

**PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
9:00 a.m. – Thursday, May 11, 2006
City Hall - Council Chambers**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Ken Smith, Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00.m.

II: ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor Ken Smith, Chairman	Herb Bunnell, Member
Deborah Finnigan, Traffic Engineer	Ted Gray, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	John Connors, Member
Assist. Police Chief Len DiSesa	Eric Spear, Member
Assist. Fire Chief Achilles	Christina Westfall

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

IT WAS VOTED on a Motion by Ted Gray to accept the minutes of the Traffic & Safety Committee meeting of April 13, 2006. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) **Regina Road** – Safety Concerns at Elwyn, Regina and Gosport and Elwyn at Rte.1 (e-mail and letter dated April 28, 2006 attached) – Debbie Finnigan reported that Rte.1 at Elwyn Rd had about 24 accidents in the last three years and recommended she be given permission to write a letter to state as it is not our intersection to change, with a recommendation that the exclusive lefts from Elwyn and Peverly Hill be done together instead of with the thru and right lanes. Gosport at Elwyn there were 12 accidents there. The recommendation is to change the height of the stop sign to the standard height on a standard post. It is 4.5' off the ground instead of 7' which will give more sight as well as repaint stop bar and put double yellow centerline down 20-30' on Gosport.

MOTION made by Assist. Fire Chief Steve Achilles to accept the recommendations made by Debbie Finnigan. Seconded by John Connors. Motion passed.

- (B) **Starbucks**– TAC referral – (site plan attached) – TAC referral - Bernie Pelech representing Pizza Hut referred to the wetlands buffer, the demolition of the existing building and construction of a smaller building to allow being away from the Mobile Home Park to the North and create a by-pass lane as well as a drive thru lane. A conditional use permit was received from the Planning Board and TAC referred us to Traffic & Safety to review the overall layout. He then asked Giles Hamm to explain the proposal.

Giles Hamm of Vanasse & Associates conducted a detailed analysis of Starbucks; the drive thru is a critical issue to sights as this. Traffic counts were conducted at Starbucks in Dover with 90 customers during the morning peak and

about 80 customers on Saturday. The Drive thru itself is not that busy with 30-40 customers per hour.

Ted Gray asked the Deputy Police Chief how many accidents in the course of a week in that area? He is also opposed to left-hand turns there.

Len DiSesa responded it is a heavy traffic area, it is a tricky turn, but people are cautious when they turn, it is not at accident spike at this point.

Steve Parkinson asked as they go into the lot they will not be able to make a left-hand turn. Mr. Hamm responded that is correct. This was changed at the last TAC as Debbie Finnigan recommended it be kept one way.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated that he wanted a back-up plan in case there was a spillout onto Woodbury for the queue and asked Mr. Hamm for thoughts on a spillout plan.

Mr. Hamm referred to the shared curb cut, and stated they monitored different facilities and felt very comfortable with this plan. The level of traffic is not significant.

Attorney Pelech stated that Starbucks has a much bigger sit down component and less drive thru than Dunkin Donuts, the majority of Dunkin Donuts is drive thru and less sit downs.

Assist. Fire Chief Achilles asked about the section of 19 parking spaces, are they able to pull in and back out with the traffic there. Mr. Hamm stated yes.

The Chair has a problem with backing out, was there any thought of having angled spaces and if so, would that change the numbers of what is required to what you could have. Atty. Pelech stated you would lose a couple of spaces, if it were angled we would lose 2 or 3 spaces and would have to go back to the Zoning Board. The Chair feels it would be safer to have angled in and feels it would be safer to give up a space for safety.

Steve Parkinson stated this is designed almost like a standard parking lot with 24' isle width with two lanes, the drive thru lane and the exit lane going around it, you have 24' of pavement which is a typical design for what we require for parking lots with 19 spaces.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to approve the proposed plan as presented. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed. The Chair opposed.

