

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO ADDRESS UTILITY STREET WORK COORDINATION, NOTIFICATION, AND COMPLIANCE POST-COMPLETION

WHEREAS, Summer construction and excavation work in the City of Boston allows for necessary and at times urgent street work to be done. The process for conducting street work requires strong collaboration between utility companies and the city to return a city street back to good condition; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) often begins the excavation process to ensure water and sewage infrastructure continues to function properly. Utility companies like National Grid and Eversource then follow to make sure gas and electric utilities also work normally. Lastly, Public Works (PWD) and the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) arrive at the location after all work by these utility companies is completed to verify everything is in order; *and*

WHEREAS, Utility companies are required to adhere to public safety and roadway design standards and guidelines throughout any excavation work being conducted. PWD expects public utility companies who open and occupy the public way throughout the City of Boston to act responsibly as residents, local businesses, and travelers depend on the use of these public ways in the course of their daily lives; *and*

WHEREAS, The Construction Management Division observes any improper backfilling, poor patching, careless plating, and unsightly debris remaining from completed projects into newly resurfaced streets. Any indications of indifference or misuse of public funding must be corrected for the issuance of a PWD permit to open or occupy a public way; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston's current process requires more accountability for executing and mitigating public utility work. Excavation work has had a significant impact on residents' quality of life. These quality of life impacts are multiplied if there are numerous utility projects happening in a small geographic area; *and*

WHEREAS, Recently, district one constituents have reached out with critical concerns regarding their safety due to the hazardous conditions they have encountered during and after utility work is conducted. These incidents include residents being unable to make to life-saving medical treatment appointments, seeing economic downturns to small businesses due to utility work dissuading foot traffic for long

periods of time, and enduring unsafe navigation of streets during school pick-ups and drop offs due to street lines being altered or not replaced after utility work had concluded; *and*

WHEREAS, While utility work is necessary to keep our city going, perilous impacts to the overall well-being of our residents can and must be rectified with the utmost caution and care. Street work utility companies causing limits on parking availability, conflicting detour delays, and blockage of multiple streets and sidewalks within a small square area must be held to a high standard of work; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston's Transportation Department and Public Works staff work diligently to ensure our streets are safe to operate throughout the utility work process. While they have done an incredible job responding to utility company negligence, they need better city-wide infrastructure to ensure notifications are made internally and externally when permitted utility construction will occur. A clear understanding of timelines, expected clean-up, and traffic mitigation plans throughout and after completion of construction work can provide greater expectations and support to our residents and departments; *and*

WHEREAS, Due to the urgent need for immediate action in response to unforeseen circumstances impacting the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Boston, an emergency declaration is hereby necessary to expedite the filing and consideration of this order; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss coordination, notification, and compliance measures for utility work permits and that the Boston Transportation Department, Public Works Department, the Department of Innovation and Technology, and other relevant departments be invited to testify. In addition, utility companies such as the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, Eversource, Verizon, National Grid, and Comcast will be invited to testify.

Filed on: September 11, 2024