

**PORTSMOUTH  
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING  
8:00 AM – Thursday, May 15, 2003  
City Hall - Council Chambers**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Ralph DiBernardo, Vice-Chairman called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

**II: ROLL CALL:**

**Members Present:**

Ralph DiBernardo, Vice-Chair	Ted Gray, Member
John Burke, Parking & Transportation	Herb Bunnell
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Ron Cypher, Member
Police Captain Jim Tucker	Hank Greenberg, Member
Fire Chief Chris LeClaire	

Alex Hanson, Chair was absent.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

**IT WAS VOTED** on a Motion by Steve Parkinson to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee meeting of May 15, 2003. Seconded by Ron Cypher.

**IV. CORRESPONDENCE:**

(A) Lafayette Road – COAST Bus Stops – 4/21/03 correspondence to NHDOT and 4/30/03 NHDOT response attached.

**MOTION** by Ron Cypher to place on file. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion Passed.

(B) 2859 Lafayette Road – Car Wash – 4/7/03 letter from City to NHDOT requesting NO STOPPING or STANDING sign and 4/15/03 NHDOT response attached.

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

(C) NHSA Grant for Variable Message Board Approved – see 4/21/03 correspondence - Steve Parkinson stated that the City had applied to the NH Highway Safety Agency to obtain an additional message board sign similar to the two currently being used by the City. The grant has been

awarded to the City and the Board will be acquired following City Council approval

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to place on file. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

- (D) Pleasant, Marcy and South Streets – Speed concerns. Letter from the Friends of the South End attached – Mary Lou McElwain, 259 South Street informed the Committee of her concerns relative to the speed of traffic and lack of enforcement in the south end. She asked whether a 20 MPH posted speed is even enforceable. The Friends of the South End would really like this speed issue addressed. She stated that neighbors often see police officers at the other end of South Street by Edgewood, but not at our section of South St. She added that State Street is also a problem where people move from one stop light to another going 50 MPH. easily.

Elizabeth Binnie, 294 Pleasant Street, complained of the speed on Pleasant Street as well as South St. She stated that children walking to school and residents of the Wentworth Home walk on the roads because the sidewalks are in poor condition and feel safer walking in the road. Speeding occurs mainly in the morning and the evening. She asked if consideration could also be given to Livermore St. residents who have no onstreet parking due to the Wentworth Home employees and visitors.

Jessica Huselman, 283 Pleasant St. spoke to the speeding issue. She has three children who walk to school and the park. She reported motorcycle speeding on a regular basis. She wondered if a crosswalk would help or speed bumps. She stated that enforcement would help. She rarely sees a police officer and as a mother it is very frightening.

Vice Chairman Ralph DiBernardo commented that there is a mind set in this community in reference to the 20 MPH speed limits. In reality violations are not held up through our Court system. At the District Court level the 20 MPH speed limit has not been viewed as reasonable and therefore, has left our Police Dept. with a situation where the speed between 20-25 has been pretty much ignored.

Captain Tucker stated that South St. historically has been a place where people have complained about speed. He agreed to speak with the Chief, Deputy Chief and shift commanders for direct patrol in those areas again as well as install radar sign boards to show people what their speed is - which is useful from an education standpoint. He stated that the Department understands that it is a problem and they will do their best to address it. As far as the motorcycles go, the Police Department is currently working with other Police Departments in the Seacoast to develop a strategy dealing with excessive noise and other problems.

The question of the court issue was discussed concerning contesting a ticket and enforcing it. Capt. Tucker stated that on any given Tuesday in the Portsmouth District Court over half of the Police Department is tied up there all day on speeding tickets and related tickets. The agenda is usually full and can run from 8:00 am to 5:00 p.m.

Ralph DiBernardo asked Steve to comment on the reference made about speed bumps and why we don't use speed bumps on public streets. Steve stated that speed bumps are not approved for public ways - citing liability issue. You see them a lot on private properties but on municipal grounds they are not allowed. They create a hazard not only to emergency vehicles but also to public vehicles.

Ralph DiBernardo asked if we could consider getting updated speed figures for these streets since the last monitoring was done in 2000. Capt. Tucker will look at improved enforcement and use of the stealth speed device.

Ted Gray suggested contacting the Wentworth Home to have their employees use the Municipal Lot at the end of the street.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

- (A) Lafayette Road/Bluefish Boulevard – Resident request to replace MERGE signs with YIELD signs on U.S. Route 1. 2/28/03 letter attached – Ron Cypher reported that there are three signs warning that two lanes of traffic merge to one, but only one of those signs includes a sign that says “right lane ends”. John Burke referred to the standard MUTCD lane drop signs the City uses at the Rte.33 lane drop. It provides the driver three notifications in advance of the actual lane drop. John stated that he would bring the situation to the attention of NHDOT.

**MOTION** by Ron Cypher to have John Burke advise the State on this issue and have them review it with the thought of upgrading the sign. Seconded by Hank Greenberg. Motion passed.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

- (A) Proposed Manchester Square Retail Development – Pease International Tradeport – TAC Referral - Site plan enclosed. Brad Mezquita of Appledore Engineering explained the proposed site plan. A curb cut into Manchester Square has been eliminated with the proposed development. One of the proposed driveways includes a right-in/right-out condition. The proposed development includes an internal connector drive to the International Drive office buildings parking lots.

Ted Gray stated that it was a very well thought out plan and would work very nicely.

Ralph DiBernardo suggested as part of the motion to approve some statement to PDA suggesting that they begin to plan for the future expense of signaling or controlling these intersections. The City requires developers to upgrade or provide a proportional share of the cost of upgrading facilities they have impacted. PDA will not want to find themselves in the position of facing the financial burden 3 years down the road without a mechanism for developer contributions.

**MOTION** by Steve Parkinson to approve the plan as presented and suggest that PDA plan for the expense of future intersection upgrades based on standards. Ted Gray seconded. Motion passed.

- (B) Woodbury Ave./Bartlett St. Intersection – Resident safety concern. 5/1/03 letter attached – Capt. Tucker referred to the on-site review and stated that aligning the intersection at 90 degrees would be more of a hindrance to traffic and danger to larger vehicles turning right onto Bartlett St. than the existing configuration remain.

Ted Gray suggested a letter be sent to the resident suggesting that perhaps he consider backing his cars in rather than driving them in, which might help out somewhat. He added that cutting back the hedges was also a possibility. Steve Parkinson stated that the hedges are not the issue – it is the angle of the intersection and cars parked further up Bartlett Street.

John Burke noted that once the stop bar is painted it will give the driver a visual reminder to stop and not roll through the intersection. Enforcement of “rolling stops” is an ongoing issue for most communities.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson for Capt. Tucker to review enforcement and to send a letter of explanation to the complainant and place on file. Seconded by Capt. Tucker. Motion passed.

- (C) Congress St./Maplewood Ave./Islington St./Middle St. Intersection – Downtown employee pedestrian safety concerns – 4/24/03 letter and 4/29/03 city response attached -

Sandy Tucker spoke to her letter regarding disregard of motorists at the NO RIGHT ON RED condition downtown. She suggested 1. Move the right turn on red sign on Maplewood up to the signal by the Library side of intersection. 2. Put in some kind of an obnoxious sign, light, or something that gets the attention of the drivers to let them know of the law, and 3. Start enforcing. If police officers start ticketing people they

will get the message. She added that she did not think the walk light is long enough for the elderly to cross road.

John Burke stated that he agreed with Ms. Tucker's recommendations with one addition - education. There are drivers who do not understand the importance of the NO RIGHT ON RED to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. He added that some regular PSA's could be offered by the City to various media outlets to educate people on the importance of this issue and that it will be strictly enforced within the City.

He stated that there is a project coming up on Maplewood Avenue next year to upgrade all of the traffic signals. He added that it is the most important pedestrian project we have planned. The project includes:

- Replacing all of the traffic signals, mast arms and controllers,
- Installing pedestrian countdown indicators to help people understand how long they have to cross the street. The flashing "walk" "don't walk" symbols have been universally misunderstood in this country since they were introduced,
- Installation of illuminated NO RIGHT ON RED and YIELD TO PEDESTRIAN IN THE XWALK signs that will come on with the red signal or on pedestrian activation, respectively.
- Installation of an audible call feature for the visually impaired, and
- Installation of the Opticom Emergency Preemption System that will allow police, fire and ambulance to preempt the signals to get through the intersections faster and safer.

Construction is scheduled for next spring. John agreed that moving the NO RIGHT ON RED sign under the signal is something that we can do right away.

Ralph DiBernardo stated that we should readjust the signs in a reasonable period of time; work toward next year's project of upgrading the intersections that should address the crossing time; have John Burke work with Capt. Tucker and Sgt. Yerardi on public service announcements regarding this issue.

- (D) Elwyn Road/Elwyn Road Extension – Resident request for Blind Driveway sign - 3/26/03 letter attached – Steve Parkinson reported that there is no doubt that this particular street comes out on Elwyn Road in a tough location. Our suggestion would be that rather than placing a "blind drive" sign we install a "traffic entering and exiting ahead" warning sign. There are two 25 MPH signs in close proximity to each other, so we can remove one and replace it with the warning sign.

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to refer to Public Works for action. Seconded by Fire Chief LeClaire. Motion passed.

- (E) Mobil/Islington Street – Request to eliminate parking to improve sight distance. 4/23/03 letter attached – Steve Parkinson stated that the onsite review indicated that there are too many cars parking between the gas station’s driveways. He suggested striping two parking stalls to allow set-back to the drives for sight distance.

**MOTION** made by Chief LeClaire to have Public Works stripe the two parking spaces on Islington Street between the driveway entrance and exit of Mobil On-th-Run. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (F) Daniel Street/Penhallow Street – Downtown employee/resident request for pedestrian crossing signs at crosswalk. Letter attached – Ted Gray reported that there are no good places to install a “yield to pedestrian” sign near the Federal building. The Committee’s idea is to install a general warning sign for traffic as it first enters the City across the Memorial Bridge. It would generally state that motorists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalk and that it is strictly enforced.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to have a sign placed at an appropriate area near the entrance to the City across the Memorial Bridge stating that motorists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and that it is strictly enforced. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

**VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

- (A) ROUTE 1 Bypass Reconstruction Project – 4/22/03 Notice from NHDOT attached stating that engineering studies have begun – John Burke stated that the state will soon be asking the City’s assistance in developing an Advisory Committee for this project.
- (D) Portsmouth Herald Article – Pedestrian Signals – 4/30/03 article attached. The article highlights the need for education on the pedestrian issue as discussed earlier. The writer does not understand the flashing walk/don’t walk signs, even though there are plates installed on the signals with directions for use.
- (E) Jones & Marne Avenues - Chief LeClaire referred to the stop sign at Jones Avenue and Marne Ave. A resident of 65 Jones Ave. stated that there was never a stop sign at Marnes Ave. but now that there is one there, they would like it to remain permanently.

**MOTION** made by Chief LeClaire that the stop sign be permanently installed on Marne Avenue at Jones Avenue. Seconded by Capt. Tucker. Motion passed.

- (F) Rte.1 Corridor Study - Ralph DiBernardo stated there has been a request for a representative to the Rte.1 Corridor Study. It has been suggested by the state that it either be the Chair or the Vice-Chair.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray that Vice-Chair Ralph DiBernardo be the City's representative to this Committee. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

- (G) Buckminster Way – Request of a resident for posted speed – It has been suggested that the speed limit be posted.

**MOTION** made by Ted Gray to refer this to the Police Department and John Burke for action. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Elaine E. Boucas