

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – May 2, 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
Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Interim Fire Chief, Todd Germain
Member, Ralph DiBernardo
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci

Member Absent:

Member, Shari Donnermeyer

Staff Advisors Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Steve Pesci requested that “the committee” in the second to last paragraph on page 6 be clarified to the “Ward 1 Neighborhood Committee”.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the meeting minutes of the April 2, 2019 meeting, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Steve Pesci noted that the Foundry Place Transient Revenue was low and questioned what impacts that would have on the garage and parking system for the fiscal year. Public Works Director Peter Rice said the impact would be a reduction in revenue, so the City would reduce spending. There are several capital expenditures that have been deferred to the end of the year. At that point, the revenue will be evaluated to see if there is money for spending.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned when the Hanover Garage was closing for repair. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that was scheduled for 2022.

Mary Lou McElwain suggested advertising \$1.00 an hour on the digital message board sign for Foundry Place Garage located on Market Street and Russell Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that he would investigate.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that they should look at making crossing Bridge Street at Deer Street easier. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that Eric Eby has been studying that.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if there was a timeline for the proposed Deer Street Associates buildings going in near the Foundry Place Garage. Eric Eby responded that the development was based on land use approvals from the Planning Board. Their development is not related to the Foundry Place Garage. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that staff would investigate and report back.

Public Works Director Peter Rice said that the Foundry Place Garage is acting as additional parking capacity. The Hanover Garage is often full, and the City has not hit peak season yet. Foundry Place is serving its function. The garage was full 3 times on special events. Even though the revenue isn't where the City hoped it would be, it is providing the value necessary.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the surrounding development would be mixed-use. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that it would.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the financial report dated March 31, 2019, seconded by Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff. **Motion passed 9-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

VI. PRESENTATION:

No presentation.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Install metered parking on Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street.

Mary Lou McElwain noted that there were several spots not metered on Maplewood Avenue and questioned if this would change. Eric Eby responded that this request was just for Raynes Avenue and Vaughn Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the businesses in the area asked them to remove those meters on Maplewood Avenue. Some businesses asked them to put some meters back. It would be appropriate to meter all spaces because the rest of the area is metered. Parking Director Ben Fletcher agreed.

Steve Pesci questioned if they should amend the motion to include the Maplewood Avenue spaces. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff responded that the motion should not be amended: that change should be posted to allow for public comment.

Eric Eby noted that there would be some roadwork in the area soon. The existing free spaces on Vaughn Street will be removed during construction. A total of 10 spaces will be impacted for about 2 ½ months.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to approve metered parking on Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street, to take effect after the opening of the AC Hotel, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion Passed 9-0.**

B. Request to renew valet parking license, by the One Hundred Club.

Steve Pesci requested clarification on item 2 of the 2018 agreement and questioned why valet services can't park in municipal garages. The Foundry Place Garage should give more space to allow for valet parking. He also requested clarification on how the \$500 fee was determined. He wanted to know if it should be increased or adjusted for annual inflation.

Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the valet garage ban was a policy decision from past councils. The opinion may change with the new garage. This valet service is not using metered spaces, it is a loading zone. He will investigate how the fee is determined. Steve Pesci noted that the policy about the garage ban should be reevaluated.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if the City's Fee Committee determined the cost and asked how long the contract would be valid. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the contract would be valid for one year. He stated he would report back on how the fee was determined.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the valet service might be able to use the Foundry Place Garage until it reaches capacity. This must end when the garage is full. Public Works Director Peter Rice added there were some concerns about having valet in the garage. There needs to be a discussion about how the valet in the garage would be handled.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that there was no difference between a customer parking in the garage and a customer having a valet take their car to the garage. It is all the same use.

Chairman Doug Roberts suggested tabling this discussion until after the summer season to understand how full the garage would get during peak season. Steve Pesci added that over the next year the Fee Committee should review the \$500 fee.

Harold Whitehouse moved to approve renewal of valet parking license for the One Hundred Club, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion Passed 9-0.**

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

No old business.

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Quarterly Accident Report by Police Captain Frank Warchol.

Police Captain Frank Warchol thanked the Committee and noted that he had enjoyed working with everyone to help make Portsmouth safer. Captain Mark Newport would be taking over his role on the Committee beginning in June 2019.

Police Captain Frank Warchol commented that in the last quarter there were 3 pedestrian accidents. Two were in parking lots. One was on Islington Street. The vehicle was never located.

Mary Lou McElwain thanked Police Captain Frank Warchol for his service on the Committee. Steve Pesci concurred and commented that the quarterly reporting was very helpful, and he hoped it would continue.

B. Portsmouth receives Walk Friendly Community (WFC) designation.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that the City applied for and received a Walk Friendly Community designation. The City achieved silver status. The organization found that Portsmouth was a City with a small population and the staff does a lot with pedestrian initiatives. They felt that Portsmouth was an example of what smaller communities could do. This designation is good for 5 years, and Portsmouth will work to continue to improve in this area. The application was in the PTS packet to give members an idea of the criteria.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that there was a sample application form that gave the reason for the questions and noted the link would be in the minutes. Here is the link: <https://tinyurl.com/wfcports>. This could help Portsmouth's policies going forward.

Public Works Director Peter Rice acknowledged that the City Council, Planning Director Juliet Walker and all the departments helped in the evolving process. It is a cultural change and takes time to build consensus. It has been a positive experience helping to build this program.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that Steve Pesci forwarded a link on the reasons behind a nationwide increase in pedestrian deaths. It's a 2 ½ minute video that talks about different reasons, from cell phones to more traffic. It is very informative. Here is the link: <https://tinyurl.com/whymoredeaths>.

Steve Pesci supported Public Works Director Peter Rice's comments and thanked all the people involved. It is a big application process and a big accomplishment to achieve silver status on the first application. Mary Lou McElwain agreed and noted that the reason she moved to Portsmouth was because of the walkability. Ralph DiBernardo requested that these comments be brought to a Council meeting so the public could hear them.

C. Notes from PS21 and PTS Committee Walking Tour with Chuck Marohn

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that the notes from Emily Corbett Chadwick from PS21 were in the packet for informational purposes.

D. Streetlight Request Process

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the City received a streetlight request for the corner of Junkins Avenue and Pleasant Street. There is a new crosswalk in the location with inadequate overhead lighting. The typical procedure is to install a streetlight in locations like those. The request was appropriate and submitted to Eversource. Eversource has final approval over the addition of streetlights to utility poles. It did not need the approval of the PTS Committee.

Harold Whitehouse commented that the blinking light at South Street and Bracket Lane was not visible coming down South Street. It needs to be updated. Eric Eby responded that the light is scheduled to be updated and should be installed soon.

E. Market Square brick repair work on sidewalks

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the project was a maintenance effort to resolve the trip hazards in the area. The goal is to complete this before summer. There is money identified for a full reconstruction of Market Square, but that is not what this effort is. This is purely a maintenance project. Some of the tree grates will be removed and replaced with a porous pavement. This was done on Porter Street. A level surface will protect the roots.

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that water would still get through to the trees. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that was correct. Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the long-term redesign of Market Square would include removing the granite accent pieces. He stated they are the worst tripping hazards. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was a good point to consider, but the City has not moved forward with the design for the complete rehabilitation of Market Square.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the roots from the elm tree in front of the North Church were causing problems with the foundation of the building. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the Trees and Greenery committee addressed it three times. There is no evidence that the roots are causing damage to the foundation. The request to remove the tree has been denied all three times.

F. PTS Open Action Items. There was no Committee discussion.

X. **MISCELLANEOUS:**

A. Discussion on the Parking Principles review meeting.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented on the Parking Principles review meeting. The City Council packet will have a summary of the small group discussions. Staff has drafted proposed revisions based on the discussions at that work session. The Council will decide how to proceed.

Mary Lou McElwain requested a report back on the middle school traffic change. She presented a traffic issue with the high school at the South Street and Summit Avenue intersection. Many vehicles go in and out of the school using South Street. This causes traffic issues. More people are driving to school instead of using school buses. Eric Eby responded that they were continuing to monitor the middle school traffic change. It appears to be working well. He stated that he would report back at the next meeting. The high school has hired a traffic consultant to do a study of their internal circulation. That study is under review. They will determine what measures to implement over the summer.

