

**PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 AM – Thursday, February 20, 2003
City Hall - Council Chambers**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Assistant Mayor Alex Hanson, Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

II: ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Ralph DiBernardo, Vice-Chair	Fire Chief Chris LeClaire
John Burke, Dir.Parking & Transportation	Ted Gray, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Ron Cypher, Member
Police Captain Dave Young	Hank Greenberg, Member

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

IT WAS VOTED on a Motion by Fire Chief LeClaire to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee (TSC) meeting of December 19, 2002. Seconded by Ron Cypher.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE:

(A) **Market/Kearsarge Intersection** – concerns regarding red light violations – 1/6/03 email from Atlantic Heights Neighborhood Association and accident history attached – John Burke stated that based on the accident information at the signalized intersections, strobe lights were installed in each direction to address the visibility issue. He added that accident rates would be monitored to gauge effectiveness. Deputy Police Chief Dave Young stated that the Police Department is aware of the problems at the intersection and will be monitoring the situation.

(B) **NH Highway Safety Agency Grant Application** – 1/16/03 application attached – John Burke stated that Public Works plans to apply for funding of three items: 1. Variable message board 2. Stop for Pedestrian in Crosswalk Illuminators to address right-on-red pedestrian conflicts at signalized intersections. 3. Pedestrian Countdown Indicators to assist pedestrians with walk cycle at signalized intersections. Deputy Police Chief Dave Young stated that the Police Department has applied for six (6) different grants and is waiting to hear back from the state.

MOTION by Ralph DiBernardo to approve filing of the Grant Application. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion Passed.

V. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- (A) **566 Greenland Road** – Request to Erect Fence on City Property – Planning Board Referral. See 1/24/03 Planning Board letter, 10/17/02 Legal Department Memorandum, 10/14/02 letter from resident of 566 Greenland Road, and various photographs. Ron Cypher stated that due to the weather the Committee did not go to the site as a whole, but went individually to look at this property. Due to the concerns of Public Works and that this is where the road narrows, it was agreed that this request should be denied

MOTION by Ron Cypher to deny the request to erect the fence on City property. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

Mr. Harry Charache of 566 Greenland Road, landowner of property in question, addressed the Committee. He stated that the matter was tabled at Planning Board because of a pedestrian safety issue. There is 6 ft from the curve to the fence post that are up and between the curve and the roadway there is enough width for another car so there's at least 12 ft. to the roadway. Mr. Charache also stated that the fence post goes from 0 ft – 13 ft on City property. There is 6' 6" between the curve and the fence on the opposite side of the road. So according to the measurements what we have is not anything different than what the City of Portsmouth already has.

Alex Hanson asked the size of his lot. Mr. Charache responded 3.5 acres. Alex Hanson stated that had the snowplows pushed the snow back from the road and if there was a fence there, the fence would be damaged very heavily. Chairman Hanson asked why not put the fence in the backyard instead of the front yard on City property. Mr. Charache stated he was putting a fence all the way around his property. The height of the road is now equal to his window. He referred to what was done for his neighbors across the road when it was raised up for the Park N Ride, the fence was put in so the lights wouldn't go into neighbor's yards. He added that we are putting the fence up in front on what we believed was our own property for the safety of our 20 month old child and pets, for lights and sound, trash and everything else we feel we have the right to do.

Alex Hanson stated that Mr. Charache was talking about lights, sound and trash. The Traffic and Safety Committee looks at traffic and public safety issues. Mr. Charache stated that the letter he received about being here today was about pedestrian safety. Alex stated that is one of the issues that we look at with respect to safety. Mr. Charache stated that in response to

the letter he received, pedestrian safety was the only issue he came prepared to discuss.

Ralph DiBernardo stated it is really important to note that the Planning Board referred this issue to the Traffic & Safety Committee. Someone on the Planning Board made the point of pedestrian traffic, the fact that it was referred to us makes us responsible for any aspects of safety not just that particular issue that someone on the Planning Board brought up. Ralph stated that to some degree I agree with you that I'm not that concerned about the pedestrian issue because there is a sidewalk on the other side of the street. But what has come to our attention and particularly because of this extreme winter is that we see an issue with the proper movement of snow off the travelway and I think that's an opinion that was expressed by the Public Works Director. We are more than concerned that having a solid fence there would prevent Public Works employees from properly clearing the road because they will refrain from damaging the fence. It seems to me that the snow has been pushed between the posts. The snow that has been pushed between the posts because there is no fence is still on City property and that is why City's maintain Right-of-ways. I see an issue for snow removal.

Steve Parkinson stated that as far as Public Works is concerned the issue comes down to things within our right-of-ways. We have right-of-ways for clear purposes. By allowing fences especially solid fences within the right-of-way that close, when we push back the snow, we damage these fences. He also pointed out that the fence across the street that was referred to is a guardrail built to prevent vehicles from going over the embankment.

Ted Gray stated that if the fence was built there would also not be access to the utility pole at the extreme right hand corner of the property.

Hearing no further questions from the Committee, the Motion passed.

Alex Hanson informed Mr. Charache that Traffic & Safety is an advisory committee to the City Council. Our report goes back to the City Council and the City Council takes the actual action on it.

- (B) **Wentworth by the Sea Hotel & Resort** – Request for directional signage in City right-of-way – 1/16/03 letter attached - John Burke stated that the Hotel had submitted proposed locations for directional signs directing traffic from Interstate 95 to the new Wentworth by the Sea Hotel. They have agreed to not route traffic through the downtown or via Miller Avenue. They would like to exit from 95 to Exit 3, which is best for minimizing impacts to the City. Steve Parkinson stated that there are two state intersections on the map where the City does not have control.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned whether this approval belongs before the Committee. Chairman Alex Hanson stated that in the past, people on Marcy Street came to this committee concerned about traffic and about large delivery trucks. This plan will minimize traffic impacts to the Marcy Street neighborhood.

Steve Parkinson stated that final approval has to come from the City Council. He also wanted to know whether the signs going to be big, small, etc. John Burke stated that there are two things the Committee should review with respect to the issue: 1. Traffic circulation – how will this added traffic impact the City’s roadways. 2. The actual sign locations - would they be stamped on a stop sign? which is not allowed, would they be blocking other regulatory signs?, etc. The issue of sign pollution and aesthetics is something that is being addressed in the City’s Master Plan process. John added that he believes a sign ordinance would be appropriate.

Steve Parkinson agreed with John and this is a good approach for this Committee to review the routes for this kind of function. We need to be careful in the future we do not get into the issue that Ralph has of the Home Depot or Wal-Mart’s wanting signage or any other businesses.

MOTION by Steve Parkinson recommending approval of the signs and locations subject to Public Works approval. He recommended City Council approval of the route. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. Motion passed.

Fire Chief LeClaire stated that he is not in favor of any more signs and that Ralph brought up a good point of what do we do with the next request, especially where this is a request for signage for a business that is not in Portsmouth. What about people that have businesses in Portsmouth that ask for signs? Steve Parkinson stated that there is no way to get to the Wentworth from the highway without going through Portsmouth. Steve stated that he agreed with the Chief but we need to be able to control the volumes of traffic and keep them off the streets they shouldn’t be on.

John Burke stated that Public Works is consolidating directional signs onto single poles to cut down on sign pollution and confusion. But ultimately, the Master Plan and a City Sign Ordinance should be crafted to regulate this issue.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that it is important that we have the Wentworth agree to make extraordinary efforts to have that route incorporated into everything they print. Alex stated that they are getting ready with their brochures and will be opening May 9th.

Motion passed.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

- (A) **Crossroads House Pedestrian and Safety Improvements** – Update – 2/10/03
Memo – Information only, no questions of the Committee.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Right-on-Red Violations - Ted Gray referred to the number of cars that go through red lights where it is already posted “No Turn on Red” and wondered if some realignment of the signs is needed to prevent this. He stated that he has seen this most often at Miller Ave. and Middle Street. John Burke noted that in many cases where an intersection is fully posted, people will knowingly violate the restriction if no pedestrians are present. Alex Hanson asked John Burke to get a report back on this issue and for the Police Department to take note of this.

Concerns Regarding Granite Crosswalks in Market Square - Ralph DiBernardo stated he would like the Committee’s support on the issue. He saw a woman take a header on Congress St. on a granite crosswalk. It was the raised block that we have so much trouble with. He thought it was time to do away with them and asked Steve Parkinson if it would be appropriate to get a report on the history and the problems with them. Ralph stated that he would the make a motion in the future that the City Council authorize removal and replacement to something reasonable and safe.

Steve responded that these crosswalks have had a long history ever since they were first built. They were originally built incorrectly and since every one of them has been rebuilt. He added that it is already being discussed that they be removed and a stamp coated asphalt crosswalk be installed instead. The asphalt would not have the slipperiness of the stones and would be cost-effective.

MOTION made by Ralph DiBernardo to support Public Works in their effort to have the granite crosswalks replaced with something suitable and safe. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion Passed.

New Car Wash on Lafayette Road – Fire Chief LeClaire brought up a concern about the new carwash across the street from Papa Gino’s on U.S. Route 1. The Committee was told that by the owner that there would not be a problem with queuing traffic onto Route 1, but it is happening on nice days. Ron Cypher stated that he agreed with Chief LeClaire as he has seen the backup as well. Chairman Alex Hanson stated that owner agreed to have someone double stack traffic using cones to prevent this. John Burke stated that the City and State DOT are dealing with the owner on the issue of ice getting tracked onto U.S. Route 1. He stated that he would contact the owner on this issue.

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted: _____
Elaine E. Boucas