

**SPECIAL GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL MEETING****Tuesday, July 18, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.****REMOTE MEETING****-Minutes-**

**Councilors Present: Council President, Councilor Val Gilman; Council Vice President, Councilor Sean Nolan; Councilor Tony Gross; Councilor Jason Grow; Councilor Frank Margiotta (joined the meeting at 6:23 p.m.); Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor Jamie O’Hara; Councilor Tracy O’Neil; Councilor Jeff Worthley**

**Also Present: City Clerk, Joanne Senos; General Counsel, Suzanne Egan; School Committee Chairperson, Kathy Clancy**

*This meeting was conducted remotely through Zoom*

*All votes were ROLL CALL votes*

**Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.**

**Councilor Gilman** announced: “In the interest of government transparency with regards to deliberations and decisions made by the City Council and according to open meeting law, since this meeting was posted as a Zoom meeting, this meeting is recorded by video and audio and will be conducted by remote participation. Additionally, all votes taken by the City Council during this and future remote meetings will be by roll call vote. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press Star 9 (\*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device, there is a “raised hand” button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.”

“It is the finding of the City of Gloucester that no individual should be denied equal treatment or opportunity because of their age, ancestry, color, disability, including intellectual and developmental mental disability, family status, immigration status, gender identity or expression, military status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.”

**Councilor Gilman** introduced the City Council members and City staff in attendance.

**FOR COUNCIL VOTE**

**1. City Charter 2-11(c)(O’Neil): PH2023-035: Amend GCO Ch. 22 “Traffic and Motor Vehicles,” Sec. 22-265 “Turning movements – Generally” by ADDING “Webster Street, at its intersection with Eastern Avenue traffic shall use the dedicated turning lanes” (cont. from 7/11/23)**

**Councilor Gilman** offered a brief summary of the matter. She stated that the public hearing was duly advertised in the Gloucester Daily Times on June 30, 2023, which satisfied the seven-day posting requirement per the Gloucester Code of Ordinances as defined in the City Charter. At the July 11, 2023, City Council meeting, after the public hearing was officially closed, the Committee Report of July 10, 2023 was made by the Chair of O&A, **Councilor Nolan**. She stated that after a brief discussion **Councilor O’Neil** invoked the City Charter 2-11(c) in regard to Public Hearing 2023-035. As stated by the City Clerk in her July 12, 2023, email, tonight’s special remote meeting is a one-item agenda, the public hearing is closed and no new information will be submitted for this matter; the matter will begin with the Committee Report, followed by councilor discussion and vote.

**Councilor O’Hara called a Point of Order at 6:05 p.m.** He stated that he is of the belief that there are “a number of Open Meeting Law violations” in the form of emails that have taken place since the 2-11(c) was invoked by **Councilor O’Neil**. He stated that new information was provided and that “a councilor noted a

concern.” **Councilor Gilman** suggested that **Councilor O’Hara** file a formal complaint with assistance from the Clerk’s Office.

**Councilor Nolan** offered the Committee Report.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor O’Hara, seconded by Councilor Margiotta, the Ordinances & Administration Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council AMEND Gloucester Code of Ordinances Ch. 22 “Traffic and Motor Vehicles,” Article VI. “Traffic Schedules,” Sec. 22-265 “Turning movements – Generally” by ADDING the following:

*Webster Street*, at its intersection with Eastern Avenue traffic shall use the dedicated turning lanes.

**Summary of Discussion:** **Councilor Nolan** stated that the proposed change is to help alleviate traffic congestion turning off of Webster Street at the Eastern Avenue intersection.

**Councilor O’Neil** stated that she passes the new school multiple times a day and that she is of the belief that a third traffic lane will not help with the congestion. She stated that she has concerns with the site line of the third lane traffic. She stated that she believes it will be safer to keep the one lane exiting/entering Webster Street and added that if the sidewalks are made to be ADA compliant (5-foot wide) then the street will be narrowed significantly.

**Councilor Worthley** stated that he performed a site visit at Webster Street and stated that the intersection of Webster/Eastern Avenue is 46-½-feet wide with no parking on the right side of Webster Street. He stated that he observed the cars who were turning right “hug” the right side of Webster Street and cars that were turning left stayed in the middle. He explained that the centerline of Webster Street is not moving so there is no change in the bus-turning radius.

