

**MINUTES**  
**PARKING AND TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**WORK SESSION MEETING**

8:00 A.M. – Thursday, February 28, 2013  
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

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**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  
John Bohenko, City Manager  
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director  
Corey MacDonald, Deputy Police Chief  
Chris LeClaire, Fire Chief  
Ron Cypher, Member  
Sheri Donnermeyer, Member  
Ted Gray, Member  
Harold Whitehouse, Member

**Staff Advisors Present:**

Mark Nelson, Parking Division Director  
Tom Cocchiaro, Parking Operations Supervisor

**III. General Discussion of Parking Garage Site Selection**

Chairman Smith began by giving a brief explanation that at the last work session the committee was brought up to speed by Planner Nick Cracknell as to what the previous Parking Garage Site Selection Committee had done. He stated that he held an informal "listening session" at a local business on Saturday 03/23/2013 to hear residents' ideas and concerns.

City Manager Bohenko asked for clarification from Chairman Smith that this was not an official meeting and that there was no quorum of members in attendance. Chairman Smith stated it was an informal informational gathering with himself, Mr. Whitehouse and Mr. Gray in attendance.

Mr. Whitehouse stated he also attended the informal session with approximately 30 people which lasted approximately 2 hours. He stated some of the ideas he heard included:

- Additional public parking at Portwalk
- Downtown parking identification signs
- Having the City be more "walkable"
- Parking garage at Rte 33 – Griffin property
- Parking at the stump dump property
- Having a safety building at the Cottage Street Armory
- Updating the Master Plan
- Hold off until federal building available
- Careful where develop near water tables
- Update/reinstate the Junior Chamber of Commerce
- Better marketing of the Masonic Lot

- Filling in the North Mill Pond
- Negotiate with Mahoney Salt Pile to use their land
- Be careful of what is spent and bonded because of the ongoing Waste Water Treatment Plant and Middle School projects

Mr. Gray stated additional ideas he heard were:

- would prefer to see smaller lots around the city
- Add a deck to the Parrott Avenue Lot
- Expand the City Hall employee lot
- Satellite parking with busses

Chairman Smith stated he feels that people are looking for a more dispersed parking system instead of one massive 400 space lot. He stated some of the areas mentioned were the Parrott Lot, Federal Building area, Northern Tier area, 3C Church, Isles of Shoals Steamship Company lot, former Portsmouth Herald Building, etc.. He stated he also heard the suggestion of Fire Station One if there was a public safety building built because the city already owns the land. He stated it is disappointing that the Chamber of Commerce has not yet conducted the survey that they were going to do. He concluded that he is looking to get a consensus from the members as to where the committee should focus attention and be able to make a recommendation to the Council.

Ms. Donnermeyer stated that the Chamber has not done the survey yet but are doing an "opinion piece" in an upcoming issue of the Chamber's newsletter *Connections*. She continued that she feels like the process is going backwards as there was a recommendation from a hired consultant as well as the subcommittee of Councilors who brought forward the recommendation of the Worth Lot but now we are starting at ground zero. She stated that City officials are elected to make these decisions and there was an expert professional recommendation and she feels that we should move forward with that option.

Discussion ensued regarding the viability of further supporting the Worth Lot option with the consensus being that it had been rejected by the City Council already and this committee should give an alternative recommendation.

Discussion then ensued regarding the idea of satellite parking areas around the city and various possible locations. It was the consensus that if this approach was further considered, the locations should be close enough to downtown to allow for walking or bicycling and not utilizing bussing as most people would not participate in that type of program.

Chief LeClaire asked for a timeline of the Federal Building being turned over to the city. City Manager Bohenko explained that an RFP for a new building at Pease will go out in the Spring, and then once ground has broken, it would be another 18-20 months to move into the new building and then the old building would be turned over to the City. He further explained that certain conditions on the property will limit what can be done on the property as it includes a certain amount of open space, etc. He stated that the City would also want it to be a mixed used site and not be centered on use as a parking garage. He concluded that we were supposed to gain possession of the property originally in 2010, but we still do not have it. He then explained a hypothetical scenario of the process to redevelop the property explaining that taking down the former building would be costly but could be a part of the RFP for redevelopment, and once the property is redeveloped, it would be added to the tax rolls.

Ms. Donnermeyer stated a City Councilor had stated they wanted to wait for this property to become available. City Manager Bohenko stated that parking would be a component of the redevelopment of maybe 200-300 spaces and it could be a part of a satellite group of parking areas if that was the policy decision. He stated the Economic Development Commission has been looking at this issue for years and there is a need for a mass parking area in the downtown area.

Ms. Donnermeyer asked if an outside company develops the McIntyre building, can the City control how many parking spaces they provide. City Manager stated that hypothetically the Council can control what is built there with a certain percentage of retail, certain percentage of parking, certain percentage of open space, etc.

Chief LeClaire stated that the current parking garage is ideally suited for downtown parking but he feels that the other logical place is the Parrott Avenue Lot. He stated there had been some discussion on adding a parking deck or maybe a garage but wonders why this location was taken out of the conversation.

Chairman Smith stated it was not taken out of the conversation but the neighbors were against it. He stated it also would become paid parking where it is currently free parking and that would disperse those who prefer to park for free into the local neighborhoods. City Manager Bohenko stated it will need to be fully vetted as far as engineering, land use, etc.

Chief LeClaire stated the Parrott Avenue Lot is already used for parking, it is wide-open, the City owns the property, etc. He stated the McIntyre Building location will also be a great spot in the future, but feels that the Parrott Avenue Lot is something that we can start with now. He stated he understands there is a neighborhood concern, but the use is already there and it is located in a place where there are a lot of businesses.

Discussion ensued regarding the various concerns previously discussed regarding the viability of the Parrott Avenue Lot.

Chairman Smith asked for a consensus of which direction the committee would like to further explore.

**After further discussion, Mr. Gray moved to direct the City Manager to look at the overall conceptual use of the Parrott Avenue Lot, seconded by Mr. Whitehouse. Motion passed unanimously.**

Deputy Police Chief MacDonald asked if the committee should also develop a list of potential satellite locations. City Manager Bohenko stated he would like to focus the limited staffing resources and time to one issue if possible.

Chairman Smith stated the next Work Session will be at the call of the Chair once the requested information is available.

#### IV. Adjournment

Mr. Gray moved to adjourn at 9:07 a.m., seconded and passed unanimously.