

## MEETING MINUTES

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

2:00 P.M. – July 9, 2020  
Remote Meeting Via Zoom

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#### **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Peter Whelan called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

#### **II. ATTENDANCE BY ROLL CALL:**

##### 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  
Member, Harold Whitehouse  
Alt. Member, Erica Wygonik

##### City Staff Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby  
Parking Director, Ben Fletcher  
Assistant City Attorney, Jane M. Ferrini

#### **III. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Parking Director Ben Fletcher reviewed the financial report.

Harold Whitehouse questioned what accounted for the increase in parking violations. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded they have not stopped writing violations, even when they weren't collecting, just to keep traffic moving. He stated there were fewer tickets written during that time. The vendor is sending out collection letters, so the report is reflecting those results.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that some parking spaces have been blocked to allow for restaurant seating and questioned if they had an idea on what that revenue loss would look like. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was difficult to say. If there is enough inventory, then the loss would be zero. Some of the secondary parking locations are starting to fill up, so people are finding parking.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the Foundry Garage numbers were increasing. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that the numbers for the Foundry Garage were stronger than the numbers from last year for the Hanover Garage.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report as presented, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **On a roll call vote, motion passed 9-0.**

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

There was no public comment. There was one email correspondence to the Committee from Liza Hewitt regarding safety on Middle Road.

**V. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Proposed Stay and Pay graduated parking meter rate ordinance changes, by DPW.**

Eric Eby commented that the Committee approved the concept and parking rates for the Stay and Pay program at the last meeting. As a result, there were some changes that needed to be made to the Chapter 7 Ordinance. There are no time limits with the Stay and Pay program. The sections provided in the packet show the wording that needs to be changed. The Committee needs to review and vote on the proposed changes before they go to City Council.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher explained the rate structure and provided a graphic outlining the proposed changes. He stated the Stay and Pay program provides the option to stay longer if the user wants to. He described the rate structure and reasoning for the changes.

Mary Lou McElwain requested clarification on the resident rates. Parking Director Ben Fletcher provided an explanation of the structure that included three incremental changes in price based on hours. Mary Lou McElwain commented that it was confusing and there should only be one change in the rate.

**Mary Lou McElwain moved to approve Chapter 7, Article I, Section 7.102, Parking Meter Zones and Parking Meter Rates with the following graduated parking meter rates for fees and time increments for residents and the general public, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.**

<b>Resident Rates</b>	<b>On Street Zone A</b>	<b>On Street Zone B/C</b>
hours 1 through 3	\$1.50	\$1.00
hours 4 through 11	\$2.50	\$2.00
<b>Public Rates</b>	<b>On Street Zone A</b>	<b>On Street Zone B/C</b>
hours 1 through 3	\$2.00	\$1.50
hours 4 through 11	\$5.00	\$3.00

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if the rates were prorated at all. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that with prepay users must pay for the time they expect to stay. When there are 5 minutes remaining on the rate, the user will get a notification with the option to add more time if they want.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned how the rates would be advertised. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that the app and devices will reflect the rates and display the total before a user pays. Jonathan Sandberg noted that it was important that users be alerted to the increase in price after hour 3. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed and noted that they would look at effective signage.

Steve Pesci supported the motion. Simple is better for pricing. The Portsmouth meters and app are easy to understand. It is a good experiment to see if they would be getting adequate turnover by giving people a choice.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if this was going to the City Council for the final reading. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was going for first reading on Monday, July 13, 2020. Harold Whitehouse requested staff comment on the change. Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they get most of their revenue from tourism. It is counterproductive to invite tourists into the City then force them out with parking limits. The first 3 hours will be the same price then people will have the opportunity to stay longer. The average consumer will be relatively unaffected. It will be interesting to see the economic impact. Eric Eby added that it would be great to see how it works and the goal is to get to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile parking rate. The City is still over 100% occupancy. Parking Director Ben Fletcher noted that they can reevaluate in 6 months to 1 year to see if parking is priced too low.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if they were really promoting the garages. It would be good to get traffic out of the Market Square area because of the restaurant outdoor seating. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that more people are using the Bridge Street parking lot, so the public is finding alternate parking.

**On a roll call vote, Motion passed 8-0-1.** Fire Chief Todd Germain abstained.

Eric Eby reviewed Chapter 7, Article I, Section 7.105 – Parking. He stated the 500-foot rule is being removed. When the meter expires the person needs to either pay for additional time or risk getting a citation.

He reviewed the changes in Chapter 7, Article III, Sections 7.324 through 7.329. The hour limits are outdated in this section. The proposal is to get rid of the 1-hour limits. There are no 1-hour limits in the City today. There are no changes to the 30 minute limits section. The 15-minute spaces will remain the same as they currently are in the ordinance.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the 30-minute spaces were enough time. Eric Eby responded that the spaces were on Islington Street and the time limit encouraged turnover for the businesses in that area. Steve Pesci added that the businesses in that area were primarily food-to-go businesses. The businesses in the area want the 30-minute time limit.

Eric Eby asked the Committee to review the red lined notes in Section 7.327 on 2-hour limited parking.

He stated there is a section of Hancock Street listed as 2 hours, but that is not what is reflected in the field. The recommendation is to clean up the ordinance language and leave the three spaces on Marcy Street as they exist now.

**Chairman Peter Whelan moved to approve change as recommended by staff to amend Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 4. Hancock Street, item a. (northerly side from Marcy Street to Pleasant Street), amended to read "Northerly side, first three spaces closest to Marcy Street", and to delete Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 4. Hancock Street, item b. (southerly side from Washington Street to Pleasant Street), seconded by Planning Director Juliet Walker.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Eric Eby noted that there were no changes to Islington Street. There are no signs on Madison Avenue (Madison Street) even though it is in the ordinance as a 2-hour limit. Chairman Peter Whelan questioned if people were using the spots for more than 2 hours. Eric Eby confirmed they were. There are no signs marking a limit. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that they don't enforce it if it is not signed because it's not fair to do so. Effectively, Madison Avenue (Madison Street) is already 72-hour parking.

**Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to approve change as recommended by staff to delete Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 6. Madison Avenue, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Eric Eby commented that there were no spaces on Mechanic Street because of the ongoing construction at the Peirce Island wastewater treatment plant. They can leave it and then spaces will be there with a 2-hour limit post construction or they can make it unlimited parking. Another option is to remove parking all together because the road is narrow.

**Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to eliminate 2-hour parking spaces on Mechanic Street as outlined in Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 7. Mechanic Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Eric Eby commented that there were no requests to put the signs back up on Middle Street, so the recommendation was to remove it from the ordinance.

**Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to approve change as recommended by staff to delete Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 8. Middle Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Eric Eby commented that both sides of Summer Street were a 2-hour limit, but there were no signs. There were no requests to put them back.

**Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to approve change as recommended by staff to delete Chapter 7, Article III, Section 7.327, Limited Parking – Two Hours, Section A., 11. Summer Street, item a. (both sides from Islington Street to State Street, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), seconded by Harold Whitehouse.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Eric Eby commented that they removed the 3-hour time limit section entirely. The 4-hour time limit section remains for Livermore Street.

**Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to adopt all red line changes as proposed by staff in Chapter 7, Article 1, Section 7.102 and Chapter 7, Article I, Section 7.105 and in Chapter 7, Article III, Sections 7.324 through 7.329, seconded by Steve Pesci.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Harold Whitehouse commented that there was no reference to veterans in the document. He stated he thought it was a State law or ordinance that all veterans can park free at any meter spots in the state. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that unless there was a very recent change veterans are subject to paying like everyone else. However, Portsmouth has made a practice of not charging when a vehicle has a veteran plate. They do request everyone observe the parking time limits. Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini added that they have a lot of housekeeping to do in Chapter 7. The goal for this proposal is to move forward with the Stay and Pay program.

**B. Request for All-Way STOP at intersection of Thornton Street and Sparhawk Street, by residents of area.** Eric Eby commented that the traffic camera showed equal volumes on both streets. There were also limited sightlines coming out of Sparhawk Street. It is the only part of Thornton Street that does not have a 4-Way STOP. Eric Eby commented that he could provide a full report next month, or the Committee could take action today.

Harold Whitehouse commented that they should not wait another month. Public Works Director Peter Rice questioned if Eric Eby thought it met warrant requirements. Eric Eby responded that it did meet the requirements. They are two similar streets with similar volumes and there is a sightline issue. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they need to be cautious because they receive a lot of requests for 4-Way STOP signs. They need to ensure it meets the warranted conditions. A 4-Way STOP is not a speed control measure. They are for the management of an intersection.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that there were sightline issues like this around the City. Branches hanging over sidewalks or roads obstructing sightlines. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the City could trim back branches. Eric Eby responded that they could be trimmed if they were hanging in the right-of-way. The City can't go on private property. Eric Eby suggested citizens use the City's Click N' Fix application when they see issues like this one.

Steve Pesci noted that there was a lot of pedestrian traffic on this street and it was an appropriate spot for a 4-Way STOP sign. Chairman Peter Whelan agreed.

**Steve Pesci moved to support for the application, but in keeping with precedent, request a report back from staff on All-Way STOP at the intersection including pedestrian volumes and vehicle crash data, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

**C. Request for All-Way STOP at intersection of Jewell Court and Brewery Lane, by residents of area.** Eric Eby commented that the intersection near Plaza 800 and the new apartment building had sightline issues. The hedges were cut back recently, so the sightlines

have improved. There is more traffic on Brewery Lane than Jewel Court, but it would be good to get updated data. Brewery Lane is part of the Plaza 800 property. The bump out is private property, so they would need to look at what it would mean to put a sign there.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if Jewel Court was a City maintained street. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that it was.

