

**PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 AM – Thursday, November 20, 2003
City Hall - Council Chambers**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Alex Hanson, Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 8:05 a.m.

II: ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Alex Hanson, Chair, Asst. Mayor	Ralph DiBernardo, Member
John Burke, Dir. Parking & Transportation	Herb Bunnell, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Ron Cypher, Member
Deputy Police Chief Dave Young	Ted Gray, Member
Fire Chief Chris LeClaire	Hank Greenberg, Member

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

IT WAS VOTED on a Motion by Ted Gray to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee meeting of October 16, 2003. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE:

- (A) **Lafayette/Elwyn/Peeverly Hill Roads – Need for protective left-turn phasing -** John Burke informed the Committee that the City project to widen the Elwyn approach to U.S. 1 was nearly complete. He noted that the City is still trying to persuade the state to install protective left-turn phasing on the signals for the left-turners on the Elwyn and Peeverly Hill Road approaches as well as a protected phase for pedestrians. He noted that NHDOT has left these phases out to try and process as much car traffic as possible on Rt. 1. John Burke explained that the letter requests a reconsideration of their decision. NHDOT has contacted the City and will review operations and accidents within 6 months of the widening to see if these protected phases are warranted.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Maplewood/Cutts/Rt.1 Bypass –** Gary Dodds, 525 Maplewood Avenue, owner of Cutts Mansion, resident of Rye. He referred to a plan depicting the intersection, which had at one time been a 4-way stop. He stated that he was concerned with the speeding in the area and made a few suggestions: Install traffic signals at each ramp from the Bypass. Install curbing and sidewalks around the intersection and install a 3-way stop sign before 95 and a 4-way stop to slow down traffic. He noted that a number of years ago the NHDOT had put sidewalks on the wrong side of the intersection coming from the Bridge. He

received 25 signatures on a petition to fix the intersection. He stated that this roadway is the second highest in terms of speeding complaints. He noted that if Cutts became a one-way onramp allowing access to the Bypass but not from the Bypass, it would alleviate all the problems with truck turning and sight distance. He also suggested relocating trees around the intersection.

Chairman Alex Hanson stated that stop signs cannot be used for speed control. Doing so puts the City at great liability.

John Burke stated that he agrees with Gary that the intersection is one of the City's highest priorities in terms of reconstruction. That is why it has been in the City's CIP for several years. Fortunately, the NHDOT finally funded the project and have already initiated design studies. The bridge and intersection are scheduled for replacement in 2008.

About a month ago, NHDOT's traffic engineers met with John, the Portsmouth Police Chief and Deputy Chief to review whether the intersection could be signalized or controlled by a 4-way stop. The consensus was that either condition would result in cars backing up from the new stop sign or signal toward the Maplewood Avenue Bridge and that there would be insufficient sight distance for people coming over the bridge to stop. This is perhaps why the 4-way stop was eliminated in the past. John Burke stated that new sidewalks will be part of the NHDOT project and whether the ramps are one way, two way or eliminated is part of the ongoing NHDOT study. The City's Advisory Committee will be review preliminary information from NHDOT at a meeting in January (yet unscheduled).

Until the intersection is reconfigured, short-term improvements can be accomplished. The intersection can be better defined through striping (already accomplished) and improving sight distance by moving some of the signs and possibly trees. A good suggestion is to center the traffic signal as well.

Fire Chief LeClaire suggested a temporary island at the intersection be constructed to keep left turns from Maplewood onto the By-pass from going over the island. John Burke stated that the island was striped, but because the intersection is deficient for turning radius, a curbed center island would probably be taken out by the trucks. He suggested that a temporary sandbag island could be tried, but he was not optimistic that it could be retained. Steve Parkinson stated this has been tried before and the 18-wheelers went right over them.

Mr. Dodds informed Mr. Hanson that he contacted Jason Page, the City's Code Enforcement Officer who is aware of the land issue and contacted PSNH.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to better align the traffic signal to the center of the intersections; petition NHDOT to relocate their directional signs at the intersection; refer the issue of relocating trees on PSNH property to the Planning Department for a recommendation; and install a temporary island on the Bypass Ramp (Cutts) approach.

Ralph stated that we are very concerned in this community about removing trees without replanting. Discussions with Public Service would be required to plant a

new row of trees before removing the mature trees that are acting as a buffer from the Bypass for the neighborhood. The neighbors may be opposed to losing this buffer.

- (B) **Lafayette Road/Meat Store Driveway** – Informational – Letter sent to NHDOT requesting NO PARKING and turn arrows.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

Alex Hanson moved forward the Community Campus item.

- (H) **Community Campus** – Request for Directional Signs – Sue Bunting, President and CEO addressed the Committee. The City had installed directional signage to the Campus a number of years ago. However, no signage was provided for people coming from Route 33. Also, the sign posted on Lafayette Road at Campus Drive is too late for people to see and make the turn. It needs to be in advance of the intersection on each side.

John Burke stated that Lafayette Road is a state road and the City has no jurisdiction, however, the City could petition the state on behalf of the Foundation. Chairman Alex Hanson asked if she was willing to pay for the sign? Sue answered in the affirmative.

Ted Gray suggested one sign that would encompass several different directional spots such as Peverly Hill, Community Campus, etc. It was discussed that the Community Campus is not a private enterprise but houses numerous public non-profit agencies serving the community need. The request differed from a single private for profit venture seeking advertisement as well as direction. Chairman Alex Hanson stated that the Wentworth by the Sea signs directed people to an area, which includes the Hotel. The signage was placed at the City's Request. The purpose of making sure that traffic does not travel through the City's congested south end.

MOTION made by Ted Gray recommending a sign for the Community Campus be posted on Route 33 in advance of the turn to Peverly Hill Road and a letter be sent to DOT for directional signage on Lafayette Road. The expense to be borne by the Foundation. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

- (A) **Greenleaf/Lafayette Road** – Request for Crosswalk - Deputy Police Chief Young stated that he and John Burke discussed this and are not in favor of a crosswalk here. The concern is the insufficient sight distance and width of road.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to place request on file. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

- (B) **Marcy/Pickering Streets** – Parking/street width - Ralph DiBernardo referred to the on-site review. They found a posted sign on Pickering Street that says “No Parking Either Side of Street”. The recommendation would be to add one more sign closer towards the Marcy St. intersection. John Burke confirmed that the Ordinance does not allow parking on either side for the entire street. The Public Works Dept. will install the sign.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to place the request on file. Seconded by Steve Parkinson.

- (C) **Pleasant/Livermore Streets** – Resident Parking Concerns – Ralph DiBernardo stated that the on-site committee did not come to a consensus on the parking issue. The committee did not feel that eliminating parking on one side, which would remove 6 to 8 parking spaces, would do anything to help the residents. It was felt that the problem is a broader parking issue within the City – that is, downtown and local employees parking on the street. He suggested referring it to the Parking Committee. The Police Dept. expressed the view that the current resident parking on Hanover Street is an enforcement issue.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to refer to the Parking Committee. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. Motion passed.

Chairman Alex Hanson moved the 325 State Street Project to the end of the Agenda as he would recuse himself from that item.

- (E) **Vaughan Street/Lollipop Store** – Parking Conflict with truck loading – Ron Cypher referred to the on-site review and stated that the problem was getting tractor-trailers into the loading dock of the Lollipop Store - specifically, 53-footers. There is one parking spot that interferes with their loading. The evidence is that the light pole across the street has been knocked down twice. The parking spot, which is substandard in length, should be eliminated by a “No Parking” sign - hopefully installed on the building with owner permission.

MOTION made by Ron Cypher to place a “No Parking” sign on the northerly side of Vaughan Street adjacent to the Lollipop Store. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed. Fire Chief LeClaire opposed.

- (F) **Proposed New COAST Bus Stops** – Portsmouth Boulevard – John Burke stated that the COAST service coming from Dover, Somersworth, Rochester into Market Square currently runs “closed door” along Woodbury and Market Street between KMART and Portsmouth Boulevard. COAST would like to be able to serve Commerce Way and Osprey Landing by diverting into these areas and coming back onto Market Street at Portsmouth Boulevard. A whole new community will be

served. COAST is seeking approval of two temporary stops on Portsmouth Boulevard – one at the intersection with Commerce Way and one at Shearwater Drive. John passed out photographs showing that the buses would not block traffic at these intersections. John noted that ideally, COAST will be getting approval from the owners of Commerce Way in the near term to allow stops directly on Commerce Way, which will replace the temporary stops.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to approve the temporary bus stops. Seconded by Police Chief Dave Young. Motion passed.

- (G) **Hampton Inn** – Request for Directional Signs – Shaun McEachern, a Portsmouth resident was present. Chairman Alex Hanson explained that signage was placed for the Wentworth as the South End has very narrow streets and did not want food service trucks and the sheer volume of vehicles going through Marcy Street and New Castle Ave. to get to the area. So ultimately, the City directed traffic down Elwyn Road, a much safer route. The signage that was posted is to the area known as Wentworth-by-the-Sea not to the Hotel (Marriott). The City does not post individual business signs.

