

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – June 2, 2016
City Hall – Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Lown called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Chairman, Brad Lown
Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
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

Absent:

Member, Ted Gray
Member, Shari Donnermeyer

Ron Cypher complimented Public Works Director Rice on the Op-Ed article in today's Portsmouth Herald regarding the Water Country traffic study.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Harold Whitehouse motioned to accept the May 5, 2016, meeting minutes.
Ron Cypher seconded.

Motion passed 8-0.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Public Works Director Rice motioned to accept the April 30, 2016, financial report.

Mary Lou McElwain seconded.

Motion passed 8-0.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Marc Stettner thanked the Committee for looking into his issue (action item VIII.A.). He recommended moving forward with staff recommendations and requested the Committee consider allocating specific spots for two-wheel vehicles, like other cities. He suggested implementing a pilot program. He requested that public comments be allowed after the motion on action item VIII.A.

VI. PRESENTATIONS:

A. Chestnut Street Streetscape Improvement project by The Music Hall – Juliet Walker, Transportation Planner, introduced the group. David Moore, Assistant City Manager, is the city liaison on the project. Ben Auger, Trustee and Chair of the Facilities Committee at The Music Hall, provided a project overview. The Music Hall, as a partner with the City, seeks to make the street more inviting. This would be accomplished by the following: a 50/50 partnership with the City for streetscape improvements; \$400,000 for street improvements funded by The Music Hall; \$400,000 from the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and The Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) funds. The Music Hall will fund a "Wayfinding Arch" to connect the African Burying Ground and Vaughan Mall to the Northern Tier. Mr. Auger discussed problematic streetscape issues currently in the area. He also presented a proposed pedestrian connector from the African Burying Ground to The Music Hall as a separate project. The presentation is posted on the City's website under the June 2016 Current Calendar section.

The Committee comments included: school bus and patron drop off, pedestrian access, vehicular access on Chestnut, arch design, the Fire Department's concern that the arch design will inhibit the use of aerial devices to get to certain parts of the building, bike corrals, and paving details.

B. Peirce Island Road Bridge deck repair project – Terry Desmarais, City Engineer, presented to the Committee. Aaron Lachance, the city consultant and Project Manager/Senior Structural Engineer, from Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, was present. Mr. Desmarais provided the project background and scope of work. He stated the deck repair project would be in advance of the Peirce Island Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) upgrade. Highlights from the presentation included: construction scheduled from late May through late September; the Mechanic Street force main located within the limits of the bridge has a small leak and needs repair; one-way alternating traffic on bridge during construction; 10-foot lane width restriction on the bridge; parking restrictions along Mechanic Street (11 spaces to be temporarily removed during construction); installing three (3) trailer mounted portable temporary traffic signals; and pedestrian access only restricted on limited basis for repairs on the pedestrian walkway. The presentation is posted on the City's website under the June 2016 Current Calendar section.

The Committee comments included: clarification on force main locations in the area, construction schedule, construction restrictions, pedestrian and bicycle access, the Tall Ships event, and coordination.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Valet parking license renewals, Atlantic Parking Services – 3 locations – Eric Eby stated this is the annual renewal of the valet parking licenses by Atlantic Parking Services at Bow Street, at the intersection of Pleasant and State Streets, and 96 State Street. He stated the terms and conditions are the same as last year and staff recommended granting the renewals of the valet parking licenses.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to approve the valet parking license renewals. Ron Cypher seconded. Mr. Whitehouse requested the canopy erected at Pleasant and State not encroach on the handicapped space, which is the first space on Pleasant. **Vote 8-0, to renew the valet parking licenses at 3 locations for another year.**

B. Valet parking license renewal, The One Hundred Club – Eric Eby stated this is the annual renewal of the valet parking license by The One Hundred Club. Public Works Director Rice motioned to approve the valet parking license renewal. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, seconded.

Mary Lou McElwain stated last year City Manager Bohenko discussed the problem of cars double-parking and backing up traffic at the valet locations. She requested the issue be reviewed again this year. Public Works Director Rice stated Parking Manager Giordano and parking enforcement staff would be monitoring the situation. **Vote 8-0, to renew the valet parking license for another year.**

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Moped, motorcycle and scooter parking – Eric Eby stated staff and the Legal Department researched the issue of moped parking on sidewalks. He stated after researching State RSAs and current City ordinances and policies, motor vehicles are not allowed to park on sidewalks. mopeds and scooters are considered motor vehicles and, therefore, are not allowed to park on sidewalks. However, there is a State RSA (265:70) that permits individual cities to create local ordinances allowing exceptions to this statute.

Mr. Eby stated the City could create an ordinance allowing the current practice of moped parking on sidewalks to continue. He stated that staff recommended that an ordinance be adopted that allows mopeds to park on sidewalks (provided they do not impede the normal and reasonable movement of pedestrian or other traffic) if they display a sticker obtained from the City certifying that they comply with the state's legal description of a moped. The sticker would be obtained from the Parking Clerk's office.

Eric Eby also discussed another recommendation proposed by Marc Stettner. It is used in other cities, like Boston. This proposal would allow an on-street parking space to be restriped to allow 4 or 5 mopeds, scooters and/or motorcycles to use the single vehicle space. He stated this proposal would free up sidewalks for pedestrians.

Ron Cypher asked for clarification on the cubic centimeters (CCs) of vehicles allowed to park on sidewalks. Eric Eby clarified that mopeds 50 CCs and below would be allowed to park on sidewalks. He stated the definition of mopeds as defined by the State of New Hampshire would be used. He also stated the City would like to encourage the use of smaller, more efficient vehicles, such as mopeds and motorcycles, as they free up more parking for regular sized vehicles.