Planning Director Juliet Walker questioned if it made sense to wait to evaluate traffic until after the Islington Street corridor project was completed. There is potential for an unbalanced intersection. Eric Eby responded that it would be helpful to gather data after traffic has normalized post Islington Street construction and after the new apartment building opens.

Jonathan Sandberg noted that there were already a lot of stop signs in that area and adding more could be too disruptive.

Public Works Director Peter Rice added that the City will be putting in the sidewalk along Jewel Court which will improve sight distances by eliminating some hedge row.

Erica Wygonik commented this could be an imbalanced intersection and would not be a good fit for a 4-Way STOP. It will be good to collect data after the traffic in the area has normalized. It would be interesting to see how pedestrian volumes evolve after the sidewalk is constructed.

**Planning Director Juliet Walker moved to request a report back in six (6) months from staff on All-Way STOP at intersection, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

**D. Request for pedestrian flags at Riverbrook Condos on Middle Road.** Eric Eby commented that there have been crosswalk requests in the past for this area. He stated even during peak hours there are plenty of gaps in traffic to cross. Pedestrians just need to wait a little longer. Pedestrian flashing lights are expensive and not warranted. Residents were receptive to trying pedestrian flags. It is a fairly low-cost treatment. The long-term plan is to construct a sidewalk on the north side of the street. The road needs some physical changes to impact speeds.

Steve Pesci commented that other communities have used this strategy effectively. This is the perfect place to try pedestrian flags.

**Harold Whitehouse moved to approve use of pedestrian flags at Riverbrook Condos crosswalk on Middle Road, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.**

**On a roll call vote, motion passed 8-1.** Harold Whitehouse voted opposed.

Steve Pesci noted that they have talked about gateway points with dynamic speed signs in the past. This is another transition spot that could be incorporated.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he was supportive of infrastructure changes, but the City did not have the funding resources right now to make any changes.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Request to improve safety at intersection of Boss Avenue and Sunset Road, due to limited sightlines, by Sarah Lynch.** Eric Eby commented that the sightlines are blocked by grading and vegetation on private property. Cutting back vegetation would create erosion on the bank. This problem cannot be solved by physical changes. The recommendation is to put a warning sign on Boss Avenue. It is mostly local traffic in that area.

**Harold Whitehouse moved to support staff recommendations to install warning signage, seconded by Steve Pesci.**

**On a roll call motion passed 8-0-1.** Public Works Director Peter Rice abstained.

Harold Whitehouse requested an update on the request for a flashing beacon at the intersection of Woodbury Avenue and Dennett Street. Eric Eby responded that they were still looking at the situation and should have a report back for the August meeting.

Steve Pesci commented that there was a noticeable lane shift with the new bridge. Eric Eby commented that it was widened when the bridge was rebuilt. The City has a design to weave into the bridge and fit better, but there is no funding for that project right now.

## **VII. INFORMATIONAL:**

**A. Traffic volumes during pandemic.**

Eric Eby commented that the City was back to 80-85% normal.

**B. Omnibus.**

Eric Eby briefly addressed the Annual Omnibus Ordinance and changes. A request to schedule the first reading is on the City Council agenda for July 13, 2020.

**C. Accident Report by Police Captain Mark Newport.**

Police Captain Mark Newport noted that the numbers are down because of COVID. There were 350 vehicular accidents from January 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. The total included 35 accidents involving personal injury. There were five pedestrian accidents and no bicycle accidents during the same time period.

**D. PTS Open Action Items.** No action taken.

## **VIII. MISCELLANEOUS:**

Harold Whitehouse asked why events were not allowed on the top floor of the Foundry Garage and instead moved to the Bridge Street parking lot. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the garage was not designed for the occupancy or the activity proposed. The City would have had to invest a lot of money to make it work, so they looked at alternate locations that would be better suited for the proposed activities.

Mary Lou McElwain commented a store owner had complained about a moped leaning on their store front. She requested that the Committee address the moped ordinance at the August meeting. Chairman Peter Whelan agreed and noted that he had received a phone call from a business owner who was concerned about the same issue. Police could not act based on the complaints because of how the ordinance is written. Planning Director Juliet Walker requested



the Committee discuss other mobility devices like electrical scooters when looking at the moped ordinance.

Steve Pesci stated the Committee had previously discussed drafting ordinances for the City Council regarding moped parking. He stated given the increased physical spacing and serving space demands, it is more important than ever that sidewalk space be preserved. He requested that the staff restart discussions regarding moped parking (off-sidewalks) in coordination with the City's ordinances regarding other non-licensed motorized and electric mobility devices. He stated as a moped owner and rider, he's disappointed with moped operators parking randomly in pedestrian spaces.

Steve Pesci stated that the Committee had also discussed making a graphic overview of the City speed limits. He requested it be added to the long-term agenda list.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn at 3:37 p.m., seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

**On a roll call, motion passed 8-0.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey  
PTS Recording Secretary