

## MEETING MINUTES

### **PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

8:00 A.M. – December 5, 2019  
City Hall – Conference Room A

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#### **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  
Planning Director, Juliet Walker  
Fire Chief, Todd Germain  
Police Captain, Mark Newport  
Member, Mary Lou McElwain  
Member, Steve Pesci  
Member, Jonathan Sandberg  
Member, Harold Whitehouse  
Alt. Member, Erica Wygonik

##### City Staff Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby  
Parking Director, Ben Fletcher

#### **III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

There were no objections to the emailed minutes, so they were approved ahead of the meeting by the Committee. The minutes were approved by the City Council on December 2, 2019.

#### **IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Parking Director Ben Fletcher provided a report on the Foundry Garage. A number of programs were put into place to increase utilization, increase length of stay and business participation. The programs have been in place for 15 days. There hasn't been an increase in transactions or new monthly parking. The City hasn't been approached by any businesses yet. He stated there needs to be more time to see the impacts.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned why businesses were not taking advantage of the programs. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they were working with the Chamber on outreach.

Harold Whitehouse suggested that they consider leasing the top level for private functions.

Erica Wygonik questioned what kind of outreach has been done to advertise the programs. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that they have done press releases on the City website and outreach to Seacoastonline.com. The usual channels have all been exercised.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the financial report dated October 31, 2019, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Chairman Doug Roberts stated three written correspondences were provided to the Committee today. They include the following:

Elizabeth Bratter in support of IX.B. (Maplewood Avenue signal)

Elizabeth Bratter letter regarding Zagster program.

Matthew Glenn in support of VII.B. (No Parking on Sagamore Avenue)

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept and place on file, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Cory Belden from Altus Engineering spoke in support of agenda item VII.A. There is an application for a residential building that will reduce the parking lot for the Bethel Assembly of God Church. There are concerns about overflow parking on the street. It is a narrow street, so if people park on both sides it could prevent emergency vehicle access.

Jay Couture, Executive Director of Seacoast Mental Health Center, spoke in opposition to agenda item VII.B. Ms. Couture objected to the current proposal because currently some Golden Egg customers use their parking lot. If on-street parking is eliminated on Sagamore Avenue then more people will use their parking lot. She suggested revising the proposal to limit parking on the weekends.

Jane Reynolds spoke in support of agenda item VII.B. There is a lot of traffic in that area, and it is a scary place to bike especially with cars parked on that section of Sagamore Avenue.

Elizabeth Bratter addressed her correspondences provided to the Committee today. Ms. Bratter supported the Maplewood Avenue light change if it included the leading pedestrian interval and education about the change. It might be worthwhile to consider it for a citywide change. Ms. Bratter has done research on Zagster and found that sponsor driven racks that are free to users had the most growth. Ms. Bratter did not support Zagster for the City as it was currently presented. She commented that COAST bus should be considered and protected as the City moves forward with microtransit options. Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that the microtransit is on hold until the incoming City Council has a chance to provide input.

David Allen is on the board of Seacoast Area Bicycle Riders (SABR) and spoke in support of the Middle Street bike lane project. Biking infrastructure is a critical part of City growth, and SABR appreciated the City's efforts so far.

Tom Gosselin from the Golden Egg spoke in opposition of agenda item VII.B. He stated parking is an asset to the business, and on busy weekends helps to slow traffic in the Sagamore area.

Ned Reynolds addressed agenda item VII.B. and supported the Middle Street bike lane project. He is on the board of the Seacoast Mental Health Center (SMHC). Prohibiting

parking 7 days a week would create a parking problem for SMHC. It could be prohibited on the weekends to help eliminate biking hazards.

Ralph DiBernardo spoke in support of agenda item VIII.A. There was a lot of public input and the Committee did an extensive study on the temporary closure. The time has come to make it permanent and protect the neighborhood from highway traffic.

Michael Bean, future owner of the Golden Egg, spoke in opposition to agenda item VII.B. He is also the owner of the corner lot on Sagamore Avenue and Wentworth Road, which will give him the opportunity to create some additional parking. It would be a hardship to eliminate parking at this time.

Chuck McMahon spoke in support of agenda item VIII.A. The entire neighborhood supports the permanent closure on Echo Avenue.

David Calkins spoke in support of agenda item VIII.A. The temporary closure has increased the safety and enjoyment of the neighborhood. The closure has made a great impact on the neighborhood.

## **VI. PRESENTATIONS:**

### **A. Middle Street bike lane report back, by Planning Director Juliet Walker.**

Planning Director Juliet Walker provided a report back on the Middle Street bike lane project. Staff was requested by City Council to provide a report back on the perceived safety concerns with the introduction of the new bike lanes. They have been in existence for about a year. There has been some design modifications made based on feedback from the Committee and the public. Shorter flexible bollards were installed in July 2019 with a greater distance between them. They were removed from areas with significant buffers. A parking space near Aldrich Road was removed to help with sight lines. Because they weren't installed until July this year, there needs to be more data collected to provide a true comparison. The Police Department provided data on crashes for the year before the bike lanes were installed and the current year in that corridor. There was a slight reduction in accidents after the bike lanes were installed, and more happened when the bollards were not installed. They were all motor vehicle related crashes. In general, the bike lanes have not made the area unsafe, and the bollards add a safety benefit for the parking lanes. Traffic speed data has been monitored. There should be more data collected, but in general there has not been a significant decrease in speeds. There is a slight reduction in speed when the bollards are present. Bicycle counts have been conducted and there has not been a significant change in bike usage. Right now this is not a complete network because it does not go all the way downtown. Changing behaviors also takes time.

Mary Lou McElwain commented there is also a lot of debris in the bike lanes that can prevent people from using them. Planning Director Juliet Walker agreed. They have received that feedback and will welcome all feedback coming in.

Planning Director Juliet Walker stated there are no specific recommendations at this time. This presentation is a report back on what was presented to the City Council.

Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that the total number of accidents has not increased. Within that total there was an increase in non-reportable accidents and a decrease in reportable accidents, which is a good thing because they were less severe. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that because people are driving more slowly and are more aware of their surroundings if an accident does occur, then it is generally less severe.

Harold Whitehouse commented that the bollards took away from the aesthetics of Middle Street and the side streets. He expressed concern about how the area would look for the upcoming Portsmouth NH 400 celebration in 2023. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that was a valid concern, and they would continue to look at it.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if when Middle Street was repaved it would improve sight lines. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that there were no current plans for a major paving project on Middle Street.

Mary Lou McElwain noted that the lighting at the Cass Street intersection was lacking. There should be more lighting at busy intersections.

Erica Wygonik commented that it would be good to see data on the higher bollards vs. the lower bollards. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that may be hard because the higher bollards have already been removed. However, a more comprehensive report back may be able to show some of that data.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that as a bicyclist he found the bollards made a big difference particularly at the intersections. Having less bollards makes turning left easier. Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that they will specifically be looking at the angled intersections this winter because without the bollards traffic patterns change significantly. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the Greenleaf Avenue intersection is a pending action and staff will come back later with a proposal.

Steve Pesci commented that the important piece moving forward is completing the corridor into the downtown. They need to work to balance the aesthetics for all of the infrastructure.

Harold Whitehouse commented that the bike rack usage at the high school was low. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that she has received a lot of feedback both positive and negative from high school students.

**B. Zagster year-end summary, by Planning Director Juliet Walker.**

Planning Director Juliet Walker spoke to the Zagster year-end summary. Three years ago the City entered into a lease agreement with Zagster. It was largely sponsored by the City, but any expansion would be done by sponsorships. It started out with 6 locations, and in 2019 there were 10 locations. There is no plan on what to do going forward. Staff is waiting to get feedback and input from the incoming City Council. Micro-mobility is an evolving field. It is better for the City to have a stake in the game instead of leaving it up to the private sector. Overall there has not been a growth in the Zagster program membership. The most popular stations were Portwalk Place and the Memorial Bridge lot.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if there was anyone trying to challenge the motorized scooter ordinance. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded there has not been a challenge to date.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this program was sponsored by parking revenue, not tax dollars. This is part of the overall parking and transportation program. It will be viewed in context of the program.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS:

**A.** Chase Drive, request to prohibit parking on north side of roadway. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that this was next to the church parking lot. It was requested by the developer. The church and the neighborhood support this change.

Ms. Walker recommended adding the portion of Michael Succi Drive that extends from Market Street to Chase Drive to keep the parking restriction consistent. Eric Eby commented that he did not think parking was allowed there already but he would report back if parking was allowed.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to prohibit parking along north side of Chase Drive and to direct staff to report back on parking on Michael Succi Drive between Chase Drive and Market Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 9-0.**

**B.** Sagamore Avenue, across from The Golden Egg, request for No Parking. Public Works Director Peter Rice noted that staff would review options for traffic calming and parking before reporting back.

Harold Whitehouse commented that it was a busy area with limited parking and questioned if they had authority over that because it was Route 1A. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed it was within the City's jurisdiction.

Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 9-0.**

**C.** Pleasant Street at Washington Street, sight line concerns, by neighborhood resident at Ward 5 meeting. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this intersection has been looked at multiple times. As a result, the intersection has been adjusted and parking has been removed to improve sight lines. Staff can look at it again and report back.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by Police Captain Mark Newport. **Motion passed 9-0.**

## VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

**A.** Echo Avenue ramp closure, request to make permanent, by Chuck McMahon. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they would need to work with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) because it is within their system. There will need to be final reviews with Police, Fire and the NHDOT. It can remain temporarily closed until

things are finalized, but there are steps that need to be taken before the closure is permanent.

