

**PORTSMOUTH  
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING  
8:00 AM – Thursday, August 19, 2004  
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:**

Ralph DiBernardo, Deputy Chairman	Ron Cypher, Member
David Allen Deputy Public Works Director	Ted Gray, Member
Deputy Police Chief Dave Young	Herb Bunnell
Assist. Fire Chief Steve Achilles	Jonathan Bailey, Member

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

**IT WAS VOTED** on a Motion by Ron Cypher to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee meeting of June 17, 2004. Seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. Motion passed.

**IV. CORRESPONDENCE:**

(A) & (B) 136/137 Cabot Street – Resident Request for No Parking – Alex Hanson stated that both letter requests would be combined.

**MOTION** made by Ralph DiBernardo to refer to on-site review for next meeting. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

(C) 221 Woodbury Avenue – Resident Request for Crosswalk – John Burke stated that the Department reviewed the proposed location and because of the potential for removing parking spaces he would recommend that the onsite committee review it collectively.

**MOTION** made by Herb Bunnell to refer to on-site review for next meeting. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

(D) Middle Street/Mendum Ave.- Resident Request for Crosswalk – John Burke stated that he reviewed this location with the Public Works Director and the Department found adequate sight distance for the posted speeds. He recommended locating the crosswalk on the northerly side of the intersection. The resident will be notified of this action.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to approve the crosswalk location as presented. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief Young. Motion passed.

(E) Rt.1A/1B – Request to NHDOT for signal warrants analysis – John Burke stated that the City had requested a warrants analysis from NHDOT in 2003 and

another letter was sent in the past couple of weeks. He noted that he spoke with the NHDOT Administrator of the Bureau of Traffic and he stated that the DOT would try and get to it within the next few weeks.

(F) Route 1/Crossroads House – Request to NHDOT for median barrier – John Burke reminded the committee of the pedestrian improvement project currently being designed by the City for the Crossroads House area. The improvement would include new sidewalks on Rte.1, new ped. signal crossing and bus shelter/pull-out at Crossroads House. He noted that the City Manager had sent a letter to District 6 Maintenance Engineer DOT asking the DOT to look into the need for a median barrier to prevent unsafe crossings of the Bypass. John handed out a letter response from the District 6 Engineer stating that there were no funds available for this activity and that perhaps the medians could be included in the Route 1 Bypass Reconstruction project.

(G) Dodge Ave./Rte.33 – Resident Concern – Sight Distance – John Burke stated that residents of the neighborhood are seeking an on-site review of the intersection.

**MOTION** made by Ron Cypher to refer to the on-site committee. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief Young. Motion passed.

(H) Peeverly Hill Road/Greenleaf Ave. - Public Works Director referral – sight distance – John Burke informed the committee that the trees were cut back at the intersection.

## V. OLD BUSINESS:

(A) Bridge Street at Gepetto's – Resident Concern – Intersection Safety – Deputy Police Chief Young referred to the on-site review and made the following motion:

**MOTION** made by Deputy Police Chief Young to: add a painted stop sign on pavement and stop bar as you exit Gepettos; have DPW review the existing head-in parking spaces along Bridge Street to see if they are within the City right-of-way and can be eliminated; and paint a white edge line on Bridge Street that follows the curvature of the roadway. Seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. Motion passed.

(B) Lincoln Ave. - Miller to Richards – Resident Request to allow on-street parking – Ted Gray referred to the on-site review. He noted that it looks as though 3 or 4 parking spaces could be safely allowed on the south side of the street. Ted stated that Public Works needs to determine the required no parking areas back from the intersections at Miller and Richards.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to approve the request and to have the Public Works Department stripe the southeastern side. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

(C) 62 Deer St. – Driveway Permit – Motion to Reconsider rejected driveway permit application – Fred Lowe, co-owner of the property referred to a number of concerns raised by the Committee at the previous meeting. As a result of that

meeting the owner hired TEPP LLC, a traffic engineering firm from Concord NH and asked them to do a traffic study to address some of those concerns. Mr. Lowe introduced Mr. Kim Hazervartian of TEPP to present the results of the study. He noted that the Committee members had the engineers memo summarizing these results.

Mr. Hazervartian stated that he went to the site and observed the following:

1. The nearest on-street parking spaces to the west are about 55 feet away from the proposed driveway. 2) there is one on-street parking space which would be eliminated to allow the driveway. 3) The traffic volume in the area were observed to be light on Deer St. in front of where the curb cut would be. 4) Speeds were not observed to be high in the area. No pedestrian activity at the crosswalk crossing Deer St. to the west of the intersection with Russell St. was observed. He concluded that this would be a typical, normal, residential driveway with nothing unusual about it. With respect to head in and back out parking he noted that such parking already existed on Pleasant Street and Congress Street.

Alex Hanson asked him if he was aware of a major development project being proposed at the Sheraton. He responded that he was aware that it was only in the proposal stage and not concrete at this point.

**Motion** made by Jonathan Bailey to reconsider the request. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that he did not see the relevance of the Congress St. and Pleasant Street parking since you don't cross a sidewalk when backing out of these spaces. He also stated that he is concerned with the proximity of the proposed driveway to the intersection of Russell St.

John Burke stated that from the Public Works perspective, aside from the loss of a metered parking space, the major concern is that you have a proposed driveway in the downtown where the vehicle will need to back out across an active sidewalk and within close proximity to a crosswalk and busy intersection. He noted that regardless of what development scenarios ultimately occur in the northern tier of the city, this intersection will become much more heavily used – and for these reasons the Department opposed the application. .

**MOTION** made by Ralph DiBernardo to deny the request for reconsideration. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed. Jonathan Bailey opposed.

Alex Hanson stated the driveway request is denied.

- (D) Thaxter/Islington St. – Resident concern for corner clearance – John Burke recommended posting 20' NO PARKING signs per state law.

MOTION made by Herb Bunnell to post no parking 20' to corner at the intersection. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

- (E) Portsmouth Incident Management Plan – Report Back – Deputy Police Chief Young reported that the Department is looking at whether or not the City would be prepared if there was a situation where the Little Bay Bridge might be closed

down. A meeting was held this summer with Chief Magnant, the Deputy Chief, Fire Chief LeClaire, John Burke, Steve Parkinson and Ted Gray. There was a good discussion on the issue and it was decided to include the Rockingham Planning Commission in the discussion and work with them to generate grant money to develop a plan. The hope was that this could occur in the fall.

- (F) South St. Speed Study - Report Back – John Burke stated that this is a lengthy report back and he suggested putting it at the end of New Business given the number of items before the Committee. The Chairman granted the request.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

Richards Avenue - City Council referral – proposed one-way to allow on-street parking – John Burke stated that before considering which direction the one-way would go in, there needed to be a determination as to whether the residents of Richards Avenue desired additional onstreet parking here. John noted that there are benefits and impacts in either direction, and it is our job is to provide that information to the people who make the decisions. John then discussed the issues with either alternative for one-waying Richards Avenue – from Parrott to Middle and then from Middle to Parrott.

Alex Hanson asked how many onstreet parking spaces could be realized by the one-way condition. John answered that approximately 14 to 17 new parking spaces could be created depending on the direction of travel and the need for setbacks from intersections and the Margeson Apt. driveway. He also discussed the impacts to the School Bus Routes from the Middle School.

Alex Hanson opened the meeting up to discussion saying that the City Council referred this to Traffic & Safety to get the input from the residents to see if it would be desirable to add the 14-17 spaces. He noted that we can do nothing, we can one-way heading out from Parrott or we could come back the other way.

Carvel Tefft, 69 Richards Ave referred to the traffic report he brought with him that was done a few years ago for the Library project. He noted that you can't solve the parking problem given the pending Library. He discussed the projected car traffic in the report. He noted that 30 parking spaces for the residents would be displaced from the JFK site and we are proposing to put back only 14-17 spaces. He stated that 100 to 200 cars will be coming to the new library and we are providing only 18 spaces. Driving down Parrott Ave at 9am in the morning when court is in session and when the Middle School is in session, you are very lucky to find a single parking space on Parrott Ave. He noted that the School Board asked the City to provide 102 spaces for the Middle School because there are 101 employees there. So far they have provided 75 and that's why you see the parking spilling over into the recreation lot between JFK and the middle school, which will not stop.

Ted Connors, Portsmouth Housing Authority discussed the impact of one-waying Richards Avenue to Margeson Apartments. He discussed the difficulty in making a left-turn from Richards onto Middle. He noted that in the winter months when it is icy, snowy and packed down, people cannot get in or out of there. Most people come out of the Margeson parking lot take a right onto

Richards and Rockland to the Masonic temple. He stated that the Housing Authority opposed one-waying the street.

Jeffrey Cooper, Park Street stated he was not a Richards Ave resident but had thoughts to share. He noted that one-waying the street would impede fire truck response. He noted that proposing to put parking back on Richards Ave in order to make way for the library was a bad idea. He noted that you could not decouple the library issue from this parking issue since they are clearly linked.

Christine Huffy, Richards Ave resident stated that she grew up on Richards Ave and remembers when you could park on Richards Ave and remembers a number of incidents that happened because of traffic and parked cars. Her father's brand new car was hit in front of their house. About 2 years ago on Market Sq. Day people parked on the street and they were towed. She opposed onstreet parking as it would create problems for SUVs, UPS trucks, buses and emergency response vehicles.

Karen Dutcher was unable to attend today and Diane Kelley Tefft presented the Committee with her letter to be included in the record.

Diane Kelley Tefft of 69 Richards Ave. stated that the ripple effect of what will happen with the traffic and safety changes on Richards Ave are just beginning to be understood. Whatever the Committee decides today, any proposed parking and traffic changes need to be studied for the impact surrounding the historic area. She stated that the City is still operating under the Section 106 review process with the State Commission of Historical Resources and in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement with the City for the construction of the new library at the armory site. She added that any associated library costs needs to be outlined, disclosed and approved prior to commencing demolition or construction of that project. If this agreement is not honored to the letter, the City stands to lose federal funding for all City projects forever. Therefore, the full disclosure on complete comprehensive project costs, whether the City is laying asphalt, fencing, cutting curbs or cutting trees, all anticipated expenses needs to be shown up front including the inevitable future need for a traffic light at the intersection of Richards and Middle St. The impact of this new library plan on the Historical Resources is legally required by the Section 106 Review Process to be presented to the consulting parties and subject to a public hearing, reviewed to determine if it is technically feasible. After that time the new plans must be compared to alternative sites.

Executive Councilor Ruth Griffin 479 Richards Ave. stated that she is the furthest distance from the problem discussed today. She noted that she has been travelling the street for over 50 years. The houses from Parrott Ave to Middle St at one time were houses that only had one family in them, a whole lot of kids but one family. Because of the zoning changes and current use of those houses, most of those large houses now have multiple families with people living in small apartments. Some have 5 and 6 apartments in the building and the way society is today if you go anywhere you have to have an automobile so if there are 2 people living in a small apt. on Richards Ave you can bet they have two cars. She noted that there could never be enough space to accommodate those cars onstreet.

She then discussed needs of the Margeson Apts. where the elderly could be deprived of their own parking spaces. She noted that you can just put so much sugar in a 5 lb. bag. She noted that if the City is going to allow multiple dwellings on small streets, you have to address the parking for the people who are going to be in those houses. She added that you are not going to solve the problem by making Richards Ave from Parrott Ave to Middle St., one-way, it just will not work.

Robert Warner, owner of 121-123 Richards Ave. stated that he has been agonizing about the parking for his tenants. He believes that the onstreet spaces are probably not enough to make a difference for the neighborhood. Given that Richards Ave. is narrow, has children and seniors walking, school buses and scads of traffic - making it one-way is not a good idea – even if selfishly for residents it adds parking. He stated that he still feels that the parking problem for the library cannot be solved and he goes back to that whole basic question, whether there is an alternative location for the library.

Tom Morgan of Richards Ave opposed the one-way and on-street parking. He believes that the width of the street is very narrow. He noted that the snowplows do not push the snow to the curb which narrows the street down 3-4 ft and you're looking at 17 or 18 ft width, which would be a problem.

