

AMENDED MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – September 5, 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
Fire Chief, Todd Germain
Police Captain, Mark Newport
Member, Ralph DiBernardo
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Steve Pesci (via conference call)
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alt. Member, Jonathan Sandberg

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:

Mary Lou McElwain moved to accept the meeting minutes of the August 1, 2019 meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Steve Pesci abstained from the vote because he was not present at the August meeting.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Ralph DiBernardo moved to accept the financial report dated July 31, 2019, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Molly Wilson completed an application for traffic calming measures and submitted it last summer. Ms. Wilson was concerned about speeding and requested that the speed limit be lowered to 20 mph to match the rest of South Street. Ms. Wilson also requested more signage and visibility to help get kids to the bus stop safely.

VI. PRESENTATION:

No presentation.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request to renew valet parking license for the Marriott Residence Inn, by Jackie Huber. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if this renewal was different from the previous agreement. Eric Eby responded that it was not. Mary Lou McElwain questioned where the valet cars went to park, and if it was at the Foundry Garage. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that there are no agreements with either garage for valet parking. Police Captain Mark Newport added that they have their own private lots.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to allow public comment, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Peter Weeks commented that they have their own parking garage at Portwalk.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve renewal of the valet parking license for Marriott Residence Inn, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 9-0.**

B. Request to renew valet parking license for the Hampton Inn, by Jackie Huber. Ralph DiBernardo moved to approve renewal of valet parking license for the Hampton Inn, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

C. Request to amend valet parking license for The 100 Club, by Dana Wergen. Eric Eby stated they currently have valet parking in a loading zone on Hanover Street from 6:00 PM to 12:00 AM Monday through Saturday. This request is to extend it to begin at 5:00 PM and add Sundays.

Chairman Doug Roberts clarified that the loading zone was not a shared parking area. Eric Eby stated parking is allowed outside the loading zone and valet parking hours.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to amend terms of the valet parking license by amending hours to Monday through Sunday from 5:00 PM to 12:00 AM, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

D. Request for valet parking spaces on Porter Street for 15 Middle Street, by Alex Ross. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that this was the former Salvation Army building that is now being converted to an inn. The Committee did a site visit. Chairman Doug Roberts was specifically concerned about cars turning left off of Middle Street onto Porter Street.

Steve Pesci was concerned that if the inn had a courtesy vehicle occupying one of the two requested spaces, then it would leave just one space for valet drop off.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that they needed to consider the school buses that go to the Music Hall and the impact that would have on parking.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if there was a stop sign at Porter Street and Chestnut Street. Eric Eby confirmed there was.

Ralph DiBernardo was concerned that people would back out of the parking spaces instead of driving down the alley. Ralph DiBernardo shared Mary Lou McElwain's concerns about the school buses.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that he understood these cars went to Foundry Place Garage. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it is current policy not to have valet parking in the city-owned parking garages.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that the valet spot was very close to the sidewalk and the building.

Steve Pesci commented that he was concerned about maintaining the pedestrian corridor and ADA accessibility.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Steve Pesci questioned who set the fee and if it had been adjusted recently. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that fees are set by the Fee Committee, and it has been adjusted recently. Steve Pesci commented that the cost seemed relatively low.

E. Request for parking changes and loading zone at 3 Pleasant Street, by John Chagnon. Harold Whitehouse moved to table request for removal of parking spaces until the Market Square Renovation Plan is completed and to table request for a loading zone until the Planning Board process is completed, seconded by Jonathan Sandberg.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the property owner has requested a short-term adjustment to allow for a temporary loading zone with no loss of parking. Public Works Director Peter Rice recommended that they discuss the proposal with the property owner and allow the loading zone for the interim. Many businesses use the alleyway for a loading zone now, but it will no longer be available in the future. If the loading zone is time specific, there can be two (2) parking spaces available during the day.

Harold Whitehouse and Jonathan Sandberg withdrew the original motion.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to allow City staff to work with the property owner to create a loading zone and report back for consideration at the next meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that the loading zone would not be used for construction. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the developer had a laydown area in the back for construction equipment and other supplies.

Harold Whitehouse questioned closing down the alleyways from an emergency access perspective. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that it has been discussed at the Historic District Committee. The alleyways would be converted to pedestrian ways and there would be fire access.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned the status of changing the turning lanes in front of Tuscan Market and if that would be impacted by the loading zone. Eric Eby responded that it would not because it doesn't extend that far back.

Motion passed 9-0.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back, request for parking restrictions at the end of Little Harbor Road.

Mary Lou McElwain moved to prohibit parking along both sides of Little Harbor Road east of Wentworth Coolidge Mansion driveway, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Eric Eby commented that when cars are parked on that end of the road it makes it very narrow and hard to get out of the driveways. The parked cars impact sightlines and turning movements. Vehicles can still park further back and people can walk down.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if this was a permanent change or if it would be on a trial basis. Eric Eby responded that any decision this Committee makes is on a trial basis for up to one-year until it becomes permanent by the City Council through the adoption of the Omnibus.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if there should be a sign to allow people to unload kayaks then go park somewhere else. Eric Eby responded that people probably already do that and suggested posting NO PARKING signs for now.

Motion passed 9-0.

B. Report back, concerns with speeding vehicles on Little Harbor Road.

Eric Eby commented that staff took vehicle volume and speed counts on Little Harbor Road. The average speed is 19 mph, with an 85th percentile speed of 24 mph. The legal speed limit is 30 mph. If they posted a speed limit it would be 30 mph. The recommendation is to not post the speed limit because it may encourage people to drive faster.

Public Works Director Peter Rice questioned if there were any pedestrian crossing signs on the road. Eric Eby responded there are currently no signs. Public Works Director Peter Rice recommended adding Share The Road awareness signage.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to post awareness signage (i.e. Share The Road) on Little Harbor Road, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 9-0.**

C. Report back, concerns for pedestrian safety on Middle Road at Essex Avenue crosswalk.

Eric Eby stated traffic cameras and speed recorders were posted. There were not a lot of pedestrians. He stated there were never more than 9 pedestrians per hour crossing at the location. Generally, crosswalks are installed when there are 20 or more pedestrians an hour. Studies have shown that if drivers are not used to seeing pedestrians in a crosswalk that they are less likely to yield at the crosswalk. There are adequate number of gaps in the traffic stream to allow pedestrians to cross safely.

There are warning signs posted and the width of the crosswalk has been increased. However, drivers not yielding is typical for a low usage crosswalk.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if it was possible to narrow the roadway width at the crosswalk. Eric Eby responded that it was only 28 feet wide currently. Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if pedestrian flashers would help. Eric Eby responded that flashers would not be recommended because it is a low usage crosswalk. The flashers are expensive and cost approximately \$15,000.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she thought this area was dangerous. She stated there aren't a lot of people crossing at the crosswalk because it does not feel safe. If efforts were made to make it safer, then more people would use the crosswalk. Mary Lou McElwain suggested adding a sign in the middle of the crosswalk, or adding a police patrol at peak hours. Police Captain Mark Newport commented that they were in the area pretty regularly.

Chairman Doug Roberts suggested adding signage to warn people about the transition to a lower speed as drivers enter the City. He stated it could help slow down traffic.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that he was surprised by the data staff collected because he has often seen cars going above the speed limit. Eric Eby responded that the average was 32 mph. Mary Lou McElwain agreed with Jonathan Sandberg, and commented that it's a busy area that needs to be safer.

Public Works Director Peter Rice stated it is a major corridor and there are many trucks coming into the City from that direction. Crosswalks and speed signs won't change that because people are very comfortable navigating that area at higher speeds because it's a larger road. The City is considering installing a bike path. They should add this item to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for a more comprehensive review.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that it would be good to do something in the interim while they wait for the CIP. He stated a temporary measure would allow the City to test out a solution. It may make sense to start lowering the speed limit at the bridge.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that they should be looking at the whole corridor from Peverly Hill Road to City Hall when considering a long-term change.

Steve Pesci noted that there were several corridors like this one in the City. Portsmouth should develop standard signage to inform people that they were entering a downtown neighborhood and speed limits are lowering. He stated the Committee should review all speed limits in Portsmouth in the future.

Police Captain Mark Newport added that there was a crosswalk near the NH Park and Ride lot on Route 33 that many people don't see. He stated it should be considered as well.

