

**PORTSMOUTH  
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES**

**8:00 AM – Thursday, October 17, 2002  
City Hall - Council Chambers**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

In Chairman Alex Hanson's absence, Ralph DiBernardo called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

**II: ROLL CALL:**

**Members Present:**

John Burke, Parking & Transportation      Ted Gray, Member  
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director      Ron Cypher, Member  
Police Captain Dave Young                      Herb Bunnell, Member  
Acting Fire Chief Chris LeClaire              Hank Greenberg, Member  
Ralph DiBernardo, Member

Also present was Lucy Tillman, Planning Department

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

**IT WAS VOTED** on a Motion by Ted Gray to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee (TSC) meeting of September 19, 2002. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

**IV. CORRESPONDENCE:**

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

**(A) 2236 Lafayette Road – Proposed commercial building and associated site improvements** – Eric Weinberg of Altus Engineering stated that at last month's meeting the Committee requested that the driveway be moved 5 feet to more closely line up with the driveway across the street. It was also requested that a porkchop island be constructed to prohibit left-turns into or out of the site. We aligned the driveway as requested but ask the Committee to reconsider the left-turn prohibition. The applicant has resubmitted a plan to DOT that includes a note to clear trees within the right-of-way that obstruct site distance. We have gone out and removed the trees and have had a surveyor verify site distance, which is adequate for posted speeds.

Ted Gray referred to the on-site review and that with the trees cleared there is 400 feet plus of site distance north, when the house is torn down, as well as to the south. In light of this, the Committee thought the best thing to do is to eliminate the porkchop requirement.

John Burke stated that it was his understanding that DOT will issue a driveway permit since the applicant meets State and federal site distance standards. Mr. Weinburg stated that the only issue to the state is the right-of-way and not the site distance. John Burke asked if the applicant had determined what the maximum speed allowable was based on the site distance. Eric Weinburg stated that he did not. John Burke suggested having the maximum speed number for the Planning Board.

Steve Parkinson suggested our approval be contingent upon the applicant receiving a favorable approval for a driveway permit from the State, which was added to the motion.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to accept new plans, which eliminate the porkchop as presented. Approval is contingent upon the applicant receiving a favorable driveway permit from the State. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**Diane Lavigne, 579 Broad Street (on Sagamore end of Broad Street).** Stated that she wanted to discuss the segment of the street from South Street to Jones Avenue, which is being used as a cut through to avoid the light on South Street at Sagamore Avenue. This traffic adds to the traffic going to the Elks Club, Sunbridge Retirement Home and the Wentworth.

Since the neighbors brought this issue to the attention of the Wentworth they have been very cooperative and their trucks have not been using this street. The neighbors have written letters to both the Sunbridge and the Elks to increase their awareness and remind them of the 20-MPH speed limit. This seemed to work for a while, but the vehicles are again travelling too fast. They are working with the police to have the street monitored and would also like to do the following: 1) Install a crosswalk about half way between Jones and South near the crest of the hill, which would help bring attention that there are a lot of children on the street. 2) We would propose getting one or two "Slow Children" signs going from South Street towards Jones Avenue. 3) Graze Lane, which is a small driveway that isn't used by many people, is not recognized

by children as a street, therefore a cross walk is proposed to remind children that it is a street.

Ralph DiBernardo explained that the normal process - particularly when it involves painting crosswalks and placing signs is to look at the area at our on-site reviews. He advised her of the Traffic & Safety Onsite review dates and added that the City's engineer provides the engineering perspective to ensure that the crosswalk location meets appropriate criteria.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to refer the matter to on-site for the November meeting. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

- (B) **Marcy Street near intersection with New Castle Avenue – On Street Parking Complaints** – John Burke referred to a letter from a New Castle Avenue resident who crossed the double yellow line on Marcy Street west of New Castle Ave. and got into an accident. The man stated that parking is allowed on Marcy Street on the corner, which forces you into another lane of traffic. John Burke stated that many streets in Portsmouth allow on-street parking where the driver must cross the centerline of the road to pass a parked car. However, the key is that there must be sufficient site distance to oncoming traffic for the driver to decide whether he can pass the parked car or he must wait until the oncoming car passes. In this particular case, the Committee went out and looked at it and there is not sufficient site distance to the first couple of parking spaces on Marcy Street inbound because of the sharp corner. John Burke made the recommendation that we prohibit parking on the easterly side of Marcy Street from New Castle Avenue to Holmes Court, which would eliminate two parking spaces that are right hand side of the bend.

