

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONFERENCE ROOM A
CITY HALL, MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE

*Members of the public also have the option to join the meeting over Zoom
(See below for more details)**

8:00 AM

February 3rd, 2022

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

City Manager Conard called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

Chairman Andrew Bagley
Vice Chairman Steve Pesci (via Zoom)
City Manager Karen Conard
Public Works Director Peter Rice
Fire Chief Todd Germain
Police Captain Mike Maloney
Mary Lou McElwain
Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

Absent

Mark Syracuse
Harold Whitehouse

City Staff Present:

Parking Director Ben Fletcher

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to bring agenda item 6a forward, seconded by City Manager Conard. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to nominate Councilor Andrew Bagley for Chair, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard. On a roll call vote, motion passed 7-0-1. Councilor Andrew Bagley abstained.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to nominate Steve Pesci for Vice Chair, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that the position should be defined because they haven't had a Vice Chair recently. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the role would be to act as Chair and facilitate the meeting if the Chair is absent.

Councilor Andrew Bagley noted that he requested a Vice Chairman because he travels for work, so it would be appropriate to have a backup. It will also be good to have someone who has been on the committee for a while to provide that institutional knowledge as a support. Mary Lou McElwain agreed.

Steve Pesci commented that he was happy to step in and help the Committee.

On a roll call vote, motion passed 7-0-1. Steve Pesci abstained.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the year is 50% over and 62% of the budget funds are in. Most of the line items are ahead of schedule and if they are not ahead, then they are right on schedule.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the Financial Report dated December 31, 2021, and place it on file, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT (15 MINUTES)

Liza Hewett of 726 Middle Rd. commented on the speeds on Middle Rd. Ms. Hewett came before the Committee in 2020 and requested that the speed limit be lowered to 25 mph as well as other traffic calming measures be put into place. No action was taken, so she submitted a petition to lower the speed limit to 25 mph. The City decided to pilot traffic calming measures that were put in last spring. There was not a review of the traffic calming measure success before they were removed for winter. It looks like the traffic calming for Middle Rd. was pushed to 2026 in the CIP. Cars travel this road with speeds over 40 mph. No speed on residential roads should be over 25 mph. Ms. Hewett has been told that this is an arterial road, and 30 mph is appropriate. This is a neighborhood. There are other gateway roads that are 25 mph. It is understood that they are studying the speed limits in the City and coming up with a plan. Middle Rd., Islington St., and Sagamore Ave. should be 25 mph.

Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that the traffic calming was not pushed to 2026. It is slated for 2023. It was slated for 2024 in the CIP last year, but was pulled forward to 2023 for this CIP. The City's Traffic Engineer left, so they are understaffed. Additional data has been collected. The City is not ignoring this request.

Ken Goldman of 271 Islington St. commented that he lives between Cornwall St. and Rockingham St. Today they are both one-way streets going in the same direction. It would be convenient for the people who live there to have one go one way and the other go the other way. Mr. Goldman requested that the Committee consider making that change.

Johnathon Sandberg of 160 Bartlett St. commented on the Cate St./Bartlett St. intersection. A lot of improvements could be easily made. The stop bar coming from Cate St. is after the crosswalk. The cars block the crosswalk when they are stopped there. The slip lane coming up Bartlett St. is unsafe. They are for emphasizing flow over safety. They are not common in the City. The slip lane is preventing queuing, but it is sacrificing safety. Cars should take a hard right instead of a soft right.

Coming down Bartlett St. the road is three lanes wide. That is unnecessary because almost no cars turn right there. The road could be changed to better accommodate pedestrians or bikes. 105 Bartlett St. won the appeal, so it will be developed and they will create the path along North Mill Pond. That creates an opportunity to connect Cate St. to this trail. It would be best to create a multi-use path up the road and create a crosswalk at the driveways instead of having people make a crossing at Cate St. and then Bartlett St.

Robin Rousseau of 90 Fleet St. commented that she was shocked that City management had voting positions on this Committee and requested that Chairman Bagley look into if that was appropriate. Ms. Rousseau commented that Portsmouth was not in compliance with parking privileges for those with handicap placards. In October there was a parking change with a three-hour limit for those with handicap placards. The RSA says they should have double the time limit that a regular vehicle would have. The City should change that rule immediately and issue any refunds to those who were impacted. This Committee should meet on a weeknight and not at 8 a.m. on a weekday. Ms. Rousseau requested that Market Square neighborhood be next in the permit parking pilot programs.

Jess Lozan of 273 Austin St. commented that she measured the width of Austin St. and it is 17 feet wide. [A Chevy] Tahoe is 7 feet. That gives them less than 10 feet to make any car switch arounds. It is understood there are a lot of small streets in Portsmouth but not all of them have parking. Ms. Lozan's neighbor suggested adding a sign that says "do not block driveway" which would prevent losing any parking. It may be good to add paint too. It would be helpful to add a notification device to prevent cars from blocking the driveway.

Michael Millikan of 284 New Castle Ave. commented on the traffic calming on Middle Rd. In 2019 Mr. Millikan had a conversation with Eric Eby about New Castle Ave. because there was a lot of speeding. That justified a speed limit feedback sign, which has been helpful. However, Eric Eby also said that New Castle Ave. is an arterial road and was not eligible for traffic calming beyond a speed feedback sign and enforcement. Mr. Millikan requested clarification on what arterial routes were in Portsmouth and what traffic calming they were eligible for.

Chairman Andrew Bagley closed the public comment session.

V. SITE VISITS

273 Austin Street; Tuesday, February 1st, 8am

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that City Officials and Committee Members were present to evaluate the site and gave credit to the City for that level of involvement. Residents may not always be happy with decisions that are made, but this shows the level of care, effort, and communication this City takes pride in.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they have looked at the site a couple times before and they understood the challenge of navigating a narrow driveway and street. The question comes down to a balance of access and parking. The setbacks show there is room for one parking spot. One option is to put in a painted triangle across the street from the driveway to prevent parking there. Another option is putting up a "do not block driveway" sign. The last option would be to stripe out the

spot and add signage saying do not park at the stop sign or driveway. There was not a consensus at the site walk.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that the triangle would address the majority of concerns. They have to balance the convenience of the private property owner with the public right to park in legally designated areas. The hope is that the staff would work to create a compromise without putting up a lot of signage.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci moved to have Staff measure dimensions and report back with options, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.

Mary Lou McElwain agreed with Vice Chairman Steve Pesci and noted that it was important to hear from residents who were parking in that area as well.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented they should send out abutter notices when they are ready to propose a change. It may be better received if people are notified.

Public Works Director Peter Rice amended the motion to include abutter notification, Vice Chairman Steve Pesci agreed to the amendment.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

(No public comment during Committee discussion without Committee approval.)

A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

This was addressed at the beginning of the meeting.

B. PTS Schedule Discussion **Sample Motion: Discuss options for upcoming calendar**

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that 8 a.m. was hard for people to attend. An afternoon meeting may be easier for City Staff and the public to attend. They can have special meetings, for example a neighborhood parking meeting, in the evenings to allow for even more attendance.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that there was not an ideal time. They have done afternoon meetings before, and the attendance was not different. This is the start of the staff's day, so it is easier for them to attend.

Erika Wygonik agreed that there was not an ideal time. 8 a.m. is tricky but she appreciated that it was at the beginning of the day and at a time when children were occupied. 8:15 a.m. would be easier to do drop off and then come to this meeting. Occasional night meetings for particular public matters do make sense.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that the meeting should be either at the beginning of the day or the end of the day. 8 a.m. can be a little stressful to make family logistics work, so 8:30 may work better.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that it was important to have the Fire Chief and Police Captain attend and requested their feedback.

Fire Chief Todd Germain commented that he had a conflict in the evening on the first Thursday of the month. Any other time during the day would work.

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that evenings could be tricky, but if he could not attend someone else from the police force could. These meetings can run 1-2 hours. If they start in the afternoon, then they can run into the early evening.

City Manager Karen Conard commented that member Mark Syracuse wrote in that the afternoon was his preference. City Manager Karen Conard added that City Staff would make themselves available for the meeting.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that the consensus seemed that a morning meeting at 8:15 or 8:30 was preferred. It's unrealistic to schedule every meeting in the evening because of staff requirements and other City meeting conflicts. However, they could consider having a couple regular meetings a year in the evening.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that they do have Zoom capabilities, so the public can participate that way as well.

Erika Wygonik moved to move regularly-scheduled Thursday meetings to 8:30am, and choose up to two times annually to switch to evening meeting to enable public input on larger-scale items, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

C. 273 Austin Street- Request for Reduced Parking Across from 273 Austin

This was addressed under the site walk agenda item.

D. 21 Brewster Street- Request for improved parking signage to denote only one available space (as painted)

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was a space that sometimes houses two vehicles but it is only striped for one. It is difficult for people to see that when the snow is on the ground, so people will double park. There is a request to put in signage to prevent double parking.

Public Works Peter Rice commented that he was concerned about additional signage on a tight sidewalk. The snow removal and paint on the road should be adequate to show there is only one parking spot. This is a single parking space in the ordinance. There is no

additional action needed by the Committee. If staff finds that signage is needed after observing it, then staff can take that action.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to table this item and place it on file, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that when residents have a request like this, they should come to the meeting to discuss it. That would help to provide some additional background to the Committee.

Erika Wygonik commented that this comes up frequently. It is understood that they don't want additional signage, but the public may not be as familiar with parking setbacks. It may be helpful to put messaging on the City's social media to remind the public about the requirements.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci agree with Erika Wygonik and commented that signage can become a long-term maintenance issue. As long as the paint is on the ground, then awareness should be there.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they would have staff and enforcement observe that area.

E. Request for RRFB at Dennett and Maplewood

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was a neighbor request. Typically, they put out a camera to monitor foot traffic. There are guidelines that show when an RRFB is warranted. This discussion should be about what timeframe would be appropriate to put this out. The numbers in the spring and summer may be more active than putting a camera out now.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci moved to have staff place traffic camera and collect data starting 4.15.22, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that they have talked about setting up criteria around when to install an RRFB in Portsmouth, and hopefully this will help facilitate that.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that these started appearing a few years ago and it seems like a lot of people have been requesting these. It would be good to have a set of criteria to guide them to prevent oversaturating the City with these. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed that they would include the existing guidelines in the presentation when this comes back.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they will present that information to the Committee and post it to their web site. There is a lot more than pedestrian counts with this intersection. Sight lines are part of the consideration. An RRFB does increase visibility,

but it does not automatically make this a safer crossing. This intersection needs to be viewed as a whole. Staff will look at this more thoroughly and report back.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None

VIII. INFORMATIONAL

A. Monthly Accident Report from Police

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that December had 99 total crashes and 71 of those were reportable. There were no accidents that involved pedestrians or bikes. A reportable crash is when the damage is \$1,000 or more. Last month's meeting there was talk about crash data at Market St. at Noble's Island involving a U-turn. In the past 5 years there were no accidents at that intersection resulting from a U-turn. There was discussion about putting in a 4 way stop at State St. and Union St. In the past 5 years there were no reportable crashes at State St. and Union St.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that the City was about to undergo a project on Union St. Public Works Director commented that it was about a year out.

B. Bike and Vehicular Traffic Data

Parking Director Ben Fletcher showed the traffic data for Market St. and Noble's Island. It has a typical down curve for winter. The numbers compared to last year are significantly higher. The data from South St. and Middle St. showed that the numbers were becoming similar to the 2019 numbers. It may or may not make sense to continue to show this report.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they would continue to collect the data, but the Committee can decide if they want to continue to see this report. Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they could continue to show it monthly or pull a specific date range.

Erika Wygonik commented that she liked seeing the report. It is helpful to see where they compare to 2019. They can just say a percentage on how they compare to 2019. Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they had parking data that can speak to that as well. They have daily data to show where traffic is for parking as well.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that Staff will work to develop recommended data reporting as the 2019/2021 comparison comes to an end.

C. PTS Action Items

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci questioned where they were on the Bartlett St. and Hodgson Way intersection work. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the stop bar and

crosswalk were going to be relocated. The engineering reports and reviews have continued to show the value of the slip lane. The area as configured is not final there will be additional signage and crosswalk adjustments to improve visibility. It will be completed in the spring.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that they had talked earlier about setting up a group to discuss speed limits in the City, and questioned if it was appropriate to set up a work group to discuss this before bringing it to the Committee. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that they have a presentation planned for the March meeting and will continue to move forward from there. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that staff was more than willing to include a working group discussion prior to that meeting. The City's web site has good information around complete streets program. There is a lot of good documentation there for anyone to review. They are living documents that need to be brought up to speed, and they warrant a revisit.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher presented a spreadsheet of the PTS open action items that they keep to help ensure that projects stay in queue.

Chairman Andrew Bagley questioned if they should make this available on the web site. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was accessible online because it is in the meeting packet. It would make sense to add a column explaining why something may get dropped off or delayed. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed they would continue to make it available.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Woodbury Traffic Calming Request Letter Submitted 1.6.2022

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was from a resident that came in to speak about traffic calming on Woodbury Ave. at the last meeting, and she requested that this be entered into the record.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this was a project that they have been working on. They are preparing to take action this summer and have identified a number of locations for speed tables. They will continue to collect data as they move forward. The area has not been ignored.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to place the correspondence on file, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was concerned about the skateboard park and 105 Bartlett St. and the impact that they will have on traffic. The biggest concern is access and egress to the skateboard park. This should be put on the agenda, and they should discuss whether a traffic study is warranted.

Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was not the purview of this Committee to be directing those types of studies to be done. There is a Technical Advisory Committee that does those reviews. The changes and configurations of that roadway are acceptable to

come back to this Committee for input. There are traffic studies being done for those projects. The 105 Bartlett St. should have been completed already and should be part of public record.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was concerned about access to skateboard park. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they have not entered the design phase for that yet. The concern is noted and there are studies being done for that project. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if that study could come to this Committee.

Erika Wygonik commented that a development has to get approval from the Planning Board and typically a traffic study is part of that approval especially if it is a larger development. Erika Wygonik questioned what the best way was for them to be interact with that review and approval. One option would be to speak as private citizens in the public hearing. Another could be to try to create a formal relationship with the Planning Board and this Committee for those items. It does not make sense to have two different Boards review the same thing separately. The City already has a mechanism to review traffic studies through the Planning Board. Erika Wygonik questioned if the skate park would go through the Planning Board process. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they have not completed the design for this project yet, but they will most likely have to go through the Planning Board process.

Erika Wygonik questioned if it would be helpful to have an alert on the agenda for items to pay attention to. The question is how they can best support the Planning Board with their knowledge of traffic and safety. Mary Lou McElwain agreed. Sometimes they get a resident's perspective who may not have shown up at a Planning Board Meeting.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that this Committee addresses problems as they came up and set the rules of the road. The Planning Board is a quasi-judicial Board. If this Committee feels the Planning Board is approving things that are unsafe, then they should address the policy. They should not be looking at individual projects as a Committee, but they can speak as private residents. Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was trying to understand how to best give feedback when there are specific safety concerns. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the Chairman summarized it well. The concerns can be voiced as a private citizen. They receive referrals from the Planning Board when changes to the ordinance are required. The individual projects already have a mechanism to review traffic impact.

City Manager Karen Conard added that there was overlap by City Staff on the Boards. It may make sense to provide updates by staff under miscellaneous.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they would be coming before this Committee next month to talk about the Bridge St. Lot because they will be removing parking spaces. It has tree impacts as well and will need to go to the Tree and Greenery Committee. It does not trigger the land use process because it is an existing space. Mary Lou McElwain noted that as a resident it was confusing to figure out which Board has the final say and where to express concerns.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that contrary to public opinion they heard, it is important to have City Staff on the Committee because they are a liaison to other Committees. A project specific review is a Planning Board purview.

Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that in public comment there was concern about having City Staff as voting members. That is allowed under the ordinance, and it would be hard to make decisions without their expertise on the City and traffic.

X. ADJOURNMENT

City Manager Karen Conard moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 am, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

**Members of the public also have the option to join the meeting over Zoom, a unique meeting ID and password will be provided once you register. To register, click on the link below or copy and paste this into your web browser:*

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rCwDO7_ORMy4IW9MrVn1YQ