timely Manner; Availability of
Infrastructure and Water Quality Improvement
Funding to Facilitate Project and Connections to
Individual Homes; and Feasibility of Project
Financing to Include Connections to Individual
Homes.
02/02/22 – Submitted by Reps. Ley, Morson, and
Nabel
03/03/22 – Held by Committee 5-0-0

Rep. Ley explained the reason for putting this item on the Agenda. This project has been pending for several years. Many constituents have raised concerns with her. The

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project seems to have stalled due to the cost. What can be done to get this project back on track?

Ms. Brown and Mr. Brink reviewed the attached [presentation](#) and there was discussion.

- A need for this project was identified years ago. It went out to bid in August 2018, a bid came back at \$14 million which was much higher than the engineers expected. Other construction companies expressed interest but did not have time for the project because of its difficulty: these roads are off of High Ridge Road, which has high traffic volume and two large water transmissions mains.
- The Engineering Dept. adjusted the plan, met with CT DOT, and arranged a detour route. It went out to bid again, and again only received one bid of \$14 million.
- Twelve alternatives were explored and only three were considered feasible.
- A public information session was conducted and some property owners were in favor and some were not.
- WPCA Board set a 2/3 criteria of property owners in favor for the project to be implemented. Multiple surveys have been sent to all property owners with low response. A petition for signatures has been started.
- Costs would be shared with City/WPCA taking on 60% and property owner 40%. Approximate cost to each property owner would be \$17,000, which would be paid in equal payments over 15 years, like a tax assessment.
- Mr. Teitelbaum, who is leading the petition to get property owner signatures, spoke in favor of this project.
- Commissioner Merritt spoke against this project, stating he does not think it is a viable engineering project.
- The WPCA does not usually go onto private property to install the connection from the house to the sewer line.

44. [O31.008](#) REVIEW; Status of Community Outreach Related to **Report Made**
West Main Street Bridge.
03/09/22 – Submitted by Mayor Simmons

Ms. Freeman and Mr. Quinones reviewed the attached [presentation](#) and there was discussion.

- Key goal of the community outreach is to educate residents about the options being considered and to get their opinions, and emphasize dialogue between the City and the residents.
- Administration wants to be sure to hear directly from people being impacted, and so far 154 people have been engaged who live or work close to the bridge.
- The permits are currently being sought for the prefabricated pedestrian bridge, but the process is not yet complete.
- The intention is to go out into the community, and not have written surveys, as this gets a better sense of how people are feeling.
- Community outreach is geared toward the long term vision for the bridge.

- It should also be important to educate people on the obstacles and challenges to this project.
- Outreach will continue at least through April.
- The motoring public who drive in this area should also be engaged, including people in all areas of the West Side, not just people in the immediate area.
- The synopsis of these conversations will help to inform and instruct the decisions about the bridge.
- Administration presenters indicated that at this time there are no plans for the existing bridge.
- Representative de la Cruz confirmed with Director Quiñones that at this time only a pre-fabricated pedestrian/emergency vehicles bridge is being considered, that no permits for this bridge have yet been secured, and that funding is not yet in place. Director Quiñones concurred, except to indicate that partial funding for the pre-fabricated bridge was available from left over funds in other capital accounts.

⁵⁵. [O31.009](#) REVIEW; 2022 paving initiative.
03/09/2022 – Submitted by Mayor Simmons

Report Made

Mayor Simmons and Mr. Quinones reviewed the attached [presentation](#) and there was discussion.

- Stamford's crumbling infrastructure needs to be fixed and this starts with roads and sidewalks. As the second largest city in Connecticut we need to do a better job of maintaining infrastructure. It is an issue of quality of life and public safety.
- The goal is to increase Stamford's operational capacity to conduct unprecedented road and sidewalk paving by leveraging federal and local funding.
- The poor condition of the roads is one of the big complaints from constituents.

There are three objectives to this project:

- *Objective 1:* The 43 roads left to be paved from the prior administration will be paved, continuing what that priority list had established (Tier 1). An assessment will be done to create a second list of roads to target (Tier 2). It is projected an additional 27-30 roads will be paved. Residents can submit roads for consideration either through Fix It Stamford or directly to Mr. Quinones.
- *Objective 2:* Focusing on City sidewalks near schools. The maintenance team has done an unofficial assessment and repairs will begin on sidewalks near five schools that are in the poorest conditions. It is expected within five years repairs of the sidewalks around all of Stamford's schools will be complete.
- *Objective 3:* Launch of a City-wide roadway assessment.
- *Objective 4:* Research opportunities to integrate unaccepted roads into paving plans in the future.
- Sidewalks on State roads such as High Ridge Road need to be improved. Students and families use these sidewalks to/from school. There are many utility poles in the middle of sidewalks.
- The paving will be outsourced to multiple vendors. Some preparation work can be done by City departments.

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Chair de la Cruz adjourned the meeting at 10:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Virgil de la Cruz, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).