

PARKING COMMITTEE MEETING
9:30 AM –Thursday, May 10, 2007
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Ken Smith called the meeting to order at approximately 9:30 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Councilor Ken Smith, Chair
Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Deputy Police Chief Len DiSesa
Jon Frederick, Parking Manager
Andrew Purgiel, City Auditor

Also present was Dave Holden.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to accept the minutes of the April 12, 2007 meeting. Seconded by Andrew Purgiel. Motion passed.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

- (A) **Westin Hotel/Conference Center-** Parking Facility – (letter dated April 30, 2007 attached) – The Chair publicly stated for the record he owns a business on Deer St. and if there are no objections from anyone he will continue. There was no objection.
- Malcolm McNeil stated the evolution of what is being discussed today comes as a result of two meetings with TAC, one with Traffic & Safety, significant discussion with abutters in area of the site relating to roadway modifications and clearly numerous discussions with City officials. The evolution comes from two directions and wish to make it clear where the private developer is coming from. The initial plan was a City generated plan, the Walker Plan which we will briefly refer to today. As a result of various comments received at various levels, primarily from the City, we have expended our resources to work with you to try to come up with a modified plan. The hotel is not driving these plans, the hotel does not wish to disrupt neighborhoods or businesses, wish to have as many parking spaces as possible in the vicinity of the hotel and make is safe. At this stage the plan is primarily and almost 100% responsive to City and abutter concerns. We would like to move this project forward.

Giles Hamm, Vanasse & Assoc., their focus over the last weeks was working off the Walker Plan to modify it so that we can maximize on-street parking, especially on Deer St. and also to still provide a plan that works from a traffic operations circulation and pedestrian safety.

Mr. Hamm provided the Committee with a handout. The first plan shows the on-street parking of 47 spaces on Deer St. and 22 on Russell St for a total of 69 on-street parking spaces. The majority are 4-hour meters, two 15 minute meters at the bottom of Deer St. at Market St. and a limo space all adding up to 69 spaces.

The Walker Plan had turn lanes at the garage to Parade Mall and also left turn lane into Russell St. In addition there is a realignment of Russell St. resulting with on-street parking, when implementing that plan you lose 32 of the 47 spaces on Deer St. and 15 on Russell St. Part of the 15 spaces on Russell St. resulted from the City Traffic Department asking us to provide a two lane approach from Russell St. to Deer St. causing the loss of 3 additional spaces. When those numbers came clear to business people in the City, the effort changed of how we can bring back some of those on-street spaces. In the end their direction came to eliminating the left turn lane from Russell to Deer St. and at the suggestion of the City we took Deer St. between Russell and Market and made it one-way in the northeasterly direction that allowed us to add angle parking and increase parking supply. The elimination of the left turn lane also allowed addition of parking on the easterly side of Deer St. This plan has crosswalks on Deer St. between Russell and Market shortening the crossing distance, an added pedestrian benefit. Making Deer and Russell operate better, essentially have a free flow condition from Deer to Russell St. Parallel parking on the easterly side of Deer St. remains. Seven spaces are lost on Russell St. on either plan. Focusing on Deer St. there are 47 spaces today, implementing the Walker Plan there are 15 on-street spaces, essentially 8 spaces angle parking and 7 on the other side of street. The one-way plan allows addition of 20 angle spaces on the west side of Deer St., currently there are 12 spaces. Maintaining the 7 spaces on the easterly side of Deer St. where you have the two 15-minute spaces and the 4 hour spaces and in vicinity of Russell and Deer St. we are adding 8 spaces, reducing removal of 12 spaces and maintaining 35 on-street spaces versus 15 on-street spaces, gaining back 20 spaces over the Walker Plan. The one angle space nearest to Russell St. is kind of close to Russell St. and will slide the whole row of parking down about 5 ' in order to keep this space. We have been trying to maximize on-street parking with a safe traffic flow and safe pedestrian flow. It was the City's direction to come up with alternative plans to maximize on-street parking.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa referred to the shifting down of the angled space and the concern of a car backing up that close to Russell St. crosswalk might endanger someone on the crosswalk and you feel by shifting down the angled space will eliminate this?

