

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – March 7, 2019
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
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Fire Chief, Steven Achilles
Member, Ralph DiBernardo
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse

Members Absent:

Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci

Staff Advisors Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Mary Lou McElwain moved to accept the meeting minutes of the February 7, 2019 meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 7-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mary Lou McElwain questioned which line item on the report shows fees from people parking on the street during a snow ban. She read in the newspaper that the fee is \$250. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the charge is closer to \$150 plus a \$25 ticket. The ticket fee goes to the City and the \$150 goes to the towing company. She questioned if meter space rentals were for construction vehicles. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed that was correct. She asked if the immobilization administration fee was for booting cars. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that was correct.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if garage passes were being transferred from High Hanover to Foundry Place or if the passes for Foundry Place were new passes listed on the report. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was a combination of both. About 100 people transferred from High Hanover and about 100 passes are new.

Harold Whitehouse requested clarification on the summons administration fee. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it's an administrative fee that the Parking Clerk's Office charges when somebody challenges a ticket to the point that it goes to court.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the financial report dated January 31, 2019, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 7-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Elizabeth Bratter expressed concern about the Zagster program. She did not think that the City should be paying so much to support it. Local businesses pay for it, but it is not a good advertisement model for them. Developers go for it because they can get a reduction in their parking. Ms. Bratter thought that the City should be working with local bike shops to do their own cooperative bike program. She was in support of the Neighborhood Parking Program, but had concerns about inventory and commercial buildings that received parking reductions, being granted permits. She submitted a letter to the Committee regarding this issue that was provided in the packet.

Ms. Bratter also expressed support for the four-way stop sign at Brewery Lane and Albany Street. She submitted an email to the Committee supporting the Portsmouth Middle School traffic pattern action item.

Charles Griffin commented that the bollards that were installed last fall were unattractive and daunting. The mild winter has given motorists time to adjust to driving on the roads with the bike lanes without the bollards. Mr. Griffin suggested a 60-day grace period in the spring before the bollards were reinstalled to see if they were really needed.

VI. PRESENTATION:

No presentation.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Implement four-way stop at intersection of Brewery Lane and Albany Street.
Eric Eby noted that they observed the poor sight lines at the intersection on Wednesday at the site visit. The traffic on Brewery Lane does travel quickly. The traffic on the side streets is slightly less in volume than Brewery Lane. However, given the limited sight lines, he stated a four-way stop was warranted. He recommended moving forward with the four-way stop.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to approve a four-way stop at the intersection of Brewery Lane and Albany Street, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 7-0.**

Ralph DiBernardo commented that this is one of the few times that a four-way stop proposal absolutely meets the criteria to put it in. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the sidewalks in that area were going to be installed by the private developer. Public Works Director Pete Rice responded that the developer has contributed more than \$50,000 to install sidewalks in that area. They will be put in on Jewel Court and around the new development. The City will be working

with the Malt House Exchange to put in sidewalks there. The long-term goal is to make a network of sidewalks in that area.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back on Middle School traffic pattern and potential one-way flow on Parrott Avenue. Eric Eby commented that he has monitored the area in the mornings and afternoons as well as put in traffic counters on Parrot Avenue and Richards Avenue. There is traffic going in both directions, but most of it is exiting out onto Richards Avenue. There is a queue of traffic waiting to exit. The school has also implemented a new pattern to exit. The buses now go around the back of the school, so passenger cars can pick up in the front. A barricade now directs students along the front of the school on the sidewalk. Eric Eby noted that the new flow shows a great deal of promise, and they should continue to monitor that before the City implemented any new measures. Two-way traffic on Parrot Avenue would be the best with this flow, and it is hard to implement a one-way for a limited time in the day.

Mary Lou McElwain recommended adding another crosswalk that went to the bike racks because bike traffic will increase in the warmer months. She commented that it was a good start to make it a safer area around the school.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the report had gone to the School Board. He commented that they should be informed about what the PTS Committee is doing. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that Eric Eby has been working closely with school administration.

Ralph DiBernardo thought that the comment Ms. Bratter made about training the students to cross at the school and stay on the ball field side of Parrot Avenue would relieve congestion. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that there is school staff outside to direct students and pedestrians. Eric Eby can continue to work with them and make that suggestion.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that it makes sense to promote safe routes that people would naturally take.

Harold Whitehouse commented that a member of the public noted that there are limited sight lines when exiting the library driveway and taking a left turn. They suggested removing one on-street parking space to make the sight lines better. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that it could be included in the report back.

Harold Whitehouse moved to have staff continue monitoring traffic operations and report back, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion Passed 7-0.**

B. Neighborhood Parking Program, referral from City Council for vote on amended program. Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve the Neighborhood Parking Program as amended, seconded by Fire Chief Steven Achilles.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher stated that all of the proposed amendments made by the City Councilors were highlighted in yellow on the handout included in the packet. The first one is that the NPP would first be available on a pilot basis for a period of six (6)

months instead of a year. The second is that the neighborhood would have forty-five (45) days from City Council approval to collect and submit a petition to the Parking Division in order for their streets to be subject to NPP rules. The third is that it is not required for a household to participate in the NPP to be eligible for a Guest Permit. The final amendment is that a business located within an NPP Neighborhood is eligible for the same number of passes as a single-family household.

Chairman Doug Roberts clarified that the net of off-street provision was removed. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed that was correct.

Chairman Doug Roberts stated that if the NPP was approved today, it would move to City Council. They would approve today's meeting minutes and the program would become active. If any changes were made by PTS today, then it would go back to City Council for review and approval. The action item would then come back to PTS for another vote.

Harold Whitehouse clarified that if the NPP was approved as proposed, then the South End was out of the program. Chairman Doug Roberts confirmed that was correct.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was going to vote against the program because it does not have a plan to move the current employee parking elsewhere. There is a micro-transit system coming, but this will cause an issue in the six (6) month pilot program. She stated the West End Business Association is opposed to the program.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that he was going to support the program because it would prove some of the issues that have been brought up. The main issue will be people moving to park on streets outside of the program.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that Ms. Bratter made a good comment about monitoring the program for businesses that received a variance on parking and having the City Manager make a change if necessary. **Motion passed 6-1.** Mary Lou McElwain voted opposed.

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

B. Zagster bike share program second year update, by Planning Director Juliet Walker. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if a Zagster station could be placed near the Portsmouth Indoor Pool. She stated riders could use the bike path to come into town and bypass the bike station at the City Hall Parking Lot. She stated the bike station at City Hall interferes with the farmer's market and the limited parking. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that any changes to the station locations would cost the City money. Other locations were considered, but these were chosen because they were the best and safest options. It would be better to look at other locations when the City is ready to revisit this next time.

Harold Whitehouse commented that in other cities when the contracts expire people start to use the racks to store battery-operated scooters. He hoped that the Ordinance would protect that from happening in Portsmouth. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that scooters were not part of the shared program. The City recently passed

an Ordinance that limits a vendor from implementing a shared program with scooters on public sidewalks.

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that if the City got a scooter program, then they would not be allowed to use the Zagster racks to park the scooters. Planning Director Juliet Walker confirmed that was correct.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if helmets were required with the program. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that they continue to have discussions on this topic. There are a number of options to try, but they can be hard to implement. Police Captain Frank Warchol commented that people under the age of 16 were required to wear bike helmets.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that they would wait to hear back from staff on their recommendation about the bollards on Middle Street. Ralph DiBernardo asked if any proposed changes would come back to PTS. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that would be their intention. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that they would continue to make adjustments as needed.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that Ms. Bratter had made some good comments about working with local bike shops. She stated that when the Zagster contracts expire, working with local bike shops should be considered. She stated that Zagster is an expensive program. Public Works Director Peter Rice pointed out that the COAST bus program was subsidized and the trolley from the church lot was also an expense. They are all part of a comprehensive parking/transportation program. There may be a better way to spend those resources, but the City does not operate the same as a for-profit business. He stated it is a good point, but not everything has to make a profit or break even. Planning Director Juliet Walker appreciated Mary Lou McElwain's comments, but the bike share program is a form of public transit. As they move forward with the next bid the City will be clear on what the objectives are. The businesses that have engaged in the Zagster sponsorship so far have not been driven by a development request. They have seen the benefits in the advertisement. The goal is to see the sponsorship program grow.

C. Cate Street connector public meeting, by Planning Director Juliet Walker. Neighborhood meeting scheduled on March 11, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the New Franklin School Library.

D. Letter from Elizabeth Bratter regarding Neighborhood Parking Program. No action required by the Committee.

E. PTS Open Action Items. No action required by the Committee.

F. City Council Work Session Re: Parking Principles Review and Discussion – March 25, 2019. No action required by the Committee.

A. Islington Street project status. Eric Eby provided an update on the Islington Street Project. The City opened the bids for the project. The base bid project will go from Albany Street in front of the White Heron down to the Spinney Road intersection.

The goal is to start construction this year. They are looking at ways to handle traffic through the area. One idea that is being considered is to have one-way traffic through the work zone during construction hours. Islington Street would be one-way traffic down to Spinney Road. Inbound traffic would be able to come up to Spinney Road, and then go right down on Spinney Road. There would be detour signs to direct traffic. The main flow of traffic on Islington Street is outbound traffic. This route will be presented to the West End Business Association.

Chairman Doug Roberts clarified that the road would switch from one-way to two-way at the Bartlett Street intersection. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct. There would never be construction on both sides of the Bartlett Street intersection. A small portion of the project would cause some traffic on Bartlett Street to detour.

Public Works Director Peter Rice noted that there were a number of drivers for this approach. One of them is that the utilities are buried deep in that area. In order to operate safely, the contractor has requested this detour approach. This is the start of a dialogue. There has been a public meeting already. Throughout the project there will be monthly meetings and website updates. The project team will coordinate closely with the businesses. The areas will be clean and passable on the weekends. The whole Islington Street corridor project from the Route 1 Bypass to Maplewood Avenue, is estimated at \$20 million.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how long they expected the project to last. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded it is estimated to last at least two construction seasons.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that there may be additional monitoring required on Spinney Road during construction. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that traffic would be impacted on Spinney Road, Aldrich Road and Cass Street. It will mostly be local traffic.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the Spinney Road sidewalk installation would include making a T-intersection at Spinney Road and Islington Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that would be part of the Islington Street project. The City must work with some private property owners at the end of Spinney Road on the issue.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that the Cate Street Apartments will open in the fall and questioned if there would be a crosswalk at Cate Street and Bartlett Street. Eric Eby confirmed that would be part of the Cate Street development. Planning Director Juliet Walker noted that she would report back. Mary Lou McElwain commented that it was a complicated area.

X. INFORMATIONAL:

Mary Lou McElwain noted that the City Council had a work session scheduled on March 25, 2019 to discuss parking, and questioned if there were other meetings that the Committee should know about. Public Works Director Peter Rice encouraged the members to look at the City website for scheduled meetings.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the Committee would see the research and results that come out of the suggestions to close streets to create pedestrian ways. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that it would be up to the City Council. They would refer it to the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT – at 8:50 a.m., **VOTED** to adjourn.
Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary