

REFLECTIONS BY LIZ — FORGING CHANGE IN A TRADITIONAL CLIMATE

In my salon last week, Luisa Paiewonsky, the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Highway Department, spoke about “Forging Change in a Traditional Climate.” What fascinated me about her talk, and showed her leadership, was her ability to transform potential disadvantages into strengths. She highlighted several:

- She is a longtime employee of the department. Therefore it might have been hard for her “peers” to regard her as their leader. Yet her knowledge of the department and her long-term relationships with the people at the department gave her a unique ability to know what needed to be done and to do it. Her agenda reflects those insights.
- She is a planner in a world of engineers. Yet being a planner gave her a different, more multifaceted approach to both design and project delivery—an approach that is needed at the department now. It has also has meant that she reaches out and eagerly uses the talents of the engineers, particularly the chief engineer, to get the job done.
- She is a woman in a predominantly male environment. However, rather than try to be “one of the guys,” she uses her low-key, warm, and inclusive style to engage the staff in new ways through clear communication and empowerment.

Throughout her comments the aspect of her leadership that shone through was her caring about roads and bridges and about the people at MHD. She truly exemplifies a leader who is committed to what she does. It was crystal clear to all of us there that she’s the right leader for the department at this time and that she relishes the job.