

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – September 6, 2018
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

At 8:00 a.m., Chairman Doug Roberts called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Chairman, Doug Roberts
City Manager, John Bohenko
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci

Member Absent:

Member, Ralph DiBernardo

Staff Advisors Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz requested that the source for the motorcycle accident information discussed under action item VIII.B. be cited in the August meeting minutes. Chairman Doug Roberts agreed to provide the source document to the Committee.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to accept the amended meeting minutes of the August 2, 2018 meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**
Steve Pesci recused himself from the vote because he had not attended the meeting.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse questioned the Foundry Place Transient line item. Public Works Director Peter Rice said the numbers were projections for budgeting purposes based on utilization expectations.

The Committee discussed the budget surplus and targets noted on the report, as well as the High Hanover Garage closures due to high occupancy. City Manager John Bohenko

requested a report on how many times the garage was closed, and the duration of the closures, for the October meeting.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned the HH Pass Reinstatement line item. City Manager John Bohenko said it was for the people who did not pay their monthly fee on time and had to reinstate it.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated July 31, 2018, seconded by City Manager John Bohenko. **Motion passed 9-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Martha Robertson had concerns about the Neighborhood Parking Program. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that it was on the agenda today, but no decision would be made by the Committee. The program would be presented to the City Council in the coming weeks.

Stephanie Lane had concerns about motorcycle parking in Market Square. Ms. Lane felt there could be a better compromise. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that this was an informational item. He stated it was supposed to be a simple change, but it has become more complicated. The consensus is to leave the parking as it is.

Lee Frank spoke in support of action item VI.B. He stated it has been a safety issue for many years.

Rick Condon spoke in support of action item VI.B. He expressed concern about the disorganized parking, cars parking in the opposite direction of traffic, or spilling over into driveways.

David Gaddy spoke in support of action item VI.B. He stated adding a curb at the edge of the road, without recessing it, would not solve the problem. Mr. Gaddy has seen school buses unable to drive down Madison Street because cars were parked on the street. He stated it was particularly an issue in the winter, when the snow banks start to creep into the street.

Kelly Hurd spoke in support of action item VI.A. Ms. Hurd proposed a compromise. She proposed removing only one on-street parking space instead of two.

Roger Pederson spoke to motorcycle parking in Market Square. He stated not all motorcyclists should be in the same category. Some meet the decibel requirements and some do not. He suggested one solution could be a voluntary decibel-testing program. Motorcyclists who pass the test could receive a permit to be able to park in the downtown area.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request to remove two parking spaces in front of 21 Brewster Street, by Kelly Hurd. Eric Eby noted that the issue was presented to the Committee last fall. The street was under construction then, so the decision was made to wait until construction was completed. He stated it remained problematic after construction, so the request is to remove two parking spaces. However, Ms. Hurd just noted in the public comment that removing one space would give them room to turn in and out.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that striping out one spot was a good compromise. If it was still an issue in the future, it could be reevaluated.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to remove one parking space in front of 21 Brewster Street, seconded by City Manager John Bohenko. **Motion passed 9-0.**

B. Request to install curbing and trees along Madison Street near the intersection with Austin Street, by Lee Frank and others. City Manager John Bohenko moved to direct staff to include Madison Street as a proposed project in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Year 2020 to 2025, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Motion passed 9-0.

City Manager John Bohenko noted that there might be other issues like drainage that would need to be addressed with the curbing.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if putting a camera in the area to collect data was appropriate. Eric Eby confirmed that it was.

City Manager John Bohenko moved to have staff collect data, evaluate and report back on parking and traffic on Madison Street, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Mary Lou McElwain commented that staff should look at the entire street with cars parking on both sides. If a school bus cannot make it down the street, then that is a safety issue. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they would be looking at the entire geometry of the road to assess the curbing. If parking was going to be maintained, then the road would need to be widened. Mary Lou McElwain questioned how the school bus issue would be handled in the short term. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the City would ensure the snow banks are pushed back far enough to keep the road open for access by school buses. He stated it would be an operational issue in the short-term.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the last part of the request was to add a crosswalk on State Street near the intersection of Madison Street for Cater Park.

Eric Eby commented that at the site visit an area for a potential crosswalk was identified, but more data should be collected to understand what would be required.

Steve Pesci moved to have staff collect data, evaluate and report back on a pedestrian crosswalk across State Street at Madison Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Motion passed 9-0.

C. Shared Active Transportation, potential ordinance. City Manager John Bohenko noted that this was a topic he brought up after reading industry periodicals about scooters and bikes without docking stations. It is becoming a problem because the scooters and/or bikes can be parked anywhere by users because there are no docking stations. The goal is to get ahead of this issue.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if a company could just come in and set this up. City Manager John Bohenko said that was correct. It has already happened in some cities.

Steve Pesci suggested changing the title of the potential ordinance, so that the public would more readily understand what the ordinance was for. The language should specify that it would be for privately owned vehicles that are shared for a fee. Steve Pesci was grateful that the City was being proactive.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if it was necessary to have legislation about this as well. City Manager John Bohenko responded that it was possible. The City can regulate the sidewalks.

Steve Pesci commented that this was great technology. It's great for mobility, but it needs to be regulated. He asked if there was a way to license them, much like signage, where the business would need to get a permit. The issue is the placement and quantity of the scooters. The City should regulate both. City Manager John Bohenko responded that it could fall under the encumbrance license.

Chairman Doug Roberts added that the ordinance should address (if it's appropriate) the use of bike lanes by low power vehicles.

Deputy Fire Chief James Heinz commented that Fire Departments in other cities are having issues navigating stretchers on sidewalks that have scooters parked on them. The Fire Department supported the regulation of scooter placement.

Mary Lou McElwain pointed out that the Police Department would have to enforce all of this. Police Captain Frank Warchol confirmed that it would be another layer to the ordinance.

City Manager John Bohenko commented that there was a benefit to the scooters. It could reduce the amount of cars downtown. He will address the issue with the City Council.

D. Request to renew Portwalk Place valet licenses. City Manager John Bohenko moved to renew valet licenses for Marriott Residences and Hampton Inn, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Harold Whitehouse commented that there is a lot of 15 minute parking and valet parking in that area and wondered if the Committee made a mistake allowing so much valet parking. City Manager John Bohenko responded that the valet takes the cars out of the core downtown and parks them in an area that the public would not normally park. It helps reduce the downtown congestion.

Shari Donnermeyer questioned why they were charging the same amount this year as last year. City Manager John Bohenko said they would take the fee under advisement with the Fee Committee.

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

No old business.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Neighborhood Parking Program. Ben Fletcher talked about the research that went into the program. The division was charged with developing a neighborhood parking program for neighborhoods that wanted it. The Department researched other communities that have similar programs to discuss what has been successful. The Department went to Baltimore because they have a very robust neighborhood parking program. There was an online survey for residents in April and May. There were over 300 responses mostly coming from the South End and Islington Creek neighborhoods. Based on the responses, an outline was created, and interested neighborhoods were asked to form steering committees. All this information provided went into creating the draft document.

City Manager John Bohenko added that it was a pilot program. It may be something the City moves forward with or not. City Council will make the final decision. This is a request coming from the neighborhoods. They will have to evaluate what works and doesn't work for them. There could be unintended consequences.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if 75% of the residences needed to sign up. Ben Fletcher confirmed that was correct. The reason that is required is to ensure that the majority of residents are interested in the program.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned how this would impact the existing parking stickers. Ben Fletcher responded that this program would replace that one. The existing parking sticker program is difficult to enforce. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the signs for the existing program would be eliminated. Ben Fletcher responded that they would be eliminated and this neighborhood parking program would have its own sign package.

Shari Donnermeyer questioned where the pilot programs would be taking place. Ben Fletcher responded that one would be in the Islington Creek neighborhood which consists of the area north of Islington St. towards the pond going from Bridge Street, to Cass

Street, and down to Dover Street. The South End neighborhood would be the other one and it goes from Court Street, down to Sander's Fish Market and Pleasant Street, up to Court Street again.

Shari Donnermeyer asked when the program would start. Ben Fletcher responded that it would start in concurrence with the opening of the Foundry Place Garage.

Steve Pesci questioned if the model was designed to be fiscally self-sustaining. City Manager John Bohenko responded that the pilot program wouldn't be because there's a lot of one-time start-up fees. If it became permanent, City Manager John Bohenko believed that it should be revenue neutral. Ultimately, that would be a decision of the City Council.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that he had received an email about this topic from Elizabeth Bratter. He will forward it to the City Council.

B. Andrew Jarvis Drive improvement project status. Harold Whitehouse complimented those working on the project. He asked if the crossing guard would have control over the lights. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they were looking at making it a timed system. The thought is once the signaling is set up, a crossing guard won't be needed because it will be much safer.

Eric Eby commented that it was an adaptive program that can account for different times of the day and different days of the week. There is video detection overhead to adapt to traffic patterns.

C. Middle Street bike lane project status. Planning Director Juliet Walker updated the Committee on the project status. Information about the project schedule has been posted on the web page. They are working on the striping. A portion has already been completed as part of the Andrew Jarvis Drive project. The South Street, Lafayette Road and Middle Street intersection will have improvements made and a bike box will be added. There will be bike lanes and buffer bike lanes with parking, as it gets closer to downtown. There has been engagement from the Seacoast Area Bike Riders (SABR) and Portsmouth High School to educate riders on how to use the bike lanes and bike box. She explained a bike box gives bicyclists a head start on a left turn at intersections. There is a video explaining how to use it on the web page. The contractor should finish the project by the end of September.

www.cityofportsmouth.com/planportsmouth/middle-street-lafayette-road-bicycle-pedestrian-corridor-project

D. Letters received regarding motorcycles in Market Square. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the Committee had received letters about this topic. There have been suggestions for times and head in parking. The Department of Public Works and Eric Eby can consider the suggestions and bring back a recommendation, if appropriate.

Director of Public Works Peter Rice moved to put the letters on file and revisit if the issue comes up again, seconded by City Manager John Bohenko. **Motion passed 9-0.**

- E. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Applications received:
- a. Aldrich Road
 - b. South Mill Street
 - c. South Street between Middle Street and Lafayette Road
 - d. South Street and Brackett Lane

Eric Eby commented that they have received several requests. The Aldrich Road request has been in front of the Committee a few times. They are in process of gathering signatures on the petition. City Manager John Bohenko questioned if there were any opportunities to put in a mini-roundabout to help slow down traffic. Eric Eby responded that was something they were looking into especially in areas where there is a 4-way intersection.

Public Works Director Peter Rice noted that the traffic calming options were listed on the web page. www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/transportation/neighborhood-traffic-calming-program He said a study of Aldrich Road was completed and a number of traffic calming options were presented and the neighborhood uniformly rejected them. Aldrich Road was designed with neighborhood input. Chairman Doug Roberts suggested doing a temporary calming measure so the neighborhood could see how it would impact them. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed.

- F. PTS open action items
No discussion by the Committee.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – at 9:10 a.m., VOTED to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary