

ACTION ITEMS AND MINUTES
PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – April 7, 2016

City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

Action Items requiring an immediate ordinance during the next Council meeting: none

Temporary Action Items requiring an ordinance during the annual omnibus:

Remove two parking spaces on High Street.

Remove one parking space on Hanover Street.

ACTIONS:

[1] Accepted and placed on file the minutes of the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee Meeting held on March 3, 2016.

[2] Accepted and placed on file the Financial Report dated February 29, 2016.

[3 (VI.A.)] **Action Item:** Downtown Parking Utilization Study – **No action item.**

[4 (VI.B.)] **Action Item:** Court Street at Washington Street. Request by resident to remove STOP signs on Court Street approaches to the intersection - **VOTED** to table action item.

[5 (VI.C.)] **Action Item:** High Street and Hanover Street - **VOTED** to remove two parking spaces on High Street and remove one parking space on Hanover Street and Fleet Street to allow crosswalk improvements and a motorcycle parking space.

[6 (VI.D.)] **Action Item:** Miller Avenue speed limit - **VOTED** to refer to City staff for further evaluation and report back.

[7 (VII.A.)] **Action Item:** Motorcycle parking on sidewalks - **VOTED** to refer to City staff for report back at a future meeting. Based on comments during the public comment period, staff will review all suggestions, to include, but not limited to, banning all gasoline-powered vehicles from parking on sidewalks, and/or allowing only mopeds with a moped license plate to park on sidewalks.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor, Brad Lown
City Manager, John Bohenko
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Acting Deputy Police Chief, Frank Warchol
Member, Ted Gray
Member, Ron Cypher
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Alternate Member, Mary Lou McElwain

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking Manager, Joey Giordano
Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Transportation Planner, Juliet Walker
Construction Project Coordinator, Ryan Flynn

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the March 3, 2016, meeting minutes.

Ted Gray seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the February 29, 2016, financial report.

Ron Cypher seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Beth Margeson, 24 Marcy Street, opposed removing the stop signs on Court Street and Washington Street because of public safety.

Joe Almeida, 33 Blossom Street and property owner of 101, 103, 105 High Street, expressed support for the removal of two parking spaces on High Street.

Richard Smith, 93 High Street, opposed the removal of two parking spaces on High Street. He requested a sidewalk coating be applied to the bricks to help prevent falls in the winter or an alternate type of paver be used, and requested a narrow snowplow be used on the existing sidewalks.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Downtown Parking Utilization Study – John Burke, CAPP, Independent Consultant, presented the 2015 Parking Utilization Study Downtown Portsmouth to the Committee. The presentation is available on the City's website under Meetings Calendar 2016, April 7, 2016, Parking and Traffic Safety Committee. Mr. Burke's technical report was included in the packet and can be located at the website mentioned above.

The presentation included the study background, parking survey objectives, parking survey methodology, parking occupancy survey, duration-of-stay/turnover survey, and study recommendations. The study recommendations included:

- In regards to future rate adjustments: consider widening the pricing gap between the HOM Zone (\$1.75/hr.) and standard meter zone (\$1.25/hr.) to incentivize parkers to use lower-cost parking outside the HOM Zone.
- Change time limits on Deer & Russell Streets from 4 to 3 hours.
- Meter Islington Street between Bridge and Summer Streets. Change the 2-hour time limit on Islington Street, and 4-hour time limit on Bridge Street, to 3 hours for consistency.
- Replace all remaining coin-only parking meters with credit card-enabled meters in the \$1.25 meter zone.
- Eliminate the six parking meters on outer State Street just east of Summer Street.
- Offer discounted monthly parking in the underutilized 90-space Vaughan Street Lot. Install 3-hour metered parking on the 90+ on-street spaces on Vaughan Street, Raynes Avenue and Maplewood Avenue. They are primarily being used for all-day employee parking.
- Continue to actively promote the limited available long-term parking that exists in the South Mill Pond and Masonic Parking Lots, and on outer State and Middle Street.
- Continue to investigate the feasibility of implementing a more dynamic, demand-based pricing system.

The Committee complimented Mr. Burke on the technical report's completeness. Mr. Burke defined long-term parking as all-day parking. Mary Lou McElwain expressed support for keeping the combo (coin and credit card) meters. She also addressed the inconsistencies regarding parking time designations and pricing in areas of the City. She also recommended that the available parking at parking lots be publicized on business websites.

Harold Whitehouse expressed concern over making sweeping changes. Mr. Burke concurred that changes should not be implemented that will affect long-term parking until additional parking supply is established.

City Manager Bohenko stated that the new parking garage is the long-term parking supply being discussed. He stated that before moving forward with a residential parking program, a long-term parking solution needs to be in place. He added that there are diminishing fiscal returns because of lack of parking. This is occurring at the present time.

Mr. Burke discussed the underutilization of the Vaughn Street Lot. He discussed how customer visitation can be re-established on certain streets once the new garage is operational.

Harold Whitehouse discussed decal parking for 32 spaces on Parrott Avenue and Junkins Avenue to Pleasant Street. He has presented the idea in the past, but it has not been discussed.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz asked about street parking impacts due to bike lanes.

Ted Gray motioned to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. Harold Whitehouse seconded. **Vote 9-0, to suspend the rules.**

Marc Stettner, 91 Fairview Avenue, advised the Committee to be careful when considering increasing fees as an incentive for parking turnover. He stated it would disenfranchise customers who want to park for a short time. He stated it would negatively affect the downtown and patrons on limited incomes.

City Manager Bohenko stated staff would use a phased approach to recommendations relative to the study beginning at the next meeting. He stated the formal process will be followed. All recommendations must be approved by the City Council.

No action item.

B. Court Street at Washington Street. Request by resident to remove STOP signs on Court Street approaches to the intersection – Harold Whitehouse stated that an on-site meeting was conducted at the location. Harold Whitehouse motioned to approve staff recommendation to remove the two STOP signs on Court Street at Washington Street. Public Works Director Rice seconded. Harold Whitehouse suggested replacing the STOP signs with signs alerting drivers of congestion area ahead.

Eric Eby evaluated the area utilizing traffic volumes and other factors warranting all-way STOP signs at the location. He stated the traffic volumes on both streets are low. Court Street carries less than 200 vehicles during the summer peak hour, while Washington Street carries less than 60 vehicles during the same time. He stated based on volume alone, this location does not warrant an all-way STOP. The reason for the all-way STOP signs is the limited sight lines on Washington Street looking up Court Street. However, when a driver pulls forward to see through the intersection, the vehicle is not sticking out into Court Street traffic. Based on these factors,

Mr. Eby stated an all-way STOP is not required. He recommended if the Court Street STOP signs were removed, that signs be placed under the Washington Street STOP signs alerting drivers that cross traffic does not stop. He also suggested monitoring speed on Court Street with a traffic counter. Drivers tend to speed up when an all-way STOP is not needed. He also stated that the intersection could be monitored to determine congestion. He will assess issues as needed.

Ted Gray inquired about the number of accidents at the intersection. Acting Deputy Police Chief Warchol stated it was very low, but he would investigate.

Ron Cypher stated he noticed that there are signs under the STOP signs on West Street at the intersection of Campus Drive that alerts drivers to the changes made at the intersection.

Mary Lou McElwain stated she is an active pedestrian in the area and does not want the STOP signs removed because of safety issues.

Chairman Lown asked why this issue was presented to the Committee. Eric Eby stated that a citizen complained about the traffic noise as a result of vehicles, especially trucks, braking and then accelerating at the intersection.

City Manager Bohenko requested the Police Department review the number of accidents at the intersection and that staff contact the citizen initiating the request by the next meeting for further details.

City Manager Bohenko requested that the action item be tabled. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Vote 9-0, to table action item.**

C. High Street and Hanover Street – City Manager Bohenko motioned to accept the staff recommendation to remove parking spaces: two on High Street and one on Hanover Street at Fleet Street. Public Works Director Rice seconded.

Ryan Flynn, Public Works Construction Project Coordinator, provided background on the project. It began when Eversource identified electrical deficiencies in the area. In order to upgrade the system, the City approached Eversource about burying the utilities. The Public Works Department is spearheading the sidewalk redesign.

Ryan Flynn stated that on the easterly side of High Street and Hanover Street, Eversource is installing electrical and communications utilities under the sidewalks. He stated on average the sidewalks being redesigned are currently 5 feet. The design standard is 7 feet. The redesign will maintain adequate travel lane widths on the roadways. However, widening the sidewalk to design standards would eliminate two parking spaces on the narrowest section of High Street.

In addition, one parking space would be removed on Hanover Street at Fleet Street to make room for the sidewalk extension, and the crosswalk, which was approved by the Committee in July 2015. Because of a large underground electrical vault at the intersection of Hanover Street

and Fleet Street, the required tip down ramp cannot be constructed within the existing sidewalk. The sidewalk bump-out would require one parking space be removed. A street light, a bump-out island and ADA compliant tip down ramp for the new crosswalk location is proposed.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz asked if the Garden Way bump-out could have a beveled edge at the corner. Public Works Director Rice agreed.

The Committee discussed the sidewalk widths, design standards, and the City Council directive regarding brick sidewalks in the historic district.

The Committee agreed to allow the remaining portion of the removed parking space at Hanover Street and Fleet Street to be used as a motorcycle parking space.

Vote 9-0, to remove two parking spaces on High Street and remove one parking space on Hanover Street and Fleet Street to allow crosswalk improvements and a motorcycle parking space.

D. Miller Avenue speed limit – Eric Eby stated a resident frequently traveling Miller Street expressed concern about vehicle speeds. The current speed limit signs are incorrect. They are posted at 25mph. Based on state law and city ordinance, the speed limit should be 30mph. Eric Eby collected vehicle speed data. The 85th percentile speed is approximately 30-33mph. He stated he would gather speed data on Miller Avenue near Middle and review sight line issues before making a recommendation to the Committee.

City Manager Bohenko motioned to refer to City staff for further evaluation and report back. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Vote 9-0, to refer to City staff for further evaluation and report back.**

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Motorcycle parking on sidewalks – A revised letter submitted by Marc Stettner, dated March 25, 2016, was distributed to the Committee at the meeting. Eric Eby stated that staff would be reviewing moped parking on sidewalks. He stated a parking policy for bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles needs to be established. The question to be reviewed by staff is if mopeds are legally permitted to park on sidewalks. Currently, state law defines a moped based on the license plate. Motorcycles are defined as motor vehicles and are not allowed to park on sidewalks per state law. The Committee motioned to refer to City staff for report back at a future meeting. **Vote 9-0, to refer to City staff for report back at a future meeting.**

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Marc Stettner, 91 Fairview Avenue, informed the Committee that Maine does not designate mopeds by license plate. He stated that the city policy regarding mopeds treats Maine residents different from New Hampshire residents. He stated his 150cc unit is the same size

as those under 50cc. He expressed concern about parking on the street. Mr. Stettner requested a legal review of the policy. He stated his intent is to maximize the downtown parking. He expressed disappointment that the letter was not part of the packet. He requested the agenda action item title reflect the intent of the topic. The Committee apologized to Mr. Stettner regarding the absence of the letter in the packet. City Manager Bohenko confirmed that the action item is still in review. Ron Cypher suggested that all gasoline-powered vehicles be banned from parking on sidewalks (mopeds, scooters, and motorcycles).

City Manager Bohenko motioned to refer back to City staff for further review of suggestions to include, but not limited to, banning all gasoline-powered vehicles from sidewalks and/or allowing only mopeds with moped license plates to park on sidewalks. Harold Whitehouse seconded. **Vote 9-0, to refer back to City staff for further review of suggestions, to include, but not limited to, banning all gasoline-powered vehicles from parking on sidewalks, and/or allowing only mopeds with a moped license plate to park on sidewalks.**

Doug Roberts, 247 Richards Avenue, representing PS21, spoke to the Committee. The organization is working on a project called Walkable West End. The project would involve a temporary short-term makeover of a section on Islington Street. The organization received a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and other sponsors. The idea is to inform the long-term redesign of Islington Street with temporary measures. It is a community driven process. They are working with Mike Lydon, author of Tactical Urbanism. Dates and locations will be determined at a future date. Mr. Roberts stated that this process might encourage a wider range of participation by the citizenry.

Marc Stettner, 91 Fairview Avenue, requested his adamant opposition be noted in the minutes allowing ONLY New Hampshire licensed mopeds to park on sidewalks. City Manager Bohenko clarified the action item will be referred back to City staff to review all options.

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Traffic calming policies and procedures – Juliet Walker informed the Committee that in the near future, she will be returning with policies and procedures related to the numerous requests received from neighborhoods looking for traffic calming measures, speed reduction options, traffic controls and other safety measures. The goal would be to have a clear process (step by step), a toolkit of traffic calming measures that could be considered, and the types of analysis that needs to be done in each situation.

B. Water Country traffic study update – Eric Eby stated a written commitment was received from Water Country to fund half of the traffic study looking at alternate exit routes from Water Country. The consultant has the traffic data and is analyzing it now. They should

have recommendations to staff by the end of the month and staff will be reporting the findings to the Committee.

C. Proposed private parking lot app by Brian Slovenski – Chairman Lown met with Mr. Slovenski. City Manager Bohenko motioned to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. Ted Gray seconded. **Vote 9-0, to suspend the rules.**

Brian Slovenski, 175 Grant Avenue, provided a handout to the Committee about an app developed to guide the public to private parking spaces for a fee through the application. The app is called Spare Spott. He provided a map of public and private parking spaces. He stated the mutual goal is to increase or allow access for the public to those private parking spaces and increase the parking inventory in the City of Portsmouth. He is asking the City to potentially assist in incentivizing the owners of the private parking lots to participate in the program by potentially offering services such as plowing, striping, and resurfacing. He stated his business would be responsible for advertising.

Ted Gray asked how private parking would be discovered and what benefit would this service bring to the City. Mr. Slovenski stated he has done his own research. He stated that having more parking would benefit both the City of Portsmouth and the businesses.

Chairman Lown and City Manager Bohenko requested a formal proposal from Mr. Slovenski. It should be sent to the Public Works Department with a copy sent to the City Manager.

D. City Council Joint Work Session with Parking & Traffic Safety Committee, Recreation Board, Trustees of the Trust Fund and Peirce Island Committee on April 11, 2016 - Chairman Lown requested Committee members send questions to him prior to the work session.

X. ADJOURNMENT – At 9:36 a.m., voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amy Chastain
Secretary of the Committee