

MINUTES
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – Thursday, April 14, 2011
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Ken Smith called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor Ken Smith, Chair
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Steve Achilles, Assistant Fire Chief
Ted Gray, Vice-Chair
John Connors, Member
Ron Cypher, Member
Kent Kirkpatrick, Member
Harold Whitehouse, Member
Jon Frederick, Parking & Transportation Director

Members Absent: Christina Westfall, Member and Police Dept. Representative

Also in attendance: City Attorney Bob Sullivan and Superintendent of Schools Ed McDonough.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Motion made by Ron Cypher to accept the minutes of the March 10, 2011 meeting as presented. Seconded by John Connors and voted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Clough Drive – Request from Mr. Jim Ritzo

Mr. Jim Ritzo addressed the committee and distributed some pictures illustrating the problem on Clough Drive. He reviewed the background of his concern stating that the School Department had implemented a new traffic pattern to accommodate the bicyclists and skate boarders for the Little Harbour School which resulted in him not being able to get out of his driveway during certain times of the school day. He stated that he was never informed of this change and only learned about it from the sign at the end of his driveway. He stated that he has 3 suggestions to alleviate the problem. First, have the kids walk their bikes, skateboards, etc. from the end of South Street to the area of the school; secondly, put a bike path behind the ball field on Clough Drive; or finally, limit the time to 8:30 – 8:45 a.m. while school is in session from May 1st to October 31st and have the crossing guard control the situation. He concluded by stating that last year the situation

was totally out of control and feels that if he didn't bring it to attention, someone may have gotten hurt.

Superintendent of Schools McDonough explained that Little Harbour School Principal Grossman implemented the new traffic pattern last year to accommodate the 200 or so students that walk and ride bikes, etc. to school. He stated they made Clough Drive one-way and have since adjusted the time to 8:20 a.m. to 8:50 a.m., 5 minutes before and after the playground is opened before school starts. He stated that Mr. Ritzo is the only house past the sign so they are working with him to come up with a safe solution.

City Attorney Sullivan stated he is speaking as a resource to the Committee and has taken no position on either side but has been involved with this issue quite a bit.

Chairman Smith asked if there is an easement between Mr. Ritzo and the School Department because it is on school property. Mr. Ritzo explained that when he bought his property there was a dedicated right-of-way in the deed and when he applied for a variance in 1981, that right-of-way was recognized. City Attorney Sullivan stated that Clough Drive has unique characteristics and may or may not be a City Street and explained various situations that have occurred in the past. He stated that it is further complicated because the School and City are the same entity, so there has been no division to this point. He stated that if it is determined to be school property, the School Board makes the decisions, if it is the City, then this committee decides, but the most important thing is the safety of the children.

Mr. Ritzo stated that the City has always maintained Clough Drive right up to his driveway as well as having cleaned the area along the fence line of leaves, etc. He stated that he agrees safety is most important and feels that the cones that outline the route are very confusing to the vehicles as it is an unnatural progression of traffic to cross over at the end of the road.

Assistant Fire Chief Achilles moved to regulate the hours to limit from 8:20 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.

Chairman Smith asked for clarification as he thought this was already the time set. School Superintendent McDonough stated that the School Board had adopted that time period but have since heard from the crossing guard Jane Coffey, who asked that the time be set from 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. as students come earlier than 8:20 a.m. and he agrees with that request. Motion was rescinded.

Assistant Fire Chief Achilles moved to relocate the sign to South Street, remove the cones, and have the kids walk their bikes to the School. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Assistant Fire Chief Achilles stated he has travelled in that area recently and agrees that the configuration of the cones was very confusing, challenging and unsafe and feels that having the kids walk their bikes on the sidewalk is more appropriate.

John Connors stated he likes the idea of the bike path inside the ball field fence, even if we have to move the fence a few feet as there are no houses there. Ted Gray also

expressed he is in favor of this idea. Public Works Director Steve Parkinson stated this will never happen as we cannot put a bike path across a field that is used for recreation purposes.

Chairman Smith stated he would like to apologize to Mr. Ritzo for the oversight of not inviting him to the initial meeting. He stated it is clear that Mr. Ritzo has deeded rights to access his driveway from Clough Drive and feels that this motion is a compromise to all parties and there are short periods of the year that this is an issue. He stated that he would like to see included in a future CIP to widen the sidewalk closer to the fence to help with making room for walking bicycles.

Public Works Director Parkinson asked what happens if this is passed and accepted by the City Council but the School Department says no. City Attorney Sullivan stated that they would then have to pursue finding out if it is school or city property as the tax maps don't make that distinction. Chairman Smith asked if it comes into play that Mr. Ritzo has deeded access. Attorney Sullivan stated that he has deeded access to City property.

Mr. Whitehouse asked if Clough Drive meets the criteria in dimensions to be accepted as a City street. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that many of our City streets don't meet the criteria for acceptance.

Motion to relocate the sign to South Street, remove the cones, and have the kids walk their bikes to the School passed.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **Union Street – Middle to State Streets** – Resident Request for Parking on Only One Side of the Street – Fire Department and Police Department Report back

Assistant Fire Chief Achilles explained that Fire Inspector Roediger worked on this report and the conclusion is that Union Street is not the only street that this is a problem, and it may be more appropriate to look at this more comprehensively. He stated that the Fire Department has always been able to make adjustments for each different situation.

Chairman Smith suggested that a sub-committee may be appropriate to study this further in terms of winter parking bans, effect on neighborhoods, trash collection, etc. Mr. Connors stated that setting limits on one street will just move the problem to the next street. He stated that this has become a problem because the buildings have all been divided up into multiple units and cannot accommodate the parking needed in their own driveways.

Public Works Director Parkinson stated that the City of Portsmouth has a unique street system with many narrow streets that are 2-way that should be one-way but have met resistance from the residents when this was approached in the past. He stated that he agrees that it is more challenging in the winter especially this year, but people learn to live with it and feels we cannot legislate common sense and does not feel that a sub-committee is necessary.

Discussion ensued regarding on-street parking concluding that there should be efforts to educate the public through community newsletters, the website, etc.

Steve Parkinson moved to accept and place the report on file. Seconded by John Connors and voted.

B. Woodbury Avenue One-Way – Report Back

Steve Parkinson stated that the conclusion of the report was that Woodbury Avenue remain as is and not dead-ended or reversed, etc.

Assistant Fire Chief Aquilles moved to accept the report and place on file. Seconded by Ron Cyphers and voted.

C. Court and Pleasant Streets Intersection – Report Back

Jon Frederick read the 4 recommendations from Maguire Group Inc. as follows:

- Paint City standard pedestrian cross walks at all 4 crossings.
- Install flashing yellow warning light for the north traveling direction on Pleasant St.
- Acquire easement from property owner at the southeast corner and adjust white fence approximately as shown in the exhibit.
- Paint yellow cross hatching and remove 3 parking spaces from the northwest corner to provide adequate sight line.

Jon Frederick stated that the 4th recommendation of losing 3 spaces would be detrimental.

Ted Gray moved to consider the first 3 recommendations, Seconded by Ron Cyphers.

Harold Whitehouse asked if there has been any request to Langdon Estates to adjust their fence level lower. Steven Parkinson stated this has been discussed in the past but the response was no because of the historical aspect of the property. Discussion ensued regarding the impact of the fence at the intersection. In response to a request for accident statistics for that intersection, Jon Frederick cited a report from the November 2010 meeting of 3 accidents in the past year.

Kent Kirkpatrick stated that he is not a believer in flashing lights and feels that they are ignored once people get used to it being there. Chairman Smith stated that he would like to leave this up to the discretion of the Public Works Director.

Motion to consider first 3 recommendations passed.

D. White Cedars Blvd and Rte 1 Intersection Pedestrian Access – Report Back

Jon Frederick read the recommendation of the Maguire Group that adding a pedestrian phase to the signalized intersection would be a desirable safety improvement considering the proximity of the Cedar Point Condominiums and that the intersection can operate at an acceptable level of service while accommodating the pedestrian phase.

Asst Fire Chief Achilles moved to accept the report and place on file and to recommend the Public Works Department include the recommendation to add a pedestrian phase to this signalized intersection in the next Capital Improvement Plan. Seconded by Ted Gray. Motion passed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn at 8:55 a.m. Seconded by Ted Gray and voted.