

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – October 3, 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
Fire Chief, Todd Germain
Police Captain, Mark Newport
Member, Ralph DiBernardo
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Steve Pesci
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alt. Member, Jonathan Sandberg

City Staff Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Eric Eby corrected a comment he made at the last meeting about the valet parking in a loading zone for The 100 Club. He stated parking is allowed outside the loading zone and valet parking hours.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the meeting minutes of the September 5, 2019 meeting as amended, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Ralph DiBernardo moved to accept the financial report dated August 31, 2019, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Barbara Zulkiewicz, resident, raised concerns about traffic in downtown Portsmouth. It is not safe for pedestrians. State Street and Middle Street are problematic and crosswalks without lights are not as safe.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that this comes up periodically. Some crosswalks have been updated with flashers, but generally it is an enforcement issue. Police Captain Mark Newport commented that the Police Department have not received more complaints from the downtown area than the rest of the City. Officers are trying to be

more visible around the crosswalks, but there are a lot of them in the City. Ralph DiBernardo added that when the police are present in the downtown they do a good job with the enforcement. Chairman Doug Roberts stated Barbara Zulkiewicz's concern would be noted and the Committee would think of alternate solutions.

VI. PRESENTATION:

No presentation.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Hanover Street, change two 15-minute spaces in front of former Bubby's Deli back to 3 hours. Ralph DiBernardo clarified that these were all locations that no longer required 15-minute spaces by businesses. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct.

Harold Whitehouse questioned where this request came from. Eric Eby responded that the request came from City Staff.

Steve Pesci moved to change the time limit on the first two spaces on the northerly side of Hanover Street east of Bridge Street, to 3 hours, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo.

Motion passed 9-0.

B. Daniel Street, change four 15-minute spaces in front of Old City Hall back to 3 hours, on interim basis. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that this was because the Post Office was no longer at that location so the 15-minute spaces were not needed.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if there were other businesses in the area that would benefit from those spaces. Eric Eby responded that there would still be three 15-minute spaces on Daniel Street. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that these spaces are under-utilized today, and there is a need for more parking in the downtown.

Steve Pesci noted that he supported the motion, but it may be helpful to consider putting in some 1-hour spaces in the downtown. Eric Eby responded that patrons only have to pay for the time they want. The limit is 3 hours.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to change the time limit on the first four spaces on the northerly side of Daniel Street west of Chapel Street, to 3 hours, on an interim basis, seconded by Steve Pesci. **Motion passed 9-0.**

C. Daniel Street, change four 15-minute spaces in front of former Provident Bank back to 3 hours. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the businesses in the area were aware of these changes. Those spaces provide quick access to businesses like coffee shops. Eric Eby responded that they have monitored the spaces and they were all less than 50% used throughout the day. There will still be three 15-minute spaces in the area.

Steve Pesci commented that it was good to provide access to businesses, but the access should not be drive-through style in downtown Portsmouth. The choice between 15-minute or 3-hour parking is too extreme. There should be something in between. It may change the dynamic of use.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to change the time limit on the first four spaces on the southerly side of Daniel Street east of Market Square, to 3 hours, seconded by Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff. **Motion passed 9-0.**

D. Parker Street, change one-way section between Tanner Court and Hanover Street to two-way traffic. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that they did a site visit and this one-way section was less than 50 yards. It is now wider and it would be easier for people if it were all a two-way road.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to change the traffic flow on Parker Street, between Tanner Court and Hanover Street, to two-way traffic seconded by Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff. **Motion passed 9-0.**

E. Rogers Street corner radius at intersection with Parrott Avenue. Eric Eby commented that they did a site visit. There is a large sweeping radius from Parrot Avenue going right onto Rogers Street. That lends itself to high speeds and creates a long crosswalk. The thought is to tighten the radius so that the crosswalk would be shorter and speeds would be reduced. There is a driveway in the middle of the intersection that will need to be considered, and those landowners have been notified. They should be able to try something temporarily to see how it works.

Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff moved to refer to staff for report back on modifying radius to improve safety, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back, valet parking request for 15 Middle Street.

Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff moved to approve postponement requested by the applicant, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

B. Report back, proposed loading zone for 3 Pleasant Street.

Eric Eby showed a diagram of the existing conditions with two alleyways and two curb cuts. The proposal is to close the alleyways on each side of the building. The closures would provide for additional curb space along Pleasant Street. The parking spaces would be shifted down to create a 45-foot loading zone. Outside of the loading zone hours it could be used as regular parking.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned what the hours would be for the loading zone. Eric Eby responded that typically the hours are 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mary Lou McElwain commented that it seemed like a big window of time for the loading zone. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that they could evaluate the hours and see what was really needed. They could get a report back from staff.

Ralph DiBernardo noted that the plan showed tables and umbrellas in the alleyways and that may prevent access to utilities. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded the Planning Board approved that plan. That items in that space are all removable.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve the request for a loading zone in front of 3 Pleasant Street, as shown on Offsite Improvement Plan C6 prepared by Ambit

Engineering, revised 9/20/19 and refer to staff for report back on loading zone hours, seconded by Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Update on traffic calming discussion with residents of South Street.

Eric Eby commented that the next step was to coordinate with the neighborhood to find a time to meet. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that this was consistent with what they have done with other neighborhood traffic calming efforts. Bartlett Street went through multiple iterations before bollards were installed.

Harold Whitehouse complimented the Police Department for their enforcement on South Street.

B. Joint EDC/PTS meeting on Microtransit, November 8th.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that the Committee was invited to attend the Economic Development Commission/Parking and Traffic Safety Committee joint meeting on Microtransit on November 8, 2019 at 8 a.m. in Conference Room A.

C. PTS Open Action Items. No Committee discussion.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Parking Principles, PTS Committee Member comments.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that she consolidated and added the comments and edits from the Committee to review. If there is a general consensus with the comments and edits presented by the members, then the document will be presented to City Council.

The Committee agreed with the comments and edits. Planning Director Juliet Walker will share with the City Council the suggestions and comments provided by PTS Committee members.

B. Discussion of speed limits, legal requirements and reducing speeds on City gateway roads. Eric Eby commented that the State sets the speed limit at 30 mph. It can be reduced to 25 mph if there is an engineering study performed. There is no provision in the law about going below 25 mph. There should be a reason to have the speed limit reduced.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that it might be hard to reduce the speed limit if people generally drive at 30 mph or faster. Eric Eby responded that people tend to drive at the speed they are comfortable with on the road. Studies show that the number on the sign has little affect.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that he opposed 20 mph speed limits that weren't legal and cannot be enforced. South Street should be 25 mph. It's a main thoroughfare and it should be a speed limit that can be enforced.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how many tickets the Police Department has issued for infractions less than 25 mph and if they had run into issues. Police Captain

Mark Newport was not sure, but whatever the speed limit sign says is what they enforce.

Steve Pesci agreed with Ralph DiBernardo. The Committee should review the rationale of speed limits in the City. It would be better to have a 25 mph speed limit with high compliance than a lower one with low compliance.

Harold Whitehouse commented that he did not agree. There were a lot of schools in that area and the speed limit should be lower.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that the 20 mph was not enforceable and that was the issue.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that 15 mph on South Street in the school zone was hard to drive. Eric Eby commented that state law says it should be 10 mph less than the posted speed limit, so technically it should be 10 mph in the school zone.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that at the last meeting they talked about notifying people coming in the main entrances to the City that they were entering a more densely populated area. It would be a good approach to start looking at the speed limits on the main roadways into the City.

Steve Pesci questioned if staff had a map that showed the speed limit segments for streets in the City. Eric Eby responded that they have an inventory of all the speed limit signs in the City.

Chairman Doug Roberts suggested that they get a report back from staff about what they think is possible in the near term.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that what is enforceable and what is not enforceable is confusing. The public should be educated. She stated speeding tickets help in reducing speeding. Police Captain Mark Newport added that just having a police presence helps.

Ralph DiBernardo asked Police Captain Mark Newport to convey their appreciation for the Police Department's enforcement. They are doing a great job.

Steve Pesci clarified that he was not supporting people ignore the posted speed limits. If it is posted 20 mph, then they should be going 20 mph. There should be a review of all the speed limits. They could create something modeled similarly to the Parking Principles for speed limits.

Staff will report back at a later date on speed limits and speed segments on City gateway roads.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that there were a lot of open action items and wondered why there were so many outstanding. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that some are very complicated to accomplish and they don't have the

resources. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that at the next meeting they could go through them and assess the status of each one.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 a.m., seconded by Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary