

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – June 6, 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, Mark Newport
Interim Fire Chief, Todd Germain
Member, Ralph DiBernardo
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Shari Donnermeyer arrived at 9:00 a.m.

Absent:

Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff

Staff Advisors Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the name Emily Corbett should be corrected to Emily Corbett Chadwick.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to accept the meeting minutes of the May 2, 2019 meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how full the Foundry Place Garage was. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was about 25%-30%. There has been a small increase due to the nice weather. A significant increase is expected on Market Square Day and other events throughout the summer when the garage rate is fixed.

Harold Whitehouse reiterated Mary Lou McElwain's idea from the May meeting about adding \$1.00 to the digital message board sign at the intersection at Market Street and Russell Street to attract more customers.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated April 30, 2019, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 8-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Mansfield of 113 Bow Street and CEO of Provident Bank spoke to agenda item VII.C. The bank opened its Portsmouth location after the Ordinance banning drive-thrus was passed. The bank is a big supporter of the community and has contributed to many organizations and programs in Portsmouth. The executive headquarters is moving to 25 Maplewood Avenue. The current branch will be moving to the first floor and 15-minute parking will be critical for customers. Mr. Mansfield requested the Committee's support in creating 15-minute parking. Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how many 15-minute parking spots they had at the current branch. Mr. Mansfield responded they had three that were shared by other local businesses.

VI. PRESENTATION:

No presentation.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request for handicap parking space in front of 179 Concord Way, by Joe Wenhold. Ralph DiBernardo moved to approve a handicap parking space in front of 179 Concord Way, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that this would be a public handicap parking spot, so anyone with a handicap-parking placard would be allowed to park there.

B. Request for loading zone on Vaughan Street for 111 Maplewood Avenue building, by the project applicant. Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve a loading zone on the south side of Vaughan Street at the corner of Raynes Avenue, with the hours of 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if this would include holidays and Sundays. Eric Eby responded that it would not. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that they would ensure that language was on the signage.

Steve Pesci noted that at the site visit they expressed concern about the location of an existing fire hydrant being blocked by certain trucks in the loading zone. It was discussed that the hydrant may be relocated as part of the construction project. Eric Eby stated he discussed it with City staff and it could be relocated to the corner on the other side of an underground electrical duct bank, however, there would be a cost involved to move it. Interim Fire Chief Todd Germain commented that he could support the loading zone if the fire hydrant could be moved.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned how many parking spots the loading zone would occupy, and questioned how it compared to the loading zone request by the restaurant across the street that was tabled. Eric Eby responded it would take up two spaces from the hours of 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. The request that was tabled was for a permanent loading zone from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. everyday. Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that this loading zone was not going to be reserved. It would be available for anyone who needs it, including the restaurant across the street. Steve Pesci noted that this request would hopefully resolve all the loading needs for everyone on the street.

Interim Fire Chief Todd Germain moved to table and refer to staff to report back on the fire hydrant relocation at the next meeting. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

C. Request for 15-minute parking spaces on Hanover Street and the Vaughan Mall lot, by Provident Bank. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that five spaces may be excessive. Ralph DiBernardo commented that they should refer this item to staff for a recommendation on how to accommodate the bank without making five spaces limited to 15-minute parking. Eric Eby noted that one suggestion was to add three parking spaces in the alleyway of the lot. It is currently two-way traffic, so it would have to become a one-way entrance and exit.

Steve Pesci thought that five 15-minute parking spaces was excessive. It would be appropriate to add the two 15-minute parking spaces on the street, and it would be good to explore if more could be added in the City right-of-way. Steve Pesci did not support the three 15-minute spaces proposed in the Worth Lot. Ralph DiBernardo noted that the existing 15-minute spaces were hard to access, and suggested moving them.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the Committee should start talking about establishing a policy on 15-minute parking before creating more spots. This was not the first time a request like this has been made. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that they could do both at the same time.

Public Works Director Peter Rice recommended that the motion should be to approve the two 15-minute parking spaces on the street and consider additional spots in the future after an evaluation. Historically, the Committee has granted requests for 15-minute parking spaces because they want to support local businesses, however, there is generally a 90% loss of the revenue for the spaces. The Worth Lot is used heavily, and should be evaluated before adding more 15-minute parking spaces.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that spaces in the Worth Lot generate about \$4,500 a year. The 15-minute parking spaces are hard to enforce because of the high turnover. Parking is designed to support the businesses whether it's a three-hour limit or 15-minute limit.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve two 15-minute parking spaces on Hanover Street in front of 25 Maplewood Avenue beginning September 1, 2019. Seconded by Steve Pesci. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to table action on the three 15-minute spaces in Vaughan Mall parking lot behind 25 Maplewood Avenue and review the City's policy on designating 15-minute parking spaces, seconded by Steve Pesci. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Mr. Mansfield supported the discussion and motion, but clarified that they would not need the spots until September 1, 2019. They could remain three-hour spaces until then.

D. Time limit for previously approved parking meters on Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve 3-hour time limit for parking meters on Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

E. Install parking meters for all unmetered parking spaces on Maplewood Avenue between Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street. Steve Pesci moved to remove the 15-minute time limit on the two spaces on the easterly side of Maplewood Avenue, commencing 140 feet northerly from Vaughan Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Steve Pesci moved to approve metering of all parking spaces on Maplewood Avenue between Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Ralph DiBernardo moved to approve 3-hour time limit for new metered spaces on Maplewood Avenue between Raynes Avenue and Vaughan Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Public Works Director Peter Rice questioned if there was data that supported the 3-hour time limit designation for those spaces. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that the closest meters on Russell Street had a 3-hour time limit. The 3-hour limit is based on giving patrons enough time at restaurants. It is appropriate and consistent with the area.

Motion passed 8-0.

F. Request for pedestrian activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) on Dutton Avenue near Memorial Bridge parking lot, by Brian Birner. Harold Whitehouse asked about the cost of a RRFB. Eric Eby responded that it would be about \$15,000.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he could bring this to the City Manager for consideration as a Capital Improvement Project (CIP).

Eric Eby clarified that there would be two flashing lights and a button to activate them.

Harold Whitehouse moved to approve installation of a RRFB on Dutton Avenue at Memorial Bridge parking lot contingent on available funding and staff will report back on funding source. Seconded by Steve Pesci. **Motion passed 8-0.**

G. Prohibit parking for 50 feet on west side of Middle Street north of Aldrich Road. Mary Lou McElwain commented that when cars are parked there it is safer for bicyclists, but it is dangerous for cars. This is a safety issue and there needs to be better visibility.

Planning Director Juliet Walker supported removing the one space. Eric Eby added that it was 50 feet because there was already a 30 foot no parking area there. This change would add 20 feet to it, which would be taking away one parking space.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to prohibit parking for a distance of 50 feet on west side of Middle Street beginning at the intersection with Aldrich Road, and running northerly, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that people have passed along the same concerns about Cass Street and suggested that staff report back on that area.

H. Motorcycle parking in Market Square. Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that there is motorcycle parking in front of 14 Market Square. The parking is suppose to be available at a reduced rate, but the rate was never established. Because the rate was never established, some motorcyclists do not feel obligated to pay full price, and ticketing them leads to appeals lost due to the lack of a designated reduced parking meter fee. He recommended establishing an hourly rate of \$1.50 when a patron uses the ParkMobile App. Residents that use the app can enjoy an additional \$.50/hour discount. Patrons that do not use the app must use the pay and display meter at the \$2.00/hour rate.

Harold Whitehouse wanted to ensure that this would not be a burden to motorcyclists because they are an important part of Market Square. Parking Director Ben Fletcher agreed.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how many motorcycle-specific spaces are at the location. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was one regular space divided into five motorcycle spaces. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that \$1.50 sounded a little high. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it is a 25% reduction in cost for everyone, and 50% for residents. It is very fair. Steve Pesci agreed.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to establish a fee of \$1.50 per hour when using the ParkMobile App or \$2.00 per hour at the display meter, maximum three hours for the motorcycle-specific spaces in the designated motorcycle parking area, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back, proposed lane use changes at Congress Street and Fleet Street, and Pleasant Street at Market Square. Eric Eby noted that the last time this came to the Committee they asked that he look at the Pleasant Street and Market Square intersection at the same time. Eric Eby reviewed traffic volume data and queuing for the intersections with the existing conditions. It showed the average queue, 95th percentile queue, and the maximum queue lengths. This was compared to the proposed lane change queuing. The Congress Street and Fleet Street intersection would have one through lane, a right-turn-only lane and a left-turn-only lane on Congress Street. The maximum queue line went back further because there was only one through lane. The volumes were based on peak-hour and peak-month activity. The only thing missing was pedestrian activity. The maximum queues do not block any intersections. The lane changes would reduce confusion. This configuration will flow better with the other intersections and it would create a consistent one through lane. The lane lines and signage would need to be extended further back, so people would know which lane they needed to be in.

Steve Pesci commented that this model showed the intersections could handle the change and it would have a lot of benefits for pedestrian safety. The change only requires paint, so if it did not work it could easily be changed back. Steve Pesci questioned if the signal could be adjusted at Fleet Street to help reduce queuing.

Harold Whitehouse requested Interim Fire Chief Todd Germain comment on the safety of this change. Interim Fire Chief Todd Germain commented that the road would still be the same width because parking would not be reoriented. As long as there was room to get a fire truck or ambulance past parked vehicles, then it will work.

Chairman Doug Roberts clarified that the Fire Department would not be in favor of changing the parking to diagonal parking on Pleasant Street. Interim Fire Chief Todd Germain responded that was correct. It would pinch the intersection too much.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that this would be safer for the busses operating in the downtown as well. Mary Lou McElwain supported the change.

Chairman Doug Roberts requested that they use latex paint. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that could be used.

Police Captain Mark Newport questioned when this would happen. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it would probably happen in September 2019. Eric Eby stated he would report back at the next meeting with a plan to clearly show the changes to the Committee.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer to staff to report back at the next meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

B. Middle School traffic pattern update. Eric Eby noted that everything has been going very well; there has been a big improvement. The recommendation is to leave this in place as it is because it is working so well.

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. High School traffic study update. No Committee discussion.

B. Parking and Traffic Safety Committee authority and jurisdiction, per City Ordinances. No Committee discussion.

C. PTS Open Action Items. No Committee discussion.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. July Meeting. Chairman Doug Roberts stated there would be no meeting in July. The next meeting is August 1, 2019.

Ralph DiBernardo noted that the DPW sidewalk project on Spinney Road was great, but it was too bad it did not go all the way to Islington Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that was the long-term plan, but they didn't have all the easements.

Steve Pesci noted that at the site visit they talked about the speed on State Street. This brought up the broader issue that there are some hot spots in town, and speeds should be reviewed. There could be an opportunity to conduct engineering studies and adjust some of the speed limits accordingly. He stated it could be an item on a future agenda.

Mary Lou McElwain requested an update on the High School traffic study. Eric Eby responded that the traffic study has been completed by the consultant. The High School is in the process of implementing some of the recommendations. Some of it is dependent on the School Department Budget.

Shari Donnermeyer arrived at 9:00 a.m. and did not vote on any agenda items. She was recognized and thanked for her service on the Committee. This was her last meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – Shari Donnermeyer moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 a.m., seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary