

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – February 6, 2020
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

At 8:00 a.m., the meeting was called to order.

II. ATTENDANCE:

Members Present:

City Councilor/Chairman, Peter Whelan
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
Alt. Member, Erica Wygonik

Member Absent:

Member, Harold Whitehouse

City Staff Present:

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

III. SELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN:

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to appoint City Councilor Peter Whelan as Committee Chairman, seconded by Planning Director, Juliet Walker.

Motion passed.

Police Captain Mark Newport and Erica Wygonik were not present for the vote.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

The December 5, 2019 meeting minutes were approved by the Committee on December 20, 2019 and the City Council on January 21, 2020.

V. FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Mary Lou McElwain requested an update on the status of the Foundry Place Garage. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the December financials show they are ahead of projections. The pilot program efforts saw a decline in potential revenue. However, usage increased because of the closure of a private parking lot, and meters which were added to multiple streets.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned how they were making the rates known to visitors. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that there was a variable message board on Market Street advertising the garage and rate. It is also on the website. Erica Wygonik suggested posting information on the Park Portsmouth Twitter feed. Planning Director Juliet Walker added that working with businesses like the Music Hall, to have parking information included in their communications, could also be helpful.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the financial reports dated November 30, 2019 and December 31, 2019, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Motion passed.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Elizabeth Bratter, property owner, spoke to a number of items. Ms. Bratter commented that the Islington Creek Neighborhood was interested in working with the City to revise the Neighborhood Parking Program (NPP). She requested that it be added to the March agenda. Ms. Bratter questioned if there would be a left-hand turn only lane on Woodbury Avenue onto Maplewood Avenue or if the half circle was going to become something else. She also commented on New Business Item A. She suggested the crosswalk would be safer if it was at the corner of Islington Street and Summer Street, but that if it was there, she would want it located so no parking spaces were removed. This would help keep on-street parking in front of Café Kilim.

Tom Bolko, resident, commented on crosswalks and signage in the South End. There are nine crosswalks from the New Castle Bridge to South Street. Mr. Bolko was concerned for pedestrian safety, especially in the crosswalks, given the high traffic area. There should be signage at the crosswalks at Humphreys Court and New Castle Avenue, and at Marcy Street and New Castle Avenue. Mr. Bolko was also concerned about the lack of signage for the Gate Street crosswalk.

Marc Stettner, resident, spoke to the Motorcycle Parking Ordinance and the Maplewood Avenue roadway. Mr. Stettner suggested there should be no fee and a designated time limit of seven (7) hours for the motorcycle spots downtown. Boston charges \$0.25 an hour for their motorcycle spots. Portland does not charge for their spots. Mr. Stettner had a few other recommendations that he gave to the Committee. Mr. Stettner also requested that the bumps be removed from Maplewood Avenue because they are not reducing the speed.

Michael Bean, resident, spoke to Sagamore Avenue parking. Mr. Bean appreciated the sample motion on Agenda Item E. The restaurant will be closed for a few weeks for renovations. There should be some traffic relief. The new lot will begin development this spring.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Islington Street, request for crosswalk at Mobil station, by Terry LeBlanc.
Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by Planning Director Juliet Walker. **Motion passed.**

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Amendment to Motorcycle Parking ordinance.
Erica Wygonik requested some background on this item. Chairman Peter Whelan responded that there were five (5) marked spots for motorcycles downtown. They take up one vehicle parking space. It is motorcycle parking from April 1st to November 30th and a regular parking space in the winter.

Public Works Director Peter Rice added that the spaces were added to provide motorcycle and moped parking downtown. The ordinance was written and stated there should be a reduced rate for those spaces. However a rate was never established at that time. The PTS Committee set a rate that was challenged because some felt that it

did not go through the appropriate channels. Erica Wygonik commented that it may not make sense to provide a reduced resident rate for motorcycle parking and questioned if they provided a reduced resident rate for cars. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed a reduced rate was given if residents used the ParkMobile app and/or the EasyPark program.

Planning Director Juliet Walker questioned if there was a time limit for parking in the spots. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was not addressed specifically in the ordinance, but it would be the same three-hour time limit as the spaces that surround it. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they could add the posted time limits into the ordinance.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned how the turnover would be enforced. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that the enforcement officer electronically chalks the tires.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was concerned that no fees would encourage more motorcycles to come into the downtown. There would be an increase in noise. The church across the street has already expressed concern about the noise.

Steve Pesci commented that it was logical for all vehicle operators to pay into the system. He supported the fee structure. He stated the Committee will need to think about parking of mopeds including electric mopeds and mobility devices (scooters) in the future. Mary Lou McElwain agreed that the moped guidelines should be revisited.

Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to suspend the rules to allow public comment, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed.**

Marc Stettner, resident, stated the rate included in the ordinance was outrageous especially compared to other communities.

Chairman Peter Whelan clarified that this was a recommendation to the City Council. There will be three (3) readings before the City Council and the public will have an opportunity to speak.

Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to adopt the ordinance as drafted in the packet with additional language stating posted time limits apply, and send to the City Council for first reading, seconded by Steve Pesci. **Motion passed.**

B. Pleasant Street at Washington Street, report back on sight line concern.

Eric Eby commented that he measured the sight lines in the area to see how the previous conditions compared to the new parking configuration. The sight line has been reduced to 80 feet, which is similar to those in a downtown environment. The new configuration has allowed for improved sight lines a few feet back from the stop bar. It is an improved condition overall for sightlines and pedestrian traffic.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept and place the memorandum on file, seconded by Fire Chief Todd Germain. **Motion passed.**

C. Middle Street, report back on request for crosswalks between Lincoln Avenue and Cass Street. Eric Eby commented that this was a resident request. There is a large curve radius on Middle Street. The curve restricts sightlines in that area. The traffic speeds and volumes are high. The sightlines are low. That is the reason that a crosswalk is not recommended in this area. Eric Eby added that he conducted counts in the area. There were only 9 pedestrians trying to cross at Aldrich Road in a 28-hour period. Generally, a crosswalk is installed if there are 20 or more pedestrians crossing within an hour. The counts also showed there were only 10-15 pedestrians walking in the area during peak times. A crosswalk is not recommended based on the data.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if the numbers would be different if the study was conducted when school was in session. Eric Eby responded that counts were done in June, when school was still in session, and then again in July. There was not a huge change. The one crosswalk that gets a lot of activity is at Austin Street and Richards Street because it's a direct route to school.

Planning Director Juliet Walker requested clarification on other methods besides counting to determine if a crosswalk should be implemented. Eric Eby responded that other communities have conducted surveys of households in the area to see if there was a desire for a crosswalk. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that it would be a good time to survey households when notices are distributed about the bike lanes. Chairman Peter Whelan agreed.

Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to accept and place the memorandum on file, and staff to follow-up with resident requesting crosswalks, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed.**

D. Summer Street at Austin Street, report back on traffic calming request. Eric Eby commented that the data showed there were at least 15 pedestrians an hour in this area. Parking goes right up to the edge of the crosswalk. The packet included a series of recommendations. The recommendations include restricting some parking, improving signage and pavement markings. This may be a pilot opportunity for pedestrian flags as well. There would be high visibility flags on each corner in buckets. Pedestrians can take these to cross the street and deposit them on the other side. Other communities have tried this. Sometimes the flags disappear quickly, but they may last longer here because it is a residential area.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he would support a pilot program for the flags. However, it may make sense to start with the initial recommendations and revisit it this spring or summer.

Steve Pesci commented that they should be enforcing the parking setback at all City intersections. Steve Pesci was supportive of the pedestrian flags. He noted flags have been used in Durham. Typically, they are used at mid-block crosswalks, not at intersections. A pilot project in an area that does not meet the benchmark for a crosswalk would make more sense.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that the light at the Middle Street intersection contributes to the problem. It is a fast light, so cars speed up to make it.

The Committee voted to approve recommended measures. **Motion passed.**

E. Sagamore Avenue, report back on request for No Parking across from The Golden Egg. Eric Eby commented that they have looked at the area and took the comments from the last meeting into consideration. Parking should continue on the shoulder of Sagamore Avenue until the development of the adjacent parcel is complete. Once the parcel is developed, there would be available parking for customers on the site.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to table until development of adjacent lot, seconded by Fire Chief Todd Germain. **Motion passed.**

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Quarterly Accident Report by Police Captain Mark Newport.

Police Captain Mark Newport reviewed the report from the packet.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that there was a three-car accident on South Street on January 21, 2020 and asked for more information. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that he could bring the details to the next meeting.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that it would be helpful to map out the accidents to help identify problem areas. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that they had software that could do that.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned how their statistics compared to other communities. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that they are lower than most. The money they were granted this year was less because their statistics are so good.

B. Microtransit by Planning Director Juliet Walker.

Planning Director Juliet Walker commented that last year the recommendation was to form a committee with members from PTS and the Economic Development Committee (EDC). Mary Lou McElwain and Jonathan Sandberg volunteered to join the new subcommittee.

C. Speed Limit Inventory Map.

Eric Eby commented that the map showed all the streets in the City and their posted speed limits. There are some spots where the ordinance does not agree with what is posted on the street, generally it is accurate. It is a good starting point for the discussion to review speed limits in the City.

D. PTS Open Action Items.

No Committee discussion.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

Steve Pesci commented that he had raised concerns about private parking signs encroaching on public right-of-ways. There have been improvements in the downtown area but it is still an issue in the Maplewood Avenue area. He requested staff continue to monitor the placement of the signs.

Eric Eby commented that the residents of South Street requested an update on the traffic calming measures. There has been some speed data collection. The average speeds have been within the speed limit, but there are some opportunities for improvement. There will be more information on this matter at a future meeting.

The Committee discussed moving site visits from Wednesday to Tuesdays at 8:00 a.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to adjourn at 9:05 a.m., seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary