



City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire Mayoral Blue-Ribbon Committee
In-person and Zoom Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2022, 6:30 PM at the Portsmouth Public Library

Committee attendance: Larry Cataldo, Peter Sommsich, Elaine Apatang, Lori Soloway, William Gatchell and City Council member John Tabor

Others in attendance: Director of Public Works Peter Rice, Elizabeth Spiers, Mary Lou McElwain and Steve Dunfey, serving as acting secretary

Chair Cataldo opened the meeting with a welcome and introduction of the committee members for 2022-2023. He then invited audience input.

A. Comments from Neighborhood Residents

- Mary Lou McElwain spoke about city sidewalks which are difficult in the winter even when roads are clear. She said it has been an icy year with many falls. Portsmouth is not a walkable city in winter. She said she would work with work with the CNC on this issue.
- Elizabeth Spiers of South Street also stated that a lot of bushes are overtaking the sidewalks.
- Peter Rice responded, then spoke about staffing on storm operations: the roads get plowed first before the sidewalks. “We do our best on sidewalks but it is very challenging. We had two challenging storms this year. After each storm we ask how we can do better. Additional staff would be helpful. Bushes on sidewalks are also challenging. People are not shy about making demands.” He stated that there were six snow removal machines for sidewalks working for the city.
- Larry Cataldo stated that he has done a lot of shoveling in front sidewalk of his condo for the second storm. People should be available to shovel. Perhaps a combined awareness campaign with Public Works that it is ok to shovel if you can.

B. Committee Business

Larry Cataldo referred to the visual slides at the meeting. He stated that Portsmouth 400 efforts were exciting but so far nothing specific was on the table in 2022 with the CNC.

There were comments on the National Night Out and also holiday lights.

Larry Cataldo discussed the fumes and noise issue in Islington Creek with Pan AM railroad. He stated that the president of CSX is looking into railroad matters after a group of four residents

filed comments at a CSX/PanAm federal merger docket. “They are serious about this,” Cataldo stated. So far, there is no major activity on the committee’s part. He expects the CSX executives to brief the CNC in the May-June timeframe.

The chair led discussion about National Night Out which takes place on August 3. Also addressed a CNC awareness campaign with newsletters and meetings held at the city library. On the campaign, one of the residents at the January meeting said she was not aware of what we did on the committee. Larry Cataldo has heard this before and would like to form a subcommittee to recommend a course of action to increase awareness of the CNC mission.

There was discussion about “What do we want to do in 2022?”. How many meetings remaining (two or three)? Also, how many forums do we want to sponsor. Discussion about the Friends of the South End.

Lori Soloway brought up the idea of a Ward Five forum. Peter Sommsich addressed the housing crisis that is ongoing in Portsmouth.

The chair announced the need for CNC elections for Chairperson, Vice Chair and Secretary. An election will be held on ZOOM sometime in April.

The meeting closed at 8:15 pm

Submitted by Steve Dunfey, acting secretary