Police Captain Mark Newport noted that they would not be opposed to it, but they would have stipulations. There would need to be an emergency gate to provide access, if needed.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to show support for permanent ramp closure with stipulations from the Fire Department and Police Department being addressed and to refer to staff for report back on permanent closure configuration after meeting with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

**Motion passed 9-0.**

## **IX. INFORMATIONAL:**

**A.** Middle Street, request for crosswalks between Lincoln Avenue and Cass Street, by Diane Schaefer and Mitch Shuldman. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that this would come back at a future meeting.

**B.** Maplewood Avenue proposed signal timing and phasing changes. Eric Eby commented that there have been complaints from the public that it is too difficult for pedestrians to cross Maplewood Avenue. It is one of the reasons they are not using the Foundry Garage. The proposal is to change the signal timing. Pedestrians would be able to cross when the traffic parallel to them had a green light. This would require vehicles making a turn to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalks. It would be a big change, but it would reduce delays for vehicles and pedestrians. Eric Eby requested feedback from the Committee.

Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that this technique has been used across the country for a number of years. The timing would be adjusted so that the pedestrian has a head start when entering the intersection. This change would require an upgrade to the equipment at the intersection.

Planning Director Juliet Walker questioned if there had been discussion of implementing this citywide. She stated Ms. Bratter makes a good point that it would be helpful to be consistent throughout the City. Eric Eby agreed. He stated there are costs to upgrading and funding is not available for citywide implementation right now.

Chairman Doug Roberts commented that the “New” sign placed at the top of the stop sign on Brewery Lane was helpful and he would like to see them used more often.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if the walk signals would come up when a pedestrian hit the button or if it would be coordinated with the signal lights. Eric Eby responded that after the pedestrian hit the button it would signal walk in coordination with the lights. This change would shorten the cycle length.

Steve Pesci questioned if this change would eliminate the diagonal crossing patterns at the intersection. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct. Steve Pesci agreed with implementing this in multiple locations, but perhaps not citywide. The equipment upgrades should include the pedestrian responsive equipment. There should be a button, a confirmation the request has

been received, and countdown timers. Eric Eby responded that they would be upgraded and include ADA tones.

Mary Lou McElwain was concerned about this change from a pedestrian perspective. People are impatient. There are safety issues at many intersections, and the pedestrians and cyclists should be the priority. She requested that this be studied more. Steve Pesci added that people do not understand the laws about right turn on red when there is a pedestrian crossing signal.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that he has been reading Walkable City by Jeff Speck. The author is in favor of these signal timings. However, he is not in favor of right turns on red.

Police Captain Mark Newport reiterated that there needs to be education for drivers and pedestrians. These signals already exist on Lafayette Road.

**C.** Albany Street, parking in front of 85 Albany Street. Eric Eby commented that this was a new 4-way stop. When vehicles park in front of the Albany Street building, traffic must go around the parked vehicles and it causes them to cross over the center lines. Staff will report back.

**D.** Summer Street at Austin Street, traffic calming request. Eric Eby commented that staff is collecting data and will report back.

**E.** Pay-by-plate. Parking Director Ben Fletcher stated the Parking Division would like to modernize how people pay for metered parking. Presently, the City uses pay and display. There will be a \$10,000 a year savings in paper cost and numerous efficiency improvements if pay-by-plate is implemented.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this addresses a concern that has been in place since the kiosks were implemented. People don't like to walk back to their vehicles, especially when there is a lot of snow. This move would improve the experience for users and for enforcement staff.

Steve Pesci questioned if the EasyPark device and the ParkMobile app would still work. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed they would remain the same. The single space meters will remain the same as well.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if there were privacy concerns. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was just a marker for the vehicle and they don't keep the data. There are many cities in the area that use the pay-by-plate system.

Public Works Director Peter Rice stated they are moving forward with the pay-by-plate system because it is an operational decision. He stated there will be public outreach and notice about the new system and the implementation schedule.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to show support with the general approach to improve efficiency and move program forward, seconded by Steve Pesci.

**Motion passed 9-0.**

**F.** Committee to elect new chairman at first meeting of New Year. Chairman Doug Roberts commented that the Committee will elect a new chairman. Traditionally, the City Council representative is the PTS Chairman, but the Committee will need to vote on it at the next meeting.

**G.** January meeting canceled. Harold Whitehouse opposed canceling the January 2020 meeting. Chairman Doug Roberts commented the Committee would not have a City Council representative by the January meeting date.

**H.** PTS Open Action Items. Beginning in January 2020, the PTS action items will be available on the City's online permitting site. No discussion by the Committee.

**X. MISCELLANEOUS:**

**A.** Distribution of agenda packet, hard copy or digital. Eric Eby asked if the members would prefer to have digital documents instead of paper. They can choose between digital or paper. Amy Chastain requested members email her if they want to go digital.

Harold Whitehouse thanked Chairman Doug Roberts for his service.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to adjourn at 9:45 a.m., seconded by Police Captain Mark Newport. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey  
PTS Recording Secretary