

ACTION ITEMS AND MINUTES
PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:26 A.M. – Thursday, November 5, 2015
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

Action Items requiring an immediate ordinance during the next Council meeting: none
Temporary Action Items requiring an ordinance during the annual omnibus: none

ACTIONS:

- [1] Accepted and placed on file the minutes of the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee Meeting held October 1, 2015.

- [2] Accepted and placed on file the Financial Report dated September 30, 2015.

- [3 (V.A.)] **Action Item:** Driveway permit application appeal, 20 Chapel Street – **VOTED** to accept staff recommendation for denial of permit.

- [4 (V.B.)] **Action Item:** Request for No Parking on east side of Cutts Street between Maplewood Avenue and Leslie Drive – **VOTED** to postpone the action item until a Parking and Traffic Safety Committee site visit can be conducted.

- [5 (VI.A.)] **Action Item:** Islington Street speed limit between Route 33 and Route 1 Bypass – speed zoning recommendation – **VOTED** to maintain the speed limit at 30 mph until the Islington Street sidewalk design is completed and approved, and then report back to the Committee for reevaluation.

- [6 (VI.B.)] **Action Item:** Burkitt Street and Thornton Street intersection – All-way STOP request – **VOTED** to accept staff recommendation to relocate the NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER signs to 20 feet from the intersection in all directions.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Lown called the meeting to order at 8:26 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Councilor, Brad Lown
City Manager, John Bohenko
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Acting Deputy Chief, Frank Warchol, Police Department
Member, Ted Gray
Member, Ronald Cypher
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alternate Member, Mary Lou McElwain

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking Manager, Joey Giordano
Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Transportation Planner, Juliet Walker

Excused Absence:

Member, Shari Donnermeyer

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Ted Gray motioned to accept October 1, 2015, meeting minutes.

Ron Cypher seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse asked for information on the boot removal fee and department responsible for action. City Manager Bohenko confirmed that the parking department is responsible for boot removal and staff will provide the cost data at the next meeting.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept September 2015 Financial Report.

Ted Gray seconded.

Motion passed 9-0.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Driveway permit application appeal, 20 Chapel Street (Angelo Iannaco) – Eric Eby stated an application for a driveway permit for 20 Chapel Street was submitted to the Department of Public Works (DPW). The application was denied by DPW due to the following factors. As an appeal process, the applicant has presented it to the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee for reconsideration.

The proposed area for the driveway is only 8 feet wide between the two buildings, narrower than a standard parking space width of 8.5 feet. It would be very difficult to turn into the driveway and open the vehicle doors to get in and out of the vehicle. A driveway at this location would also present an unreasonable safety risk to the public: vehicles backing out of the driveway would not be able to see pedestrians on the sidewalk. The driveway would also require the removal of an on-street metered parking space. Staff recommendation is to deny the permit because of these issues.

Ted Gray motioned to accept staff recommendation for denial of permit. City Manager Bohenko seconded. **Vote 9-0, to accept staff recommendation for denial of permit.**

B. Request for No Parking on east side of Cutts Street between Maplewood Avenue and Leslie Drive (Cindy Dodds) – Eric Eby stated the request was presented by a homeowner in the area. He stated there are three No Parking signs posted along this section of Cutts Street between Maplewood Avenue and Leslie Drive. However, the area is not listed in the City's Code of Ordinance as a No Parking zone. Cutts Street is 28 feet wide, which is sufficient for parking on one side, with two 10 foot travel lanes. Parking exists on the west side of the roadway. When vehicles park along the east side of the roadway, it limits sight lines for vehicles turning out of the driveways, and restricts Cutts Street to one lane of traffic. Staff recommends approving the No Parking zone designation on the east side of Cutts Street between Maplewood Avenue and Leslie Drive, to back the existing signs with an ordinance.

Ted Gray stated he did a site visit and noticed that there are open spaces on the roadway to park. He believes the homeowner requesting the action does not live in the area. He does not support the motion for the entire section of roadway. He would support the No Parking zone section from Maplewood Avenue to the driveway of the property formally known as the Cutts Mansion.

Public Works Director Rice stated that typically this type of request would require a site visit. The Committee did not have the usual Tuesday site visit this month because of Election Day.

City Manager Bohenko motioned to postpone the action item until a Parking and Traffic Safety Committee site visit can be conducted. Harold Whitehouse seconded. **Vote 9-0, to postpone the action item until a Parking and Traffic Safety Committee site visit can be conducted.**

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Islington Street between Route 33 and Route 1 Bypass - speed zoning recommendation – Eric Eby said there was a request to lower the speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph on Islington Street. As part of any speed limit reduction request, a study must be done to document the need for a speed limit change. By state law, 30 mph is the lowest speed limit unless an engineering study is completed.

The Portsmouth Police Department placed a speed monitoring and recording device on Islington Street for a total of three weeks to gather data on traffic volume and speed. The data collected revealed that the average speed of traffic is 32 mph. The 85th percentile speeds, the speed at or below which 85 percent of the motorists travel, are 39 mph inbound and 38 mph outbound on Islington Street. The 85th percentile speed is the main value used for establishing speed limits.

Eric Eby stated if the 85th percentile rule was followed in this case, the speed limit would be posted at 35 mph or 40 mph. However, the residential nature of the street is not compatible with a 40 mph speed limit. He stated 30 mph is the desired speed for the area. Also, studies have proven that lowering the speed limit number on the sign does not effectively reduce speeds. Drivers drive at a speed at which they feel comfortable and safe.

Eric Eby stated that the accident history provided by the Portsmouth Police Department indicated that this section of Islington Street has experienced a total of 11 accidents over the past 5 years. This is equivalent to 108 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (MVT). It is a very low accident rate for the 7,500 vehicles that travel that section of roadway daily. The accidents that have occurred have not resulted from speeding.

Eric Eby stated that with the current road design, it is recommended to keep the 30 mph speed limit until completion of the planned sidewalk project and updated 85th percentile speed data supports lowering it.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the narrowing of Islington Street from 12 feet to 10 feet. He wanted to know if it would be similar to the Middle Street design. Public Works Director Rice stated the design has not been completed, but it would not be the same configuration as the Middle Street project. The request for a sidewalk has been made and has been funded by the City Council. Public Works Director Rice stated that as part of the work, the department would look at incorporating bicycle lanes and/or a shared path. However, a final design has not been completed.

Mary Lou McElwain presented the issue of enforcement and asked that the topic be addressed at this meeting or a future one. She suggested posting signs at entrances into the city that warn drivers speed limits will be strictly enforced. Enforcement is key to the issue of lowering speed limits.

Acting Deputy Chief, Frank Warchol, stated that enforcement happens on a regular basis. He stated that speeding is the number one quality of life issue in the city and is very important to the department. Efforts are being focused on the issue and education is part of that process.

City Manager Bohenko agreed that enforcement is important and he will discuss it with the Police Department and Department of Public Works Transportation Engineer.

City Manager Bohenko motioned to suspend the rules to allow public comments. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Vote 9-0, to suspend the rules.**

Rick Becksted, 1395 Islington Street, commended the committee on allowing him to comment before the committee took action on this item. He stated that the average speed on Islington Street was 36 mph to 42 mph when the radar speed signs were present. His neighbor observed the vehicle speeds and took notes. He asked the Police Department to install the radar speed signs in locations where speeding is a problem.

City Manager Bohenko stated that he would make a motion to maintain the speed limit at 30 mph until the design of the sidewalk project has been completed and then bring the item back to the Committee for discussion and possible adjustment. He stated that neighborhoods would be actively involved through context based design. He will also discuss with staff the possibility of purchasing additional radar speed signs.

City Manager Bohenko motioned to maintain the speed limit at 30 mph until the Islington Street sidewalk design is completed and approved, and then report back to the Committee for reevaluation. Ted Gray seconded. **Vote 9-0, to maintain the speed limit at 30 mph until the Islington Street sidewalk design is completed and approved, and then report back to the Committee for reevaluation.**

City Manager Bohenko motioned to suspend the rules for purposes of discussion only regarding the Chapter 7 Bicycle ordinance update. Ron Cypher seconded. **Vote 9-0, to suspend the rules.**

Mary Lou McElwain requested this item be addressed because she would like to have it clarified. The ordinance changes need to be clearly identified for better understanding. She would like the document to address the specific changes proposed to the ordinance.

Eric Eby clarified that mopeds and bicycles are treated the same under the state statutes, but Segways are treated differently.

City Manager Bohenko stated that the document could be "cleaned up" and would be included in the Omnibus list at the end of the year. Chairman Lown stated the item would then go to the City Council for three readings and could be amended during that process.

B. Burkitt Street and Thornton Street intersection – All-way STOP request. Eric Eby stated that this item was presented at the October meeting. Currently, STOP signs are present on the Burkitt Street approaches to the intersection. NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER signs are present on all four legs of the intersection, but less than the state requirement of 20 feet from the intersection. Eric Eby recommended relocating the signs to 20 feet from the intersection in all directions.

Ted Gray said that this item has been presented previously and yield signs were discussed as a possible solution.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept DPW recommendation for NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER signs relocation. Mary Lou McElwain seconded. **Vote 9-0, to accept DPW recommendation for NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER signs relocation.**

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Doug Roberts, 247 Richards Avenue, discussed three points of Donald Shoup's formula for effective parking. Mr. Roberts discussed the ideas on returning revenues in obvious ways to the community. He offered several specific suggestions of how this could be implemented. Mr. Roberts also discussed traffic enforcement citations.

City Manager Bohenko responded, stating that parking revenues go to the snow removal downtown, which benefits businesses and citizens. Revenues also fund public transportation, senior citizen transportation, and sidewalk improvements near the parking garage. He agrees that the public should be aware of the improvements made by parking revenues.

Sherry Brandsema, 865 Woodbury Avenue, discussed her difficulty backing out into the street from her driveway.

Fred Lewis, 1238 Maplewood Avenue

Kevin Drohan, 1240 Maplewood Avenue

Larry Francoeur, 1003 Woodbury Avenue

Howard Mangold, 1275 Maplewood Avenue

Ryan Akers, 999 Woodbury Avenue

They voiced their opposition to a traffic circle at Maplewood Avenue and Woodbury Avenue.

Rick Becksted, 1395 Islington Street, discussed traffic calming measures on Market Street. He asked about the cost of the devices discussed during the work session and the discounts some businesses receive from parking in the garage.

Ron Cypher commented on backing out onto a roadway: he suggested backing into the driveway.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL

A. Banfield Road update - Eric Eby stated that a RFP (Request for Proposal) has been issued. Two firms will be interviewed and one selected to prepare a design to update the culvert crossings near Heritage Avenue and develop a master plan of the entire corridor. The public process will begin soon on the design portion.

Eric Eby stated that a meeting was held with NHDOT and Water Country representatives to discuss the traffic patterns coming out of Water Country and the use of Banfield Road. The City will work with Water Country to conduct a traffic study to determine the potential impacts of rerouting Water Country traffic.

B. Woodbury Avenue from Gosling Road to Market Street – signal project update

Eric Eby stated this is a state funded project. All signals along the corridor are being inventoried and studied to design an updated coordinated traffic signal system for better traffic flow. It is in the design stage currently, and it is anticipated that a final design will be completed in six months.

Public Works Director Rice stated that intersection configurations are also part of the design process. Modifications and aesthetic improvements of intersections are also being reviewed. These improvements will be phased in over time and are dependent on funding.

C. STOP sign installation Tech Notes handout - Eric Eby provided an informational pamphlet on the proper use of stop signs.

D. Portsmouth Click and Fix - Public Works Director Rice informed the Committee of a new program, Portsmouth Click N' Fix, that will allow residents to report issues and request services through an online and mobile interface. The Portsmouth Library staff can assist residents in learning the new system. It is an additional tool to help in the allocation of resources.

E. Bike corral seasonal removal - Juliet Walker informed the Committee the seasonal bike corrals would be removed the week of Thanksgiving. They will be reinstalled in April or May 2016. She stated that usage has been tracked by parking enforcement staff and a few business owners after hours.

F. Colored crosswalk on Middle Street at Richards Avenue - Eric Eby stated that the brick red color was chosen for the crosswalk pattern due to contrast and visibility. Once the utility work is completed, the colored pattern would be painted in-between the white markings, weather permitting. The pedestrian warning signs have also been updated.

Mary Lou McElwain requested an update on the EasyPark program, including how well it has been advertised. She also requested an update from Joey Giordano, Parking Manager, on the usage of the garage, who is using it, and how many passes are being issued. She also requested information on the summer usage of the municipal lot, free parking, and the shuttle.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – At 9:33 a.m., voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amy Chastain
Secretary of the Committee