Mary Lou McElwain opposed moped sidewalk parking and expressed concern about enforcement. She would support designated moped parking in the municipal lots and the Prescott Park Parking Lot. Police Captain Warchol stated he would work with Parking Manager Giordano on enforcement.

Harold Whitehouse supported moped sidewalk parking.

Harold Whitehouse motioned to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. Ron Cypher seconded. **Vote 8-0, to suspend the rules.**

Marc Stettner stated current policy is that mopeds must be parked away from pedestrian walkways. He stated it is enforced and he has been ticketed. He expressed concern regarding parking mopeds on the outskirts of downtown and supported parking in highly visible areas. He expressed support for both recommendations.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz expressed support for keeping sidewalks open for pedestrians and removing moped and scooter parking from sidewalks.

Mary Lou McElwain stated this is an issue that should involve the downtown business association. She has seen many mopeds coming into the downtown in the mornings and suspected they are downtown employees. She mentioned one business that objected to moped parking in front of the business. She reiterated opposition to mopeds parking on sidewalks.

Public Works Director Rice motioned to recommend the City Council pass an ordinance allowing mopeds to park on sidewalks if they have a City issued sticker or a designated moped license plate, do not impede pedestrian traffic, and meet the state's legal description of a moped. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, seconded.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the sticker fee and stated he hoped it would be minimal. Public Works Director Rice stated the fee would need to be presented to the Fee Committee and then approved by the City Council. Mr. Rice stated it would probably be part of next year's budget cycle once all costs were identified.

Mary Lou McElwain stated the ordinance needed more information before the Committee voted on it. Chairman Lown stated this motion, if approved, is a recommendation to City Council and there would be opportunities for public input.

Vote 6-2, to recommend the City Council pass an ordinance allowing mopeds to park on sidewalks if they have a City issued sticker or designated moped license plate, do not impede pedestrian traffic, and meet the state's legal description of a moped. Deputy Fire Chief Heinz and Mary Lou McElwain voted opposed.

Chairman Lown stated the next issue is to formalize the policy of requiring only one motorcycle to purchase a pay and display sticker when parking in a group. Staff recommended that a separate ordinance be adopted to codify this practice. Public Works Director Rice motioned to approve for discussion purposes. Deputy City Manager, Nancy Colbert Puff, seconded.

Eric Eby stated that current policy dictates only one motorcycle in a group is required to have a pay and display sticker when parking together. There is an explanation of this policy at the pay kiosk.

Public Works Director Rice explained the current policy is satisfactory as an interim step. If the City desires to have designated spaces for motorcycles, staff would need to identify parking spaces for motorcycle parking, and the pay and display meters would need to display different rate options for motorcycles.

Harold Whitehouse opposed any changes regarding motorcycle parking.

Vote 8-0, to formalize the policy of requiring only one motorcycle to purchase a pay and display sticker when parking in a group, and that a separate ordinance be adopted to codify this practice.

Public Works Director Rice stated that staff would report back on potential spaces for moped and motorcycle designated parking.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Marc Stettner thanked the Committee for their votes on action item VIII.A. He expressed concern regarding mechanical issues and pedestrian access concerning the arch proposed by The Music Hall.

Pam Kayden-Babish expressed support for moped parking on sidewalks. She supported a sticker program. She expressed opposition to mopeds and motorcycles parking together in a designated space and parking in the outskirts of downtown.

X. INFORMATIONAL:

A. 2016 Parking Utilization study data collection begins June 2nd – Eric Eby provided an update on John Burke’s annual parking utilization study. Crews are collecting parking data now, in July and/or August, and in October.

B. PS21 “Islington Street Lab” implementation update – Eric Eby was present at the “Islington Street Lab” installation at 5:00 a.m. on June 2nd. He stated that a group of volunteers installed a crosswalk in front of White Heron and parking spaces in the right turn lane on Islington Street near the signal at Bartlett Street. He stated all in-street work was completed in the morning and additional off-street work would be completed by end of day. Pictures were presented to the Committee. Sunday, June 5th, is the last day for the installation. Eric Eby stated traffic would be monitored due to the temporary removal of the right turn lane onto Bartlett Street.

C. Proposed Neighborhood Traffic Calming program – Juliet Walker, Transportation Planner, presented a preliminary Neighborhood Traffic Calming program and process to the Committee. She stated the program is in response to citizens concerned about speeding and safety issues in their neighborhoods. Juliet Walker explained the two-phased process, types of non-infrastructure traffic calming measures, and types of physical neighborhood traffic calming measures. The presentation is posted on the City’s website under the June 2016 Current Calendar section.

Public Works Director Rice thanked Juliet Walker, Eric Eby, the Police and Fire Departments for their work on this program. He stated it is a critical step in communicating how the City deals with the impact of traffic and how staff can work with residents. He stated a final guidance document would be presented to the Committee.

Ron Cypher told a personal account of an incident regarding a new speed bump in a neighborhood. He stated opposition to them being installed in any neighborhoods. Juliet Walker acknowledged that they are not appropriate in all locations.

Harold Whitehouse asked staff for a report on any city or town that has passed an ordinance or ruling on pedestrians looking at electronic devices while crossing in a crosswalk in a central business district.

Mary Lou McElwain requested a monthly report on bicycle and pedestrian accidents.

Eric Eby reminded the Committee of the June 2nd public meeting on the Peverly Hill Road Improvement Project at the Library’s Levenson Room from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – At 9:28 a.m., voted to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:
Amy Chastain
Secretary of the Committee