

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – January 5, 2017
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, Ronald Cypher
Member, Harold Whitehouse
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. SELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN:

Ronald Cypher motioned to nominate Brad Lown as Chairman for the calendar year 2017. Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff seconded. **Motion passed 9-0.**

Harold Whitehouse motioned to nominate Ted Gray as Vice-Chairman for the calendar year 2017. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Motion passed 9-0.**

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the December 1, 2016 meeting minutes. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Motion passed 9-0.**

V. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the financial report dated January 2017.
Ronald Cypher seconded. **Motion passed 9-0.**

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Wes Tator supported the 15-minute parking space on Portwalk Place. He said after talking to residents on Middle Street, many were not aware of the Middle Street / Lafayette Road Bicycle Lane project. He expressed support for the project, but does not believe the general public is aware of the project scope.

Rick Becksted attended the Tuesday site visits with the Committee. He supported the 15-minute parking spaces being proposed (agenda items VII.A. and VII.B.). He complimented Eric Eby for purchasing the four radar speed feedback signs and requested more signs be purchased. He also noted specific locations for installation.

Ramona Charland spoke about the need for a traffic signal at the intersection of Middle Street and Union Street. She recounted historical accidents and expressed concern for homeowner and pedestrian safety.

Roland Cote requested the No Parking Here to Corner signs on the southbound side of Middle Street be moved several car lengths down the street to improve visibility at the intersection of Union Street.

Paula Anne Chalfin spoke regarding the request for a traffic signal at the intersection of Middle Street and Union Street (agenda item VIII.A.). She addressed the staff memorandum in the packet and disagreed with the findings and recommendations. She stated opposition to the Middle Street / Lafayette Road Bicycle Lane project due to safety concerns.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request for two 15-minute parking spaces near Optima Bank & Trust at 143 Daniel Street, and removal of 15-minute space on Bow Street. Pamela Morrison, Director at Optima Bank & Trust, stated patrons visit the bank for short durations and the two 15-minute parking spaces would meet the need for short-term parking. Eric Eby stated he would like the opportunity to do a comprehensive review of all 15-minute parking spaces in the downtown and report back next month.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to direct staff to conduct a comprehensive review of the 15-minute parking spaces in the downtown and report back at the February meeting. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, seconded. **Vote 9-0, to direct staff to conduct a comprehensive review of the 15-minute parking spaces in the downtown and report back at the February meeting.**

B. Request for one 15-minute parking space near Profile Coffee Bar at 15 Portwalk Place.

Eric Eby stated the Committee conducted a site visit on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. He stated he would like additional time to review this request in conjunction with Action Item VII.A regarding 15-minute parking spaces.

Public Works Director Rice motioned to direct staff to report back at the February meeting. Ronald Cypher seconded. **Vote 9-0, to direct staff to report back at the February meeting.**

Public Works Director Rice informed the Committee that Parking Manager Giordano has been working on replacing existing meters with new technology. It allows the time on the meters to be altered based upon demand or time of day. Public Works Director Rice thanked Parking Manager Giordano for his work on this project, and Mr. Becksted for his comment regarding the appropriateness of 15-minute parking meters.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back on request for traffic signal at intersection of Middle Street and Union Street.

Eric Eby informed the Committee that a traffic study was conducted last month. The traffic counters were collecting data for over a week in order to get accurate counts on traffic volumes. He stated the volume of traffic on the side streets was too low to meet the minimum volume thresholds for a traffic signal at Middle Street and Union Street. He addressed the question posed during public comment regarding how a traffic signal can increase the number of accidents when it is not warranted at an intersection.

Eric Eby stated the average speed of traffic on Middle Street was recorded at 25 mph. This is below the posted speed limit of 30 mph. A review of the traffic volume data indicated that while Middle Street carries over 10,000 vehicles per day and 3.5 million vehicles per year, the number of crashes was below the minimum number to warrant a traffic signal. Five crashes per year would be required to warrant a traffic signal based on crash history.