Ms. McEachern informed the Committee that there were signs posted to the Comfort Inn as well. She stated that the Hampton Inn is also a business in Portsmouth. She respectfully requested that the Committee consider additional signage for the Hampton Inn. The Durgin Lane sign had special approval through City Council, however, the street sign is inadequate to provide notice. If you are not looking for this sign you will not see it. John Burke stated that he could replace the Durgin Lane street sign with larger lettering, which is now the standard. Steve Parkinson suggested 12” lettering for the street sign on Durgin Lane.

Alex Hanson recommended that Ms. McEachern write a letter to the City Council asking for a License Agreement for the hotel signs.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS:

- (A) RSA 265:60/63 Posted Speed Limits – John Burke stated that the City Attorney was consulted for a legal opinion on posted speeds. He noted that the RSA’s allow municipal postings under 25 MPH. Secondly, if a street is not posted, it reverts to 35 MPH in suburban/rural areas and 30 MPH in urban areas.
- (B) Hancock and Marcy Street - A Police Department request. Hancock Street will be put on the next Agenda to consider a no parking area from its intersection with Marcy Street to provide adequate bus turning.

- (C) Ordinance to give Police Chief authority to post 20-MPH speed limits - The City Attorney was consulted to research whether this would be legal. He found that speed limits must be set by the City Council. Chairman Hanson stated that the Police Department has authority though in emergency matters. Deputy Police Chief Young stated that for the record, this is nothing that the Police Department has requested.
- (D) **Noble Island/Chamber of Commerce approach to Market St. intersection** - Ralph DiBernardo stated that a citizen brought to his attention that the “no right turn on red” sign seems to be missing for the Noble Island/Chamber of Commerce approach to the Market St. intersection.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to install “No right on red” sign coming out of parking lot at Noble Island condos. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. Motion passed.
- (E) Alex Hanson requested revisiting the sign location on the Miller Ave. approach to the signalized intersection at Middle Street. He believes that the “No right on Red” sign should be on the signal instead of in front of it.
- (F) Alex Hanson stated that the annual holiday luncheon would take place at Yoken’s. There will not be a regular meeting in December unless TAC business warrants it.
- (G) Ron Cypher informed the Committee that he attended the Neighborhood meeting last week as President of the Lafayette Road Association and they were concerned about speeding within the Park and stated that he thought 20 MPH was reasonable. The Mayor advised him to contact the Traffic & Safety Committee. It was noted that the road is private. Deputy Police Chief Young stated that he did not believe the Police Department could enforce speed limits on a private street but he would look into it.

Alex Hanson turned the chair over to vice-chair, Ralph DiBernardo. Alex Hanson recused himself and left the Council Chambers.

- VI. (A) 325 State Street** – Proposed Ocean National Bank - TAC Referral – Eric Weinberg, professional engineer with Altus Engineering represented the project that would build a new Ocean National Bank on the former First National Bank. He referred to the site plan showing the proposed improvements. The site plan will eliminate three out of the six driveway curb cuts. Off-site improvements include brick walks along Porter St. and State St. After the site walk it was determined that by shifting the parking on Porter Street from the east side to the west side, four extra onstreet parking spaces could be realized. He also noted that a condition of TAC was that a financial contribution be made by the Developer towards the City’s downtown traffic study.

Ralph DiBernardo asked the length of the proposed loading zone at Porter and Church Street. Mr. Weinberg replied 30 feet.

MOTION made by Fire Chief LeClaire to approve the plan as presented including shifting the onstreet metered parking on Porter Street from the east side to the west side of Porter Street. Seconded by Hank Greenberg.

John Burke stated that the turn radius from Porter onto Church would need to be increased if the parking is moved to the westerly side of Porter Street. Eric stated that it would increase from a 5-foot radius to a 10-foot radius. John asked if an easement would be necessary. Eric replied that it would be. John stated that this would need to be a condition of approval.

Steve Parkinson questioned whether the changes at the corner of Porter Street and Church St. would be included in the motion.

AMENDED MOTION made by Chief LeClaire to approve as presented including shifting the onstreet metered parking on Porter Street from the east side to the west side of Porter Street; increasing the turn radius at Church Street from 5-feet to 10-feet; and acquiring an easement from the owner to do so. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. **MOTION PASSED.**

Lucy Tillman clarified the three changes for the Planning Board's consideration: 1. Move parking across the street on Porter Street, 2. Increase radius of Porter Street at Church Street. 3. Acquire Easement from owner for radius increase.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted: _____
Elaine E. Boucas