

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

3:00 PM – July 22, 2021

Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Peter Whelan called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. ATTENDANCE BY ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

City Councilor/Chairman Peter Whelan

City Manager Karen Conard

Public Works Director Peter Rice

Assistant Fire Chief William McQuillen

Police Captain Darren Sargent

Steve Pesci

Jonathan Sandberg

Erica Wygonik (Present via Zoom)

Member Absent:

Mary Lou McElwain

Fire Chief Todd Germain

Police Captain Mike Maloney

Harold Whitehouse

City Staff Present:

Assistant Attorney Jane Ferrini

Parking Director Ben Fletcher

III. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Iris Estabrook commented on the Islington Creek Neighborhood Parking Program, how 198 Islington Street is left out of this program, and how this is problematic. She feels the City has not had the opportunity to zero in on the unique situation that is 198 Islington Street. She appreciates the City taking prior feedback seriously, and amending the program. She commented she is here to ask the City to do that one more time. She provided an amended map of the City's outline of the Neighborhood Parking Program. She modified this map to reflect where 198 Islington Street is. She explains, without the opportunity to access parking in the side streets across Islington Street, residents are left only with the little bit of a hill around the corner on Summer Street, which is a very busy street, and rarely has parking, or they would have to walk four blocks in the other direction to Cabot Street, which is also a busy street and then hope to get something behind there on State Street, and then walk back to the building. She commented that the vast majority, if not all residents in the building are senior citizens. The winter in particular, under the current proposed program, will present a real hardship for the residents. She states that she is here to hope that before the program goes before council, it will once more be amended to include the 14 families that live at 198 Islington Street.

Robin Husslage via zoom spoke to Iris Estabrook, and commented that it was her understanding the units at 198 Islington Street have on-site parking, as well as guest parking out front. She then questioned the hours of enforcement of the Neighborhood Parking Program. She clarified that anyone, from anywhere, could park on the program streets, without worry of being ticketed or any enforcement happening from 6:01PM to 10:59- or almost 11AM the next morning. So people can park there overnight. She wanted to clarify that this was correct, and that once this was violated, then they would receive 2 warnings violating that time frame, and only on the third time would they actually get a ticket.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that in terms of enforcement and parking outside of the enforcement hours, she is correct. The second part, regarding the warnings, was incorrect. There have been no plans to do warnings. Perhaps maybe the first week- but no plans to do 2 warnings before citing.

She commented that she wanted to clarify that there was a lot of time freedom for anyone to park on these streets during a large period of time.

She also questioned the parking capacity on the NPP streets. She asked how many on street parking spots the City has identified. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded 250 spots have been identified. She then questioned if the total number of businesses and residences has been calculated on those streets. Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher responded that it had, but he did not have that figure with him today, and that it has changed over time as eligibility has changed.

She expressed she is looking to understand what the potential demand is, versus what the capacity is. She voiced her particular concern is with Safeway Storage, which she believes houses 31 businesses. So that could be 125 passes that they could have just for the Safeway Storage, which is half of the current capacity, so that impact, to her would be a concern.

Chairman Peter Whelan clarified that what he believes will be done on a weekly basis is a measure of the usage and capacity. Metrics will be taken throughout the 6 months, so the City will know, and take into consideration these counts.

Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher commented that counts are currently being taken on a daily basis, and once the program begins, a new count system will begin and be compared to prior numbers.

Public Works Director Peter Rice added the passes are issued to vehicles (with proof of registration in Portsmouth, NH), one does not just get 4 passes printed out.

Robin confirmed that she did understand that, she is just concerned that demand is going to be significant compared to actual slots on the street.

She also asked if there will be distinguishing between businesses and residences.

Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher responded that a database will be kept on to whom and where they reside when passes are issued.

Robin questioned if they will be distinguishable on the street. Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher confirmed you will not be able to tell the difference on the street during the pilot program.

Nancy Knowles responded to Robin Husslage's comments on the parking at 198 Islington Street. Nancy stated that parking spaces assigned are dependent on bedrooms in a unit. There is no guest parking- there is one free spot that can sometimes be used, is most often used for maintenance workers on building, but it cannot be used in the winter as snow is plowed into that area. She asked if the parking spots on Islington Street that have the 2 hour limit will be included in the program.

Chairman Peter Whelan responded that nothing on Islington Street parking is changing.

Nancy commented she does not feel it's a fair statement to make, that they have off street parking- they still need parking for caregivers, workers, and guests.

Chairman Whelan clarified, what she would really like is to include 198 Islington Street into the program. Nancy confirmed yes, if not other houses in the area as well, as they will have similar challenges.

Chairman Peter Whelan commented a benefit to the pilot program is that the City Manager and Parking Director can make changes on the fly. As we go forward they can either add or subtract as needed.

Nancy commented how changes will be communicated to the public as the program is going on, and the construction taking place on Islington Street is also going to affect parking.

Kurt Knowles asked Parking Director Ben Fletcher for the inventory in area. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed that the inventory has been accounted for, he just does not have the number in front of him at this time.

Brooks Stevens commented on Robin's comments regarding businesses on Islington Street. He said he walked Islington Street and counted 17 businesses. Equating to 68 potential passes. He also wanted clarification on who could get a parking permit for the neighborhood; he asked if anyone in the city could get a permit for the neighborhood. Chairman Peter Whelan confirmed that that was correct.

Brooks questioned if that should be limited, potentially on a daily basis rather than on a permanent basis. This could be easily abused.

Chairman Peter Whelan responds he does not see how it will be abused, and that parking will be monitored. It does not guarantee a space, it's to hunt for a space.

Public works Director Peter Rice commented that this is a 6 month pilot, and it's anticipated that it will be an annual pass that will be renewed, as you have to show proof of residency.

Chairman Peter Whelan commented that all the people of 198 Islington Street could apply for passes and get one.

Kristin Peterson commented she would like to reiterate what Iris Estabrook and Nancy Knowles have stated. There is not enough parking for residents on Islington Street. There is no guest parking, and only one spot per unit. She asked for clarification around how the program will affect her at 51 Islington Street. She posed the scenario of if she comes home from work at 3pm, her daughter's vehicle is in her spot, and she has a load of groceries, what does she do once this program starts.

Chairman Peter Whelan responded the 2 hour parking is not going to change. He also commented that she is eligible for a parking pass at her residence. She asked if that is different than what is happening at 198 Islington Street. Chairman Peter Whelan commented yes, because 198 Islington Street is on the other side of Islington Street, and the program is only being implemented on the North side of Islington Street.

Kristin stated she would like to voice her opinion that she does not believe this is fair.

Nicole LaPierre commented she too is concerned with inventory. She states that she is not unsympathetic to Iris Estabrook and her neighbors, but she is unsure as to where you draw the line. She commented that she gets frustrated hearing the comments from 198 and 51 Islington Street because these were developments put in by the City with not enough parking and that developers have continued to be allowed to develop with inadequate parking requirements. She asked if the program was amended again, where

would it put us in the process.

Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini responded that after public comment, if the committee wished to amend the program, they could do so at this meeting and then that amendment would go to the City Council. For any changes on the fly the City Manager makes, she would bring those to the Parking Traffic and Safety Committee, they will be reflected in the minutes, and those will be adopted by the City Council. So there will be a record of those modifications during the course of the pilot.

Chairman Peter Whelan clarified that the program could be modified today to include 198 Islington Street today, and that's how it would be presented to City Council on August 2nd. Nicole commented that she does not actually agree with them (198 Islington Street Residents), she thinks it's a separate neighborhood, however, if the one last hurdle is these last 14 units at 198 Islington Street, then we have to move on with this. She wants to do something that we can look at and monitor to adjust.

Lester LeBlanc commented on parking at 198 Islington Street, and the need for parking for healthcare vendors and maintenance workers. He commented if the program goes forward, he strongly endorses including the South side of Islington Street.

Ken Goldman commented on how many people can get passes. There is a lot of off street parking in the neighborhood, including his residence. He stated he will apply for passes, however he won't always be utilizing the street parking.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Review of Islington Creek Neighborhood Parking Program Summary.

Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher read the Islington Creek Neighborhood Parking Program Summary.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to motion as read. Jonathan Sandberg commented he would be happy to amend to include 198 Islington Street. He commented there is a lot that needs to be fixed with the program and there is a lot he does not like about it. He wants the program to move forward and if including 198 Islington Street residents, and potentially more on the fly on the South side of Islington Street, as need be, but for the sake of moving forward, he would like to include 198 Islington Street.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he would amend his motion to include 198 Islington Street.

City Manager Karen Conard commented she appreciates the amendment and is inclined to support it, but is worried about choosing one address on that side of the street. She asked if the maker of the amendment motion would include the length of Islington Street on the map, down to Dover (on the South Side).

Public Works Director Peter Rice stated he will amend his motion once again. He acknowledges others are going to want to ask the same thing, so include the South side of Islington Street for that length.

Steve Pesci commented that he is inclined to support the motion as amended, but just heard one thing he wanted clarification on; there was a reference that Safeway Storage has 31 business units, and therefore each business would be entitled to the stated number of permits, but how is that, is each unit a business?

Chairman Peter Whelan responded that not all units are a business, but they do have businesses and studios up there.

Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher confirmed that property does have some off street parking.

Steve Pesci suggests down the road evaluating this net, but now it's time to move forward

with the pilot; observe and make recommendations. He plans to support motion with the amendment.

Jonathan Sandberg comments what he likes least about it, is the exorbitant cost (estimated \$56,000 for 6 months). He feels the cost should be bore by the users of the program. It really should be people who live in a dense neighborhood where there is scarcity of a resource. How you deal with that, is there's a market for it, you pay for it. Chairman Peter Whelan commented that he agrees with Mr. Sandberg and there should be a user fee. Once through the pilot there will be a day of reckoning that states if it is to continue, and it shall be funded, then there is going to be a cost to register your car and get a parking pass. There's a cost of bringing someone to monitor streets, there is a cost to putting signs up, there's a cost to the stickers.

Steve Pesci commented that the idea of the pilot is to see if there is something that might be replicable in other parts of the city. Basically we're providing a permit to use 250 + square feet of public space, and he agrees with Jonathan and the Chair that this is being done to quantify the cost and understand it, but down the road it cannot be free.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented he would be negligent if he did not represent Harold Whitehouse, who asked him to mention cost of the program, as well as staffing requirements.

Jonathan Sandberg commented that Mary Lou McElwain asked him to bring up the point again that passes will be able to be accessed at the Foundry Garage.

Chairman Peter Whelan asked Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher when we will be able to move forward with this. Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher commented that the digsafe process has been started for signs that need to be put in the ground and identified other existing poles where signs can be put up. The 3.5 weeks timeline he had advised City Manager Conard was inclusive trying to get all of that done, while this discussion was taking place. In anticipation of this moving forward.

City Manager Karen Conard confirmed that August 4th is still the date, Parking Director Benjamin Fletcher confirmed that is correct.

On a unanimous roll call 9-0 voted to adopt the Islington Creek Neighborhood Parking Program Summary, as amended to include south side of Islington Street between Dover and Bridge Street, as a temporary parking regulation.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to adjourn. City Manager Karen Conard seconded. **On a unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to adjourn.**

Respectfully submitted by:
Shanleigh McGonagle, Department of Public Works