



City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire Mayoral Blue-Ribbon Committee
Wednesday, October 19 at 6:30 pm
City Hall Conference Room A and Zoom
Meeting Minutes

On this date, the Citywide Neighborhood Committee met at City Hall to discuss proposed changes to the NNO/neighborhood block party event and other committee business. The meeting began at 6:40 pm.

Attendees: Larry Cataldo - chair, Elaine Apatang - vice chair and Lori Soloway, all from the committee; Kathy Bergeron, former chair of the CNC and City Councilor John Tabor, the City Council's CNC representative. From the city, Chief Mark Newport and Sgt. Brian Houde of the Portsmouth Police Department were present.

Also attending were Scott Forte, president of Seacoast Crime Stoppers, Susan Sterry, Friends of the South End and Sheridan Lloyd, the neighborhood representative from Cliff Road/Walker Bungalow.

The meeting began with a presentation by Larry Cataldo on NNO statistics and an alleged decision by the city manager and the police chief. This followed with a lengthy discussion of the issues surrounding the National Night Out event.

Chief Newport, at first, clarified that the city had not made a firm decision on the number of locations and it desired more discussion with the committee.

The issue is that the NNO's event with neighborhood block parties has apparently become so popular that Police, Fire and Public Works departments are stretched thin to meet the expectation of 16 neighborhood locations. The Chief suggested that we choose five locations for the NNO event date and invite the neighborhoods to attend one of these. He further said that the number of locations is not fixed but it should be less than 16, the number of block parties held last August 2nd. Scott Forte felt that a single large event, such as the one in Greenland this year, can offer the best solution but two or three locations would also work.

From the previous discussion, most of us agreed that it was impossible for most first responders to reach each and every block party and, as a result, the Police Department would not be able to meet all of the neighborhoods' expectations. Chief Newport also said that with so many locations, he would not be able to meet his own expectations of being able to talk to residents and hear what they have to say. Hence, reducing the visits would make a big difference.

A number of the attendees cautioned that the NNO link with neighborhood block parties is a long-standing tradition, dating back to 1994. We must be careful not to unhinge what has become a special event in Portsmouth whereby neighborhood children and adults get together once a year, enjoy food, conversation and welcome city employees and equipment.

Larry Cataldo and Kathy Bergeron argued that the first responder visits are the fabric that makes this event the success it is. Therefore, any solution must be carefully considered. This was amplified by Susan Sterry and Sheridan Lloyd, the two neighborhood representatives attending.

After much discussion, Larry suggested that a small sub-committee should continue the discussion in the near future with the expectation that some solutions would be reached by the yearend or in early next year – well before the August NNO event. Besides Larry, Sgt. Brian Houde, Kathy Bergeron, Scott Forte, Elaine Apatang and Sheridan Lloyd volunteered to be on the committee.

Note: Following the meeting, Sgt. Houde secured a large city map to for the next meeting to help the committee decide on the best NNO locations. We will hopefully meet in the library sometime in early December. Other CNC members and neighborhood representatives would also be invited.

Because the NNO discussion lasted almost two hours, Larry decided to end the meeting without covering other agenda items. These would be discussed on December 14th, the committee's next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted by

Larry Cataldo – Chair of the CNC

[NNO Overview Presentation Oct 19.pdf](#)