Ted Gray stated that he had a concern with eliminating on-street parking due to the fact that it is so congested and there is a need for every space. He suggested moving the double yellow line so it is off center. John Burke responded that they reviewed doing this. Unfortunately, the road is narrow and the existing lane widths are just 12 feet. Because of the bus and truck traffic and the fact that some houses are directly on the street, it is not recommended that the lane widths be reduced below 11 feet.

John Burke stated that there is another issue the Committee must keep in mind. Traffic and parking demand grows every year. In the past 20 years, traffic has probably grown at an average rate of 2 to 3%. This means that traffic volumes on some streets have increased

by 50% over this time period. With more traffic you get more on-street parking. On-street parking locations that were once fine now become problematic because there is 1) more opposing traffic – which means that there will be less opportunities for gaps to pass – and 2) more of a likelihood that a car will be parked on the sharp curve in question. You will begin to see accident rates increase at certain locations and it is proper to make changes in response.

It was requested that perhaps the double yellow line should be eliminated.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that eliminating that line would create more problems than it would help.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to prohibit parking on the easterly side of Marcy Street from New Castle Avenue to Holmes Court. Seconded by Acting Fire Chief LeClaire. Motion passed.

- (C) **Marcy Street/Children’s Museum – sight distance concerns –** Ted Gray spoke of the on-site and a thought was to make one of the streets on the west side of the Museum one-way, but that would not seem to resolve anything. Ted was concerned with a fence that was recently constructed that obstructs site at the intersection, but it seemed that any cure would be worse than the disease.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to place on file. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

John Burke stated that there was another issue raised at the onsite meeting on the other side of the Museum at the easterly intersection with Marcy Street. Ted Gray stated that site distance was a concern there too. There is a bus stop on Marcy Street and cars park right up to the corner in the bus stop and at the corner of Meetinghouse Hill, which blocks site distance. It was discussed that a sign is posted and enforcement is needed.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that some students of Portsmouth High School would like to address the Committee about a traffic & safety matter.

**Crossroads House/Route 1 Safety Concerns – Presentation by Portsmouth High School Students** - Sam Tombarelli, Social Studies teacher at Portsmouth High School and a Portsmouth resident addressed the Committee. He introduced three students: Tana Hoffman, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Zak Rahn, 12<sup>th</sup> grade and Amanda Nichols, 12<sup>th</sup> grade who have worked approximately a year and a half in an after school program called “Students Helping Students in

Need.” They give tutoring help to homeless kids at Crossroads House to help them succeed in school. There is a resource room at Crossroads House that looks like a classroom and the students become teachers everyday after school from 3-6pm. One of the things that distinguishes this program is that it is not just simply community service. The students are challenged to bring the experience back to the classroom and think about issues that revolve around government. They were challenged to do what we call the “Super-Solver Project” at the end of the quarter where they have to identify a problem facing homeless children, research it, and then provide some sort of solution. They have identified a safety and self-esteem issues with regard to the children at Crossroads House. It involves Route 1 in front of Crossroads House. We are here with the blessings of the School Board where we first did this presentation and hope someday to get to a state level to address the issue. We are here to present issues and then ask for any advice or comments you might have to improve the proposal. Mr. Tombarelli introduced Tana Hoffman who will speak on the safety issue. She has been working in the program for 1.5 years working with the children at Crossroads. She is concerned about safety on Route 1 and the fact that there is no recreation at Crossroads House and therefore they will be playing in the parking lot. It is not uncommon for a ball to roll onto Route 1. The speed limit at the overpass is 35mph and there does not seem to be enough distance for people to stop if a child runs out in the road. Another problem cited was getting people from Crossroads to the Bowl-A-Rama parking lot. On the overpass, there is no sidewalk for kids walking to the High School. The COAST Bus wants to put a stop somewhere on Route 1 and the most logical space for them to put it was at the Bowl-A-Rama parking lot – but this would also make it difficult to get to that side of the street safely. People from Ledgewood also need a safe way to cross back and forth on Route 1. Ms. Hoffman introduced Zak Rahn who will speak on self-esteem issues.

