

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

8:00 A.M. – July 6, 2017
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
City Manager, John Bohenko
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Member, Ted Gray
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Member, Ronald Cypher
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Alternate Member, Mary Lou McElwain

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Planning Director, Juliet Walker
Parking Director, Benjamin Fletcher

Member Absent:

Police Captain, Frank Warchol

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the meeting minutes of June 1, 2017.
Seconded by Ted Gray. **Motion passed 8-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated July 2017.
Seconded by Ron Cypher. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Harold Whitehouse asked about parking enforcement personnel turnover. City Manager Bohenko stated it was average.

Harold Whitehouse moved to suspend the rules in order to take up action item VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project] after the first public comment session. Seconded by Ron Cypher.
Motion passed 8-0.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rick Becksted spoke to action items VII.B. [Request for LOADING ZONE on Vaughn Street for new hotel] and VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project]. He expressed concern about losing parking on Vaughn Street, and asked if the hotel could use the valet parking spot as the loading zone area. He spoke to the Middle Street project as it related to off-street parking for residents, and asked about placement of trash and recycling bins during collection. He questioned the accuracy of the accident report provided by Tom Morgan and cited accidents not listed in the report.

Peter Weeks spoke to action item VII.B. [Request for LOADING ZONE on Vaughn Street for new hotel]. He recommended changing the sample motion from conditional upon 30 days after opening of hotel to conditional upon issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.

Charlie Griffin spoke in opposition to action item VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project]. Some of Mr. Griffin's concerns and reasons for opposing the project were: the expansion of the route was justified based on the possibility that more high school students would bicycle. The current demand does not warrant it. He believes the southbound stretch of the project would be the least safe because it would be used by students at a time of heavy vehicle traffic. It does not have the protection needed. He spoke to the sight distance concerns expressed by residents at the intersection of Greenleaf Avenue and Lafayette Road. He stated the project would slow response time for first responders because of the narrowing of traffic lanes. He spoke to the varying width of the bike lane buffer and questioned the safety due to the variation. He asked the Committee to scrutinize the proposal and recommended it not be approved in its current form. Mr. Griffin presented a copy of his remarks to the Committee.

City Manager Bohenko moved to suspend the rules to extend the public comment session. Public Works Director Rice seconded. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Phil Winslow, Town of Rye Selectman, spoke in support of action item VI.A. [Route 1 and Lang Road intersection]. He stated the improvements proposed would increase safety.

Gerald Duffy spoke in support of action item VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project]. He talked about creating an environment that fosters bike riding and encouraged the Committee to think about expanding it in the future.

Mark Brighton spoke to action item VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project]. He expressed concern about emergency response times due to narrowing roadways. He stated active enforcement of the speeding laws would help achieve the project's goals.

Joel Harris spoke to parking enforcement issues related to his business at 107 State Street. He stated two parking spots behind his business border the sidewalk on Sheafe Street. His employees have been ticketed multiple times for partially blocking sidewalk access. He provided pictures of the area to the Committee and asked for guidance.

Doug Roberts spoke in support of action item VIII.A. [Middle Street Bike Lanes project]. He talked about the general safety of Middle Street and how the project would improve safety for bicyclists and motorists.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS:

A. Middle Street Bike Lanes project, by Juliet Walker, Planning Director.

Juliet Walker stated the issue before the Committee related to impacts to on-street parking along the corridor. She stated the recommended action would be to approve the proposed on-street parking restrictions along the corridor to allow room for the bike lanes, and forward the recommendation to the City Council.

She also stated the project had not changed substantially since the October 2016 presentation. The project would be a combination of buffered bicycle lanes and striped bicycle lanes. The striped bicycle lanes would run along the entire corridor. She stated on-street parking would provide the protection for the protected bicycle lanes along a portion of the corridor. She has worked with the Portsmouth Fire Department to ensure adequate roadway widths for emergency response vehicles on the primary emergency route. She agreed the design would be further reviewed to ensure 11-foot travel lanes on the route wherever possible.

Ms. Walker spoke to on-street parking and parking counts conducted in February 2015, April 2016 and April 2017. She stated the on-street parking conclusions were as follows: demand for the majority of the corridor is low. Excess capacity existed on the side streets. Highest demand was north of Cabot/Highland. Peak hours in highest demand areas tended to be mid-day on weekdays. She summarized the proposal for on-street parking would be: no change from existing for the corridor north of Cabot Street. Parking on one-side of street from Cabot to Lincoln. No parking between Madison and Union. No parking south of Lincoln. Parking on Middle Street consists of 79 spaces within .3 miles, with a total of 177 spaces when the side streets are included. She stated staff observed the maximum peak demand (including side streets) is 70 to 80 parking spaces along the entire corridor.

