

January 12, 2016

City of Portsmouth -- Citywide Neighborhood Committee

Meeting Minutes

Cliff Lazenby called the meeting to Order-7:04

Cliff welcomed everyone and announced that the attendance sheet is there, and to please sign in agendas are on the table, minutes are going around

Paul Mannle made a motion to accept the meetings of the November meeting. Cristy Cardoso seconded. All approved

Cliff Lazenby – thanks for coming, we invited all of the candidates who ran in the past election, thanks for joining us. The mission statement of our committee is on the back side of the agenda. For your review and to become familiar with that. The steering committee is going to look at making changes in the future.

Cliff recognized Cristy Cardoso for her service and leadership over the past decade.

Cristy Cardoso – thanked Cliff for stepping up to take over. Stressed the need for new people with enthusiasm.

Cliff Lazenby introduced the steering committee, Cristy Cardoso, Marie Kelleher, Paul Mannle and Kathy Bergeron. Also introduced city council committee liaison and Jim Splaine
Brought attention to meeting calendar on agenda

We want to take a look at the nature of the committee and see if it is still valid. Not as many set associations to attend meetings as at the committee's inception. Not many formal committees exist currently, more social networking, emailing. If an issue comes up people will get together. Going forward we would like to take the meetings to the neighborhoods. Cliff has met with Mayor Blalock to share this. We are looking at having forums facilitated by us, with several city departments. More narrow, more interactive. First one this spring. March or May

New Business

Communication comes up often at our meetings on how to engage with city council.

People feel as though they need to contact everyone, would be easier and clearer to have a channel to express concerns.

The question is: "How could we work toward a primary city council contact or how might we better engage between city council and neighborhoods". Some years are spread among wards and neighborhoods, some not. How do we compensate for lack of distribution of councilors

Rick Becksted: brought up Aaron Gargantas idea of picking a councilor to represent each ward. He liked the idea. But it never happened. Would like to see that going forward.

Jack Blalock: lives in ward 5, knows it is a concern. One of his duties is to appoint councilors to cities. Was ready to assign, but Jim Splaine found some pitfalls. Wards are not neighborhood based. Lines down middle of streets, etc. Would like to see representation from the wards. It is the plan to have that

Jim Splaine: talked about this with Jack and city council. Two main problems. Whatever is created cannot be gone back on. Originally at beginning of CNA was 8 neighborhoods that would come together and support one another. Up to 20 nbhds at one point. Has a report from 1996. It used to work with a rep from each nbhd would come to city council. Tends to be divisive when different duties within council. Stepping on each other's turf. We should represent everyone. People should take their problems to everyone. Suggested the concept of Portsmouth Listens. The city council could meet with each nbhd prior to council meetings to discuss issues.

Cristy Cardoso: fewer and fewer volunteers willing to be voice for their nbhd. Looking to the future. We need to evolve, new residents, high turnover. How can we adapt for the future to make it work

Cliff: To clarify – Councilor would be a contact, not a rep. Take away the buckshot feeling. Doesn't exclude other communication. As far boundaries, we need to split it up somehow, wards already done.

Jack Blalock: Concerns are valid, need to stress that they can contact anyone. Agrees with the need, needs to get the councilors on board. As long as it is not a turf war, wants to encourage communication. Wants to get the councilors on board. Already has the wards drawn up, but need to get everyone on board.

Eric Spear: Concern is that there will be stepping on toes. One way to solve the problem that it is overwhelming to contact everyone. Committee needs to do a best practices for communication. Committee can furnish contact info. Only received 5 phone calls last year.

Rick Becksted: People want to know about specific concerns, direction and one person that would know concerns in detail.

Joshua Cyr: We need to experiment with different processes, but people don't want to feel like there bothering someone. A template on why you should contact your councilor.

Christine Dwyer; Nbhd committee used to get up in front of the council. The nbhd issues are often more relevant to the committees than for the council. Example Traffic and Safety committee was all from one ward. Easy thing would be to just come to the council to speak before the council.

Cliff: Our challenge has been that we are not getting people to come out to represent a whole neighborhood. Waiting for people to come to our meetings is not most effective.

Josh Cyr asked for background on why people aren't coming

Cristy; all problems, people moving, people not having time. People have busy lives. Parents time as used up, getting people to volunteer more time.

Josh Cyr: what can we do to help come up with plans for leadership in the groups.

(Back of room)Unidentified: Eveylyn would pack the room, she was a big cheerleader, people are busier. People can gain knowledge from communications from social media, nbhd emails etc. We need to find the vehicle to have that communications. More transient community, not everyone knows who to call.

Nancy Pearson: Many people do not know that they can contact us first before departments such as public works. Difficult to contact public works.

Brad Lown: been on the council, gets lots of emails and he tries to answer or send to the right department. People don't feel like they are being listened too. People feel that way because they don't understand how things work in the city. Examples are McDonough Street and Banfield Road, they take a long time, people complain that they aren't moving forward but they are. People need to understand how it works. Communication is not the issue, it is people wanting to feel heard, and learn what is happening.

Josh Denton: Is open minded would be willing to be a rep. Wanted to know who are the civic associations that have elections. Sherburne, Frank Jones, Atlantic Heights and South End.

Chris Dwyer: Nbhds do not always make sense, maybe we need to organize in other ways. Are there different ways to have people affiliate other than by nbhd? Such as groups of seniors, schools, pre schools. Nbhds may not be the way we affiliate.

Cristy: West End is a new nbhd that people identify with, similar for northern tier. Not meaningful to everyone. We need to keep up as they evolve. We talk wards because they already mapped. People can find out what ward easily, while nbhd nicknames don't mean anything more difficult to find.

Cliff: People don't want to organize and belong to another thing. Brads thoughts fit in, don't know how a website could get all communication out. Forums are a way to go out and communicate.

Kathleen: Condo on State Street, condo association became their own society. They didn't know what was going on in the city. Brought up click n fix, the information is good, could be expanded to other public works projects.

(at table) Unidentified: Comment on Banfield Road, Andrea went there to say problem was traffic from water country. He doesn't think anyone was listening, not the way the nbhd wanted it. The nbhd thought they weren't listening, he does like the idea of having people as a contact.

Josh Cyr: Observations: It is a communication problem. We may think things are progressing but citizens think that they aren't. Practical question: Is there some vehicle to push out communication with one of the committee's email lists.

Brad Lown left 8:05

Cristy: Wished every department would get on to NextDoor. Police use it now

Cliff: Best tool as neighbors are vetted to make sure they live there.

Christine Dwyer: Need to do a big push to sign up for nextdoor.

Paul Mannle: Giving context. Aaron Garganta's idea was a good one, we are just talking about simple contact, not talking about stepping on people's toes, no advocacy. We hear from DPW that they don't

want to communicate more than once, until we know for sure. We just want communication conduit. 70% of this city didn't vote, didn't vote for you.

Cliff Lazenby: Benefit would be voter participation could be positively impacted

Chris Dwyer: Hoping that these forums bring up bigger problems more than small, easy fixes.

Marie Kelleher: We need to know if emails are received.

Jack Blalock: The list will go out and the councilors will be assigned as long as we agree it is just a contact.

Jim Splaine: it is not about stepping on toes, it is also about division.

Jack Blalock: We will try it, let people know they can contact their contact or any councilor. Also in the future we will have a Portsmouth Listens type forum where candidates will communicate with citizens.

Cliff: Appreciate this and we will help facilitate communication.

Cliff: Let us move on. Councilors left.

Cliff: Showed the new metric for the CIP, they did a ton of work, they added ward. Put sheet up on overhead.

Cristy: Each project will have its own sheet. It shows the reasons why there is an unbalanced investment. Another addition is the priority, and a timeline. This spells out timelines and details, will curb questions of why things are not or are happening. They put a list of citizen requests, such as if it exists on another plan such as Safe Routes, Bike/Ped, and they use criteria to prioritize projects. A lot more info, easier to absorb. They are adapting a budget document to be more user friendly.

Rick Becksted: Huge improvement

Paul Mannle: We just wanted the city to say why something is happening or not. Justify it in a way that can be easily communicated.

Kathleen: How did you come to give this much feedback

Cristy: Went to the CIP meeting and was the only member of the public. Had a great dialogue with the CIP subcommittee.

Unidentifie: This is wonderful, can this be shown by ward. Is there a way to show where things were cut? Is there a way to show if something was cut prior to the city council.

Cristy: This does not show anything until it is being voted on for funding.

Paul Mannle: Explained that it is a 6 year rolling document. They vote on what needs to be funded in the current year. There was an idea brought up that is something gets cut after funding it would go onto the next year and not get cut.

Unide: Talked about CIP101, found out that the planning board took something out, and the council never even voted on it. Can we find out.

Cliff: It is difficult, but you can find it. Cliff does not expect council to look at by ward on front line.

Cristy: If you don't see something that should be in there, you need to go to the meeting on the 21st, this is the last chance to have input until next year.

Kathleen: can it only be things already submitted.

Cristy: If you want to get it on public record, you can go to the meeting.

Rick Becksted: Has some issues that he is surprised are not on there, so he will go on the 21st.

Paul Mannle: Do not want to advocate government by squeaky wheel, but they need to know about it. If you have something you want to say, go.

Cristy: This process is set up for public input. They are tasked with creating this CIP.

Tom Morgan: Feels that looking at wards is irrational, needs to take care of infrastructure.

Cliff: Not the goal to spread it out equally, looking to have people aware.

Tom: This will be politicized, he has prepared these documents, this geography thing is crazy.

Paul Mannle: It wasn't to make it politicized, but we were getting these questions, needed more info out.

Cliff: Feels that it reasonable to be aware of some investment.

Back of Room, Pevery Hil has been requesting sidewalks, and downtown is getting fancier lanterns.

Kathy Bergeron: I think this is important to see what the funding is, it may be grants etc.

Cristy – go on the 21st

Cliff introduced Doug Roberts – PS 21 having an event on affordable housing. Workforce housing, elderly being squeezed. January 28 at 3S in the evening 6:30 – 8:30. Education and vision session. And then January 29, action workshop, with specific approaches. Break out into committees. Portsmouth has a lot of programs, but there has been little development of affordable housing in this city in 10 years. This will be the bigger questions of how can we go about creating a general plan. Final: What it should it look like?

Cliff: Onto next business

Paul Mannle: Went over Portsmouth Listens is having a group to gain public input on zoning changes on the West End. This is a great way to learn about form based zoning which may expand. Your chance to participate.

Cliff: Still have a steering committee vacancies. Looking for people.

NextDoor.com, we have talked of, encourage you to get on it. Great way to communicate, police can send outbound message.

Neighborhood Reports.

Tom Morgan: Richards Ave. We have a heroin problem, would love to hear how other nbhds are handling it. SB146, state zoning regarding accessory apartments- people need to be aware of it.

Marie – Pevery Hill concerned on water country traffic.

Cristy: This is an example of why we need a rep.

Marie: That is the problem, we found out in the paper.

Cristy: Ward representation is necessary from this type of argument.

Paul Mannle: Communication and information is necessary

Jim Splaine: Yes there is city responsibility of the city to let people know what is going on. Jim explained that the council can't contact public works. Citizens have more power.

MaryAnne: Concerned about the Gary's Beverage. She is an example of someone who is new and doesn't know who to contact.

Kathleen South End: Concerned with the wastewater treatment plant and loss of public space. Four years of construction.

Larry Cataldo: Lives on Islington Street, wants to be part of the committee.

Motion to adjourn Paul, Marie seconded

9:10 Adjournment

Transcribed by Kathy Bergeron