

MINUTES
TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – Thursday, September 8, 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
Stephen Dubois, Deputy Police Chief
Chris LeClaire, Fire Chief
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director
Ted Gray, Vice-Chair
Ron Cypher, Member
Harold Whitehouse, Member
Jon Frederick, Parking & Transportation Director

Members Absent:

Christina Westfall, Member

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Motion made by Mr. Whitehouse to accept the minutes of the August 11, 2011 meeting as presented. Seconded by Mr. Cypher and voted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Broad Street – Request to review “No Thru Traffic”

Mr. Cypher explained that a site review was held and it is their recommendation that the sign on Broad Street be changed from a No Thru Traffic Sign to a No Thru Truck Traffic Sign and that a letter be sent to Sun Bridge requesting that employees continue to be instructed to use Jones Avenue to Sagamore Avenue.

Roger Pitroff, 41 Jones Avenue – stated he became involved with this when a contractor working at his house had a difficult time getting to his house from Jones Avenue and had to go down Broad Street and knows that others have had to do the same. He stated that they can't use the bridge by the Golden Egg because of the weight limit on the bridge, so this needs to be considered as well. He stated if the City Council doesn't approve this sign taken down, then he would like it to include all of the neighborhood streets, but is unsure how it will be enforced. He stated he is concerned with what happens if the Council does not approve this recommendation.

Chairman Smith explained the process of removing Broad Street from the ordinance which will include a public hearing, giving people a chance to speak to the Council about their concerns.

Mr. Pitroff stated that in the meantime, the Police Department is enforcing the ordinance and people have been ticketed. Deputy Chief Dubois stated that it will be enforced until it is changed as they are charged with that duty.

Paul Houlares, 65 Jones Avenue – stated he has been a resident for 38 years and feels that this issue has pit neighbors against neighbors and feels it is unbelievable that a street this wide would be closed to through traffic. He stated that neighbors are writing down license plates and turning them into the police.

Deputy Chief Dubois responded that his records show only 5 stops in the last 4 years for enforcement of this ordinance.

Jane Sprague, 26 Verdun Avenue - asked what does a No Thru Street accomplish, is it to stop the avoidance of the traffic light? Chairman Smith stated that can be one reason, but Broad Street was added to the ordinance in response to complaints about the nursing home workers using it as a short cut to get to the facility. He stated he agrees that this ordinance is flawed and needs to be corrected. Ms. Sprague continued that if speeding is the problem on this street then tickets should be given out for speeding. She related that a friend of her son recently was stopped and ticketed for the No Through street ordinance which she immediately called the police to complain. She stated she doesn't understand why taxpayers aren't allowed to use all city streets.

Brief discussion then ensued regarding the issue of trucks on various streets as well.

Linda Bergeron, 330 Jones Avenue – stated she is pleased to hear that they will be taking down the No Trough Traffic sign on Broad Street as she feels it is a safe street and that the problem is more societal with multiple families and multiple vehicles and no where to park them. She stated that Jones Avenue doesn't have sidewalks and businesses are located there but they still manage to keep their children and the elderly residents safe. She feels that if the No Thru Street isn't removed from the ordinance, it will set a precedent.

John Michael Isaac, 751 South Street, Manager of Portsmouth Elks – stated that he feels that limiting the truck traffic would be a good compromise, or perhaps limiting parking to one side of the street as larger trucks making deliveries in the area have a difficult time turning around with cars on both sides. He also suggested adding an advanced left-hand turn onto South Street from Sagamore Avenue which may help reduce the traffic on Broad Street.

Raymond Bergeron, 216 Jones Avenue – letter from Mr. Bergeron requesting the removal of the No Thru Street sign on Broad Street was submitted for the record.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to recommend to the City Council the removal of Broad Street from Section 7.346 “No Thru Traffic” of the City Ordinances, as well as the removal of Commercial Alley and Vaughan Street from the same section, as they are no longer applicable, seconded by Mr. Whitehouse.

Parking and Transportation Manager Frederick clarified that Broad Street is already on the truck traffic restricted list in the ordinance.

Mr. Whitehouse asked about the suggestion for the advanced left-hand turn at Sagamore/South Street. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that can be evaluated.

Chairman Smith asked about the hedges on Jones Avenue that had been discussed at a previous meeting. Public Works Director Parkinson stated he would like to have separate motions on these individual reports back.

Motion passed.

Sagamore Ave/South Street Traffic Light Recommendation – (Not an agenda item) –

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to refer the suggestion to add a left hand turn traffic light at Sagamore Avenue/South Street to the Public Works Department for a report back, seconded by Mr. Gray. Motion passed.

Intersection of Jones Avenue and Sagamore Avenue – Parking distances from corner – (Not an agenda item)

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to place this issue on the next Agenda, seconded by Mr. Cypher. Motion passed.

Chevrolet/Cass and Woodbury/Bartlett - Visibility – (Not an agenda item)

Mr. Gray moved to instruct the legal department to send property owners of the North West corner properties requesting they cut back the shrubs to clear visibility at the intersections, seconded by Mr. Cypher. Motion passed.

B. **Washington and State Street** – resident request to address safety issue with on-street parking and traffic flow

Mr. Gray stated a site review was conducted at the site and it is his recommendation that no changes be made. He stated that these spaces have been on Washington Street for as long as the street has existed and feels that people need to use more caution and not speed.

Mr. Gray moved to accept and place on file with letter of thanks to requester, seconded by Deputy Chief Dubois. Motion passed.

C. **Bow, Chapel and Penhallow Streets** – Resident request to address lack of speed limit signs

Public Works Director Parkinson stated he was alerted to this issue by a resident who has noticed an increase in traffic on Bow Street since the bridge closing and that they are speeding through the area as well. He stated that upon review, it was determined that Bow Street as well as Chapel and Penahallow Streets are not listed on any of the speed limit ordinances and therefore, the speed would be 35 mph, which is not appropriate for the area. He stated he recommends placing these streets on the same list as Daniel Street and Market Street.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to recommend to the City Council to place the 3 streets within the 15 mph section of the ordinance, seconded by Deputy Chief Dubois. Motion passed.

D. **Greenleaf Avenue and Lafayette Road** – Resident request for stop light –

Parking and Transportation Manager Frederick explained that this request has been made before but because of the ongoing NH DOT improvements, they are waiting for the conclusion of the project to reevaluate the situation.

Mr. Whitehouse stated this has been going on for quite awhile, and asked if there is a projected end date. Public Works Director Parkinson stated sometime in 2012.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to accept and place on file with a caveat to review this issue once the NH DOT improvements to the area have been completed, seconded by Fire Chief LeClaire. Motion passed.

E. **Rogers Street and Parrott Avenue** – Resident request for pedestrian crossing signs

Parking and Transportation Manager Frederick stated there is a request also to highlight the crosswalk at the intersection such as was done at the Little Harbour School crosswalk. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that is an issue that will need to be addressed separately as there are other requests coming and decisions need to be made and a policy set.

Public Works Director Parkinson moved to install Pedestrian Cross Signs at Rogers Street and Parrott Avenue, seconded by Deputy Chief Dubois. Motion passed.

School-zone Crosswalk policy (Not an agenda item)

Fire Chief LeClaire moved to request this item be added to a future agenda for consideration, seconded by Mr. Gray. Motion passed.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

Chief LeClaire stated he has a couple of issues to discuss. First, regarding the 3-way Stop Sign on West Road, he is unsure why that is there as it doesn't meet the warrant. Secondly, regarding the railroad tracks on Banfield Road, the stop signs were there now they are not, and he wants to know whether this track is still active and if not, why keep the stop signs there. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that the stop sign at the railroad tracks was stolen, but it does need to be there until such time as the railroad has officially been abandoned. He stated that the owner of the railroad has filed for abandonment, but the process could take awhile.

Chief LeClaire then asked about the posted speed limit on Banfield Road at 30 mph, stating that it is unrealistic to only go 30 in some areas of that road. Public Works Director Parkinson stated that roads cannot be posted various speeds so it is posted for the safest speed for the road.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Gray moved to adjourn at 8:45 a.m. Seconded by Public Works Director Parkinson and voted.