

PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
9:00 AM – Thursday, October 21, 2004
City Hall - Council Chambers

DRAFT

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 Chairman	
John Burke, Dir.Parking & Transportation	Ted Gray, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Ron Cypher, Member
Deputy Police Chief Dave Young	Herb Bunnell, Member
Fire Chief Chris LeClaire	Jonathan Bailey, Member
Alex Hanson, Chairman	

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 September 16, 2004. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE:

- (A) Brewster/McDonough Street – Resident Request for Stop Sign – John Burke stated that the STOP sign would be posted.

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

- (B) Kearsarge/Ranger Way – Resident Request for Stop Sign – Informational only. Stop sign is in place.

MOTION made by Ted Gray to place on file. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) Lincoln Ave. – Richards Ave. to Miller Ave. – Resident Request – The Vice Chairman recounted the Committee’s action at the previous meeting to allow parking along the easterly side of Lincoln Avenue on this section. He noted that the residents of the street have weighed in and parking is actually preferred on the westerly side. John Burke stated that historically when parking is allowed on one side, all things being equal it is put on the side that provides the most parking. However, there are some conflicts with people backing out of driveways if it allowed on the easterly side and you would only gain about 1 extra parking space on that side.

MOTION by Steve Parkinson to amend the previous action and place the parking on the opposite side of the street in accordance with the Ordinance. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

- (B) 430 West Road – Business request for rehearing on previous committee/TAC action regarding left-turn restrictions at Lafayette/West Roads – John Burke stated that the “pork chop” at this intersection has been in place for many years and is undersized. When the old plumbing business was vacated and a new tenant was granted approval, a stipulation of the Planning Board was to make it larger and more effective at preventing left turns onto Route 1. A new owner is going in and opposes it and is seeking a rehearing. An abutting business also opposes it on safety grounds.

MOTION made by Fire Chief LeClaire to put this on on-site next month. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

- (C) South/Sagamore/Miller – Report back on pedestrian improvements – A sub-committee was formed by Traffic & Safety and Jonathan Bailey and John Burke are participating along with school department officials, the Police Department and residents. The Committee met and reviewed intersection operations in the field. Jon Bailey noted that the crossing guard has difficulty controlling traffic going through the intersection when she is crossing the children. John Burke stated that following the meeting Public Works has gone in and restriped the white edge lines to keep cars from cutting the corner. Advance school crossing signs have been installed and STOP for Pedestrian in Crosswalk signs have been installed. Also the crossing guard has been furnished with an A-frame children crossing sign for better visibility. Speed control and PD monitoring was also recommended. The City will be installing new pedestrian signals at the intersection in FY06. The Committee will meet again in November.

- (D) South Street Speeds – Report back – Ralph DiBernardo stated the 20 MPH speed limit is something which has been discussed for years and is not working at 20 MPH. John Burke stated that the Friends of the South End (FOSE) asked to have the speeds looked at to determine what the safe speed is. They had requested that if the speed limit should be higher based on studies, guidelines and criteria then it should be posted as such and enforced. John noted that state law requires that South Street be posted at 30 mph unless an engineering study determines that it should be otherwise. Therefore, the department conducted a speed study in this regard. Speed information was collected by the Police and Public Works Departments. In general, the upper and lower limits for posting safe speeds is the average speed (on the lower limit) and the 85th percentile speed at the upper limit. The 85th percentile speed is the speed where 85 percent of the motoring public is travelling at or below. At this level, studies have shown accident rates to be low. The 85th percentile speeds are generally hovering around 30 mph. The average speeds at 25 mph. Based on the engineering/speed study you would be posting the street at either 25 or 30 MPH.

Ralph DiBernardo asked the Committee if reporting back to the neighborhood would be prudent before making another change in speed limit.

A resident of South St. present stated that his car has trouble even staying at 20 MPH so he was in favor of a change.

Deputy Police Chief Young stated that the Police Dept. did their own surveys over the years on many different sections of South St. and supports a change to 25 MPH.

Ted Gray stated there may be a vocal few adamantly against doing anything except leaving it at 20 MPH, however, the vast majority will adhere to a more reasonable speed.

MOTION by Ted Gray to modify speed limit on South Street from 20 mph to 25 mph. Seconded by Herb Bunnell.

John Burke suggested getting together with the neighborhood committee first since no one was present from the Committee. He suggested that he and the Deputy Police Chief meet with them and bring back comment to the November meeting.

Jonathan Bailey asked is there a way to perhaps narrow the travel lane by painting edge lines on South Street. John Burke stated that at the public meetings on the redesign of South Street there was some input from residents that edge lines would make the road seem more like a highway than a residential street. He said this is a common misconception and it should be revisited.

Deputy Chief Young agreed that we should check in with the neighborhood group one more time.

MOTION made by Ted Gray withdrawing his motion. Seconded by Herb Bunnell.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to table this and act on it next month after John Burke and Deputy Chief Young meet with the FOSE. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) 6-16 Congress St. Redevelopment – TAC Referral – Steve McHenry, architect updated the Committee on the project. Covered parking will be provided for 25 vehicles, the first floor level being retail, 2nd floor offices, and third level and above residential.

John Chagnon of Ambit Engineering referred to the plan included in the packets showing proposed lane striping adjustments on Congress Street. The loading zone has been increased in length from 20 feet to 40 feet. He noted that onsite meeting with the Traffic & Safety resulted in improved lane striping on Congress Street.

Ralph DiBernardo asked John Burke if the City had everything they needed and all drawings are up to date. John answered yes but that he would like to see the lane striping incorporated into the site plan.

Mr. Chagnon informed the Committee that the revised site plan showing all adjustments to lighting and striping was delivered to Planning Department today.

Ron Cypher referred to the on-site noting that all concerns were addressed and the clearance on the underground parking driveway would be expanded since the building was going to be recessed compared to the existing condition.

MOTION made by Ron Cypher to accept the proposed updated plan as presented to Planning Dept./TAC addressing our issues of striping on Congress Street. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

Gerald Giles resident of Porter Street Condominiums stated that he has not had an opportunity to look at the updated plans so he is not in a position to comment, but suspects he will have an opportunity to look at them for future board meetings.

- (B) Proposed COAST Trolley Route Changes – City Council Referral – John Burke stated briefly that following a successful year of trolley ridership, there are still a number of things that would improve the system and getting to the Portsmouth Regional Hospital is the number one priority of the Mayor and city. John noted that there is also a petition from Feaster Apts. to add a stop at Feaster Apts. He added that a safer stop is sought for Market Basket Plaza where the trolley currently stops on Lafayette Road.

Rad Nichols of COAST presented the Committee with a proposal to accommodate these changes. He noted that the trolley has been a tremendous success with ridership over the past 12 months over 81,000 passenger trips, which is a 108% increase over the previous year. Mr. Nichols gave a summary of the proposed changes that would continue to build on these successes. He noted that the changes would connect Portsmouth Regional Hospital, Feaster Apartments, improve the MarketBasket Plaza stop, and reduce recovery times in Market Square. He also noted that an earlier connection to C& J Trailways service to Boston would be provided at 6:20 am. getting people into Boston before 8:00am. He presented a summary of service changes considered for service to the Hospital. It was determined that the best course of action was to try and get a connection from Cate Street through to Borthwick Ave. to meet schedule demands. This action would require that the property owner between Cate and Borthwick agree to access. John Burke noted that discussions with the property owner are very preliminary and the Committee should no any recommendation in this regard to subject to the owner's approval.

Under the scenario for service to the hospital via Cate Street and Borthwick Ave., service along outer Islington St. and Greenland Ave. would be eliminated. Ridership in this area has been light. Service to Plaza 800 would remain. Regarding Market Basket Plaza, Mr. Nichols stated that the idea would be to put the stop on Wilson Road with service to West Road. Service along Lafayette between Wilson and West would be eliminated.

Mr. Nichols presented the proposed trolley schedule. Mr. Nichols stated that the stop over in the Square will be reduced to just 3 minutes meaning trolleys will not be sitting in Market Square as long.

Chief LeClaire asked John Burke if there was concern whether there was enough room on Court Street for the proposed stops. John Burke noted that at 35 feet, Court Street was wide enough for stops but that COAST should work with the Chief on the precise locations relative to the fire station. Ted Gray applauded Mr. Nichols for his work.

Devon West, a resident of Feaster Apts. for 17 years, addressed the Committee. He stated that he represents 54 residents who signed the petition for the new Feaster stop. There are 103 apts. Out of 36 parking spaces, probably 2 or 3 people are waiting for parking spaces at any given time. One of the issues is the concern that residents are simply not getting out into the community enough. The trolley stop will help. Everyone at Feaster is very enthusiastic about the trolley service. Mr. West asked about the implementation time. Mr. Nichols stated mid-November.

Mr. Bunnell asked if they were aware of senior transportation through the Housing Authority. If they call they can go anywhere they want to. Mr. West stated that there is a bus from Portsmouth Housing Authority on Thursday mornings. However, if for any reason you aren't able to make Thursdays at 9am you cannot make the shopping trip. The senior bus is handy yes, but insufficient.

Leslie Hope, Public Affairs Director at Portsmouth Regional Hospital thanked John Burke and Rad Nichols and people from Coast for working closely with her to get this trolley stop back to the hospital. She also thanked the Senior Citizen Shuttle which provides wonderful service to people to get to the hospital and she noted that the hospital tries to support that service. Also there are patients that come to the emergency room and can't get home and the hospital does pay for the cab.

John Burke again reminded the Committee that getting to the hospital involves a private entity. So if the proposal doesn't go forward then we will come back shortly with an alternative.

MOTION made by Alex Hanson to approve as presented with the Court Street stops agreed upon by the Fire Chief, Parking & Transportation Director and COAST. Seconded by Herb Bunnell. Motion passed.

- (C) Borthwick Avenue/Liberty Mutual - Proposed pedestrian improvements – Informational item. John Burke stated that Public Works is working with Liberty Mutual on installing a new solar-powered pedestrian beacon at Borthwick Ave./Liberty Mutual. Public Works will be studying its effectiveness over time. Steve Parkinson stated this entire project is being funded by Liberty Mutual.
- (D) Market, State, Deer & High Streets – Proposed new on-street parking – DPW referral – Alex Hanson referred to the on-site for Market Street, stating that the recommendation was if a fire hydrant could be moved, the merchant would pay for the cost of moving the hydrant to provide additional parking. Two spaces

were to be added to State Street now that the new curbing has been installed for the new State Street condos. There is also an area for two new parking spaces on Deer Street across from Russell Street. The High Street space considered was too narrow.

MOTION made by Alex Hanson to approve the additional parking on State Street and Deer Street. Seconded by Ron Cypher. Motion passed.

These locations will also be reviewed by the Parking Committee to determine if meters are appropriate.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS:

- (A) **Broad St./Jones Ave. Neighborhood** - The petition came too late to be included in the packet. Ralph DiBernardo stated that normally it would be put on next month's on-site but there is a person here to speak to it.

Paul Houlares, 65 Jones Avenue explained the letter. There have been two or three accidents in that area. The intersection is very dangerous and as property owners they are requesting that specific measure be taken in order to improve neighborhood safety and driver awareness. A lot of people use Broad St. as a shortcut and speeds are incredible. He believes this is probably an enforcement issue. The stop sign at Broad St. onto Jones cannot be seen and needs to be looked at. There are also a lot of new children in the neighborhood.

MOTION made by Fire Chief LeClaire to refer this to on-site next month with the following stipulations: accident reports for the past three years, that the stealth recorder be placed there and to review warrants at the intersection of Jones Ave. and Broad St. for multi-way stop. Seconded by Alex Hanson. The on-site will be on Tuesday, November 16th around 8:10 am. Motion passed.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

- (A) U.S. Route 1 Corridor Study – RPC Status/Update – Ron Cypher stated there has not been a meeting since he was appointed. The next meeting will be October 29th. He and John Burke will attend.
- (B) Gosling Road/Gosling Meadows – P.D./DPW Review of Pedestrian Safety – Deputy Chief Young informed the committee that he and John Burke met with residents there in response to a young boy being struck by a vehicle on Gosling Road. Dave noted that they suggested that the Housing Authority send out leaflets to the residents making them aware that crossing Gosling Road is a concern and people should be very cautious. He noted that some striping and signage will also be considered. Alex Hanson suggested that the Police Department prepare the letter and give it to George Robinson to distribute to the residents, coming from the Police Dept. would be more effective.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: Approximately 9:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted: _____
Elaine E. Boucas