Paul Peterson, owner of 105-107 Richards Ave is a resident on Rogers St. which is also being effected by this whole thing. He believes that the 14 spaces on Richards Avenue are a drop in the bucket. His tenants will never get to use them anyway because the library people will use them. He noted that there is not a single space in the JFK lot on Saturdays. He added that the new library is going to make the situation impossible.

**MOTION** made by Ralph DiBernardo to place this on file. Seconded by Herb Bunnell.

Ralph DiBernardo stated he would vote in favor of his motion because a clear majority has shown that they have no interest in this change and that the basis of our government is based on the will of the majority.

Ted Gray stated that he was of the understanding that the referral came from the residents who wanted the one-way with additional parking but he could see that clearly this was not the case – so he would vote for filing the request.

Deputy Fire Chief Achilles stated that the Fire Department is not in favor of onstreet parking or one-waying the street given fire access issues.

**MOTION PASSED.**

- (A) 1039 Islington Street – TAC referral – proposed residential/retail development – Brad Richards of Sierra Construction referred to the August 18<sup>th</sup> letter by Maguire Associates, agreeing that proper sight distance can be provided with the proposed relocation of guardrail.

Ted Gray referred to the snow removal and to make sure that the new guardrail being replaced conforms to Department of Public Works approvals as well as the catch basin specifications be approved by Public Works Department.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to approve with the following stipulations. That the new guardrail and catchbasins conform to Public Works approval and that an updated plan be provided today to Public Works showing the 15 ft set back rather than 12 ft for the guardrail. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.  
Ralph DiBernardo opposed.

- (B) 2300 Lafayette Road (Water Country) – TAC referral – proposed expansion – Steve Ohle of Millette Sprague & Colwell referred to the proposed plan. Traffic studies were provided to the Committee. John stated that he had an opportunity to review the study and discuss it with the traffic engineer. He noted that while the development is very small in proportion to the entire site, they requested the study to set a baseline for development traffic and parking. John Burke summarized that there was a need to clean up striping and signing at the Route 1 Driveway since turning vehicles into the site do not always see the right turn lane as they approach the driveway. Also, the study uncovered the capacity problems on Route 1 where traffic is backing from the Heritage Ave. signal beyond Constitution. He noted that simple striping improvements could resolve this issue. Finally, he noted that the City will use the study to approach NHDOT about moving forward the federally funded intersection improvement at U.S. 1/Constitution Ave. that will put Water Country traffic back on U.S. Route 1 instead of Banfield Road.

**MOTION** made by Herb Bunnell to approve with the stated stipulations. Seconded by Assist. Fire Chief Achilles. Motion passed.

- (C) 1800 Woodbury Avenue – TAC referral – proposed retail expansion – John Burke stated that this is an addition to the existing Gerber Dental building. He said that the only reason this was referred to the Committee is that the access to the site from Woodbury Ave is a right turn (before the lights at Durgin/Woodbury) where the vertical granite curbing on the entrance island is y blowing out tires.

**MOTION** made by Ralph DiBernardo to approve with the stipulation that the vertical granite curbing on the entrance island from Woodbury Avenue be replaced with sloped granite curbing. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (D) Marcy/Hancock St. – Parking Committee referral – resident request to reduce corner clearance – John Burke stated that the Public Works Department reviewed the issue. The concern was that the 126-foot clearance per Ordinance may be excessive. However, since the abutting properties driveway was recently moved from Marcy Street to Hancock there is effectively only an 80-foot clearance to where the driveway now starts, which is considered appropriate.

**MOTION** made by Deputy Police Chief Young to place on file. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

- V. **OLD BUSINESS:** (out of order)  
(F) **South Street Speed Study** – Committee decided to move this to next month’s meeting.

VII. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:** There were no comments on the informational items.

- (A) Elwyn/Regina/Gosport – Safety improvements completed.
- (B) Market Street/Nobles Island/Port Authority – signal/safety improvements completed.
- (C) Citywide Emergency Response Traffic Signal Implementation – 8/9/04 memo from Parking and Transportation Division -
- (D) “Benefits of Access Management” – USDOT Publication attached.

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT:**

**The complete packet is on file at the Public Works Department**

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Elaine E. Boucas