Mr. Eby stated that sight lines at the intersection are problematic. However, the proposed bicycle lane project would eliminate parking on the inbound side of Middle Street. This improvement would provide sight lines for the east leg of Union Street that exceed the minimum requirements. He stated based on an analysis of the data, a traffic signal is not warranted or recommended at the intersection. However, he recommended the implementation of the bicycle lane project, which would improve the intersection.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the bike lane location. Eric Eby confirmed that a designated marked bike lane would extend from Highland Street to Portsmouth High School on Middle Street. Mr. Whitehouse requested the action item be studied again and requested a report back at the next meeting. He stated he would like the parking restriction distance to be greater than the current City Ordinance definition.

Mary Lou McElwain stated that sight lines from many side streets along Middle Street are limited due to vehicles parked on Middle Street, sometimes less than 20 feet from the intersection, and that enforcement should focus on this issue. Eric Eby stated that as part of the bicycle lane project, many of the parking issues would be addressed and project implementation would be in 2017.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to direct staff to report back. Public Works Director Rice seconded and amended the motion to direct staff to research interim measures regarding parking and sight line issues prior to the implementation of the bicycle lane project. **Vote 9-0, staff to research interim measures regarding parking and sight line issues prior to the implementation of the bicycle lane project.**

B. Report back on request for 4-way STOP sign control at Thornton Street and Burkitt Street. Harold Whitehouse stated the Committee conducted a site visit on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. He informed the public that site visits are conducted in order to preview the action item presented at the meeting. He stated all final decisions are made at the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee meetings and not at site visits.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to approve an All-Way STOP at Thornton Street and Burkitt Street intersection. Ted Gray seconded.

Eric Eby informed the Committee of the warrants that justified the All-Way STOP at the intersection. He conducted traffic counts, collected vehicle speed data and measured sight lines at the intersection. The warrants applicable to this intersection are: the volumes were approximately equal on all four legs; both streets have the same characteristics, and sight lines are limited at the intersection. He stated the average speed of traffic on Thornton Street was recorded at 20 mph, but sight lines are inadequate due to the on-street parking.

Vote 9-0, to approve an All-Way STOP at the intersection of Thornton Street and Burkitt Street.

C. Report back on request for one-way flow on Meeting House Hill Road. Eric Eby reported that traffic counts were conducted on the street and there were approximately 60 vehicles per day, which is a very low volume of traffic. He stated a majority of the traffic was coming and going to Portsmouth Public Media, which is located in the old South End Meeting House. He stated a majority of the vehicles used the angled parking spaces over the course of a day. Only four of them backed in to the spaces. He recommended that the current two-way traffic flow pattern remain in place due to the low traffic volume and narrow width of the roadway.

Harold Whitehouse motioned that the current two-way traffic flow pattern on Meeting House Hill Road remain in place. Ron Cypher seconded. **Vote 9-0, to maintain the current two-way traffic flow pattern on Meeting House Hill Road.**

D. Report back on request for truck restriction on Greenleaf Avenue between Lafayette Road and Route 1 Bypass. Eric Eby stated the action item was presented by a citizen living on Greenleaf Avenue near Lafayette Road. He conducted traffic counts, collected vehicle speed and classification data. Data revealed that truck traffic volume was about 2 percent of the total traffic. Although it does not represent an unusually high volume, it is significant. He stated with the improved and signalized intersection of Lafayette Road and Route 1 Bypass, all trucks can make all turns at that location, so a truck restriction on Greenleaf Avenue is feasible and recommended.

Eric Eby informed the Committee that the City is also planning to improve and signalize the intersection of Lafayette Road and Andrew Jarvis Drive at the High School entrance. He stated these roadway and intersection improvements would allow traffic to travel to and from Lafayette Road and the High School safely and efficiently without the use of Greenleaf Avenue. Mr. Eby also stated that the Committee should give future consideration to the long-term configuration of Greenleaf Avenue, especially where it intersects with Lafayette Road. He stated with the current and future improvements at nearby intersections, real opportunities exist for making Greenleaf Avenue a much less traveled roadway, more in keeping with its residential character.

Harold Whitehouse asked when the Lafayette Road and Andrew Jarvis Drive project would be constructed. Public Works Director Rice stated easements were being obtained from abutters, and the project design is almost complete. He stated the project is part of the Capital Improvement Plan. Once funding is allocated by the City Council, construction could possibly begin in the summer of 2018.

Mary Lou McElwain stated the intersection of Greenleaf Avenue and Lafayette Road was probably the most dangerous in the City due to trucks turning at the intersection. She asked what truck size would be restricted. Eric Eby stated the City Ordinance prohibits any truck with a box, body, or platform of over 12 feet in length from using the street, if the restriction was approved.

Ted Gray expressed support for the newly improved and signalized intersection of Lafayette Road and Route 1 Bypass.

Ted Gray motioned to restrict truck traffic on Greenleaf Avenue between Lafayette Road and Route 1 Bypass. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, seconded.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz commented that the Fire Department uses Greenleaf Avenue regularly and requested to be involved in all future discussions regarding the roadway.

Vote 9-0, to restrict truck traffic on Greenleaf Avenue between Lafayette Road and Route 1 Bypass.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rick Becksted asked if there would be a time limit on the use of bike lanes on Middle Street. He expressed concern for residential parking and would like the bike lanes to have designated hours of use.

Rick Chellman, resident, licensed traffic engineer and author, presented to the Committee on new parking patterns, urban street design, and traffic calming elements in the downtown. He provided specific examples where pavement restriping could create additional parking. He stated if travel space was changed to parking space, the effect would have a traffic calming measure.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz thanked Mr. Chellman for the presentation and mentioned the items they have been able to agree upon regarding this topic. He specifically asked if it is unreasonable to expect fire trucks to be able to travel on all city streets all the time. Mr. Chellman stated that it is not necessarily appropriate for fire trucks to be able to gain access to all roadways all the time. Deputy Fire Chief Heinz and Mr. Chellman discussed State Street. Fire trucks cannot gain access to an event due to traffic congestion caused by the vertical lift on the Memorial Bridge.

Mary Lou McElwain asked about the process when a presentation is made during public comment. Chairman Lown stated he asked Mr. Chellman to present during public comment and asked if a member would like to make a motion for staff to report back on Mr. Chellman's ideas and recommendations.

Shari Donnermeyer motioned to have staff report back on recommendations presented by Mr. Chellman. Ted Gray seconded.

Harold Whitehouse expressed concern for safety and supported Deputy Fire Chief Heinz comments. Public Works Director Rice stated that several of the proposals presented were previously discussed. They were determined to be not viable. However, he stated some do have merit and would be revisited when staff time allows. He complimented Eric Eby, Parking and Transportation Engineer, for his excellent work on meeting Committee deadlines. He reminded the Committee that Mr. Eby has additional responsibilities beyond supporting PTS and that it may take longer than a month to complete the evaluations.

Voted 9-0, staff to report back on recommendations presented by Mr. Chellman at a later date.

Wes Tator asked Eric Eby the cost of a traffic signal. Eric Eby stated it would cost approximately \$250,000. Mr. Tator asked why PTS meetings are held in the early morning. Chairman Lown stated it has historically been held at 8:00 AM. Mr. Tator suggested staff meet with residents regarding issue items before distributing a recommendation. He requested a plan be developed regarding Mr. Chellman's ideas and allow public comment.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

Quarterly Accident Report for 09/28/2016 to 12/28/2016.

Police Captain Warchol provided an overview of the report and reported that the number of accidents was relatively low based on the volume of vehicle traffic in the downtown.

Public Works Director Rice addressed Mr. Tator's comment about providing public comment opportunities, addressing Mr. Chellman's recommendations. Mr. Rice stated meetings and forums were held regarding Mr. Chellman's recommendations. Committee votes are made not to pursue some of them because of concerns relative to the Fire Department.

Harold Whitehouse requested Chairman Lown, in his report to the City Council, discuss a policy regarding reflective gear for pedestrians. Mr. Whitehouse recommended the policy include a requirement that reflective gear be worn by runners or pedestrians outside the Central Business District after sunset.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – At 9:15 a.m., **voted** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amy Chastain
Secretary of the Committee