

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – October 5, 2017
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Lown called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Chairman, Brad Lown
Acting City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Member, Ted Gray
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Member, Ronald Cypher
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Alternate Member, Mary Lou McElwain

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Planning Director, Juliet Walker
Parking Director, Benjamin Fletcher

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the meeting minutes of September 7, 2017.
Seconded by Ron Cypher. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Shari Donnermeyer moved to accept the financial report dated August 31, 2017. Seconded by Ron Cypher. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Committee members thanked City staff for including the category definitions listed on the financial report. Mary Lou McElwain stated she would email Parking Director Fletcher with questions and discuss any issues with the Committee at the November 2nd meeting.

Harold Whitehouse asked about informational items including: jurisdiction and annual reports for private parking lots and veterans with approved license plates parking for free in private parking lots.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Charles McMahon spoke to action item VII.A. [Request to eliminate access to Echo Avenue from Spaulding Turnpike]. He spoke to safety concerns due to the narrow roadway, no sidewalks, excessive vehicle speeds and drivers using Echo Avenue as a cut through to Woodbury Avenue. He proposed implementing a pilot program that would eliminate access to Echo Avenue from the Spaulding Turnpike.

Dave Cosgrove agreed with Mr. McMahon's safety concerns and supported the pilot program proposal. He spoke to safety concerns for the residents at Betty's Dream.

David Palumbo also agreed with Mr. McMahon's concerns. He previously requested the Echo Avenue sign be removed from the Spaulding Turnpike. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) denied the request. He supported changing Echo Avenue to a dead-end street.

David Calkins spoke to action item VII.A. [Request to eliminate access to Echo Avenue from Spaulding Turnpike]. He stated traffic volumes are not excessive. The excessive speeding is problematic. He recommended speed bumps to calm traffic and make the roadway safer for the residents.

Pam Mower spoke to action item VII.A. [Request to eliminate access to Echo Avenue from Spaulding Turnpike]. She also spoke to safety concerns for residents of Betty's Dream and the neighborhood.

Jane Begala spoke in support of action item VIII.A. [Request for crosswalk on Grafton Drive at Sherburne Road]. She collected signatures from neighbors in support of the crosswalk. She requested a pedestrian activated crosswalk with flashing lights similar to the one on Sagamore Avenue. She spoke at length about sections in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2014 regarding implementation, walkability and connectivity. She also addressed the Capital Improvement Plan and allocating funds for improvements.

Cindy Fessenden spoke in support of action item VIII.A. [Request for crosswalk on Grafton Drive at Sherburne Road]. She supported the statements made by Ms. Begala. She requested a crosswalk at the intersection of Grafton Drive and the C&J Bus driveway, and improvements to the crosswalk at Borthwick Avenue and Greenland Road.

VI. PRESENTATION:

A. Complete Streets Guidelines. Juliet Walker, Planning Director, presented the Complete Streets Design Guidelines to the Committee. "Complete Streets" means streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, so that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a street. Juliet Walker stated the guidelines were developed in collaboration between the Planning Department, Department of Public Works and the Fire Department. The report is available on the City's Transportation webpage. <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/transportation/complete-streets-program>

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request to eliminate access to Echo Avenue from Spaulding Turnpike, by Charles McMahan. Eric Eby stated that residents had voiced their concerns about pedestrian safety and traffic. He stated he would be working with other City Departments, the neighborhood and NHDOT to determine what could be done. He will report back to the Committee regarding a final recommendation at a future date.

Harold Whitehouse moved to have staff work with neighborhood, to determine desirability and report back with next steps in process. Seconded by Shari Donnermeyer.

Eric Eby clarified the city right-of-way begins at the roundabout on Echo Avenue. He stated NHDOT was agreeable to eliminating the exit from Spaulding Turnpike to Echo Avenue.

Vote 9-0, to have staff work with neighborhood, to determine desirability and report back with next steps in process.

B. Request to allow parking at end of Dearborn Street, by Michael Stasiuk.

Public Works Director Rice moved to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. **Vote 9-0, to suspend rules to allow for public comment.**

Michael Stasiuk stated the space is at 41 Dearborn Street. It is located between a telephone pole and a flushing hydrant. He resides at 31 Dearborn Street and is the landlord of 41 Dearborn Street. He provided background on the parking issue and stated the City designated the space as handicapped parking for the former owner. A handicap parking sign was located on the telephone pole. He spoke about the parking challenges due to neighbor disputes. He requested the Committee move to allow parking in the space in front of 41 Dearborn Street.

