

PORTSMOUTH
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
8:00 a.m. – Thursday, September 14, 2006
City Hall - Council Chambers

DRAFT

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

The Chair called a moment of silence in memory of Barbara Driscoll.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor Ken Smith, Chairman	Jonathan Bailey, Member
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director	Ted Gray, Member
Deputy Police Chief Len DiSesa	John Connor, Member
Assist. Fire Chief Steve Achilles	Eric Spear, Member
Deborah Finnigan, P.E., Traffic Engineer	Christina Westfall, Member

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

IT WAS VOTED on a Motion made by Ted Gray to accept the minutes of the August 10th meeting. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.

The Chair welcomed Asst. Fire Chief Steve Achilles to the Committee.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) **Taft/Arthur/Cleveland Roads Intersection** – Request for “Stop signs, Speed Limit and Children Playing signs” (letter dated 7/7/06 attached) – Eric Spear didn’t feel the solution was a stop sign. The problem is the layout of the road and intersection encourage vehicles go faster than they should.

MOTION made by Eric Spear to refer this to Public Works to look at changing and fixing the intersection and to include this in the next capital improvement projects for recommendation to the City Council with a report back to this Committee. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

The Chair referred to the discussion at the on-site to remove some of the pavement and to have the Police Department could do stats for speeding.

Deputy Fire Chief Achilles felt that the intersection needs to be changed and would ask Public Works to see if it requires to be change, does not recommend Public Works automatically change the intersection but evaluate does it need to be changed? The other discussion at the on-site was at the corner of Cleveland and Taft merge a resident is adopting the spot and cleaning the area, which is also a part of the evaluation.

John Connor suggested stop lines, make them more visible to improve the intersection.

Steve Parkinson suggested in the Motion in order to redesign and reconstruct this intersection, we need funding to do that which comes through the capital plan

process and would be more appropriate if you want us to proceed with a redesign of that intersection and reconstruction that it be included in the next capital improvement projects for recommendation to the City Council and report back.

- (B) **Melbourne/Sheffield Street Intersection** – Stop Sign Request – (e-mail dated 8/29/06 attached)

MOTION made by Deputy Chief DiSesa that a stop sign be placed on Sheffield at the intersection of Sheffield and Melbourne. Seconded by Asst. Fire Chief Achilles. Motion passed.

- (C) **Orchard Street** -- “No Parking Here to Corner” -- Police Department referral - (Aerial map attached) – Debbie Finnigan reported that people are parking on the inside curb and the sight distance is bad and people are going towards the oncoming traffic to avoid parked cars. The resident would like no parking on that corner.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated that it was concluded that the volume of traffic was not an issue and it was decided to place on file.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to place on file. Seconded by Deputy Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

- (D) Aldrich Street at Islington Street. -- “No Parking Either Side of Street” signage - Police Department referral (e-mail dated 8/11/16 attached) – The Chair stated this was being referred back to Public Works to straighten out the signage. Christina Westfall stated her recollection was the signs closest to Islington St. said “No Parking Here to Corner” and the next one down on Aldrich said “No Parking” which causes confusion so all signs to be changed to “No parking” and eliminate “No Parking Here to Corner”.

MOTION made by Christina Westfall for all signs to read “No Parking” and to eliminate “No Parking Here to Corner” signs on both sides of the street. Seconded by John Connor. Motion passed.

Steve Parkinson stated that the roadway is somewhat narrow and people were parking on top of sidewalk and the installation of the curbing defined the sidewalks eliminating parking.

- (E) **Cate at Cottage Streets** – Sight Obstruction – Police Department referral - (e-mail dated 8/8/06 attached) – Deputy Police Chief DiSesa reported when one goes up Cate to the “T” at Cottage and Cate, there’s a stop sign at this intersection, and tries to make either a right or left turn, if there is a vehicle parked on Cottage near the intersection you have to creep out almost to the middle of intersection on Cottage to make a safe right or left turn, we felt if a sign is placed in front of 50 Cottage or thereabouts 20’ from the intersection “No Parking Here to Corner” would eliminate that spot and make the sight line clear and eliminate the problem.

MOTION made by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa to place a “No Parking Here to Corner” sign in front of 50 Cottage Street 20’ from the intersection. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

Debbie Finnigan asked on both sides? Deputy Police Chief DiSesa responded “no” just on one side.

John Connor suggested putting the sign on the telephone pole that is in that vicinity.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated enforcement, issued parking tickets, spoken with the residents of 50 Cottage St., but signage would eliminate the problem completely.

- (F) **Bartlett Street** – Safety Issues – (letter dated 7/31/06 and 8/8/06 e-mail attached) - Debbie Finnigan referred to the on-site and discussion of proposed project and if there are any safety concerns that the committee might have that might impede the ability to put a building there. There were some concerns about intersection of Cate and Bartlett which really is not defined as such, it looks like a wide extended pavement. People making a left to go onto Cate St. from Bartlett cause a problem at the intersection of Bartlett and Islington Streets. Many people stated that the intersection of Bartlett and Islington Streets is probably the worst in the City.

Asst. Fire Chief Achilles stated after being on site doesn’t feel this committee can make a recommendation unless there is a proposed plan. The potential developer has identified that there are issues they will need to resolve and is concerned if the Committee makes a vote saying we feel that it is workable we don’t know what their plan is and the development of the site at Cate and Bartlett is connected to the Islington/Bartlett intersection. If anything happens at Cate/Bartlett, it is going to effect Bartlett at Islington Street and vice versa.

MOTION made by Asst. Fire Chief Achilles to have the developer work with the Public Works Department for a report back and a possible traffic mitigation at Bartlett and Islington Streets.

Steve Parkinson asked if this has gone before the Technical Advisory Board (TAC). The Chair responded not as yet.

Steve Parkinson stated that typically we will not review these until they have as there may be changes to the site layout.

Jonathan Bailey stated as part of discussion the developer brought this in advance of that process to try and get some forward information.

Gregg Whalen spoke referring to the on-site when they were asked to meet with the engineers. After speaking with Mr. Millett explaining as a result of his meeting with the Committee, their request to come up with a concept/model of what that intersection might just look like with curbing, turning lanes and stop signs. Dennis came up with a model, a conceptual plan without a lot of detail, but at least conceptually it gives us all something, a template to work from in an effort for discussion and from that standpoint to say that it is at least worthy of consideration and it may be felt that it was reasonable to proceed, we would continue the process. The #1 issue at this site on everyone’s agenda appeared to be the traffic flow in and out. Without moving beyond that we felt it prudent for all to discuss.

John Connor stated that the way Mr. Whalen had it laid out, would definitely help that intersection. His concern, however, was the amount of people this would generate?

Mr. Whalen responded Dennis drew a layout of the proposed office building to indicate the parking ratio and the medical office use was the most intense in terms of parking requirements. The site indicated it had more than adequate room to satisfy all parking requirements.

John Connor stated he is concerned with pedestrian traffic coming from Mr. Whalen's development crossing over to the sidewalk on the other side of street. John Connor would like a sidewalk proposed coming down on Mr. Whalen's side of Cate St. and having a couple of crosswalks one going over to the island where the stop sign is and another one so people can cross there otherwise they will be walking on the outside of the bridge underneath which is very tight. There is not room for another sidewalk under the bridge.

The Chair stated that these details would be addressed at TAC and comes back to us, but at this point it is preliminary for them to see if this could even go forward. Steve Parkinson asked if a valuation of the intersection with this added traffic coming in? He is concerned with the volume of traffic you are going to be sending to this particular site through the intersection of Cate and Bartlett as well as the intersection of Islington and Bartlett.

Mr. Whalen responded no, only as far as the peak a.m. and p.m. hours week days. Mr. Whalen is hoping that perhaps with some structure to that intersection, i.e. curbing stop signs there would be some order restored.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa felt he was on the right track, realizes this is preliminary and to go to TAC with a refurbished plan. This intersection does need cleaning up and feels this is a good start. There will be foot traffic generated as well as vehicle traffic and would look at perhaps making another exit from the actual main parking lot.

The Chair is concerned with the stop sign at the island coming from Bartlett.

Ted Gray is concerned with 18-wheelers and large trucks.

MOTION made by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa to work with Public Works Department. Seconded by Christina Westfall. Motion passed.

(G) **Café Killam** – Request for Crosswalk at Islington/Summer Streets - Motion made by Jonathan Bailey to place on file. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

(H) **Marcy/Mechanic Streets** – No parking – Police Department referral – Debbie Finnigan wasn't exactly sure where this was as there were no wheelchair ramps to be blocked and would like to go back and talk with the Police Dept. and come back with a report next month.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to table and report back from Public Works at the next meeting. Seconded by Jonathan Bailey. Motion passed.

(I) **Music Hall - Chestnut at Islington Streets** – Request to create a pedestrian walkway on Chestnut from Congress to Porter Streets – City Council referral letters dated 8/23 and 8/11/06 attached) – Asst. Fire Chief Achilles referred to the onsite and the proposed pedestrian walkway from Congress St. up to Porter St. The abutters are in support. The initial evaluation from the Fire Dept.'s standpoint is access.

MOTION made by Asst. Fire Chief Achilles to recommend to the City Council to create a pedestrian walkway from Congress Street to Porter Street on Chestnut Street as a pilot program from August 2007 – January 1, 2008. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa. Motion passed. Ted Gray opposed.

Christina Westfall was concerned about parents dropping off their children at the Music Hall and could not do so with the Pedestrian walkway.

Ted Gray was concerned about handicap people unable to be dropped off at the door and rainy/snowy weather cannot be dropped off at the door. Access of the Fire Department to get emergency vehicles through in case of a fire. Feels it is a bad idea.

Asst. Fire Chief Achilles stated they need to consider what would happen beyond Porter St. down through to Middle.

The Chair stated that people trying to get to the parking lot area behind Bull Moose all have to come down Porter St.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated that the bollards have break away chains. If we had to get down that street, we would get down there whether it was closed off or not.

Patricia Lynch Executor Director was present together with Elena Maltese Special projects Manager. Ms. Lynch stated the proposal to make Chestnut St. a pedestrian friendly walkway is part of their vision of the Music Hall becoming a center piece for this community and an even greater tourist attraction. They have experienced a 34% increase in ticket sales in the last year, people are coming from Newburyport and Southern Portland. Safety is very important to the Music Hall and referred to the letters of support from their neighbors, who are excited about this opportunity. Feels this will offer greater pedestrian safety. Currently the handicap access for wheelchairs is on Porter St. side.

Elena Maltese stated in discussions with the City, the City recommended looking at Church St. in Burlington VT which successfully placed a pedestrian walkway. She spoke with different members of Burlington as to their recommendations and costs in their pedestrian walkway. Their ballads were 20' apart so that emergency and delivery vehicles could access, but visual reminders that everyday vehicles are not welcome to drive there. There is scheduled more historic restoration with construction taking place during next summer so during this time that is now being discussed as a trial period, that will be part of our construction time. We will be focusing on the upgrades of our downstairs lobby and the increased handicap accessibility to that lobby, so there will be much lower patron activity during this time.

Patricia Lynch appreciated the Committee's comments and thoughtfulness and a trial period will allow all of us to get the bugs out and hopefully come up with the best plan for the Music Hall and neighbors and for the City.

Ted Gray is concerned about getting to the parking garage if there is a pedestrian walkway and upset with the loss of Chestnut St.

Jonathan Bailey asked if the trial period that the Committee is recommending would work for the Music Hall?

Ms. Lynch responded that there will be construction trucks in front of the Music Hall as demolition and excavation of the lower lobby happens. The construction

starts May 18th and will end in time for Telluride by the Sea and wonders if it might be better to start the trial period September 1 through December 15th.

Steve Parkinson asked if she anticipates the summer schedule picking up in time for Telluride by the Sea and wonders if it might be better to start the trial period September 1 through December 15th.

Steve Parkinson asked if she anticipates the summer schedule picking up in a year from then? Ms. Lynch responded it depends on how we move forward with their capital campaign.

Steve Parkinson's concern with maintenance and the like the summer months from Memorial Day to Columbus Day is the time of year we have most of our pedestrian traffic. Getting into the colder winter months, which may be your most busy season with less pedestrian traffic. More people are being driven to your front door and dropped off. The test period for the City is the majority of when we will see the walking in the central business district.

Ms. Lynch then suggested August – Columbus Day.

The Chairs concerns are 1. when unloading passengers, vehicles cannot get around the trucks parked during construction and the vehicles need to back up the street. 2. Reason for a trial basis is not so much for pedestrians as concerned with snowplowing, snow storage, snow removal, who is responsible, what is happening to the snow, how is it taken away. Concerns with who is responsible for removing snow. Also during bad weather, a majority of people drive up and let off people.

Ms Lynch stated this is precisely why the trial period is going to be very informative.

Christina Westfall was concerned with the closure creating problems with traffic. Also stated that if using Chestnut St. is now successful being used by pedestrian together with vehicle traffic, would like this to be considered that it is working now.

Asst. Fire Chief Achilles stated because of the concerns of this Committee, it may be appropriate to identify times they would like to do this as we did with street closures downtown.

Steve Parkinson stated there are operational issues involved with this that need to worked out. We already close streets for specific events. The thought behind closing for an extended period gives you a better opportunity to see what the various impacts are. We need a period of time that is going to cover a number of events and a number of non-events. The City has an interest in this as well as the Music Hall. His position on maintenance issues is that it is a City street, City property and we will maintain it just like we have in the past, as we do the Vaughan Mall, Commercial Alley, any of the other walked areas and Market Sq. where the snow is removed and loaded out and taken away. Suggested the period summer up until Thanksgiving which would give us both downtime and uptime, and the good weather and bad weather. The street will be maintained as City property and will be maintained, if there is a ballad there it will be pulled and plowed. There are no issues as far as maintenance is concerned.

Debbie Finnigan stated from a traffic perspective that she would like to see this closed as a trial to see how it works.

The Chair stated the question stands for the trial period from Memorial Day to Columbus Day and asked if the Committee wants to modify the motion?

Steve Parkinson responded August 1, 2007 to January 1, 2008.

Councilor Whitehouse feels this is a bad move even on a temporary measure. Deliveries that take place, cars are able to pass, special events people pull up to let passengers out and then find a place to park. It is important to keep this street open. The traffic pattern is very important downtown, the cut through streets are important, they connect US Rte.1 heading north which is State St. very important. We will be in real serious trouble by changing the traffic pattern downtown. The cut through streets were designed years ago for a purpose.

- (J) **Spinnaker Point** – Request for Bus Stop – letter dated 7/17/06 and e-mail dated 7/20/06 attached) – Debbie Finnigan stated that there was a bus stop there sometime ago and the COAST drivers thought it was unsafe to stop there so it was removed. Recommended not having a stop there for safety reasons. Deputy Police Chief DiSesa also has a concern with people crossing Market to get to the bus stop, a very unsafe crossing and also does not feel this is a good spot for the optimum use and is opposed to this.

MOTION made by Jonathan Bailey to place on file. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

- (K) **Bicycle** – Implementing strategy of the Master Plan – The Chair stated this was brought to our attention by the Master Plan process that within the Master Plan we should have a committee to be able to look at bicycle traffic throughout the City as well. Instead of going ahead and renaming this Committee, to bring to your attention the bicycle issues and when we are looking at issues, will keep them in mind as bicycles are becoming a way of the future for the downtown.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Woodbury Avenue** - Truck Traffic – Report back (letters dated July 24, August 3 and 24, 2006 attached) – Debbie Finnigan referred to the map with “no truck sign’ and “No truck traffic “ signs on Rte.1. Not exactly sure if the trucks are coming from up Market St. or Maplewood, maybe should put a sign on Maplewood as there is none. There is a conflict in the Ordinance that there is a truck route to and from I-95 the rotary to Dennett St. The Ordinance now states that from Market to Bartlett Streets there is no truck traffic over a certain size. Concerned with trailer trucks. The other concern is there are truck traffic signs on Cottage St. and wonders if they are appropriate or not. Deputy Police Chief DiSesa reported that for the last three months there were 134 citations, written warnings and warnings, have stopped cars on Woodbury for speeding, stop sign violations, traffic control device violations, misuse of plates, inspection violations. The officers are not seeing truck traffic for the times that the Police are out there. Woodbury will continue to be monitored, a plan to be implemented this week for some statistical return on what we are seeing for speed, we are not seeing a great deal of speed at this point. We are out there everyday, it is on our radar screen and will continue to do enforcement. The Chair stated that a lot of trucks are using the GPS systems and asked if there was a way we could get to the GPS systems showing streets and where trucks are not allowed. Could this be researched? While we have local and truck traffic, we also have for hazardous materials and at the same time look to see if the

hazardous truck routes are up to date and make sure they are also on the GPS systems, if possible.
Debbie Finnigan will do the research and report back.

V. OTHER BUSINESS:

- (A) Ted Gray referred to intersection of South Street and Miller Avenue where hedges were removed and asked if the City did this.
Steve Parkinson stated we have an easement from the property owners to do this work associated with the signal project.
Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated that the sight line is greatly improved.
- (B) The Chair referred to where Austin and Middle come together when trying to take a left there is a big row of hedges that block sight distance and suggested the Department of Public Works speak with the owners.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: Adjourned at approx. 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Elaine E. Boucas, Secretary