

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – October 6, 2016
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Chairman, Brad Lown
Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Member, Ted Gray
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Member, Ronald Cypher
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Alternate Member, Mary Lou McElwain

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Parking Manager, Joey Giordano
Assistant Planning Director, Juliet Walker

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Ted Gray motioned to accept the August 4, 2016, meeting minutes.
Harold Whitehouse seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the financial reports dated September 2016 and October 2016. Ted Gray seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rick Condon supported the temporary crosswalk on Islington Street at Albany Street, but expressed concern about traffic impacts and the narrowing of Islington Street.

Dave Palumbo spoke about action item (VII.D.), the Echo Avenue neighborhood petition. He stated the major concerns are traffic speed, pedestrian safety, handicapped resident safety, and signage. The neighborhood residents have noticed an influx of vehicles on Echo Avenue. He stated that GPS units are directing traffic into the neighborhood. He expressed concern for the handicapped residents of Betty's Dream.

Mr. Palumbo provided detailed photographs of the neighborhood, pedestrian traffic in the neighborhood, and signage posted in the area.

Recommendations:

The residents would like the City to do the following:

- Contact GPS companies to direct traffic off Echo Avenue.
- Signage on Echo Avenue at Woodbury Avenue and Arthur F. Brady Drive (bypass road) to indicate wheelchairs and children are present.
- Remove the sign on Arthur F. Brady Drive directing traffic onto Echo Avenue
- Sign on Brady Drive to indicate access to Portsmouth/Woodbury Avenue shopping areas.
- Install a speed sign on Echo Avenue at Woodbury Avenue.
- Repair the utility patch on Woodlawn Circle.

Judy Miller, representing the Harbour Hill Condominium Association, submitted a letter and photos to the Committee. The association is requesting the crosswalk at Hanover Street and Fleet Street be reinstalled to increase pedestrian safety prior to the High Hanover project in 2017.

Barbara Destefano expressed support for the crosswalk reinstallation at Hanover Street and Fleet Street.

Terry Ann Boucher supported the Echo Avenue neighborhood association's recommendations. She expressed concern for handicapped pedestrian safety and the need for sidewalks in the neighborhood. She also expressed concerns regarding sidewalk conditions on Woodbury Avenue.

Denise Courier expressed concern for handicapped pedestrians safely traveling on Echo Avenue to Woodbury Avenue.

Mark Allinson questioned why vehicles are allowed to exit from 1900 Lafayette Road. He stated this is the only business in the area granted this option. He expressed concern regarding compliance and safety.

Bruce Osborn requested the City contact the GPS companies that are routing vehicles on Echo Avenue from the Spaulding Turnpike. He expressed concern for neighborhood residents' safety. Mr. Osborn was a representative of the Echo Avenue neighborhood.

VI. PRESENTATION:

A. Middle Street bike lane project – Juliet Walker, Assistant Planning Director, presented the proposed Middle Street / Lafayette Road Bicycle Lane plans to the Committee. The presentation is available on the City's website under Meetings Calendar 2016, October 6, 2016, Parking and Traffic Safety Committee.

The purpose for the presentation was to solicit feedback from the Committee and the public on the design. Comments collected from the Committee and public will be forwarded to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) as part of the compliance and federal funding requirements.

The presentation included information on the project background, impacts, funding and design. The project length is 1.3 miles, extending from Andrew Jarvis Drive to Congress Street. Juliet Walker stated the project is primarily a striping, signage and curb ramp project.

The project purpose included:

- Improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians
- Expand connectivity
- Provide bicycle route utilized by all ages
- Enhance pedestrian crossings
- Comply with federal funding requirements and documentation of impacted resources

After conducting parking counts, a demonstration project, and reviewing public comments, it was concluded that protected and buffered bike lanes are the appropriate design choice. A buffered bike lane is defined as: one with additional lateral separation from motor vehicle travel ways. A protected bike lane is defined as: one with vertical separation (parked cars, flexible bollards, plantings, or curbing) from motor vehicle travel ways. The design benefits include:

- Separation from motor vehicle traffic
- Bicyclist traveling in the same direction as motor vehicles traffic
- Minimal impact on historic resources

Juliet Walker presented detailed drawings of each section of the project. She noted that since the last presentation, the major design change was ending the protected and buffered bike lanes on Middle Street (at Highland Street and Cabot Street). Shared lane markings would continue on Middle Street to the downtown. No parking restrictions would occur north of Cabot Street and Highland Street.

Next steps in the project include: final engineering design completed in fall/winter of 2016, final NHDOT Notice to Proceed, bid for construction, and a construction start date in spring/summer 2017.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the amount spent to date on the project. Juliet Walker stated approximately \$40,000. Mr. Whitehouse expressed concern regarding the roadway alteration of U.S. Route 1 (1 and three-tenths of a mile) and asked if federal agencies were contacted. He requested copies of documentation if contacted. He stated he would only support the project if a letter from the Secretary of Transportation in Washington D.C. was provided.

Juliet Walker clarified that the project is in the City's jurisdiction. She stated since federal funding was involved, NHDOT must comply with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) standards and regulations.

Mary Lou McElwain expressed concern for pedestrian and bicycle safety on the south side of Lafayette Road and the extended area. Juliet Walker stated there is a project to improve the intersection at Andrew Jarvis Drive. NHDOT is preparing to do a major Route 1 corridor project, and the City is working with them to include pedestrian and bicycle improvements as part of the project.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Charles Griffin opposed the project on Lafayette Road between the intersections of South Street and Andrew Jarvis Drive. He stated he has traveled the South Street and Lafayette Road intersection three days a week for the past five years, and noticed very few high school students riding bicycles. Mr. Griffin said that traffic at the intersection in the morning is gridlocked. He provided photos to the Committee illustrating traffic congestion. He expressed concern about introducing bicycle traffic to the intersection. He is also concerned about altering the roadway to implement the protected and buffered bike lanes, the effect to emergency responders, non-student bicyclist safety, and the character of Lafayette Road.

Rick Becksted opposed the project on Lafayette Road between the intersections of South Street and Andrew Jarvis Drive. He stated he makes multiple trips to the high school and does not see a need for bike lanes. However, he expressed support for bicycles and discussed widening sidewalks for shared use. He noted parking concerns on Highland Street and the neighboring areas.

Jonathan Sandberg expressed support for a protected bike lane from Andrew Jarvis Drive to Richards Avenue. He discussed the 2013 Portsmouth Listens Study Session, the support of multi-modal transportation systems, and the Complete Streets program. He encouraged the Committee to support the project and extend it to Richards Avenue. He stated it would encourage more walking and bicycling and combat the parking and traffic problems in the downtown. Mr. Sandberg discussed the importance of including the section on Middle Street from Highland Street to Richards Avenue and creating shared parking in the neighborhood.

Peter Gerrish, a senior at Portsmouth High School, expressed support for the project. He read a support letter from Principal Mary Lyons. He presented the Committee with a petition signed by 247 students and teachers. He stated the endorsement was supported at every grade level through all class councils.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Whidden Street, driveway permit application by Greg Mahanna – Chairman Lown stated a site visit was conducted on Tuesday, October 4, 2016. Eric Eby stated the application was received by the Department of Public Works. He stated it was forwarded to PTS because of the narrow roadway conditions, the need to review open space requirements, and setbacks. Additionally, an approval would remove one on-street parking space. Staff had no recommendation at this time.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. Ron Cypher seconded. **Voted 9-0, to suspend rules to allow for public comment.**

Greg Mahanna stated he is seeking approval for an 11' opening onto his property currently being used as a driveway. He stated the benefits of approving the permit included: removing two vehicles from the on-street parking and creating access for city and emergency vehicles. He stated he is not removing one on-street parking space, but removing two vehicles from on-street parking.

Public Works Director Rice motioned to refer the action item to staff and report back next month. Harold Whitehouse seconded.

Shari Donnermeyer supported approving the application. Ron Cypher expressed concern for backing out of area. Greg Mahanna described how he was able to exit with a two point turn. Ted Gray stated he observed that the proposed driveway area (grassy area) did not appear to have had vehicles parked on it. Greg Mahanna stated that vehicles had been parking in area for the last 9 months.

Voted 9-0, to refer action item to staff and report back next month.

B. Portwalk Place, valet parking at Marriott Residence Inn. Application submitted by Parade Residence Hotel, LLC. – Public Works Director Rice stated action items VII.B. and VII.C. were related. Both were part of the overall project closeout and bond release. He stated the function had been in place for approximately three years. It was part of a site approval process. He stated this action would formalize the licensing procedures.

Robert Sullivan, City Attorney, addressed the Committee. He stated in August 2016, the developer submitted proposed valet agreements (VII.B. and VII.C. locations), which he reviewed. He prepared a memorandum dated October 3, 2016 to the Parking and Traffic Safety

Committee, comparing the Portwalk agreements to a “normal” valet agreement. Attorney Sullivan discussed some of the comparisons. For example, the Portwalk valet agreements would be automatically renewed without approval by the PTS Committee.

Attorney Sullivan stated that all outstanding issues had been resolved with the developer, but the new language for the agreements had not been written. He recommended two options: delay the vote until next month when he would present completed valet agreements, or delegate the authority to make final approval to Public Works Director Rice (subject to his review).

Harold Whitehouse motioned to delegate the authority to make final approval on the valet agreements to the Public Works Director and City Attorney. Ron Cypher seconded. **Voted 9-0, to delegate the authority to make final approval on the valet agreements (VII.B. and VII.C.) to the Public Works Director and City Attorney.**

C. Portwalk Place, valet parking at Hampton Inn. Application submitted by Portwalk HI, LLC. – Action item vote included in VII.B.