Public Works Director Peter Rice questioned if the new intersection at Andrew Jarvis Drive and Lafayette Road was a success. Eric Eby confirmed that it has been successful. Mary Lou McElwain noted that South Street was the bigger problem. Eric Eby responded it was because of the layout of the parking lots. Chairman Doug Roberts requested a report back at a future meeting about the high school changes.

Harold Whitehouse commented that he wanted the PTS Committee to take a stand and let the McIntyre Subcommittee know there isn't support for the parking allotment of 77 spaces for 77 condos for the McIntyre Building. He stated his opinion is based on safety and parking. He stated he wanted to go on record opposing the plan, but would not be

making a motion. He stated he hoped another member would make a motion. No motion was made.

Mary Lou McElwain noted that in the past, proposed developments have come before the PTS Committee. Recently they have not. She stated that the Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA) development should have come before this Committee. She questioned why these applications are not referred to PTS. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that if there were on-street parking impacts, then the project would come before this Committee. If there are not, then it would not. Mary Lou McElwain noted that the City is losing a lot of metered spaces with the PHA project. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that those were the PHA spaces. They were not City spaces. The City had an agreement with PHA to use the spaces, but it is their property.

Harold Whitehouse did not think the McIntyre Building was providing enough spaces. Chairman Doug Roberts said there were no parking requirements for first floor retail in the downtown. They are proposing parking for the residential condos. Harold Whitehouse commented that it was a safety issue. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that he did not think it was a safety issue.

Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff commented that the Planning Board had jurisdiction over the number of parking spaces pursuant to the Ordinance. The developers will be doing a traffic study as part of the application. It will be reviewed by the Planning Board.

Steve Pesci said that more than just applications with parking impacts should come before this Committee. If traffic studies or designs for new projects impacted the streetscapes, pedestrian scape or traffic flow, it should come to PTS for member feedback.

Ralph DiBernardo agreed with some of the concerns Mary Lou McElwain expressed. He was disappointed that the Committee would not be participating in the proposed pedestrian street closures before presentation to the City Council. He understood that this is an advisory committee and it is the Council's choice to refer an item for review. However, that means the only members not included in this street closure discussion are the citizen appointed members. Closing streets for pedestrians is the beginning of a potential ongoing program. The Echo Avenue closure and Neighborhood Parking Program came before this Committee. The citizen members had good input for those projects.

Ralph DiBernardo moved that Chairman Doug Roberts request the City Council include the PTS Committee in the discussion about closing the streets for pedestrian use before implementation, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that street closures are an event-related activity and handled by staff. This event is not a permanent closure. It is no different than Children's Day or Market Square Day. It's a managerial issue. If this was a permanent closure, then it should come to this Committee. Public Works Director Peter Rice did not support the motion: it is an event.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if Ralph DiBernardo knew that it was changed to two Sundays in September. Ralph DiBernardo responded that he was aware, but added that the proposal was not posted on the website. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff said it was included in a City Council packet on the website.

Ralph DiBernardo noted that the original proposal would have made a serious impact to the City's parking and traffic. The foundation for this is evolving with the pilot trial, but it has potential to be a bigger program. He thought this Committee should have input. The pilot Neighborhood Parking Program came before PTS because they expected it to be permanent.

Police Captain Frank Warchol commented that the Police Chief had the authority to close streets for events or other reasons and not consult staff or committees. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff added that this was not a proposal for a permanent closure of Market Square. It is an event proposal. City staff are working with the Council to ensure the event is successful and safe. Chairman Doug Roberts added the event would open streets to pedestrians. Other communities have been successful with this approach.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if any permanent street closure would come before this Committee. Chairman Doug Roberts said yes but the Council can decide against it.

Steve Pesci commented that it would be a positive thing for the Committee to have some input on this event. He requested that a message be conveyed to Council saying that there is a Parking Traffic and Safety Committee that would like to play a role in these discussions. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that he would keep that in mind going forward and bring it to their attention.

Ralph DiBernardo withdrew his motion, and Mary Lou McElwain withdrew her second.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – at 8:58 a.m., VOTED to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary