

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)**

8:30 AM

March 3rd, 2022

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Andrew Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

Chairman Andrew Bagley
Vice Chairman Steve Pesci
City Manager Karen Conard
Fire Chief Todd Germain
Police Chief Mark Newport
Mary Lou McElwain
Mark Syracuse
Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

Absent

Harold Whitehouse
Public Works Director Peter Rice

City Staff Present:

Parking Director Ben Fletcher
Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby

I. FINANCIAL REPORT

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the year was 58% over, they had reached 70% revenue. They were optimistic that they would meet the FY 22 goals or finish ahead of them.

City Manager Karen Conard moved to accept the Financial Report dated January 31, 2021, and place it on file, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Mary Lou McElwain requested more details on the HH pass reinstatement being at 194%. Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they had budgeted \$500 and were sitting at over \$900. The line item accounts for people who lose their pass or let it lapse. They need to pay to get it reinstated. City Manager Karen Conard questioned if they often went over the \$500 mark. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that they budgeted \$750 for next year.

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

II. PUBLIC COMMENT (15 MINUTES)

Liza Hewitt of 726 Middle Rd. commented that the subcommittee on speed limits appears to be using the complete streets design guidelines to evaluate speed limits. In the past Ms. Hewitt has been told that Middle Rd. is a gateway corridor, but in the guidelines, it is classified as a neighborhood connector street. There are 18 streets in Portsmouth in this category. Eleven have posted 20 mph signs and five have posted 25 mph signs. Islington St. and Middle Rd. are the only streets in that category with posted 30 mph signs. It is time to acknowledge the safety of the residents and lower the speeds to match the other neighborhood connectors. The City does not need to study this further to know lowering the speed limit is the right thing to do.

Rick Becksted of 1395 Islington St. commented that they should not put in a do not block sign at Jewel Court. Mr. Becksted drives that area many times a day and has seen a lot of accidents and close calls. Putting that sign in place would put lives at risk. It will provide a false sense of security. The City should reconsider. Mr. Becksted has lived on Islington St. for 39 years and it has always been 30 mph. The road changed 6-7 years ago when sidewalks were installed and it narrowed the road. This is a narrow delivery route with a lot of bikers and pedestrians. The speed limit should be 25 mph. Previously there was a NH law that didn't allow it to go below 30 mph, but now they can do 25 mph legally.

Pat Bagley(z) of 213 Pleasant St. commented that the City should consider making Washington St. between Court St. and State St. a one way road. Today it is a two-way road and cars can park at the top of the hill. It is physically impossible to be 2-way street with the parked cars. It is a standoff between a car at the top of the hill and one trying to turn on the road. The detour on Pleasant St. because of the outdoor dining has only increased the problem. It's a safety issue for everyone and this change would prevent accidents.

Ken Ferrer(z) of 915 Woodbury Ave. echoed the comments about the speed on Islington St. The City should put in more concrete traffic calming actions. Mr. Ferrer also agreed with the concern about Washington St. However, instead of making it one way they should remove the parking?

III. SITE VISITS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

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

A. Request to add 'Do Not Block' signage and pavement markings at Islington Street and Jewell Court - **Sample Motion: Staff to assess entire intersection and make recommendations**

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was a public request. The pavement markings would clear traffic for Jewel Court to access Islington St. when there was a red light.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that this was extensively studied in the past so they should have some information about it already.

City Manager Karen Conard moved to have Staff to assess entire intersection and make recommendations, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby commented that they had the detour in place during the construction. They moved the stop bar back to allow a left turn onto Jewel Court from Islington St. It did work well during that time. The new signal has a camera, so it is easy to collect data. There were good points raised in the public comments on this as well. It is worth looking at this to see if they could make the intersection safer.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that when they look at the intersection, they should look at it on a macro level. Instead of looking at accommodating all the movements, they should look at how to make it safer. They may not need all the access points that are there today. Vice Chairman Steve Pesci questioned if the 'do not block' box would block both directions, or just the inbound. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby responded that it would just be for the inbound. TEC studied Jewel Court and Albany St, so they can review that report again.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that the Bahn Mi shop was moving this spring, so it is unclear what is happening with that building. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby commented that the whole intersection was difficult because everything was off set.

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

B. 5 Osprey Road: Request for Speed Assessment – **Staff Presentation of Speed Data**

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was a citizen request. The posted speed was 20 mph. The average was 22 mph and the 85th percentile was 27 mph. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby noted that the average of 22 mph was not significantly over the speed limit. They wouldn't be able to lower it any more than 20 mph based on this data.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that there was also a question on the enforceability of 20 mph. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that if the speed limit is 20 mph, then they would enforce it. Police Captain Mark Newport was not familiar with the law changing so that they could go below 30 mph. If that is accurate, then they would enforce it. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby commented that the current state statute allows for the speed limit to be 25 mph if there is an engineering study to support it.

City Manager Karen Conard moved to have Staff review available data and report back at future meeting, seconded by Mark Syracuse. On a unanimous roll call vote, motion passed 8-0.

C. Request for Speed Analysis on Harding Road Staff Presentation of Speed Data

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was another citizen request. They did a quick study in October. Then added speed devices in two other places. The speed limit is posted at 20 mph. The three locations had an average speed of 21,23,22 mph and 85th percentile of 26, 28, 26 mph.

Mark Syracuse commented that this was evaluated in the winter. They should study this in the summer because the numbers may be different.

City Manager Karen Conard moved to have Staff continue speed analysis in June or July, 2022, review available data and report back at future meeting, seconded by Mark Syracuse. On a unanimous roll call vote, motion passed 8-0.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. None

VI. INFORMATIONAL

A. Monthly Accident Report from Police

Police Chief Mark Newport commented there were 69 total crashes and 40 of them were reportable for January.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if they had an idea of where most of the accidents were happening in the city. Fire Chief Todd Germain responded that a lot of them happened at the traffic circle. Chairman Andrew Bagley questioned if it was feasible to make a hot map. Police Captain Mark Newport responded that they may be able to do it with their current software. They are in process of upgrading the software, and the new one will definitely be able to create that.

B. Bike and Vehicular Traffic Data

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the graph showed the data for February 2022 and compared it to data from February 2019. For the first time since the pandemic the current numbers are above the 2019 data.

C. **Announcement** - Middle Street Bike Lane Public Input Meeting: **3.10.22 6:30pm in Council Chambers**

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she could not attend this meeting and questioned what would be covered. City Manager Conard responded that the outside consultant who was hired to study the configuration of the bike lanes will give a presentation based on their analysis of the data the City collected. They will speak to the safety of the current roadway. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the information would be available on the City's web site. City Manager Karen Conard confirmed that it would be.

Mark Syracuse commented that they should notify abutters on Middle St. about this meeting. Chairman Andrew Bagley questioned if that was feasible because the meeting was coming up soon. City Manager Karen Conard commented that they could go door to door with a leaflet. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed they could.

Mark Syracuse commented that the notice should include contact information for those who could not attend.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the Communications Director confirmed that they would be sending out an email blast to everyone on their list. They can supplement that with a paper leaflet at each door.

Mark Syracuse moved to send out abutters' notices to residents on Middle St., seconded by City Manager Karen Conard.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that they should not use the term abutters notice because that adds a level of expense and formality. The email blast is good. Also, this street is a corridor. It is not just about the abutters on the street. Door to door outreach in advance of the meeting is sufficient. Mark Syracuse agreed they didn't need to have a formal abutter notice and did not know the City had Middle St. resident email addresses. City Manager Karen Conard responded that they had the email addresses of those who have provided it to the City to receive updates on particular projects. City Manager Karen Conard commented that they should amend the motion to remove abutter notice from it.

Mark Syracuse moved for the City to send out directed outreach to abutters on Middle St. about this meeting, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard. On a unanimous roll call vote, motion passed 8-0.

D. **Announcement** - Neighborhood Parking Program Public Input Meeting: **3.16.22 6:30pm in Council Chambers**

E. Neighborhood Parking Program Survey – **Preliminary Results**

Chairman Andrew Bagley noted that there was a survey out there in the City's newsletter.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they have received 120 survey responses. 95% of those responses are from the people participating. 72.5% are residents of the neighborhood and 10% were from people outside the neighborhood. Overall, 66% of people approve and 33% do not. 73% of the people like the program because it allows them to find a space, 45% like that guests can find parking as well, smaller percentages liked the contractor program, and that it worked for tenants and employees. 11% of people selected there was no reason they liked the program. 19% did not like the program because there were not enough permits, 32% thought there were not enough guest permits, 14% thought the contractor program was too limited, 35% felt that people were parking in the neighborhood then going to work downtown, and 27% selected that there was no reason they did not like the program.

F. Update on Subcommittee on Speed Limits by Staff Engineer Tyler Reese

Staff Engineer Tyler Reese provided a presentation on the speed limit subcommittee meeting he had with Erika Wygonik and Vice Chairman Steve Pesci. They discussed introductory steps to evaluate the speed limits in the City. They will plan to review the target speeds as outlined in the Complete Streets Design Guidelines. The guidelines identify speed limit ranges for the street classifications. They will review and adjust the classifications for individual City streets. It is a good opportunity to reevaluate the speeds because they have not looked at this in a long time. Some of the subcommittee's goals are to codify the speed limits, and ensure the codified speeds match the posted sign. They will also ensure that they are in compliance with NH state law. They will be looking for PTS input on the complete streets classifications and their target speed limits.

Erika Wygonik commented that the goal is to approach this project in a systematic and thoughtful way. The Complete Streets Guide is already available to the City and gives good organization to this project. They can quickly get through the bulk of the streets that already have speed limits that make sense, and then focus on what doesn't make sense.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that they were trying to be systematic on this. They have heard of several streets that are known incongruencies. They will be systematic and respond to some of the acute issues as soon as possible. The speed limit bill that is currently in the House may be tabled at the moment. However, many City streets lack the engineering study that state law requires for lower posted speed limits. That creates unrealistic expectations for what speeds should be in the community. When they report back next month the hope is that they have pulled off some of the acute issues where there is general consensus that a change is needed.

Erika Wygonik commented that they also discussed being efficient with their time. The goal is to bring items to the PTS when they are at a point for policy decisions instead of wrestling over individual decisions. The purpose of the presentation today is to outline the plan and make sure everyone on PTS agreed with it.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci commented that there is a range of speed limits on the classified streets. Range is an important word. A blanket speed limit is never appropriate. There is not a cookie cutter answer for every single street, and they need to be sensitive to that.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she was impressed with how comprehensive their plan was. This will answer a lot of questions that the community has about speed limits.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci noted that if any committee members wanted to join the subcommittee they could. They can report back on the status of the speed limit bill that's in the House at the next meeting.

Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby commented that if a speed limit is not reflective of the road's conditions, then people will ignore them. It is important to have realistic speed limits.

G. Conversion of Raynes and Vaughan to one-way [from 11.16.21 OB-A]: Staff working to set up meeting with Abutters

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was something they discussed a while back. Now that spring is coming the City will be reaching out to abutters to show them that this is what they want to do. They will set up a public input meeting after that.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the Bridge St. Lot was going to be part of this agenda, but there were late changes to that. The bids have gone out for the reconstruction of the lot which will take it offline for a while. This will be completed before Hanover goes through their changes, so there will not be overlap. The bids are out, and the work will be scheduled shortly.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that the intersection at Maplewood Ave. and Raynes Ave. will be very busy. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby responded that as developments in that area come online, they have done traffic studies too. They can use that data to see what's appropriate.

Vice Chairman Steve Pesci questioned if any of them looked at a one-way street. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby responded that the project going into the health club site looked at a one-way flow. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that they also did a one-way flow while the AC Hotel was being constructed.

City Manager Karen Conard requested an update on the Bridge St. Lot and High Hanover projects at the next meeting. Parking Director Ben Fletcher agreed.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if they could put the electronic sign directing people to the Foundry Garage back up at Russel St. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that they would look to put that back up for the warmer months.

Mark Syracuse reminded the public that the City has a newsletter and there was good information on the City's web site for them to use to stay informed about ongoing activities.

Chairman Andrew Bagley questioned if they could look into installing a more attractive permanent electronic sign. City Manager Karen Conard responded that they will need to

direct people to the Foundry Garage for the next 3 years, so this could be a good opportunity to look into that. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that they had an electronic sign with antiquated software. He confirmed that he would look into upgrading the signage at that location. Chairman Andrew Bagley commented that it would be good if the sign could display the locations, rates, and capacity at the garages. Parking Director Ben Fletcher confirmed that they should be able to display that for both garages after the High Hanover project.

Mark Syracuse questioned if there was a way to direct people to the Foundry Garage when they search “parking” in Google Maps. Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby responded that he did not think so, but they could look into it. City Manager Karen Conard added that Park Portsmouth provides mapping and signage for parking options as well.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

A. None

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she wanted to acknowledge Ted Gray’s passing. He had been on this Committee for decades and made a lot of contributions to the community.

City Manager Karen Conard clarified that there would not be any loss of parking in the Bridge St. Lot, but they will be adding 4 EV spots. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that some of the current striping may not be compliant, so they may restripe to bring that lot up to code. That may result in a small loss of spaces. City Manager Karen Conard clarified that the goal was to retain as many spaces as possible while being in compliance.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if they could put the Washington St. issue raised by Pat Bagley in Public Comment on the April agenda. It would be good to address this before the permits are issued for outdoor dining in that area. Chairman Andrew Bagley confirmed they could put it on the April agenda, but it may not be addressed before permits are issued. City Manager Karen Conard added that they would consider it as part of the process if a restaurant applied.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

City Manager Karen Conard moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 a.m., seconded by Mark Syracuse. On a unanimous roll call vote, 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_kYr6s_xFSEa3dhtDfnO4bQ*