D. Echo Avenue, neighborhood petition requesting signs to address speeding concerns. Dave Palumbo and Bruce Osborn. – Chairman Lown thanked the neighborhood representatives and speakers who participated during the public comment period.

Public Works Director Rice motioned to direct staff to report back on potential enhancements to the area. Harold Whitehouse seconded.

Public Works Director Rice stated that signage improvements could be made in the short term. Sidewalk improvements needed to be addressed as part of the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). Harold Whitehouse expressed concern for Betty’s Dream handicapped residents, who use wheelchairs on roadways when traveling to Woodbury Avenue. He asked about a policy requiring flags or reflectors on wheelchairs.

Voted 9-0, to direct staff to report back on potential enhancements to the area.

E. Bow Street and Market Street intersection, request for police officer to direct traffic while Sarah Mildred Long Bridge is closed, by Frank Breen. – Public Works Director Rice motioned to refer to Police Department for report back. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff seconded. **Voted 9-0, to refer to Police Department for report back.**

F. Parking space striping outside of downtown, by Mark DeLorenzo. – Public Works Director Rice motioned to refer to staff and report back. Shari Donnermeyer seconded. **Voted 9-0, to refer to staff for report back.**

G. 15 minute parking spaces, request for review of their functionality and appropriateness, by Councilor Cyr. – Harold Whitehouse motioned to refer to staff and report back at the November meeting. Ted Gray seconded. **Voted 9-0, to refer to staff for report back at the November meeting.**

Public Works Director Rice stated staff would review the 15 minute parking function as part of the modern parking environment.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS:

A. Bartlett Street and Thornton Street intersection, concern regarding STOP sign compliance, by Randy Leach. – Eric Eby stated that traffic cameras would be moved to the intersection to monitor activity after the Islington Street pilot project monitoring was completed. Staff to report back on findings.

B. Pleasant Street motorcycle parking spaces. Concern with current parking fee requirements during trial period, by Marc Stettner. – Eric Eby stated that traffic cameras would be used to monitor use during the pilot project. He stated preliminary data had shown that motorcycles were utilizing the designated parking spots because cars were parking in the other spots. Staff to continue monitoring use and occupancy of spaces during the trial.

Chairman Lown asked the Committee to consider moving the Informational Section to the next action item as requested by resident, Rick Becksted. Ted Gray motioned to suspend the rules. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Voted 9-0, to suspend the rules to move the Informational Section to the next action item.**

IX. INFORMATIONAL

- A. Neighborhood Traffic Calming program update:
1. Elwyn Road sidewalk request
 2. Aldrich Road update
 3. Radar speed signs update
 4. Eliminating center lines on selected roads

Public Works Director Rice motioned to table Juliet Walker's presentation on neighborhood traffic calming until next month. Shari Donnermeyer seconded. **Voted 9-0, to table presentation to next month.**

- B. Quarterly accident report for 07/27/16 – 09/27/16

One bicycle accident was reported during the period. Mary Lou McElwain requested more information. Police Captain Warchol stated he would provide more detail on the next quarterly report.

C. Islington Street/Albany Street temporary crosswalk project update

Eric Eby stated that the temporary crosswalk is still in place and traffic cameras continue to monitor activity. He stated after reviewing the data, traffic backed up past the crosswalk several times during peak hours for brief periods. He stated the crosswalk provided a safer pedestrian crossing, and entrance and exit from the White Heron parking lot.

Public Works Director Rice motioned to leave the pilot project in place until the end of October 2016. Harold Whitehouse seconded.

Public Works Director Rice stated the data being collected is very valuable. Due to the number of pedestrians crossing at the location, he supported further review. He stated that the signal at Bartlett Street and Islington Street would be upgraded as part of a different project with preemption technology for emergency vehicles. Harold Whitehouse expressed support. Deputy Fire Chief Heinz noted that the Police Department does not have pre-emption on traffic signals.

Voted 9-0, to leave the pilot project in place until the end of October 2016.

D. Islington Street corridor project public meeting scheduled for October 19, 2016

Eric Eby stated this would be the second public meeting regarding the Islington Street Corridor Design Project. It is scheduled on Wednesday, October 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the Library's Levenson Room. VHB, the design consultant, would present preliminary design plans of Islington Street from Maplewood Avenue to the Route 1 Bypass.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Rick Becksted stated he had requested the Informational Section be moved because he wanted to hear more about the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program and discussions. He asked if solar powered traffic calming device signs had been researched. Mr. Becksted requested the Echo Avenue neighborhood issues and future issues be addressed: an 80-unit residential development has been proposed in the area.

Eric Eby stated four battery-powered signs had been ordered. Public Works Director Rice stated DPW staff would be responsible for sign maintenance.

XI. MISCELLANEOUS

ADJOURNMENT – At 10:04 a.m., voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:
Amy Chastain
Secretary of the Committee