Mary Lou McElwain was concerned about changing 20 mph areas to 25 mph because it may increase speeding. Mary Lou McElwain questioned why they had 20 mph if it was not enforceable. Chairman Doug Roberts responded that it was historical.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to direct City staff to investigate interim solutions to address vehicle speeds and pedestrian safety on Middle Road and in the general area, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 9-0.**

D. Report back, request for traffic calming measures on South Street between Middle Road and Lafayette Road. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this item was similar in nature to the previous agenda item. Part of the traffic calming application is to have the residents propose solutions and show public support for them.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that adding a crosswalk in that area would not slow down traffic. It would give pedestrians a false sense of security that they could safely cross. Narrowing the road with bollards or adding police patrol would be better options.

Mary Lou McElwain suggested that the residents in this neighborhood work with Eric Eby and Public Works Director Peter Rice on a solution. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they work with residents all the time, and have been talking with this group. He stated staff have suggested having people parking on the street to visually reduce the width of the road. Staff have been working collaboratively with the residents and will continue to do so.

Jonathan Sandberg suggested removing the yellow striping as they did on Aldrich Road. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed it could be considered.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to direct City staff to work with the neighborhood and develop interim measures for traffic calming, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Legal opinion on PTS authority to set parking rates.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer proposed amendment to the Designated Motorcycle Parking Area ordinance to the Legal Department to amend pursuant to the issues raised in this memorandum for referral back to PTS. PTS will then review and approve a draft of the proposed amendment to submit to the City Council for first reading, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 9-0.**

B. Parking Principles Discussion.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that there was a work session this past March to discuss the Parking Principles. It lays out the guiding principles for parking policies. At the workshop there were some staff recommended changes that were discussed. The Council requested that these changes come to each Committee that has a role in parking policies and report back if there were any additional changes. The changes should be discussed by the Committee and a consensus must be made on all changes before it is brought back to City Council. City Council will see a consolidated list of recommended changes from all of the Boards and Committees.

The Committee discussed some of the principles outlined in the revised draft. Planning Director Juliet Walker recommended the Committee consolidate their suggested

changes into one version. This is the process used by the other Boards. Chairman Doug Roberts agreed.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that 85% of Seacoast motorists ride by themselves. A goal of the parking principles should be to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips. There should be an environmental component added to the overall principles.

Steve Pesci supported Chairman Doug Robert's suggestion. The City should support parking, but parking should not be the primary role of the City.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that it should be the commercial developer's responsibility to provide parking if they want it. Steve Pesci disagreed and stated the working groups made a big change already from making it the City's responsibility to a shared responsibility.

Steve Pesci noted that there was a lot of consensus on most of the discussions during the work session. Everyone agreed on managing pricing. Portsmouth should look at dynamic pricing. There should be references to shared vehicles and micro mobility should be added. There is one point in the draft that says parking should be revenue neutral. The revenue of parking should contribute to funding of a balance of the overall transportation system. He stated it is a good draft.

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that part of the revenue from parking went into the general fund, which helped to reduce taxes. Chairman Doug Roberts confirmed that was correct. Ralph DiBernardo questioned if anything in the principles would change that. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that would not change. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that administratively the money could be clearly spent on things related to transportation. Excess money can be put into the general fund.

The Committee agreed to forward their changes and suggestions to Chairman Doug Roberts and the PTS Secretary by September 19, 2019. The Committee will review the suggested changes and revisions at the next meeting.

C. "Why Speed Kills Cities." Article by Andrew Small, CityLab.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that this article had a number of interesting points, and it could be helpful to PTS.

D. PTS Open Action Items.

No Committee discussion.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Meeting minutes approval process.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that there are sometimes delays in approving minutes from the previous meeting. This proposal is to change the way the minutes are approved. They would be sent out electronically. If there were no objections to the minutes, then they would be approved. If there were objections then it would be discussed at the next PTS meeting.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved that the Committee minutes will be forwarded to Committee members electronically or delivered by staff as soon as prepared. Unless a Committee member objects to those minutes within 72 hours of the time when the minutes have been forwarded to that member, the minutes will be deemed to have been approved by that member. If any member objects to any set of proposed minutes, that set of minutes shall be placed on the next available Committee agenda for approval by the full Committee, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Steve Pesci abstained from the vote because there was not enough discussion around the new process, and he felt that 72 hours may be too short of a timeframe.

Mary Lou McElwain requested that the Committee discuss speeding at the next meeting. Chairman Doug Roberts agreed.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 a.m., seconded by Jonathan Sandberg. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary