

**MINUTES OF THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

April 2, 2013

Conference Room A

7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Councilor Ken Smith, Councilor Brad Lown, City Manager John P. Bohenko, Paige Roberts, Rick Chellman, Bill Lyons

Members Absent: Cliff Sinnott, Eric Gregg

City Staff Present: Steve Parkinson, Rick Taintor, Juliet Walker, Mark Nelson, Adam Cannon

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

As the first order of business, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes from the March 13, 2013 meeting.

Next, Mr. Rick Chellman and the Committee discussed various ideas about downtown traffic circulation and considered the possibility of converting one-way streets to two-way streets and the potential benefits for traffic calming, walkability and bikability, and overall economic vitality of the downtown. Mr. Chellman suggested there is potential for two-way patterns on Congress Street, Pleasant Street, and State Street. He also noted a few examples including Albuquerque, New Mexico's success with transforming one-way streets to two-way streets. City Manager Bohenko stated he believed most of the streets were converted to one-way as part of the urban renewal effort in the downtown in the 1970s. Public Works Director Steve Parkinson noted that Market Street to Bow Street had a two-way traffic pattern until the late 1980s. Mr. Parkinson and Mr. Bohenko stated that consideration of one-way to two-way conversion of streets had also been done in Atlantic Heights and that some lessons could potentially be taken from that process. Converting of streets would require traffic modeling and would need to be carefully evaluated for the potential impacts on different intersections and overall traffic patterns. In addition, there would be costs for traffic signaling and intersection upgrades.

Chairman Smith stated that consideration of alteration to traffic patterns in the downtown options should be included in the report. Mr. Lyons stated that it should be in the report to look at over time. Mr. Chellman also stated that he wasn't necessarily recommending immediate action, but that this is worth consideration. City Manager Bohenko reiterated that it needs to be carefully vetted before proceeding. Councilor Lown suggested that it be included as an implementation idea or action considered within a policy recommendation in the report. Ms. Roberts agreed that the topic is consistent with the overall objectives of the Committee.

Councilor Lown made a motion to add consideration of two-way streets in the downtown to the recommendations of the report. Mr. Chellman seconded the motion. The Committee unanimously approved the motion.

Next, the Committee reviewed the draft committee report. Councilor Lown recommended that the report should include a recommendation on parking in the downtown. City Manager Bohenko encouraged consideration of public/private partnerships to increase the supply of parking. Councilor Lown made a motion to have the Committee include a recommendation in the report to build one or more new parking garages in the downtown. Ms. Roberts seconded the motion. Chairman Smith discussed the idea of providing distributed parking at additional sites around the periphery of the downtown rather than building a parking garage at one location. Mr. Lyons stated that he thought the proposed motion was too specific and that the report should be about broader policies. He recommended including a policy statement that parking should be an integral part of an overall balanced transportation system with a strategy to consider opportunities for expanding parking supply in the downtown including the potential for a parking garage (or garages). Mr. Chellman stated that he did not believe the motion precludes the idea of distributed parking. Chairman Smith stated that it was important to work with public/private partnerships to have periphery parking and balance the amount of free and paid parking in the City. The motion as presented passed 3 to 2. Chairman Smith and Mr. Lyons voted opposed.

The Committee had consensus on adding the City Council approved Parking Principles added to the report and also had consensus on adding all changes recommended in an e-mail from Mr. Sinnott. Ms. Roberts suggested that the report include a consideration of people with disabilities when planning for transportation.

Following this discussion, the Committee agreed to allow public comment.

John Tabor of 55 Pleasant Point Drive spoke on behalf of Portsmouth Listens. Mr. Tabor stated that the group would like to work on a transportation dialogue using the Study Circle model, which has been tried in the City for previous public dialogues around the Master Plan and, more recently, the City budget. Once the Transportation Policy Committee report has been presented to City Council, Portsmouth Listens is planning to organize Study Circles to discuss transportation with emphasis on the characteristics of a sustainable transportation system. City Manager Bohenko recommended using the Committee's recommendations in the report as a starting point for the discussions. Chairman Smith stated that the Study Circles should focus on the city as a whole and not just the downtown. Mr. Tabor stated that the group is glad to be a resource to the City.

There were no other speakers following Mr. Tabor.

Chairman Smith clarified that the staff will make suggested revisions to the report and present to the committee for approval at the next meeting.

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday, April 10, 2013 in Conference Room A at 7:30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Cannon
Special Projects Manager