

## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

January 12, 2004, 6:30 p.m.

Conference Room A

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Officials Present: Mayor Sirrell, Councilors Whitehouse, Pantelakos, Grasso, Hynes, Ferrini, Marchand, and Raynolds. Assistant Mayor Hanson absent.

Present: City Manager Bohenko, Steve Parkinson and John Burke, Public Works Department, Nancy Carmer, Community Development, Maryann Blanchard and Betsy Shultis, State Representatives, Dana Levenson, Everett Eaton, and Steve Alley, Economic Development Commission.

Mayor Sirrell called the work session to order at 6:33 p.m.

### **Worth Lot**

City Manager Bohenko introduced the Worth Lot and explained to the new Councilors the work session procedures. He highlighted his chronological report presented to the City Council.

Economic Development Commission Chair Dana Levenson explained that the commission considers parking downtown an important issue that was thoroughly studied.

City Manager Bohenko noted that no local funds were used in the planning process.

Parking and Transportation Director John Burke presented a slide show presentation outlining the current parking improvement program, program performance, downtown parking utilization, and policy decisions.

Robert Durfee, Hoyle, Tanner, and Associates explained the engineering feasibility study and found the site appropriate for building a garage with no major concerns or issues. He explained that the location would be ideal for traffic flow using Hanover Street and Maplewood Avenue.

Art Stadig, Walker Parking Consultants, explained that the location provides for an ideal parking facility with the lot size. He presented a proposed facility highlighting the design of parking spaces. He explained a few plans including retail space on the upper level and other variations that affect the cost per parking space.

Lisa DeStefano, DeStefano Architects, explained that the facility would use brick and granite materials on the outside with the pedestrian way using green space with benches. She explained the challenge of a conceptual design taking into consideration the various styles of building in the lot's vicinity.

Councilor Pantelakos questioned the access from the parking facility. Art Stadig explained that Hanover Street is an acceptable secondary street with more turning options than on the main artery of Maplewood Avenue. She was concerned about the

number of vehicles exiting onto Hanover Street. John Burke explained that Hanover Street has been considered and turning lanes would alleviate the traffic backup.

City Manager Bohenko said that there are other future parking options including parking at the Sheraton and the McIntyre building using public and private partnerships. He said that there is a whole plan to be considered using a global approach.

Councilor Whitehouse is concerned with blocking the whaling wall, as it is an attraction to many tourists. He is concerned with lighting of the public access path. He also questioned the loading zones for the businesses in the Worth Lot. He questioned if the Department of Transportation agreed to the potential lot. John Burke explained that Maplewood Avenue is under the authority of the City.

Councilor Grasso wanted to know how tall the facility would be in comparison to the Worth building. Art Stadig explained the height of the surrounding buildings.

Art Stadig noted that the majority of the abutters are in favor of the project. He also noted that the Cabot House building would be repaired that would damage the whaling wall.

Councilor Hynes explained concerns with the creation of this facility. He is concerned that the City's historic feel would be gone with building horizontally and using all space in the City. He said that people visit Portsmouth for the City's historic feel. He believes that we need to educate the people downtown for parking.

Councilor Marchand explained that he found residents concerned with the traffic onto Hanover Street. He said that he would need more information in future meetings to be able to determine the affects. He questioned the City Manager on the parking fees. City Manager Bohenko explained that break even would be approximately six years and highlighted the variables and assumptions figured into the analysis.

Councilor Reynolds expressed concern with the aesthetics and felt that a detailed report is needed for parking demand along with alternatives. City Manager Bohenko said that numerous alternatives have been made including mass transit and satellite parking.

Mayor Sirrell explained that she has taken numerous telephone calls from Worth Lot businesses that are uncomfortable with the plan. She said that the face of Portsmouth is changing and is unsure if it is in the best interests of the City.

Councilor Grasso suggests that the plan be delayed for two years to see the proposed plans for the Hilton, Sheraton, parking fees, and various other variables.

Mayor Sirrell asked the City Council about their feelings on working with the Sheraton. All City Councilors were in agreement to giving the City and the Economic Development Commission direction for future dealings.

## Ocean Road

City Manager Bohenko explained that the issue at hand is Ocean Road development. He noted that the City Council requested a letter be sent to Department of Transportation Commissioner Murray regarding ownership of Ocean Road. He highlighted his chronological report of the actions.

John Burke explained the cost comparison between using federal funding and state funding. He noted that using federal funding would be further out then using state funds.

Betsy Shultis provided a brief history of Ocean Road, the concerns, and the steps taken along the way. City Manager Bohenko explained that the entire project would be bonded and at a future date the City would be paid by the State of New Hampshire.

Councilor Whitehouse questioned the 50/50 match in the letter. City Manager Bohenko explained that the match is used for overrun in the project.

Councilor Ferrini questioned about unfounded mandates or the State takes it out of the budget. City Manager Bohenko said that once a bond is signed that the State is legally bound to the funds. He further noted that the City would not accept the street until the project was finished.

Maryann Blanchard summarized that it is a good offer and recommends that the City Council accept the plan.

Councilor Grasso questioned the manager of the project. John Burke explained that the City would manage the entire project. She questioned the timeline before the offer would expire. John Burke explained that the State funding would be available as soon as July 2005.

Councilor Whitehouse questioned what would happen with the project on the Greenland side of the street. City Manager Bohenko said that the City would take care of its section and that the Greenland portion would remain a state road.

Councilor Pantelakos questioned if Portsmouth Police maintains the road. City Manager Bohenko said that they do operate radar points and various traffic enforcements. He said that costs to patrol the road would need to be taken up with the Chief.

Mayor Sirrell felt that consensus is needed for the City to know what should be done. The City Council agreed unanimously to move forward.

Mayor Sirrell closed the work session at 8:28 p.m.

Minutes taken and typed by: B. Christopher Maxwell, Deputy City Clerk