

City of Barre

Public Body Agenda

Transportation and Public Works Committee

Date and time of meeting: 5:00 p.m. Thursday, April 24, 2025

Location of meeting: City Hall Council Chamber

Call to Order

In attendance: Art, Brian, Steve, Mitch, Ken. Called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Adjustments to the Agenda

Steve wants to take up new items first, before the continuing items.

Public Comment

No public present, so no comment.

Approval of Minutes from the March 20, 2025, Meeting

The committee would like to institute a procedure like the one suggested, in which the secretary submits a draft quickly to members and the city's executive assistant that is then posted as a draft, commented on by members, finalized by the secretary, and submitted again for final posting. Brian is checking with the executive assistant, Roxanne Pike, to determine whether this dual posting is possible. It is also possible that minutes will get more substantive with Hill Street activity, so the process might need to be adapted. Also, with Mitch serving for only another meeting or two, the committee will need to select a new secretary, and the process might need to be adapted for that purpose as well. Approval was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

New Agenda Items

Discuss and Decide About a Proposed 4:00 p.m. Committee Meeting Start Time

Ken can start early, but Samn had noted that the earlier start time would be tough for people who have regular office hours.

Steve suggested 4:30.

Mitch noted that the needs might change when her replacement comes in.

Steve prefers 4:30 and requested a motion.

Ken moved, and Art seconded.

All ayes except Mitch, who agreed with Samn that earlier times are harder for people who are not available during regular business hours.

The 4:30 time was approved.

2025 Pavement Marking and Striping Schedule and Program

Steve noted that start dates depend on the weather. He also said that it was frustrating that the city starts late and maybe in the wrong areas. He recommended that the city start as soon as it can with Main Street, Summer Street, the main core.

Brian said that they schedule main intersections for night work and therefore need to wait for warmer nights, so in the meantime, the city gets the low-hanging fruit as it can, adding that smaller streets do not require as much setup as the larger ones do. Also, Donell is planning to try a longer-lasting paint (the city paints the crosswalks on Main Street at least a couple of times a year). (Brian added that the city is hoping for no more flooding this year.) The city is ordering a pallet of the longer-lasting paint and trying it to see how it lasts.

Steve asked whether a pallet covers all that is needed for one pass.

Brian said not for the city but that the city wants to try before it commits. The city is trying the auditorium parking lot with the latex the city has first. He added that the city has two paint machines and could probably keep one crew busy all summer long on striping, but the city cannot dedicate the labor to that.

Steve asked when the weather would break.

Brian said that the city could probably start in two weeks, that it just depends on what the city can get done in the daytime. Nighttime work will not come until mid-May.

Steve asked whether that was a reasonable target date, weather contingent.

Brian said that it was and that the city was trying to get crews out as soon as it can. Summer and Elm and Summer and Maple are usually done at night because legally the city cannot do traffic control through the intersections, so it has to do those when traffic is low.

Steve noted that the striping is gone on Main and that the street needs that lane striping.

Brian reminded the committee that the state does center lines. The city does lane lines by the park.

Steve said that the sooner the city can get to Main, the sooner the public sees activity.

Brian added that money for paving has not been approved.

Steve said that he thought that Seminary between Maple and Brook was terribly deteriorated and needs work this summer.

Members agreed that the city does not want to cold-patch those.

Brian reminded members that the city did Brook, Warren, Merchant, and Pleasant last year. He did put that short segment of Seminary on the list. He acknowledged that the city knows that those side streets—Smith, Foss, Vine—were just junk. Also the high-pressure line along Berlin is a problem; the city is doing the Route 63 crossing of water mains, in design right now, and has bond money to bid that now. The city

is hoping to get a contractor to continue down Berlin so that the city can either pave it or incorporate it into the two-year project of Berlin, Foss, Smith, and Vine. That neighborhood has floated to the top of the list. Pike was the low bidder at \$109/ton, down from last year's bid of \$129/ton. Pike got a 6.5-mile contract from Barre Town, so there might be more incentive to come in a bit lower. The city was very happy with Black Top last year, finding it very responsive, but this year it came in third. J. Hutchins from West Lebanon, New Hampshire, came in lower by a little. Brian noticed last year that Pike would stay open for Hutchins because it was such a big client.

Hill Street Speed-Reduction Strategies

The discussion was deferred to the May 15th meeting, but other calming was discussed.

Steve said that Joanne Reynolds sent packets of info on speed control, improvements, safety stuff, and Steve wants to get a copy for everyone on the committee.

Brian said that he could scan the hard copies if Steve cannot find the electronic copies.

Steve said that whatever is discussed at this level, the committee would forward to Brian, and he would have to decide what is possible. Challenges are finding the right speed-control solutions.

Brian said that he is not a big fan of them, after looking at packets from Michael Hellion, and most give just a minimal reduction in speed. He said that he was not sure that they would produce what people really want. He added that anything put in the travelway affects traffic, plowing, noise of cars speeding and slowing, and trailers hitting speed bumps. Plus, he said, the city has limited resources, so it has to decide what *not* to do to make these changes.

Steve suggested maybe taking money out of the capital construction budget.

Brian indicated that city council and the city manager would have to decide. In any case, he said, there is usually a reduction in just 2–3% of speed, and that does not seem to be enough to make people happy.

Steve said that, if that is the limited benefit achieved, it might be worth trying something in one area (Prospect and Berlin?). Maybe better intersection definition. Brian might not be a fan of bumps, but narrowing problematic streets might work. And if the city actually tries some speed-control measures to see whether they help enough or not, it will at least have local evidence.

Ken said that he thought that the city was going to do temporary bumps. He hears about the stop sign at Warren, and he said that all the neighbors call it "the drag strip." Drivers stop then floor it northbound. He said that putting some bumps on that side would make the neighbors happy—at least something would be being done. Even the people up the hill dislike the noise from the drag strip, he added.

Brian countered that he has had two calls from Merchant residents asking that the city *not* put the bumps back because of noise of slowdown then takeoff.

Ken noted that these are not the only possible solutions (though he said that he wished the city could just close off Merchant). Some would love a bike lane going up Merchant. So what the city eventually gets to will take time, but bumps are a good starting point.

Steve added that, if a bike lane could be done safely, that could contribute to speed control because it narrows the street. But if the city creates that, it affects striping.

Ken noted that they are all over Montpelier and that there are lots of solutions.

Brian pointed out that, if the city does bike lanes, it loses parking.

Ken countered that there are already yellow curbs so not much parking anyway. He said that he sees lots of children up and down that street.

Steve said that the city benefit is that the public sees city trying to do something, even if it's a pilot project. Just showing a willingness to try, within budget constraints, helps. A hard part is finding money to do whatever the pilot is. He said that he would add that to future discussion.

Continuing Agenda Items from Previous Meetings

Strategies to Support Pedestrian Use: Walking, Bicycles, Adaptive Vehicles, Public Transport

Steve noted that it had been 13 years since the city completed the big dig and completed sidewalks and they were still in good shape. It is hard, he added, to maintain the sidewalks the city has, in addition to building new ones. He asked whether there was a list of where people have been asking for new ones.

Brian said that there was not but that he has the street department's list of recommendations. He is plotting them on a map to get some guidance. He said that he wants to make sidewalks a priority. The crew is working on Granite Street right now and finishes next week, then it will clean up the other side. No sidewalk will be going in on that side—they are just cleaning up the edges.

Steve asked whether there would be a fog line on that side.

Brian replied that the city has to hire out for that for straightness.

Art asked whether they are doing sidewalks with reinforced wiring and slip dowels at joints. Brian said that they were, and Art said that those should last.

Steve said that the city has historically done good sidewalk work.

Brian said that he would love to switch to granite curbing, partly just because it is so durable. But the city does not have the skill to install in house and they are expensive. It is not in the budget to switch everything now. With outside contractors, the city can do two to three times what it can without them.

Steve asked Brian to bring the list to the next meeting, and Brian said that he would. Steve said that he would like to try to report into council (like the committee should at least annually) what the committee has been discussing and direction in which it is heading.

Brian said that he is making a point of training some younger and less experienced workers on sidewalks for continuity in the future.

Art noted that his peeve is people striping without reading the standard. He offered that, because he

wrote the standard, if the city wants someone to show the crew how to do it, especially dealing with skewed sidewalks, he would be glad to show them.

Steve asked Art whether he meant skewing panels or making them parallel to road.

Art clarified that he meant making them parallel so the wheel path has no paint. He added that it is all right in the standard, that everything goes from the center line.

Brian said that he would print off the standard and get Art to demonstrate before the crew starts for the year.

Steve added a suggestion that the department take a look at striping plans from the big dig for the striping at the park between the library and the park and at Elm Street because of the staggered stop boxes, and teach them to look at the plans.

Brian said that the crews have just never done it, but they can learn. They have to start somewhere. He said he would dig out plans and the standard and that it might not all get done this year but was something to work toward.

Formal Streets Need Assessment

Steve thought maybe Samn had raised this. How does the city decide which streets get paved and in what order?

Brian said that this is all in house and that the current plan was doing long streets to maximize dollars. Next season, he said, the department would do Nelson (Tremont to Washington) and Woodland. After the 2024 flood, he noted, the department tried to twist the culvert so water did not hit Steinman's house but would go back into the brook.

Steve asked whether the department sees a need to get a consultant for a citywide assessment.

Brian reminded the committee about the app shown earlier this year and that it can collect data, then give an assessment once enough data are in. It can give a pavement condition rating. This program is kind of a limited assessment but ongoing. When there are more data, the department can always move the device to a different truck to collect and set a schedule to review the data and recommendations. The department is probably a couple of years away from those decisions in neighborhoods, he said; it is just collecting data now. It is called City Rover, and the city pays something like \$1,400 per year. That collects a minimal amount of data, then there is another fee for processing and reporting and for additional data collection.

Assessment of Overall Infrastructure

Subject skipped for time.

Department of Public Works Staffing Level and Need Assessment

Subject skipped for time.