**Councilor Grow** agreed with **Councilor Worthley’s** width measurement of Webster Street at Eastern Avenue and added that there is more than enough room for four 10-foot wide lanes. He stated that he is of the belief that effectively the intersection currently is handling traffic the same as to what is being proposed with the exception of the painted arrows on the roadway, which will be determined with this vote. He also stated that he recognizes that it is a work in progress and that if the painted arrows do not facilitate traffic the way it is being anticipated then future changes can be made. He stated that he is also of the belief that painting the arrows on the roadway will add to the safety of the intersection and, with an affirmative vote the Council, is codifying what is already in place. He stated he will support this matter.

**Councilor Memhard** stated that he also performed a site visit and agreed with **Councilor Grow** in that it will add clarity to an existing traffic pattern. He also agreed that if it does not work as anticipated then changes can be made if necessary. He stated that this change has been requested of the Council by the School Committee and Administration and that he is comfortable proceeding with the request.

**Councilor O’Hara** stated that he has concerns with buses taking a right-hand turn onto Webster Street, as well as tractor trailers taking right-hand turns onto Webster Street. He also stated that he is unsure as to what the other options are.

**Councilor Gilman** stated that she is supporting this matter. She stated that the superintendent was clear that this is the beginning of a process and that if modifications are needed then the matter will be re-reviewed. She stated that the formal traffic study done of this area specifically refers to these turning lanes (on pages 6 and 39 of the traffic study) and that she was also at the meeting from 2020 when this matter was first presented. She informed the Council that the animated report [which was referred to at the prior City Council meeting concerning this

matter on July 11, 2023] did not show Eastern Avenue. **Councilor Gilman** also informed the Council that at the old Veterans School the buses would need to back up onto Webster Street when leaving the school.

**Councilor O'Neil** stated that she believes that the traffic will flow more naturally without the painted lines. She suggested voting this matter down to see how the flow will be once school is open and if it is then determined that lines would be beneficial to then add them. **Councilor Grow** reiterated that he believes the lines will provide clarity to the flow of traffic. He stated that this area will be monitored by crossing guards, parents, etc. He also stated that he believes tractor trailer truck drivers will adjust their delivery schedules to not happen during school drop-off/pick-up.

**Councilor Worthley** stated that he believes that by not painting the arrows (which will help with congestion) then people might want to try alternative routes in the neighborhood on the smaller/narrower streets. He again stated his support for the matter.

**Councilor O'Hara** stated that the Chair of the Traffic Commission, Robert Ryan, has voiced his opinion and concerns and stated that he has concerns that this matter was not brought before the Traffic Commission.

**Councilor Margiotta** stated that he is in support of the matter and that by adding the arrows it provides clarity and safety, as he has family members that will be attending the new school. **Councilor Memhard** agreed with **Councilor Margiotta** as he, too, will have family members attending the new school. **Councilor Gilman** stated that this matter is a work in progress and that when issues arise they will be addressed. She noted that the issues of the tractor trailer trucks is separate to the matter in front of us.

**MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Nolan, seconded by Councilor O'Hara, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 7 in favor, 2 (O'Hara, O'Neil) opposed, to AMEND the Gloucester Code of Ordinances Ch. 22 "Traffic and Motor Vehicles," Article VI. "Traffic Schedules," Sec. 22-265 "Turning movements – Generally" by ADDING the following:**

*Webster Street, at its intersection with Eastern Avenue traffic shall use the dedicated turning lanes.*

**MOTION TO RECONSIDER: On a motion by Councilor Grow, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 0 in favor, 9 opposed, to reconsider the vote of the main motion.**

**The motion to reconsider fails.**

**Councilor Gross** wished to address the accusation regarding Open Meeting Law violations made earlier in the meeting. He asked that **Councilor O'Hara** include the rest of the Council in the discussion as to what he believes to be the violations.

**MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Grow, seconded by Councilor O'Hara, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 9 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m.**

**Submitted by: Sherry White, Clerk of Committees**

**Items submitted at the meeting:** None.