

# **Citywide Neighborhood Committee Meeting**

## **December 9, 2020, 5:00 pm**

Committee Attendees: Larry Cataldo, Lori Soloway, Mark Syracuse, Dave Cosgrove, Paul Mannle, Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, and Beth Margeson. Also, Kathy Bergeron, the former chair, participated - All Participated via **Zoom**

City Staff: Peter Stith, Planning Department coordinated Zoom for City

Members of the public present: Juliet Grant, Marc Chisholm, Stacy Moore, Joan Hamblet, State Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka, Councilor Cliff Lazenby, Ann Cummings, Laura Brown, Bob Tuttle, Jim Lee, Ken Goldman, and Patrick Hughes

### Discussion Items:

1. Discussion of Neighborhood Issues: Juliet Grant of Wibird Street reported that in the area from Hannaford and Cass Street, the streets were dark and there was no sidewalk. Larry Cataldo said that he would reach out to PW Director Peter Rice and review this problem again from a safety perspective. (It was raised in a previous Zoom meeting.)

2. The next order of business was to elect officers. Upon motion of Lori Soloway and later seconded by Mark Syracuse, Larry Cataldo was nominated as Chairperson. Upon motion of Larry Cataldo and second of Mark Syracuse, Lori Soloway was nominated as Vice Chairperson. Upon motion of Larry Cataldo and seconded by Lori Soloway, the undersigned was nominated as Secretary. The nominations were unanimously approved by the committee members.

3. The next order of business was to discuss the Holiday Lights Contest. Mark Chisholm, a member of the public, volunteered his family to act as a judge, however, all the judging positions are filled. Each ward has one judge (a family) but they will be judging outside of their ward.

Mark Syracuse reported that there were 73 contestants entered as of tonight. For comparison's sake, in the 2009 contest there were about 30 entrants. The contestants will be competing for three \$500 gift cards to Home Depot, Ricci Lumber and Loew's as well as Honorable Mention prizes of \$25 for Hannaford's, Wal Mart, Irving, and Market Basket. The gift cards were selected on the basis that they could help the winners buy essential items in light of the COVID 19 pandemic. Mayor Rick Becksted and Paul Mannle are credited with obtaining more gift cards.

The undersigned is responsible for coordinating volunteers. Dave Cosgrove and Stephanie Seacord, the City's Public Information Officer, have been working exhaustively to create a Google Map with turn-by-turn directions of all of the entrants so that the judges can go to the houses. The contest entrants will close on December 10 at midnight. The judging will take place from December 12 to December 20, the judges will take photos. After that time, the overall winners will be selected by the committee with the winners to be announced at the December 21<sup>st</sup> city council meeting. The categories are Classic/Traditional and Most Creative. Each participant will receive a thank-you letter.

Additional comments on the holiday lights contest were as follows. Stephanie Seacord was thanked for all of her hard work and support. She will be responsible for getting letters from the mayor to the contestants and sponsors. In turn, Stephanie thanked Laura Brown for her exhaustive efforts promoting the event on the city's Facebook pages and other social media platforms. Mark Syracuse thanked Councilor John Tabor for his assistance in getting Seacoast Media Group, the publisher of the Portsmouth Herald, to sponsor the event.

4. Lori Soloway reported on her progress with the neighborhood coordinator email and contact list. She contacted each one to confirm that person was a representative of that neighborhood. She said that this effort was almost complete. So far, it proved useful in asking the coordinators to promote the Holiday Lights Contest. This effort will be useful in the future in broadcasting major issues and events such as the National Night Out (NNO).

5. Mark Syracuse made a motion, and seconded by Lori Soloway, to have once-a-month zoom meetings to discuss ideas that would improve the neighborhoods and continue communications within the committee. Larry Cataldo pointed out that each meeting would need to be public (i.e., public invited) to maintain transparency. Jim Splaine also confirmed that. Even if a quorum was not present, issues and administrative actions could be discussed, but not voted upon. The regular monthly meetings would continue throughout the pandemic. The committee in general felt that the meetings should start at 7 pm, as suggested by Kathy Bergeron. Mark suggested that our next meeting should be held at the end of January at 6 pm. The motion was unanimously approved.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Beth S. Margeson

Beth S. Margeson  
Secretary