- (C) **Ranger Way** – Proposed Townhouse Development (site plan attached) – Attorney Pelech referred to the on-site and prepared sketches of three alternatives for the municipal parking lot that was the issue on Tuesday. There is a substantial area where we can place up to eleven municipal parking spaces for use of Atlantic Heights residents during emergency snow removal bans. The three sketches show what can be done, some leaving more landscape buffer between the abutter than the others. Feels it is up to the Committee to decide how this is to be configured and have no problem with any of the three proposals. The Chair gave the members a chance to look at the three proposals. Steve Parkinson spoke on his behalf only that he is looking at this project as supplying needed parking especially for the neighborhood in the wintertime to get their cars off the road during snow. Does not have a problem with the original proposal of parking backing out into Ranger Way. The same situation was created down by the ballfield around the corner from this location, created a number of parking spaces used year round, primarily intended for snow parking,

they back out, same as Ranger Way, which has minimal traffic. Does not see installing parking spaces in a sea of pavement when we do not need to. The abutting property owner would have no privacy at all and as presented this proposal serves the need of what is intended by the City Council to provide off-street parking for the neighborhood during snowstorms.

Eric Spear agreed with the original presentation with spaces backing onto Ranger Way and is concerned with the greenery between the house would all go away and the house would be completely exposed. Does not see much of a safety issue on this road. Weighing pros and cons and loss of curtain of greenspace, would prefer to keep it as on the original drawing.

MOTION made by Eric Spear to approve the original plan. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed. Herb Bunnell opposed.

Steve Parkinson asked Atty. Pelech if this would be curbed. Attorney Pelech responded “yes”.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Islington Street Neighborhood** – Request for review of neighborhood signage – Report back (resident letter & Petition attached) – Debbie Finnigan referred to the packet she presented to the members at the on-site showing the signage needed in the neighborhood from a safety perspective or replacement of signs as they do not meet reflectivity. Built this on stop line requests to help them realize they need to come to a stop. There are conflicts within the Ordinances. Debbie Finnigan copied the Ordinance to include in their packet and put in what her thoughts were as to what is needed to be done in order to make sure that all things were consistent and not confusing. A safety study was done on Islington St. with recommendations as follows: Two gas stations on Islington between Dover and Bridge Sts. In theory there is parking there, they are not labeled, but the Ordinance says there is two hour parking from Bridge, Congress & Islington down to Salem St. and people can park there for two hours. The recommendation from the study is to remove that parking. In the number of times Debbie Finnigan has been out there, has not seen anyone parking there and feels a “no parking” sign should be there to help sight distance coming out of those gas stations.

The Second one is Langdon St., there is a sight distance and recommended removing that first space going westerly and feels this is a good idea. The other option they proposed was Cornwall has better sight distance coming onto Islington than Langdon and should be reversed.

Lastly, Debbie Finnigan has an issue with Brewster St. It is pretty much the same width as many of the one-way streets in the area with parking on one side or both sides. It is presently two way, has parking on one side and causes conflict. One of the neighbors Debbie Finnigan spoke with stated they like it the way it is. Personally from a safety perspective to put on record that she is uncomfortable with that as she has almost been hit by people coming around the street from Hanover St. There is just not enough pavement for two cars and parking. Personally in this particular neighborhood would rather save the parking than the two-way street, there are ways to get in and out of this neighborhood, however, it is up to the Committee, for the record this is her recommendation. According to the Ordinance it is two-way and there is parking on the side closest to Rock St.

not on the other side. It is not labeled and need signs, but it is in the Ordinance and believes this will help the neighborhood's concerns.

The Chair asked with this recommendation how many would actually have to go as Ordinance change. One is removal of one space on Islington St., the signage is clarifying what has already been approved and getting the proper signs and replacing warning signs.

Debbie Finnigan stated there are Ordinance changes within that document only because there is conflict within the Ordinances so they will have to be approved by the City Council to fix them in the book. Part of what she is charged to do is when she finds issues within the traffic and parking Ordinances especially conflicts where things are omitted is to bring them to the attention of those who can make the changes.

The Chair referred to her other recommendation to remove the school crossing sign. After realizing the location of the school Debbie Finnigan changed her recommendation from removing the sign to putting the sign higher on the pole to the standard level.

John Connors commented on changing Brewster to one-way there is not enough room and where would people go? Debbie Finnigan stated they would either go down Sudbury or McDonough. Debbie Finnigan felt this might be controversial but whether it passes or not, people need to know she feels this is a safety concern. The reason she wants it one-way in that particular direction is to take into effect Celebrity Sandwich's parking lot is in the back and it would not be helpful to them to have it one-way from McDonough to Islington and people would still drive there the wrong way which would also create safety concerns. There would have to be a no-right turn sign at the gas station.

Assist. Fire Chief stated it makes sense for the one-way to go from Islington down, but how does that affect Rock St. and affect any traffic pattern? Also he agrees that Brewster is a tight street and there are conflicts and from the Fire Department's standpoint we just have to pick and chose what streets we go down when there's an incident in that area. Also agrees you don't want to change every street to make in an even in and out, as almost every street would have to be reassessed.

Debbie Finnigan stated she was trying to do the least amount of change to make it safe and would be happy to take another look at all of this in general. Feels you try to have an even amount of one-ways in and one-ways out and in this case there are a lot of one-ways in and not too many coming out.

Ted Gray felt you are creating a problem with some of the businesses on Rock St. The Chair suggested instead of changing Brewster, remove parking on both sides.

Debbie Finnigan responded that would be fine but also knows that there is a feeling of not removing parking and was trying to be sensitive to all.

The Chair asked how many parking spaces are along that other side?

Debbie Finnigan responded maybe 8 cars parking there, maybe 9 depending on how close they are.

The Chair asked about going ahead with her recommendations proposed this morning with taking the Brewster St. out of the recommendation for further study in order to look at either one-way streets back and forth, removing parking and trying to clear it up.

Debbie Finnigan responded this is her recommendation, but it is up to the Committee.

Jonathan Bailey stated it would give us an opportunity to look back in the Police record and see what traffic incidents there, see how much of a problem we have.

Debbie Finnigan respectfully disagrees, just because there are no accidents it doesn't mean it is the right thing to do.

Asst.Fire Chief stated there is a high risk occupancy on Brewster St. and his concern is if there was an incident there and had traffic coming up we would have access issues, as there is an apartment building on Brewster with concern of its residents and anything we can do to improve access might be a concern.

MOTION made by Herb Bunnell to approve recommendation excluding Brewster Street for further study. Seconded by John Connors. Motion passed.

Debbie Finnigan asked if there was a feeling of this Committee that we also look at between Sudbury and Hanover at Rock St. to see if it should be one-way or two-way and parking as part of Brewster Street.

The Chair thought it would be appropriate to zero in on this.

John Connor stated that one-way on Rock all the way down there's no way to get out so that one little section should be two-way for access in and out for business and residents.

The Chair stated this would be part of the study.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

- (A) Ted Gray referred to a resident calling about a situation he observed on Greenland Rd. where the two lane area becomes one before the bridge, across from the park and ride area. A home is being built and there are vehicles parked there and suggested looking at it for possible elimination of parking in that area for safety.

Len DiSesa stated parking is not allowed there and will check it out, they are parking for the construction.

Steve Parkinson stated there was a project last week on the Griffin property removing tired, junk cars, etc. so there was a lot of activity around that area. Steve also stated there is curbing in that area and mostly it's a travel lane.

Len DiSesa will have this checked out.

- (B) Deer St. Maplewood Ave. Light Signal – Ted Gray has received several complaints of the length of time of the red light and requested it be looked at to shorten the time.

Debbie Finnigan will look at the traffic to see if the heavier traffic is on Deer St. as opposed to Maplewood.

- (C) Steve Parkinson received an e-mail from a resident on Jenkins St. off Summit by the High School concerned with parking taking place there which appears to be high school students. This has been looked at and the Committee didn't see any serious problem with this and was "placed on file". Would like to set this up for on-site next month.

The Chair welcomed Eric Spear and Christina Westfall to the Committee.

- (D) Debbie Finnigan stated she received a call concerning New Castle Avenue and Marcy Street and would like to put this on next month's onsite.

IV. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION to adjourn. Adjourned at approximately 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Elaine Boucas, Recording Secretary