

**PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 AM – Thursday, December 16, 2004
City Hall - Council Chambers**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilor John Hynes, Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 8:05 a.m.

II: ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor John Hynes, Chairman	Asst. Fire Chief Steve Achilles
Ralph DiBernardo, Vice Chairman	Ted Gray, Member
John Burke, Dir.Parking & Transportation	Ron Cypher, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Herb Bunnell, Member
Deputy Police Chief Dave Young	Jonathan Bailey, Member

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

IT WAS VOTED on a Motion by Steve Parkinson to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee meeting of October 21, 2004. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE:

- (A) Mendum/Middle Street Crosswalk – 10/20/04 letter of thanks to Traffic & Safety for crosswalk installation attached

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

Chairman Hynes stated there would be a change in the Agenda by putting New Business ahead of Old Business. He then turned the meeting over to the Vice-Chairman.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

- (C) Middle/Kensington Rd. – Resident request for crosswalk/4-way stop – 10/21/04 email attached. Herb Bunnell referred to the on-site and stated that the Committee was not in favor of a 4-way stop sign because it was not warranted. A crosswalk was not recommended.

Paul Harvey, who lives at the corner of Kensington and Middle Road addressed the committee. He noted that he has been concerned about the area for sometime and removed a 6' hedge to improve visibility at the intersection. He agreed that the 4-way stop sign was unnecessary. He believes that posting playground warning signs on Middle Road and reducing speeds would solve the problem. Has lived at the location for 48 years and there has never been a concern like this. He referred to one parking space that exists in front of his home, which is needed. He may in the future request that the space be made a handicap space since he has had a knee replacement and his wife is handicapped.

Ralph DiBernardo asked if Maureen Donnelly, who forwarded the request to the city was present. She was not present.

Steve Parkinson asked to have noted in the minutes that this particular intersection does not meet warrants for a 4-way stop sign. He noted that one thing that was noticed at the onsite was a missing stop sign on Kensington that needs to be replaced. Also the stop sign on the end of Monroe St. needs to be adjusted, which Public Works will do.

Ted Gray stated that you cannot use stop signs or traffic lights as a means of speed control on a main thoroughfare.

MOTION made by Herb Bunnell to place this request on file. Seconded by Ron Cypher.

Mr. Harvey stated that you need to be careful with the stop sign on Kensington as it could obstruct visibility. He suggested posting it on the left-hand side. Steve Parkinson stated that it has to be on the right hand side to be legal.

The Deputy Chairman moved back to the regular Agenda.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) 430 West Road - Business owner request for reconsideration of T&S/Planning Board Action regarding left-turn restrictions at Lafayette/West Roads – 10/8/04 letter attached. Ralph DiBernardo referred to the on-site. He noted that the existing “porkchop” island on West Road at Route 1 across from St. James Church was installed to restrict left turns for safety. When a plan for redeveloping the old Standard Plumbing warehouse was brought forward, the Planning Board required the porkchop be reconfigured and expanded by the new owner. The Planning Board then received a request to abate the group’s requirement to do this and referred it to the T&S Committee for recommendation. It would actually take a Planning Board action to change it but they are looking for our recommendation. There are some issues of concern to the abutters in the strip mall along Lafayette who have a driveway on West Road and do not want the Porkchop extended. In general, the Committee is still concerned about the hazard of left turns going north from Lafayette Rd. The general consensus was that we need to work the island out to accommodate the business and their access. He noted that left turns onto Lafayette have some serious dangers and the engineering standards recommend against this type of left turn on this road when you have a controlled intersection nearby that can be accessed in place of it. He asked that John Burke comment on this.

John Burke stated that best management practices for access control and safety along a major arterial are to try to provide left-turning traffic a way to get to a signal. If there’s an alternative means to get to a signal that is not significantly out of the way from the unsignalized intersection then it’s a good opportunity for installing a left-turn restriction at the unsignalized intersection. He noted that the signal at Wilson Road and U.S. 1 for northbound Route 1 traffic is very close by and can be accessed directly from West Road. He suggested that NB Route 1 signage directing traffic to West/Route 1 at key intersections would further improve safety.

George Larenes, owner of a business in the plaza along U.S.1 at West Road stated that there are 3 businesses in the strip mall that would not have access to Rte. 1 if the driveway were closed on West Road except through a driveway on Route 1. He suggested that a traffic light might help.

Todd McLaughlin represented his father who is the owner of the pawn shop in the strip mall. He stated that the island has created more of a problem since it has been there. People cut through his driveway along West Road to avoid the intersection.

Hank Wunderlich, employed at CHI, 430 West Road. Referred to the Planning Board requirement that stipulates the island become wider and longer.

Lucy Tillman of the Planning Dept. gave some history. The initial porkchop went in with the Community Campus development. She believes that the strip mall has a two-way entrance on west but as soon as you enter into the area in front of the pawnshop and carpet center it turns into a one-way isle. It was never intended in the site review process to have cars coming in off West Rd. She noted that the committee might want to look at this.

Ralph DiBernardo asked Lucy if what she is saying is that the original planning for the little strip mall restricts the West Rd entrance to a one-way. Lucy Tillman answered she believes so.

Asst. Fire Chief Achilles stated that his concern is the entrance off West Rd and that the traffic heading south on Lafayette turning onto West and then cutting across into the parking lot.

John Burke stated that the Planning Board approval for the building at 430 West Road include a stipulation that the island be expanded so that it is truly restricting left-turns for which it was originally intended. He believes that the island can be extended down West Rd and still leave a 20-foot wide driveway into the plaza, which is the existing condition. He noted that the island should allow emergency access vehicles and large trucks to safely and easily make sure the right turn onto Lafayette and Public Works should review it prior to construction. The other abutter concern regarding people who cut through their driveway to make a left turn can be corrected by enhancing directional signage along West Road and Campus Drive to notify drivers to access Wilson Road for Rt. 1 NB and West Road for Rt. 1 SB.

Ron Cypher asked Deputy Police Chief Young if it was a traffic violation to cut through a parking lot to avoid an intersection? Deputy Young stated it is to avoid a traffic light but it is difficult to prove the intention was to avoid the intersection altogether.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that the difficulty with left turns along Lafayette Rd is recognized by the State and City. Another unsignalized intersection, Constitution Ave., is going to be widened and signalized in the future. If the committee is going to try and enhance traffic safety we know that it is heavy left turns that are unsafe here.

John Burke added that if there was not another traffic signal in close proximity to West/Rt. 1 – like Wilson Road – then West/Rt. 1 would probably already be signalized. He added that when the state widens Route 1 at West Road, they will evaluate a signal at that time. In the meantime, a left-turn prohibition with northbound access directed to Wilson is what is currently in place.

An abutter asked if the City would put in a couple of speed bumps in the plaza parking lot. Steve Parkinson stated that the owner can install them but the City will not.

MOTION made by Herb Bunnell to recommend that the Planning Board maintain the stipulation on 430 West Road to expand the “porkchop” island but that it be modified so that it leaves a two-way driveway to the Rt. 1/West Road Plaza and that the design for the expansion be resubmitted to the Public Works Department for approval prior to construction. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (B) Broad/Jones Ave. – Resident safety concerns – see attached letter – Steve Parkinson referred to the on-site review and noted that the neighborhood provided great recommendations. There is an issue with the stop sign. He believes the addition of a stop ahead sign will improve this. Not sure whether or not we can move the stop sign or make it more visible because of the way it sits on the corner, however, this can be looked at. Another suggestion was to add a stop bar, crosswalk and double yellow line about 25 to 30 feet back from stop bar to better delineate the intersection. The suggested 3-way stop does not meet warrants.

Paul Houlares of 65 Jones Ave stated that the neighbors appreciate the committee’s efforts on our behalf and think whatever you can do in regards to these recommendations will be an improvement.

Ted Gray referred to a fence and hedge at the intersection and wondered if a crosswalk and moving the stop bar back will make things worse.

Steve Parkinson stated the biggest issue at the intersection is that you may not know there is an intersection until you are on top of it. The painting will define the intersection.

Deputy Chief Young stated that he researched 3 years of accident data at the intersection and there was only one accident over that period. The accident involved alcohol. The stealth radar machine used on Broad Street a couple of years ago showed that the average speed on Broad is 24 MPH and 85% of all vehicles go 29 MPH or less. There is not an extreme speed problem .

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to add a stop ahead sign, a stop bar and run a double yellow line back from the stop bar 25 to 30 feet. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (C) South/Sagamore/Miller Ave. – Report back on pedestrian improvements - 11/23/04 School Dept. Memo attached – John Burke stated this was a memo from the School Department summarizing the improvements made by the Traffic

& Safety subcommittee involving the Police, Public Works, School Dept. and abutters. John noted that the signals will also be upgraded in 2005.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to place on file. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

- (D) South Street Speeds – Report back. – Deputy Police Chief Young stated that John Burke and he were to meet with members of the South End on speed issues. The next meeting will be in April. He noted that the Friends of the South End wanted to take their time on this.

MOTION made by Deputy Policy Chief Dave Young to table this issue. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

- (E) Gosling Meadows/Gosling Road – Pedestrian safety concerns – 11/3/04 P.D. memo to Housing Authority attached – Deputy Chief Young referred to the letter he wrote to George Robinson on safety concerns related to pedestrian crossings of Gosling Road at the Meadows. There was a boy that was struck on the Newington side of the road this fall and both John Burke and the Deputy Chief have been working with some of the residents since on some safety issues.

John Burke stated that the Gosling Road improvements currently in design that were required of the PSNH wood chips project will include a warrants analysis for a pedestrian signal at Gosling Meadows.

Ted Gray asked if there was appropriate signage out there? Deputy Chief Young stated that this will hopefully be addressed as part of the Gosling Road project.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to place on file. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) Summit/Jenkins St. – Resident request for no parking – 11/28/04 email attached – Steve Achilles referred to the on-site and students reportedly parking on the corner. If someone was to park in the upper end or closest to Summit they would be infringing on traffic flow so they could be ticketed. Putting up “no parking” throughout would seriously impact the abutters. The recommendation is to leave it as is; be sure the school continues to educate the students on this; and the Police Department continue to enforce.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to place on file. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

- (B) Middle Street/Wibird Street – Resident request for crosswalk – 10/26/04 letter attached – John Burke stated that Public Works can install the crosswalk. Ralph DiBernardo asked if the Committee should get a report back on it. John Burke stated that if parking restrictions are involved for installation of the walk then the Committee would have to make a recommendation.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to report back next month. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

- (C) Spinney Road/Islington Street – Resident safety concern - 11/30/04 email attached – **MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to refer the “T-ing up” of the intersection to Public Works for design and consideration for inclusion into the capital improvement plan to reconfigure the intersection within good engineering standards. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

Steve Parkinson stated to keep in mind the first opportunity for consideration for the CIP will be next year, the current budget has already been submitted for this year’s CIP.

Herb Bunnell suggested we send the gentlemen who inquired about the intersection a letter explaining that it won’t be done right away.

Steve Parkinson pointed out, that he can propose the project, but that does not mean that it is going to be funded. It could be ‘08, ‘09, ‘10 before it is funded if at all.

John Burke offered that once it is identified, developer contributions can also offset or pay the cost.

- (D) Thornton/Burkitt Street – Resident request for 4-way stop – 10/30/04 letter attached – Ron Cypher referred to the on-site and it was decided it does not warrant a 4-way stop sign. However, if we move the stop sign from Thornton to Burkitt it will alleviate the problem described by the resident. Ralph also noted that the dead end sign at the end of Thornton Street needs to be pulled back so people know it is a dead end before they reach the dead end.

MOTION made by Ron Cypher to move the stop signs at Thornton and Burkitt from Thornton to Burkitt and also adjust the dead end signs on Thornton accordingly. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

Ralph DiBernardo asked John Burke about temporary signage that tells people we have changed the stop sign. John stated there is specific guidance in the manual on uniform traffic control devices on how to notify the public in this regard. Steve Parkinson added that using the variable message boards is one way.

- VII. **ADJOURNMENT: MOTION** made by Herb Bunnell to adjourn. Seconded by Steve Parkinson.

Chairman Hynes thanked the Committee for the excellent job it has been doing. He added that he believes the Traffic & Safety Committee is probably one of the best working groups we have in the City and would like this entered into the record.

Respectfully submitted: _____
Elaine E. Boucas