Public Works Director Report and Update

Fire Hydrants

The city is working on them. It has replaced five or six this spring. It is down to 38 hydrants being out of service; 36 will be completely replaced and there are nine in inventory. The city is repairing the ones it can (the two out of the 38). Lajeunesse is giving a price to replace a hydrant. The city might farm some out.

Steve asked whether this would be by the end of the summer. Brian said that it was at least a two-year project.

Steve asked whether the city is strategically replacing hydrants. Brian said yes and that TJ was working with the fire department to minimize gaps between hydrant coverage areas. The city is prioritizing what it is paving this year and asking the fire department what it deems most important.

Steve asked whether the work requires going to the main line. Brian replied that normally it is just to the valve unless the valve is problematic. The crews received demonstrations on rebuilding valves so they do not have to shut the line down. Mike McDougal from Northfield, who has lots of experience, came in to train them.

Manholes

The city is assessing but concentrating on streets for paving. It has 11 covers in inventory for installation this spring.

The 302 Transmission Main

With current prices, the city is about \$2 million to \$3 million short. Brian talked with the state office administering that, and they said they can send funds to other projects with approval. He thought that this might be a wastewater treatment plant. So that project is on hold because the city does not have that money.

Steve asked whether the congressionally designated allocation had been withdrawn? Brian said that he did not think that it could be withdrawn because it had already been allocated. But the city applied for a clean-diesel grant and, in December, the office said that everything was on hold. But he has found out money had been allocated, so the city did get the \$65,000 grant for a new Case wheeled excavator (price was \$245,000). The city signed the purchase to avoid the tariff but does not have the equipment here yet. It is hoping to get a mini excavator with the extra money, a 15,000-lb machine. The crews want backhoes for sidewalks and hydrants, so a mini excavator would be great for either project.

Cobble Hill Water Main

Design is complete. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is not going to fund the whole project. The correct fix is to drill under Brook, but FEMA will give the city only \$50,000 for damage plus \$50,000 in mitigation.

Ayers Street

This is on hold until next year or the year after because getting the new garage dampened the water budget.

Garage Purchase

This was approved April 23.

North Main Sewer Lining

This had a defect that the contractor is coming back to fix.

Headworks

This is ongoing in the final design phase.

Sludge Bunker Roof

The contractor is on site and started installation Monday. Probably it will be done next week.

Twenty-Year Evaluation

This is ongoing. The collection system evaluation is ongoing.

Rate Study

This is on hold for numbers and flows from Barre Town.

Paving

Paving Merchants' Row is starting the third week in May, so crews will be there a couple of weeks before that to tear up.

Steve asked what was up behind Wobby's. Brian said that there was a lot of sand and water in the basement from outside in back. A valve was not working, so crews had scheduled to replace it today, but that line split, so they to do it sooner. Brian is meeting with Dawn and Nick to work with merchants to get Merchants' Row Paved.

Pike had the low bid to pave Irwin, Prospect, and Allen. Once that is funded, the department will work with the contractor for availability.

Sidewalks on Granite are underway and to be completed next week. Next will be Berlin from Dagmont to Prospect. The department will repair damage to the stream bank then redo the sidewalk to the intersection. East Street from Academy to North will have a complete sidewalk replacement.

Dagmont Culvert

The department has not gotten the final design yet but should at any time. The grant is \$65,000, which is not enough, but Michelle Redmond at the state informed Brian that he could to adjust up by \$20,000, then bid to replace the culvert. Dufresne Group is doing the design.

Department of Public Works Garage

The topographic survey was received this week; Dewolf will do the exterior renovation. Banwell will be on interior and permitting. They think it will be six to seven months to get design and permitting done, so the department will probably not be in before next summer.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Projects

The North Main stormwater piece at Dubois and King is mostly finished. The Public Safety parking-lot request for proposals (RFP) is written. The city is mitigating with drainage by the access road to the trash

rack. It is going to install an emergency entrance and egress from the back road to North Barre School. Steve Ribolini owns the school and is giving access to put the gate in the back parking lot. It was not designed for ladder trucks but for everyone else to get supplies in another flooding situation. FEMA denied the city money for an access road so the city would locally fund that part.

Streambank Stabilizations

The city is getting an RFP for a consultant for Elmwood and Delmont and for Elmwood Cemetery.

Gutter Brook Reclamation

The city has permission to travel up that river with machinery and remove debris that has piled up in the stream there. It just got preliminary design concepts for Willie Street Bridge renovation and doing the floodplain where Ayers Auto Body is. The city will make a shelf so debris gets caught up there. Berlin Street bridge-removal concept is started. The city is redoing some of the trash rack at Brook Street: SLR is the engineer, and it would remove the center pylons and instead stagger them to collect debris and push water to the side so water always has a path to flow. Currently it dams and has to flow all the way down Maple before it can get back to the brook.

Round Table

Art asked about the guardrail on 302 west. Brian said that he had not contacted the state yet.

Art added that the signal on the hill at Washington going east turning left was not working properly.

Set Next Meeting Date, Time, and Location

City Council Chamber; 4:30 p.m. Thursday, May 15, 2025.

Art moved to adjourn. Ken seconded. Passed unanimously.