Public Works Director Rice stated the issue was technical. The focus of the discussion should center on the feasibility of the parking space configuration.

The Committee conducted an on-site visit on Tuesday, October 3, 2017. Eric Eby stated the space had been measured and he would recommend creating a parking space in front of 41 Dearborn Street. He stated a vehicle exited the neighbor's driveway from across the street while some of the Committee members were at the site. There were no issues.

There was brief discussion among the Committee members about adding an additional parking space, but it would involve moving the utility pole, fence and flushing hydrant, which would require funding that is not available at this time. Environmental regulations could also be a concern.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to allow parking on west side of Dearborn Street south of Dearborn Lane. Seconded by Acting City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff.

Harold Whitehouse asked Deputy Fire Chief Heinz for his opinion regarding safety. Deputy Fire Chief Heinz stated he would vote against the motion because the Fire Department favors wider streets and space to maneuver equipment.

Harold Whitehouse moved to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. **Vote 8-0, to suspend rules to allow for public comment.** Chairman Lown left the meeting prior to vote.

Susan Regan spoke about exiting her driveway onto Dearborn Street and the hardship a parking space in front of 41 Dearborn Street would cause her and her tenants. She expressed concern about the narrow roadway, the existing problematic parking issues and snow plowing. She asked the Committee to review photographs she had taken, which illustrated her concerns.

Acting City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, reminded the Committee that the issue was to determine the feasibility of approving one parking space at the designated location. She asked Eric Eby to comment on snow plowing. Mr. Eby stated snow is removed by a front-end loader because of the width of the right-of-way. Snow plows are not used on Dearborn Street or Dearborn Lane.

Michael Brandzel spoke against the proposed parking space because it would narrow the roadway and cause a hardship for Ms. Regan. He proposed two scenarios as a compromise in the interim. He stated any temporary agreement should be approved by Ms. Regan and Mr. Stasiuk until a permanent resolution is made.

Public Works Director Rice thanked Mr. Brandzel for his suggestions. He stated staff reviewed the available space. It met the criteria needed to create a parking space. He stated there are many areas in the City where space is limited. Dearborn Street is not an exception.

Harold Whitehouse stated he would vote against the motion due to safety issues. Mr. Whitehouse called for a roll call vote.

On a roll call 5-3, motion failed to allow parking on west side of Dearborn Street south of Dearborn Lane. Ted Gray, Harold Whitehouse, Ronald Cypher, Deputy Fire Chief Heinz and Police Captain Warchol voted opposed. Shari Donnermeyer, Acting City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff and Public Works Director Rice voted to approve.

C. Request to renew Portwalk Place valet licenses. Eric Eby stated there were three designated spaces to be used for valet services for the Marriott Residence Inn and three spaces for the Hampton Inn. Staff recommended renewing the valet license agreements for another year.

Public Works Director Rice moved to renew the valet licenses for Marriott Residence Inn and Hampton Inn. Seconded by Acting City Manager Colbert Puff.

Harold Whitehouse discussed valet operations being offered from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Eric Eby stated the licenses allow for valet services at designated parking spaces. Public Works Director Rice stated staff would investigate concerns regarding unlicensed valet operations.

Mary Lou McElwain referenced Section 2, Use, on page 1 of the License Agreement attached in the packet. She asked for clarification on storing parked vehicles in designated municipal spaces. Public Works Director Rice stated a Joint Municipal Agreement was made with the developer of Portwalk Place who worked with the City to create a public parking lot on Vaughan Street. The Vaughan Street Lot is what is being referred to as the designated area for storing parked vehicles.

Vote 8-0, to renew valet licenses for Marriott Residence Inn and Hampton Inn.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Request for crosswalk on Grafton Drive at Sherburne Road. Eric Eby stated he had collected data on vehicle speed, sight lines and volumes. He recommended a High Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) signal in order to make the crosswalk safe. A picture of the HAWK signal is shown on page 29 of the packet. The signal is dark until activated by pedestrians. Eric Eby stated the City would need to work with Pease Development Authority (PDA). The city is responsible for maintaining the roadways, including pavement, pavement markings and signs. The PDA is responsible for infrastructure costs, including traffic signals.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to have City staff work with PDA to implement pedestrian crossing at intersection of Grafton Drive and Sherburne Road. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Mr. Whitehouse asked if staff would be attending the next PDA meeting. Public Works Director Rice stated City staff would be working with the PDA. He stated the crosswalk would be presented to the PDA technical staff as the first step in the process. Acting City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, assured the Committee this matter would be addressed with the PDA in a timely manner.

Vote 8-0, to have City staff work with PDA to implement pedestrian crossing at intersection of Grafton Drive and Sherburne Road.

B. Request for crosswalk on Woodbury Ave at Edmond Ave. Eric Eby stated he collected traffic data on both school days and non-school days. The video data showed that pedestrians were primarily crossing only when a school bus was present. The school bus stopped traffic in both directions to allow students to cross on Woodbury Avenue safely. Based on the data collected, staff does not recommend the installation of a crosswalk at this location.

Ron Cypher moved to deny the request for a crosswalk on Woodbury Avenue at Edmond Avenue due to the lack of pedestrians. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Vote 8-0, to deny the request for a crosswalk on Woodbury Avenue at Edmond Avenue due to the lack of pedestrians.

C. Request to move Zagster bike share station to on-street space near 77 State Street. Eric Eby stated this location is the most highly used station in the City. It is located in the Memorial Bridge Parking Lot. City staff carefully selected bike share station locations that would not impact on-street parking. He stated the limited sight lines for vehicles exiting the garage at 77 State Street were similar at many driveways and side streets that have adjacent on-street parking spaces. He stated the situation was not unique. It does not present any greater safety concerns than other locations in the downtown. City staff recommended that the Zagster bike station remain in its current location.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to deny the request to move Zagster bike share station to on-street parking space near 77 State Street. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse. Mr. Whitehouse stated he viewed the area and did not observe any issues.

Vote 8-0, to deny the request to move Zagster bike share station to on-street parking space near 77 State Street.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ron Cypher asked the Committee if there was anything they could do to assist a resident of Spinnaker Point Condominiums who is a Vietnam Veteran, and denied a handicap parking space two times on the property. Public Works Director stated the issue is a private property matter and not in the purview of the Committee.

Michael Stasiuk spoke to the failed motion under action item VII.A. [Request to allow parking at end of Dearborn Street]. He requested the ordinance be amended that prohibits parking on the right side of Dearborn Street and the No Parking sign located on the telephone pole be removed. He spoke to safety issues with the current parking configuration.

Michael Brandzel asked for guidance regarding who he could meet with to discuss alternatives regarding parking on Dearborn Street. He discussed several scenarios presently occurring. Public Works Director Rice stated the appropriate use of the roadway would be investigated since it had been presented to the Committee and City staff. Mr. Brandzel stated he would request a meeting with City staff to follow-up on proposed alternatives.

Susan Regan spoke against a parking space at 41 Dearborn Street and the one in front of her residence. She stated the roadway is too narrow.

Jane Begala thanked the Committee for voting in favor of the crosswalk at Grafton Drive and Sherburne Road. She asked that consideration be made for a similar crosswalk at Borthwick Avenue. She spoke to the concept of neighborhood and how it relates to her area.

Cindy Fessenden asked if she needed to make a formal request for the additional crosswalks. Public Works Director Rice stated she could make a formal request, but also encouraged her to participate in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to secure funding.

Harold Whitehouse requested speakers with topics outside the purview of the PTS Committee be directed to the appropriate City department or committee.

X. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Crosswalk requests on state roads, Lafayette Road at Robert Avenue, and Ocean Road at Suzanne Drive. – Eric Eby stated the City does not have jurisdiction and cannot approve or deny the requests because they fall under the jurisdiction of NHDOT. City staff received information on the proper process to follow when requesting a crosswalk across a state roadway. Mr. Eby stated he is working with the NHDOT and would report back at a future date on the progress of these requests. No action is required by the Committee.

B. Quarterly bicycle and pedestrian accident report. – Police Captain Warchol spoke to the two bicycle and three pedestrian accidents that occurred during the quarter (06/21/17 to 09/20/17).

XI. MISCELLANEOUS:

Public Works Director Rice proposed the PTS monthly meetings be moved to Conference Room A. The Committee concurred. Meetings will continue to be televised and available on the City's website.

Mary Lou McElwain requested a report back at the November meeting on Zagster bike use and satellite parking use.

Harold Whitehouse asked Police Captain Warchol about the excessive noise of motorcycles. Police Captain Warchol stated an operational plan to address the issue is under review.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – at 9:41 a.m., **VOTED** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amy Chastain
Secretary to the Committee