The City of Lowell • Department of Planning and Development
JFK Civic Center • 50 Arcand Drive • Lowell, MA 01852
P: 978.674-4252 • F: 978.970.4262
www.LowellMA.gov

Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager   *EMD*

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

DATE: June 28, 2018

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 5/7/19 BY COUNCILOR CIRILLO
REQUEST THE CITY MANAGER DIRECT THE PROPER DEPARTMENT TO LOOK INTO OPTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE LIGHTING FOR THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE RIVERWALK FROM BOOTT MILLS TO LeLACHEUR PARK

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has been continuously studying the issue of light levels along the downtown Merrimack Riverwalk and Canalway pedestrian path system. Low light levels are frequently cited by a diverse variety of residents during public listening sessions. Light levels are a critical component of security and, just as importantly, perception of safety and corresponding use. Accordingly, DPD has been developing strategies for measuring and improving light levels without negatively impacting abutting residences.

Pedestrian lamps in these areas are owned and maintained by multiple agencies in addition to the City of Lowell, including but not limited to the Lowell National Historical Park, University of Massachusetts Lowell (UML), and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. The City maintains a Geographic Information System (GIS) map that details which lamps are owned by which agencies. This map is occasionally updated with new information.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) completes an annual walkthrough of the downtown Riverwalk and Canalway lights owned by the City of Lowell and notes which lamps are not functioning. DPW also regularly receives notifications from constituents through Civic Plus or emails directly to DPW, DPD, or the City Manager. Generally, nonfunctioning LED lamps need their fuses replaced. These lamps are usually repaired within a week, depending on weather. Occasionally, the electrical system feeding the lamps is malfunctioning. In those cases, the repairs may take longer or require special funding. When a person contacts the City about a lamp not owned and maintained by the City, DPW forwards the request to the appropriate agency.

Even if the lamps are functioning correctly, there may be a need for additional lighting. The amount of light in an area is a function of the brightness of the lamp, spacing of lamps, the width of the cones of light, and obstructions like trees or walls creating shadows. In some cases, the problem is not the brightness of the lamps, but that there are too many shadows. This is why light in an area is generally measured in two ways: (1) average foot-candles and (2) the difference between the darkest area and the average. DPD has secured access to a meter that will assist in evaluating light levels, and it has already done a preliminary estimation of average foot-candles in each section of the Riverwalk to use as a baseline.

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To better understand whether additional light is needed, DPD and DPW are arranging a joint walkthrough audit of the Riverwalk. The public will be invited to attend, with special outreach to abutters and appropriate neighborhood groups. This audit will include both identification of problem areas and brainstorming of potential solutions to investigate. Solutions may range from retrofitting existing lamps to adding additional architectural or accent lighting. Any solutions would need to be evaluated as to compliance with building codes and historic codes, cost and funding sources, and general feasibility based on existing conditions.

In addition to lighting, residents of Renaissance by the River who attended the May 7th City Council meeting also raised concerns about other health and safety issues on the Riverwalk. An interdepartmental meeting including LPD, DPD, DPW, Health Department and the Manager's office has been scheduled for July 11 to discuss how best to address these problems. A report summarizing the findings and solutions will be presented to the City Council after the meeting.

DNT/ns
cc: Chris Hayes, Transportation Projects Manager