

DRAFT - WORKING SESSION MINUTES
PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

TO: John P. Bohenko, City Manager

FROM: Cynthia Huyghue-Fancy, Secretary to the Committee

RE: Actions Taken By The Portsmouth Parking And Traffic Safety Committee Meeting Held On Thursday March 05, 2015, At Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers, Municipal Complex, One Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

PRESENT: Councilor Lown, City Manager Bohenko, Deputy Fire Chief Heinz, Public Works Director Rice, Parking & Transportation Engineer Eby, And Members: Gray, Whitehouse, and Alternate Member: Mcelwain, Ronald Cypher

STAFF ADVISORS: Juliet Walker, Transportation Planner

ABSENT: Shari Donnermeyer

Work Session began with roll call at 8:00am

Work Session Consultant Attendees:

Harborcorp Representatives

Giles Ham, Vanasse & Associates-Traffic Consultant

Travis Center, Platt Associates- Parking Garage

Chris Thompson-Harborcorp

Cliff Grimes- Harriman Architectural Engineers

Will Gatchell – Harriman Architectural Engineers

City of Portsmouth

Kevin Dandrade-Principal, TEC, Consultant

Harborcorp Project Presentation-

Mr. Giles Ham provided an overview of the project as it relates to traffic and parking. Mr. Ham explained that an in-depth two year traffic study was conducted on traffic during the summer season, peak times of the day and Saturdays. The study also projected out a ten-year horizon consistent with New Hampshire standards, taking into consideration existing and planned developments within the City. They performed level of service analysis, and incorporated comments and suggestions from neighbors, peer consultants, City Staff, and the City's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) which resulted in changes to the project design.

City Staff directed the developer's study to include 12 intersections including major intersections along Russell Street, Deer Street, Market Street, and Maplewood Avenue. The three signalized intersections along Maplewood Avenue at Deer Street, Hanover Street, and Congress Street were

included, as well as Market Street at Albacore Drive. The traffic generation components include Supermarket, Small Retail, Hotel and Conference Center, Residential condos and Public Garage.

Total traffic generation during the weekday is 5,600 trips, and 9,000 trips daily on a Saturday; during peak morning hours the project will generate 249 trips, with 668 trips during the Saturday mid-day peak hour. Not all traffic is new to the area, and the traffic coming into the area will be dispersed to all three access points on Deer Street, Russell Street, and Maplewood Avenue. All signalized intersections level of service would be maintained with signal timing adjustments to mitigate traffic impacts. The changes that are being made to signals and intersections will allow the area to accommodate the increase in traffic.

Maplewood Avenue has been designed as an entrance only access, and the truck route allows trucks to enter from Market Street and loop around out back. Typically there are two or three trailer trucks per day that deliver to Whole Foods, with two to three deliveries of single unit trucks such as FedEx and UPS accessing the site as well. Maplewood Avenue will have bike lanes and a bike box at the traffic signal with Deer Street, and the project will maintain at least 8 foot wide sidewalks which would be the narrowest sidewalks in the project. There are three signals on Maplewood Avenue; the applicant will continue to monitor them a year after project is complete to ensure they are operating in an efficient manner.

Deer Street will maintain an 11-foot wide sidewalk along the site and have bike racks and share the road sharrows; a serrated concrete island will be added to prohibit left turns into the site. The applicant will realign the Deer Street and Russell Street intersection to slow traffic and help reduce the pedestrian crossing distance.

There are bus pull-outs and bus spaces on Russell Street across from the Sheraton Hotel, and on Market Street the City is proposing a roundabout. Today there are a total of 48 parking spaces on Deer Street and Russell Street, but some of those spaces will be eliminated due to widening of sidewalks and the addition of bike lanes. Once completed, a total of 7 on-street spaces will remain on Deer Street and Russell Street.

Regarding off-street spaces, the Sheraton Hotel has 160 parking spaces which will be maintained and the garage has 523 spaces, for a total of 683 parking spaces that will support the development.

The current proposed parking supply offers 683 parking spaces and during peak times the applicant can offer valet services which would increase parking spaces by 115 additional parking spaces which brings the total parking supply to 798 parking spaces. An estimated parking demand created by Whole Foods, the hotel, and retail stores on a Saturday would be 612 parking spaces; with a convention of 750 attendees the parking demand would increase by 250; this would cause a slight shortfall in supply, and the applicant would offset this by having employees park off-site to free up spaces.

The City's peer review consultant, Mr. Dandrade, explained that he reviewed this project very closely, and provided feedback on design changes, consulted on analysis profiles, while examining crash data, and the times the study was conducted and the traffic counts collected. Mr. Dandrade then reviewed the data provided on supermarket Saturday peak flow traffic generation, and found that the analysis of using alternative routes to the project satisfied his concerns on intersection impacts, but suggested tightening up some of the turning radii near Deer Street and Russell Street. Overall it was determined that the project and its revised design would create a pedestrian scaled environment and mitigate the progression of traffic around Deer Street and Russell street and the downtown area. In

response to a request from the fire department to install Opticom on the traffic signals, Mr. Dandrade explained that Opticom is an electric transmitting device that allows the Fire department to control the traffic signals.

Public Comment –

Jerry Zelin provided the committee a memorandum dated March 4th, and Patricia Bagley provided a letter that was written to Mary-Lou McElwain.

Robin Normandeau, 15 Pickering Avenue, spoke on behalf of her Mother who owns a condo unit at 33 Deer Street. Robin is concerned about the Sheraton Hotel taking parking from the circle and not having fire lanes. Mr. Rice responded that the committee does understand her challenges and has heard the same concerns from other residents, but this challenge is an issue that needs to be addressed with the condo association and the Sheraton Hotel, but it is not a part of this review.

Rick Bickstead, 1393 Islington Street, expressed his concern with large trucks that make a right turn from Russell Street onto Deer Street having to turn into the on-coming lane for a short period of time. He was also concerned that this will also happen when turning on to Maplewood Avenue, and Harborcorp has said at the TAC meeting that they have constraints from what the City has requested for parking and bike paths. "Take for instance 175-173 Market Street project, due to the five feet radius requirements the project was stopped, maybe we should have the same requirements with this project. Harborcorp also said they would post signs for exit 7 and create a new route for trucks and with these new routes we will be creating more traffic issues and concerns."

Joe Caldarola, 170 Dennett Street, agrees with the shortening of sidewalk crossings, but has questions with the turning radius into oncoming traffic onto Maplewood Avenue with respect to the tractor trailers, as an accepted practice. Regarding Russell Street and Deer Street, this project design needs to be re-evaluated to deter trucks from turning into oncoming traffic, and provide an honest evaluation and a better compromise to avoid trucks from taking this route.

Mr. Rice responded to Mr. Caldarola saying that he mentioned a very important point, that there is a balance between the radii and shortening the distance and the risk associated with this type of activity.

Mr. Dandrade explained that the applicant's design process that they went through was recommended by Mr. Dandrade. He explained that they should tighten up the turning radius, knowing that this type of access creates a calm, controlled, slow atmosphere when creating a tight intersection, with a standard geometry when possible. There is guidance from different state agencies that have been formally published that there needs to be flexibility for large trucks so we don't have excessively wide intersections. There is not a high risk environment with this project and design, and we know there is a need to be flexible when handling trucks, pedestrians and bike paths.

Patricia Bagley, 213 Pleasant Street, she would like to hear from the Fire and Police department from a safety point of view as it relates to the design of the roadway and the safety of the citizens.

Police Captain Warchol stated that they will take into consideration how the project will tax police services, but will also work with the City to manage the design and determine how it will impact the services, downtown area and the safety of the citizens.

Fire Deputy Chief Heinz, stated the fire department would like to see wide intersections everywhere, but at a minimum they need to be able to move cars to get their apparatus through safely. "This project design has been a compromise for all but we are satisfied with the design plan."

Paul Mannle, 1490 Islington Street, quoted Mrs. Normandeau "If the City can step in and make some sort of accommodations to residents living in the condos, I think that would be a good thing. The City is making Harborcorp's design work instead of suggesting a different design to meet the needs of the residents. I have suggested different designs to address the parking, traffic and safety issue for the last 14 months." His concern is Maplewood and the additional traffic on this road.

Doug Roberts, 247 Richards Avenue. Expressed concern with how many parking spots on Russell Street and Deer Street are being lost and what are the trade-offs for having bike lanes, parking and sharrows, and street widths.

Mr. Dandrade responded that they were trying to conserve parking on Russell Street and Deer Street, due to constraints to meet all needs the design had to be adjusted to accommodate safety of pedestrians, and bike lanes.

John Stephson, 197 Miller Avenue. "Thousands of cars a day, hundreds of cars an hour, these numbers do not sit well with me, and if you move forward with this project it will cause a traffic nightmare and safety issues for decades into the future."

Patricia Bagley responded; "When I hear the words compromise and we are talking about safety, you can't compromise safety and we are talking about 18-wheelers turning and people getting to work and school, the City needs to do more work to address this issue."

Mr. Ham stated that they are absolutely not compromising on safety, but there is a balance. "Do you want to have wider roadways and wider crosswalks which aren't safe for pedestrians or bikes, or do you want to have narrower roadways and shorter crosswalks which are safer for pedestrians and bikes. The templates used are very conservative, for example on another project where the templates suggested a truck couldn't make a turn, they tested the design template by bringing a tractor trailer out to see if the turns could be made and indeed they were made with no problems."

Rick Bagley, "This study takes into consideration all projects taking place in the City which we should keep in mind. It may be that we test the turning theory before making a decision and maybe we look at eliminating the bike path on Russell Street and as far as parking concerns how will Whole Foods guarantee that visitors won't park in their parking lot and take off and go touring the City."

Mr. Rice explained that staff will review and provide recommendations on the questions presented for the committees review where possible for the next meeting.

Adjournment – At 9:35 AM, **Voted** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia Huyghue-Fancy
Secretary to the Committee