Harold Whitehouse stated he attended the June 8, 2017 meeting. He heard citizens asking about Wibird Street who questioned why it was not considered for this project. Juliet Walker stated the Bicycle Pedestrian Plan considered a variety of connections for the entire network, but Middle Street had been identified long ago as a key connector to schools and the Downtown.

The Safe Routes to School Action Plan also encourages connections to places school-aged children frequent. Juliet Walker stated the City was looking for ways to improve the connectivity across Middle Street. There is a neighborhood in the area with no safe routes to nearby schools.

She stated Wibird Street is a neighborhood street. The City encourages shared use on neighborhood streets, not bike lanes.

Shari Donnermeyer commented that Wibird Street would most likely not be used by bicyclists because it is not on the shortest route. She provided the example of people crossing Islington Street at the White Heron instead of using the signalized crosswalk a short distance away.

Mary Lou McElwain asked about improvements at the Greenleaf Avenue intersection, and the status of a handicap parking space in front of business on Middle Street. She watched the June 8th meeting on video and complimented staff on the presentation. She supports the project.

Juliet Walker stated the Greenleaf intersection would be improved with striping and green paint to increase visibility. The Andrew Jarvis Drive intersection would be improved as a separate project to increase safety of the area. She stated she is working with the property owner on the handicap parking space issue. Public Works Director Rice provided a timeline on the Andrew Jarvis Drive improvement project.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to approve proposed on-street parking restrictions along Middle Street and Lafayette Road as shown on GPI plan dated June 8, 2017 to accommodate the proposed bicycle lane project. Seconded by Ron Cypher.

Harold Whitehouse opposed the project due to concerns over extended emergency response times. Mr. Whitehouse moved to table the action item until August 3, 2017, so City staff could respond to Mr. Griffin's concerns. The motion was not seconded.

Chairman Lown disclosed his ownership of a business property on Middle Street and stated he is an avid cyclist. He publicly thanked Juliet Walker for her work on the project.

Ron Cypher expressed his support for bicycle safety but did not think that the project should be touted as a way to increase bicycle ridership of high school students. Shari Donnermeyer agreed.

On a roll call 7-1, motion passed to approve proposed on-street parking restrictions along Middle Street and Lafayette Road as shown on GPI plan dated June 8, 2017 to accommodate the proposed bicycle lane project. Harold Whitehouse voted opposed.

VI. PRESENTATION:

A. Route 1 and Lang Road intersection, Road Safety Audit, by NHDOT.

Michael Dugas, Chief of Preliminary Design, from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation Highway Design Division, presented to the Committee. Michelle Marshall, Highway Safety Engineer at NHDOT and David Walker, Transportation Program Manager at the Rockingham Planning Commission were also present. Mr. Dugas discussed a safety evaluation conducted at the intersection of US Route 1 and Lang Road. The evaluation was requested by

the City and the Rockingham Planning Commission because of vehicle crashes at the intersection.

Mr. Dugas discussed the following aspects of the project: funding, traffic data, crash data for 10 years, which included 68 crashes and 1 fatal crash, the road safety audit conducted on September 21, 2016 and potential solutions. He stated the high traffic volume on US Route 1 (Lafayette Road) makes it very difficult to turn left from Lang Road. He presented two solutions. The first would be to construct a concrete island on Lang Road to prohibit left turns from Lang Road onto US Route 1. This solution would be low cost, but would divert traffic and relocates the safety issue to other areas. The second would be to realign Lang Road to connect Longmeadow Road and the US Route 1 signal. This option would not impact the Service Credit Union parking lot or walking paths on the property. Graphics of each proposed solution are available in the packet. Mr. Dugas stated the traffic island prohibiting left turns onto US Route 1 would also be strongly recommended in the realignment solution.

Mr. Dugas provided an estimate on project cost at \$600,000. He stated half of the funding would be eligible through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HISP) funds because of the safety improvements to US Route 1. He cautioned funding would have limits. The Local Public Agency (LPA) process through NHDOT, and adherence to federal funding guidelines would need to be followed.

Public Works Director Rice thanked Mr. Dugas, staff at NHDOT and the Rockingham Planning Commission for their work and strongly supports the partnership to make the area safer.

Mary Lou McElwain asked about the Service Credit Union access from Lang Road. She suggested it be entrance only. Mr. Dugas stated City staff could work with Service Credit Union on this issue. Harold Whitehouse spoke to road conditions on Lang Road to Washington Road. Ron Cypher asked for clarification on project cost to realign Lang Road. He expressed support for the project.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to approve DOT's recommended actions. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Vote 7-0, to approve DOT's recommended actions.** City Manager Bohenko was not present for vote.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request for NO PARKING areas on Mechanic Street. Harold Whitehouse stated a site visit was conducted on July 5, 2017. Committee members met with residents and reviewed the areas. Harold Whitehouse moved to approve NO PARKING in three areas as proposed on Mechanic Street. Seconded by Ron Cypher.

Shari Donnermeyer opposed the motion because it included the parking space on Mechanic Street, adjacent to 213 Gates Street. She does not support removing more on-street parking. Chairman Lown advised that the motion would need to be amended.

Shari Donnermeyer amended the motion to approve NO PARKING in two areas on Mechanic Street, but exclude the area adjacent to 213 Gates Street. Seconded by Chairman Lown.

Eric Eby provided clarification, stating the area is problematic because of the narrow roadway, pedestrians, snow banks, and high traffic volumes from events at Prescott Park. The Committee discussed parking concerns along Mechanic Street and the need to maintain residential parking.

Deputy Fire Chief Heinz stated he opposed the amended motion because it would constrict the roadway for emergency response vehicles.

Public Works Director Rice moved to suspend the rules to allow for public comment. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 7-0.**

Daniel Desrochers spoke in support of removing the space adjacent to 213 Gates Street on Mechanic Street.

By show of hands 3-4, the amended motion to approve NO PARKING in two areas on Mechanic Street, but exclude the area adjacent to 213 Gates Street, failed. Chairman Lown, Shari Donnermeyer and Ted Gray voted in support. Public Works Director Rice, Deputy Fire Chief Heinz, Harold Whitehouse and Ron Cypher voted opposed.

Chairman Lown called for a vote on the motion to approve NO PARKING in three areas as proposed on Mechanic Street. **By show of hands 6-1, to approve NO PARKING in three areas as proposed on Mechanic Street between Peirce Island Road and Gates Street, and between Gardner Street and Hunking Street.** Shari Donnermeyer voted opposed.

B. Request for LOADING ZONE on Vaughn Street for new hotel. Eric Eby summarized the diagrams in the packet and provided background. The requested loading zone is located directly in front of the current location of the entrance to the gated parking lot. He stated the location cannot be designated as a loading zone while the parking lot is in operation. The space would be reserved as a LOADING ZONE if approved by the Committee.

Harold Whitehouse moved to approve the LOADING ZONE on Vaughn Street once the Certificate of Occupancy for the hotel is issued. Ron Cypher Seconded.

Harold Whitehouse asked for clarification on the opening of the hotel. Public Works Director Rice clarified that a Certificate of Occupancy is issued by the Chief Building Inspector. Mary Lou McElwain stated her opposition because one parking space would be eliminated. Public Works Director Rice stated the applicant had Planning Board approval and it was not feasible to have the LOADING ZONE on the property. **Vote 7-0, to approve LOADING ZONE on Vaughn Street once the Certificate of Occupancy for the hotel is issued.**

C. Request by Parkside Condo Association to move Zagster bike station to an on-street parking space on State Street. Eric Eby explained the photograph in the packet showing the exit from the Parkside Condo garage at 77 State Street. When vehicles are parked in the on-street parking spaces, sight lines are limited when exiting the garage. Mr. Eby stated the

situation is like many existing driveways and side streets in the Downtown, where sight lines are limited due to on-street parking. The Association proposed to move the Zagster bike station, currently stationed on the sidewalk, to the first parking space causing the obstruction. Mr. Eby stated the Zagster stations were selected because they do not eliminate on-street parking. They require two on-street parking spaces due to size.

Shari Donnermeyer moved to refer to City staff to report back. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Harold Whitehouse requested the Zagster station at the corner of Parrott Avenue and Junkins Avenue be reviewed. He is concerned about school bus turning radius. **Vote 7-0, to refer to City staff for report back.**

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT:
No Speakers.

X. INFORMATIONAL:

A. State Street traffic and fire response: Deputy Fire Chief Heinz spoke to State Street traffic and a firefighting apparatus delayed getting to the scene of an emergency call because of traffic congestion. He stated on June 2, 2017 at 2:12 p.m., emergency personnel encountered traffic congestion and provided a photograph depicting the scene.

Mary Lou McElwain spoke to the following items: a letter she received from Elizabeth Bratter. She requested Ms. Bratter be contacted and invited to speak at the next meeting during public comment. She requested the crosswalks at Middle Street and Miller Avenue be addressed soon because the pedestrian signals are antiquated. She requested traffic congestion be addressed by the Committee.

B. Quarterly bicycle and pedestrian accident report: Two incidents reported on the quarterly accident report.

Chairman Lown introduced the new Parking Director, Benjamin Fletcher, to the Committee.

XI. ADJOURNMENT – at 9:35 a.m., **VOTED** to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted by:
Amy Chastain
Secretary to the Committee