

MINUTES
PARKING AND TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – Thursday, May 9, 2013
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Ken Smith called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor Ken Smith, Chair
John Bohenko, City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Frank Warchol, Police Department Rep.
Ron Cypher, Member
Sheri Donnermeyer, Member
Ted Gray, Member
Harold Whitehouse, Member

Members Absent:

Fire Department Representative

Staff Advisors Present:

Mark Nelson, Parking Division Director
Tom Cocchiaro, Parking Operations Supervisor

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Mr. Whitehouse moved to accept the minutes of April 11, 2013, seconded by Mr. Cypher. Motion passed.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Gray moved to accept the Financial Report and place on file. Seconded by Public Works Director Parkinson and passed.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Metering and Enforcing Chapel Court

Mr. Cypher stated a site walk was held and the first issue is that the area needs to be cleaned up. Secondedly, he stated that there is enough area for 4 spaces to be lined.

Mr. Cypher moved to stripe 2 parking spaces along the entrance and 2 additional spaces striped along the right-of-way for a total of 4 spaces, seconded by Mr. Whitehouse. Motion passed.

Mr. Whitehouse asked how far back on the city maps can this court area be traced. Public Works Director Parkinson stated he doesn't know exactly but it does go way back.

B. Time-limiting of Taxi Stand near Fleet Street

Parking and Transportation Director Nelson stated that this space is used very infrequently, if at all during the daytime hours by the taxi companies, and it is considered a highly desirable parking space, so they would like to change the taxi-stand hours for night time use only.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that this is similar to the taxi stand on Market Street and would like to see these be consistent.

Chairman Smith stated that notification to the Taxi Commission should be a part of the motion as well.

City Manager Bohenko moved to post the time of the taxi stand near Fleet Street for the hours from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., Monday through Sunday (which is consistent with taxi stand on Market Street), and notify the Taxi Commission of the change, seconded by Public Works Director Parkinson. Motion passed.

C. Remove "Reserved for-Teachers" signage in Parrott Avenue Lot -

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that 45 spaces were reserved for teacher parking during the reconstruction of the Portsmouth Middle School, but the need for these spaces has diminished over time as the project progresses. He referred to the letter submitted by John Stokel, Principal of the Portsmouth Middle School, stating that they no longer need these spaces reserved.

City Manager Bohenko moved to remove the "Reserved-for-Teachers" signage at the Parrott Avenue Lot in accordance with the request of Middle School Principal John Stokel letter dated May 2, 2013, and the spaces be made available to the public, seconded by Ms. Donnermeyer. Motion passed.

D. Defining "Active" Unloading/Loading for the Ordinance

Parking and Transportation Director Nelson stated that this is needed for the enforcement staff to be able to enforce these zones.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to amend language in the Ordinance by inserting the following definition into Chapter 7, Article VI: "To be engaged in loading and unloading, personnel must be seen to be moving product into/away from the vehicle with no breaks from the activity longer than 10 minutes", seconded by City Manager Bohenko. Motion passed.

E. **Langdon Street Parking Post-Development** – Ambit Engineering

John Chagnon of Ambit Engineering stated they currently have an application in front of the Planning Board which requires variances. He explained that they are requesting to move the house to the front of the lot as close to the front of the street as possible which will be to the edge of the City sidewalk. He stated that Langdon Street is only 19' wide so they are requesting no parking on the street.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that with ongoing work in the area and most of these street being the same size, he feels that the Public Works Department should look at the design before the committee rules on this request.

City Manager Bohenko moved to refer to the Department of Public Works for a report back to the Parking and Traffic Safety committee at a future date to include various options, seconded by Mr. Gray. Motion passed.

F. **244 Marcy Street Driveway Request**

Justice Rines, representing 244 Marcy Realty Trust, explained that they have an application submitted for a driveway cut between 244 and 252 Marcy Street and that the neighbor is willing to grant a 12-16" easement in exchange for driveway repairs.

Mr. Whitehouse explained that during the site walk they were concerned with the width of the driveway as well as the site distance on Marcy Street heading north. He asked if the lot line information is documented. Mr. Rines stated yes he will have full documentation. Mr. Whitehouse stated that this driveway would have to be a back-in head-out driveway, but feels that it is a tight area and he would not approve the request.

Mr. Whitehouse moved to deny the request, seconded by Mr. Gray.

Mr. Gray stated that the property line is in the middle of the 2 houses and even though the current owner may say yes to the arrangement, it does not mean that future owners will and this may be a can of worms.

Mr. Rines explained that the line is 16-18" away from 252 and they have added bricked-lined landscaping. He stated that they will also be grading to make it a more level surface.

City Manager Bohenko moved to table for further information to be provided, seconded by Ms. Donnermeyer.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that he is concerned with tabling this and adding an extra expense to the requestor to provide more information if the Committee is leaning towards denying the request.

City Manager Bohenko withdrew his motion and the seconder agreed.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated there is a gas meter on the adjacent house and asked if that will be moved. Mr. Rines stated there will be concrete or granite posts placed to protect it. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that he is not in favor of this being a back-in head-out space either because it is still dangerous. He stated that there are other driveways currently in the same area, but he feels that those shouldn't be there either and he will not vote in favor of the request.

Mr. Gray stated he sympathizes with the applicant but he feels this will open up the door to a serious situation, especially with the gas meter.

Mr. Whitehouse stated he also feels badly about denying the request but the area has a lot of traffic which is often going over the speed limit and is dangerous.

Motion to deny passed.

G. Parking issue on Salem Street

Mr. Gray stated a site walk was held on the request to remove a parking space to provide better access to a driveway. He stated that the concern with granting this request is that it would open Pandora's Box as there are a lot of narrow streets in Portsmouth and others would want the same consideration.

Mr. Gray moved to deny the request, seconded by Public Works Director Parkinson. Motion passed.

H. Unitil Re: Charging for Parking

Phil Johnson speaking on behalf of Unitil Gas, 325 West Rd., stated they are requesting a waiver for the Parking Meter Bag fees as many of the projects they are working on are driven by City projects. He stated they have already spent \$6,500.00 on parking since April 1st.

Public Works Director Parkinson clarified that although there are projects that are driven by the City, Unitil would still have to deal with their underground issues. He continued that it also isn't fair that smaller companies do pay for their parking and that the bigger companies have been getting by without paying the meter fees.

City Manager Bohenko moved to deny the request to waive parking fees, seconded by Ms. Donnerymeyer.

Jay Sommers of Comcast, spoke from the audience stating that he had requested to also be on the agenda and would like to address the committee. *(Parking and Transportation Director Nelson clarified that no written request was received)*

Parking and Transportation Director Nelson moved to suspend the rules to allow Mr. Sommers to speak, seconded by Mr. Whitehouse. Motion passed.

Jay Sommers, representing Comcast, explained that the technicians are paying the parking fees themselves and then put in for reimbursement which is causing an administrative problem. He stated often times they are only at a service call for 10-15 minutes but if they are going to be longer, then they get a traffic detail.

Chairman Smith suggested the EasyPark System stating that this would alleviate the issue of reimbursement as they are prepaid. Mr. Sommers stated he was unaware of this option.

Ms. Donnermeyer stated she understands the burden it puts on the technicians but feels the EasyPark option will alleviate the problem as it will be assigned to the vehicle and not specific technicians.

Motion to deny passed.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Parking on-street on Miller Avenue

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that this item was tabled at the last meeting and after reviewing the area, his recommendation is to extend the no parking zone on Miller Avenue on the westerly side by 110 feet to match the no parking zone on the easterly side, also 150 feet. He stated that this will address the requestors' concerns of this being a dangerous intersection and he suggests that parking issues continue to be looked at as projects continue on the city streets.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to extend the no parking zone on Miller Avenue on westerly side 110 feet to match no parking zone on easterly side (150'), seconded by Ms. Donnermeyer.

Mr. Whitehouse stated that narrowing of streets is a problem in the entire city and when cars park in the opposite direction it is a bigger problem.

Deputy Public Works Director Parkinson stated that narrow streets is not the issue it is trying to have people park where they are supposed to and not wherever they want.

Mr. Cypher stated would like to see parking on one-side of the street but will wait until the street improvements are completed to bring it forward.

Motion passed.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dick Bagley, 213 Pleasant St. - spoke regarding the Parrott Avenue petition opposing a parking deck on the site stating that he was glad that it has been withdrawn. He asked if Chairman Smith would be attending the parking forum on Friday, May 10th.

Chairman Smith stated yes, but only as an observer. He further explained that the action of the Council taken at the May 6th was not on the agenda for this Parking and Traffic Safety Committee meeting because the agenda had already been sent out.

Mr. Bagley asked if this committee will be revisiting the issue. Chairman Smith stated no.

City Manager Bohenko explained that the Council voted to remove item #3 from the Action Sheet and to not accept the recommendation of the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee to pursue a distributed parking system to include a parking deck on the Parrott Avenue Lot. He stated that this is an advisory committee and when the Council approves the action sheet it implies consent or they can remove an item and vote not to accept the recommended action.

Mr. Whitehouse stated that there is nothing in the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee records that shows that this committee voted it down.

City Manager Bohenko again explained that the Council has the final decision of accepting the advisory recommendation or not to accept.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL

A. Ranger Way Streetscape Improvements

Adam Cannon, Community Development Department, reviewed the background of the ongoing Atlantic Heights Project. He then introduced Ryan McCarthy, Engineer, representing CLD Consulting.

Mr. McCarthy reviewed the plans for Ranger Way stating that this particular area is unique as it is next to a highway overpass and a little league field. He stated it is also a truck route. He stated the neighbors have expressed concerned with parking on the gravel shoulder as it is not wide enough to allow two-way traffic and is a safety concern as emergency vehicles would not be able to get through either. He stated that the are planning for formalize parallel parking spaces to allow full width spaces to park as well as granite curbing and 5' sidewalks on both sides. He stated that this will be able to accommodate the largest city fire truck and school busses and the Irving trucks shouldn't be affected.

Mr. Gray asked if any thought has been given to ask the State if people can park under the bridge as this had been discussed several years ago.

Community Development Director David Moore stated we are working actively with the State on a joint project to improve Maynard Park and paving the should to provide parking in conjunction with the street improvements.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that the City doesn't own the land under the bridge, the State Dept. of Transportation does. He stated they have been very cooperative with us but they are concerned with formalizing parking under the bridge due to Homeland Security concerns. He stated the area is primarily recreational and if we can get some additional parking as the improvements are made, that will be great. He concluded stating that all truck travel is required to go under the bridge to keep commercial traffic away from the houses.

B. Bike Corrals for Summer 2013

An updated report regarding the locations for City bike corrals for summer of 2013 was reviewed by the Committee.

Chairman Smith stated that as time goes by, additional locations will be added. Mr. Whitehouse clarified that no metered parking spaces will be taken for this use.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Smith concluded the meeting by thanking Public Works Director Parkinson for his work on the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee and for the City of Portsmouth and wished him well on his future endeavors.

Mr. Gray moved to adjourn at 9:00 a.m., seconded and passed unanimously.