Zak stated that one of the biggest problems facing the children at Crossroads is a lack of self-esteem. Nobody likes to be ridiculed, made fun of or degraded because of where they come from or where they live. Zak stated that kids at Crossroads want to believe that they have a stable living environment, positive role models and live in a decent home just like any other kid. But when they are labeled, when they get on the bus in the morning, for not having any of certain things, coping with their homeless situation becomes even more difficult. To try to avoid this labeling, kids are walking across Route 1 to Bowl-A-Rama. Route 1 is one of the most heavily traveled roads in town. This poses a serious safety risk to the kids. Kids should not have to cross Route 1 to avoid hurtful and

derogatory comments. Zak stated that a crossing guard, crosswalk or lowering the speed limit would enable kids to cross the road safely and to become welcome members of this community.

Amanda Nichols stated that there are 3 main concerns that she will address: 1) Are drivers aware of pedestrians in the area? She stated that people are not aware of Crossroads and that a solution would be to install a blinking yellow light and a "Slow Children" sign. There are vehicles driving at a minimum of 35 MPH in two directions and feel that a light would work as a reminder. 2) People can't stop if they need to. Lowering the current speed limit of 35 MPH and increasing police surveillance is a solution. 3) Pedestrians are intimidated to walk across the street or along the street. The idea is to expand the sidewalk along Route 1 or have a crosswalk on the on-ramp or across the street. She stated that they feel the issue at Crossroads is a community concern.

Both Ralph DiBernardo and John Burke stated that it was an excellent presentation. John Burke responded that the State sets the speed limits based on design standards and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of the road. They do however, factor in school zones and building densities and we should bring all of this information to them.

With regard to the Coast bus issue, the City is looking to have the bus stop in the vicinity of the Route 1/Greenleaf Woods intersection instead of Bowl-a-Rama. Ralph DiBernardo asked if the sidewalks in this area are the prerogative of the state.

Steve Parkinson stated that if the sidewalks are installed it is at the City's expense. Route 1 is currently being studied for a redesign by DOT from the by-pass at Greenleaf Woods all the way to Maine. There is talk now about reconfiguring the overpass at Crossroads, but it is in the consulting stage now. Steve stated that it is a good idea to bring to DOT's attention that there is so much pedestrian traffic by Crossroads, Wamesit and Ledgewood. He added that there is already a crosswalk at the light.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that DOT is looking at putting a divider down the middle of Route 1 - which would preclude any crossing in the middle unless it was designed into it. Mr. DiBernardo stated that with the effort these young adults have put into this tremendous presentation, what advice can we give them or what part can we help them with and what part can we give them some direction to move forward.

John Burke stated there are a couple of things he can think of - one being a point Steve Parkinson raised about getting to and using the crosswalks. John stated that providing education and understanding to the residents is needed about why it is safer to use the existing crosswalks and pedestrian signals than crossing over the guardrail. He stated that a second issue is the design process already initiated by NHDOT. He noted that next summer, NHDOT will be coming to Portsmouth to meet with the City and neighborhoods on plans to reconstruct the Route 1 Bypass. He stated the students presentation was exactly the type of input that they are seeking. It was suggested that perhaps the school could play a role in the planning study. Ralph DiBernardo noted that the students could contact the state as an interested party and to be placed on their mailing list. John Burke stated that the NHDOT Project Manager was Victoria Chase and provided the students with her phone number.

Ralph DiBernardo asked if it would be of any value for the on-site committee to look at the area. Steve Parkinson stated it would be appropriate to see if there are any temporary measures short of putting in a sidewalk to improve or direct the pedestrians in a safer manner than crossing four lanes of traffic.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to put this matter on next month's on-site committee meeting agenda. Seconded by Steve Parkinson.

**High Street Traffic Concerns** - Kathy Smith of 127 Pine Street addressed the Committee. She first stated that she thought the students did a fabulous job. She addressed a situation that started on High Street between the parking garage and the Sheraton. In the last 4 or 5 months there have been two separate incidents where vehicles have run over the fire hydrants and have actually rammed into buildings on the left-hand side of the street. She stated that she feels this is a unique problem where vehicles are going into buildings. Not sure that speed is really the issue, but it seems to happen late at night like after 1:00 a.m. She would like the item to be placed on the next Agenda. John Burke suggested that the Police Department print a 3-year accident report, which might give us some information on what is going on.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to put this issue on next month's on-site committee agenda and request the Police Department supply us with 3-years of accident data. Seconded by Fire Chief LeClaire.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

- (A) **Maplewood Avenue/Hanover Street** – Steve Parkinson stated that he and John Burke reviewed the intersection and they believe that people simply are not seeing the lights coming into town. The Department has moved the strobe stop lights used at the Cabot Street/Islington Street intersection (to make people aware of the new signal) to the Maplewood/Hanover Street intersection to correct the problem.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to accept report and place on file. Seconded by Police Capt. David Young. Motion passed.

- (B) **118 Maplewood Avenue – Traffic/Parking/Safety Concerns** – John Burke stated that in response to a recent accident and Portsmouth Herald Editorial, he and Deputy Police Chief Mike Magnant went out to look at this stretch of Maplewood Avenue. Accident data does not reveal a high hazard corridor. He noted that parking does occur right up to driveways, and therefore he would be restriping the spaces and pulling the cars 10 feet off the driveways. John Burke stated that he thought the stealth speed equipment would be appropriate. Dave Young stated that speeds were recorded in front of 111 Maplewood Avenue and the average speed was 29 MPH and within safety standards.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to accept report and place on file. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

- (C) **Friend Street – Proposed NO PARKING on one side** – Steve Parkinson stated that this short dead end street off Cass Street has a history of problems during wintertime – particularly on trash day. People occasionally park on both sides of the street and we cannot get our vehicles down the street including trash pick up vehicles, plows and certainly not an ambulance. Our proposal is to prohibit parking on the easterly side of Friend Street towards Middle.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to prohibit parking on the easterly side of Friend Street. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (D) **Aldrich Road/Sewall Street — Parking/Sight Distance Concerns** – John Burke referred to a complaint that cars parked on a blind corner on Aldrich Road force cars travelling on the road into oncoming traffic. He noted that the Committee had just posted a “Vehicles Entering Turning” sign on Aldrich Road in advance of Sewall Road because people were unable to see cars pulling out of Sewall Road. He noted that at the onsite review, the Deputy Chief parked his cruiser along the curbside on Aldrich Road on the corner.



Sure enough a car came around the bend and traveled into the oncoming lane without proper sight distance for an oncoming vehicle. John Burke recommended no parking on Aldrich Road, both sides of the street a distance of 150 feet from Sewall Road running easterly.

**MOTION** made by Chief LeClaire to prohibit parking on both sides of Aldrich Road from Sewall Road a distance 150 feet easterly. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. Motion passed.

**VII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

**Fleet and State Streets** – Deputy Fire Chief LeClaire stated there have been accidents at this intersection and several near misses. He noted that he spoke with John Burke about the planned upgrade of the intersection. John Burke stated the old signal equipment will be replaced in the spring. In the meantime, strobe lights will be installed to ensure that people are seeing the red lights.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Elaine E. Boucas