Mr. Hamm responded “yes” about 20’ now between the edge of the space and crosswalk, and cars are 16-17’. Our option was to eliminate it or slide it down.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated the Police Dept. had a concern about the width of the street and had discussion with the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief because of the size of their vehicles traversing that way and both thought 16’ was appropriate.

The Chair referred to the loading area in back of the Sheraton with the fire hydrant down there were 2 spaces there, and by shifting down will it interfere with loading or unloading for the Sheraton?

Mr. Hamm stated “no”.

The Chair referred to the Parade Mall and asked if there was discussion between you and the Parade Mall as they are proposing to do the same thing in moving those spaces and wants to make sure there is not a conflict of what you are proposing in that area.

Mr. Hamm responded that he has not seen their plans, however, they are forwarding a copy of their traffic study.

Steve Parkinson stated the net result between the two of them, we will probably end up with additional spaces than what are shown here.

Malcolm McNeil stated it appears that this works. Jeff Johnston called a few days ago and their plans are not finalized and would like to proceed with our plan as it is presently.

Steve Parkinson stated their plan will only enhance this one.

Attorney Sharon Somers representing The Hill Condominium Assoc. stated, for the record, that the Hill Condominium Assoc. supports the efforts of the Westin project to retain the maximum number of parking spaces on Deer St. endorsing the plan. Reiterating the comments made at the Traffic & Safety meeting they are interested in re-examining the location of the crosswalk on the corner of Russell and Deer, wanting to move it back onto the other side. Recognizes that it is an item to be taken up later and what impact, if any, on the loss of parking spaces. They are pleased with the results of this plan feeling it will be beneficial.

Attorney Doug McDonald representing resident at 62 Deer St. whose front door is at the end of the existing crosswalk. There is litigation between the City and Mr. Lowell pertaining to a driveway to be located at 62 Deer St. The City denied that application which we appealed to the Superior Court which was found in our favor, an order was issued directing the City to allow him to locate his driveway at 62 Deer St. The only space on his lot is to the right of his front door that has sufficient space to locate the

driveway. There is concern that if this plan goes through as proposed the crosswalk would be at the end of his driveway. Attorney MacDonald would be in favor of moving the crosswalk to the other side of the street as well. Would like this Committee to consider, at a minimum, moving that crosswalk to the other side of the street.

The Chair stated that the crosswalk issue will be taken up at the May 24th Traffic & Safety meeting.

Attorney McDonald commented he was here on behalf of Atty. Ryan (representing Dover Realty Trust) who made a presentation at the last TAC meeting regarding parking in general. He is out of town and asked if I could fill you in. Atty. McDonald presented the members with a handout. Dover Realty Trust (DRT) own condominiums beside the Sheraton. DRT and a client of my firm 976 Realty Trust share opinions with respect to the parking/traffic situation as a whole. Attorney Ryan's focus is that there are too many projects in this area and where are the cars going to go in general. To demonstrate this he indicated that in 1985 when the initial Sheraton was built, the Zoning Ordinance at that time would have required 559 spaces. There was a special exception that brought that down to 401, a deficit from a Zoning Ordinance perspective of 158. The Zoning Ordinance would require 1359 spaces. Those numbers were taken from pleadings and depositions in this matter. That leaves a total demand with exception amount allowed of 1760, if on-street parking is removed and a new parking garage is built you end up with 1723 total parking spaces. You are at a 1000 parking space shortfall, these cars will be traveling around the City looking for spaces. His conclusion is that this Committee should strongly consider parking as a whole in this area as it relates to all of these projects.

Steve Parkinson stated there are more than 600 spaces and an additional 80 spaces under the convention portion of the building itself. The numbers being represented here are not accurate.

Malcolm McNeil commented that Atty. Ryan doesn't dispute the parking as presented by Harbor Corp.

David Holden, Planning Director stated that the number required for the existing Sheraton was granted by the Board of Adjustment and that number was carried forward in all calculations.

Carol Johnson stated she is in favor of this proposal, thanked the Westin for being responsive to the fact there are a number on the Hill that felt if we did not keep on-street parking we would be forced to sell businesses and relocate as we need that access. On-street parking is going to continue to be a vital piece to the smaller businesses in that area.

Dave Holden asked if the Hill's parking needs are also being addressed by the Parade Mall?

Ms. Johnson responded as part of the court settlement they are providing 24 on-site spaces above ground at the Westin and have 16 underneath, which is less than we had before.

Don Peterson works with Harbor Corp. and stated, for the record, when you look at the spaces on Deer St. that were existing, a total of 28 spaces and essentially in the same area the proposal before you add 7 new spaces, so we are adding, not subtracting or eliminating any spaces in and around the Hill. A fact that shouldn't be lost in all the presentations.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to accept the plan as presented with elimination of the spaces, one-way circulation and angle parking. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

The Chair asked if that large open space for buses on the left hand side of the Sheraton is for Coast Buses or buses coming in and utilizing the hotel? Also will there be a dedicated taxi stand or do you plan on going to the Taxi Commission for a taxi stand?

Giles Hamm responded it is for Coast buses. They do not propose any taxi spaces in the area.

The Chair stated for the public this will be brought back to Traffic & Safety, a site walk on Tuesday, May 22nd at 8:00 a.m. on Deer Street and the Traffic & Safety meeting will be on May 24th at 8:00 a.m. in City Hall, Council Chambers.

(B) Bridge Street Parking Lot – **MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to table. Seconded by Deputy Police Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

(C) Taxi Stand – Request for Higher Visibility (letter dated April 23, 2007 attached) – Jon Frederick reported he attended the Taxi Commission meeting. A request was made to exchange the taxi stand on High St. for a space of higher visibility somewhere in the Market Sq. area. The idea was to move the stand next to Allie's Jewelers on the northerly side of Daniel St. across from Breaking New Grounds. They are willing to forego the spot on High St. altogether.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson, for discussion purposes, to approve the Taxi Commission's request. Seconded by Deputy Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

Jon Frederick stated he spoke with Steve Allie yesterday who was concerned about moving the taxi stand to that spot because of the

narrowness of the sidewalk and not safe for his business having folks waiting for a taxi especially early morning hours and is not in favor of the stand there.

The Chair stated there is already a taxi stand on Market St. on the other side behind the police cruiser.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated they previously wanted to take the cruiser's spot and his recommendation was not to do that. The cruiser spot was going to be moved to the horse and carriage spot. Deputy Chief DiSesa stated it is taking a very visible spot away from downtown.

Opposed by Steve Parkinson, Deputy Chief DiSesa, Andrew Purgiel, Jon Frederick and the Chair.

- (D) **The Juicery-Hanover Street** – Request for additional 15 minute spaces (letter dated April 10, 2007 attached) – Jon Frederick received a request from Ken Doiron owner of the Juicery for 1 or 2 additional 15 minute spaces. There are two 15 minute spaces on that block in front of his business and would be beneficial if he had more. There are five spaces in that block now, the two westerly spaces are 15 minute spots and three easterly spots are two hours.

The Deputy City Manager asked Jon Frederick if he knew how heavily used those 3 two hour spaces are?

Jon Frederick responded “not very”, if somebody was going to use a two hour spot they are more inclined to go to the garage.

Steve Parkinson felt for types of businesses in this stretch, suggested we try it.

The Deputy City Manager suggested taking the three spaces that are grouped together on the easterly side and make those the short term ones and have the other two longer term?

The Chair stated he was ok with trying it for awhile and see how it works out and get a report back after six months.

Steve Parkinson suggested a trial period under the Omnibus.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson to take the remaining three spaces and turn them into 15-minute spaces on a trial period under the Omnibus and report back. Seconded by Deputy Chief DiSesa. Motion passed.

- (E) **Eva's Uniform Shop-Congress St.** - Request for removal of one 15 minute space – Jon Frederick stated there two 15-minute metered spaces at the southerly section of Congress St. west of Fleet St. in front of the newsstand and are three additional two hour spaces and requests one of the 15-minute spaces be removed. Jon reported he spoke with the businesses

there and they are all in favor, with the exception of the newsstand, of the longer parking as it is better for them. The newsstand, not only the two, but wanted more 15 minute parking, there is a conflict. This section was changed in July 2004 adding those two 15-minute spaces. Steve Parkinson stated he is not in favor of this.

MOTION made by Steve Parkinson not to remove the 15 minute space. Seconded by Jon Frederick. Motion passed.

Public Comments:

Paul Benton 482 Broad St. owns an office building on 220-226 State St. and asked why the Parrott Ave. lot has a 72 hour window.

Steve Parkinson responded he was not sure what the original intent was, it has been in existence the 26 years he has been here. There's a heavily residential component downtown, people go away for the weekend, their car is left there, this is where they park. If they park on the street they get ticketed. This lot is like all our municipal lots, 72 hours and applies to our on-street parking as well, they are ticketed and towed after 72 hours. It is a City wide policy.

Mr. Benton stated this 72 hour doesn't make any sense, it is a storage situation, maybe 20% of the lot may be unrelated to residents in that section of town. Mr. Benton suggested to try and experiment at the Parrott Ave. lot of Monday thru Friday, 24 hour option and let it go on the weekends.

The Chair stated there was an item on today's Agenda for this particular parking lot, so there may be some other things coming up. This will be brought up again at our next Parking meeting. Another issue we will be looking at is a residential parking component and will be looking at the whole picture.

Jon Frederick stated they are towing cars from this lot after 72 hours. It is being watched and enforced. We can't just go and tow the vehicles, we have to give them fair warning. After issuing the ticket there is some lag time for them to remove the vehicle before we tow. We are becoming more proactive on enforcement of this lot so hopefully you'll see the storage aspect decrease.

Deputy Police Chief DiSesa stated that he anticipate a hue and cry if you tried to limit that parking. From an enforcement standpoint it would certainly make it easier but there would be a lot of complaints from the residents who use this lot.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated that the City has always provided that space to make it user friendly for people who work downtown as well as other reasons.

The Chair stated this is an issue that is being brought up at the next meeting, it is an area we are looking into.

Mr. Benton will submit a letter.

OLD BUSINESS:

- (A) **Islington Creek Neighborhood – Brewster Street - Residential Parking** – Report back from Police Department and Jon Frederick – Deputy Police Chief DiSesa reported that he went back 5 years, ran accidents specifically intersections as this was their main area of concern and found the accidents to be unremarkable and not really statistically relevant. There were two in 2001, one in 2002, two in 2003, two in 2004, two in 2005, four in 2006 and none so far this year. Most were minor fender benders, a car door opened and someone clipped it. This was addressed in Traffic & Safety with the neighborhood group, and uncovered other issues of concern which we will look into.

- (B) **Consultant’s report – follow up:**
Residential Parking - Jon Frederick obtained information regarding residential parking programs in other cities. The cost of the programs are listed as well as the type of program. The most expensive is Manchester at \$40.00 annually per pass per designated on-street parking areas. At various districts and lots throughout the City they are designated as residential parking only.

The Consultant recommended that we institute a residential parking program that would involve input from citizens. Keene had a process where citizens could petition the City to have their neighborhood be designated as a residential parking area which is something we probably have to do here. Given the issues on Islington St. and the Islington corridor, the sides streets there is interest in a residential parking program, we have one at Hanover St. and the Washington St. area may be interested in one. Soliciting input from those streets through a petition process maybe the way to go to find out who wants their neighborhoods to be residential parking only and what fees they would be willing to pay to accommodate such a program.

The thought is this would be open to the residents of the City so anybody in the City of Portsmouth would be eligible to purchase one of these permits to park on designated streets.

The Chair does not have a problem with a nominal fee.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated that without that sticker they cannot park on that designated street, otherwise they are subject to being ticketed and towed.

There are sections for visitors parking.

The Deputy City Manager suggested the next step is to find out the experience of other communities, what kinds of streets are they designating? Are they narrow little streets as we have here? Are they more neighborhood blocks .

Jon Frederick responded they are neighborhood blocks inside the business district area. The whole concept behind this is to prevent visitors in the downtown area, employees and shop owners from parking in the residential areas.

The Chair asked how the one we have on Hanover St. is working?

Jon Frederick stated it is difficult to enforce. The only way the Parking Enforcement Officers can tell is by out of state plates.

Deputy Chief DiSesa stated we run plates but it is cumbersome, would be a lot smoother if there was a sticker that the officer could just look at on the window.

The Chair suggested putting the Brewster St. request on file for now pending an overall program, continue police work there and bring more information at the next meeting.

MOTION made by Ken Smith to put the Brewster St. request on file pending an overall program, to continue police work and bring more information at the next meeting. Seconded by Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager. Motion passed.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Respectfully submitted
Elaine E. Boucas, Secretary