

## MEETING MINUTES

### **PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

8:00 A.M. – April 5, 2018  
City Hall – Conference Room A

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#### **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

At 8:00 a.m., Chairman Roberts called the meeting to order.

#### **II. ROLL CALL:**

##### Members Present:

Chairman, Doug Roberts  
City Manager, John Bohenko  
Public Works Director, Peter Rice  
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz  
Member, Harold Whitehouse  
Member, Ronald Cypher  
Member, Mary Lou McElwain  
Alternate Member, Ralph DiBernardo

##### Members Absent:

Police Captain, Frank Warchol  
Member, Shari Donnermeyer

##### Staff Advisors Present:

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

#### **III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:**

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the meeting minutes of March 1, 2018.  
Seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

#### **IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Mary Lou McElwain asked Parking Director Ben Fletcher to provide background on each line item listed on the monthly report. She stated it would be helpful to go through it at a future meeting. City Manager Bohenko said this information was available online in the budget, and confirmed that they would review each line item at the next meeting. The financial report was placed on file.

City Manager Bohenko requested members contact him or Chairman Roberts directly regarding all PTS requests or questions. They will forward the information to the appropriate staff member.

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Chairman Roberts stated there would be only one public comment period starting at the next meeting. He stated this would allow the committee and speakers more flexibility. The committee could suspend the rules to allow speakers to address action items at the time of committee discussion and vote.

Charles McMahon spoke to the potential closure of Echo Avenue and Farm Lane from the Spaulding Turnpike. He spoke to the impacts from the Woodbury Avenue Bridge closure and the eventual reconstruction of the traffic circle. He reiterated that the neighbors on Echo Avenue are still interested in closing the streets from the turnpike. He requested a pilot project be conducted to test the impacts of the potential closure. He addressed several options made at the public meeting. Mr. McMahon thanked Eric Eby for his work. He stated he looks forward to future meetings and would be responsible for dissemination of information to his neighbors.

Ralph DiBernardo motioned to suspend the rules to allow Mr. Choquette to address the committee during action item VI.A. Seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Harold Whitehouse asked what the target date was for finishing the Woodbury Avenue Bridge. Eric Eby responded that the NHDOT estimated it would take 10-11 months once the project is started. The Stark Street Bridge must be completed before the project is started and it is anticipated to be completed in October 2018. He stated the next step is to demolish the existing Woodbury Avenue Bridge either before Thanksgiving or after New Years, depending on the contractor's schedule.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Request to restrict parking along both sides of Thaxter Road within 150 feet of Islington Street, by Jesse Choquette. Eric Eby stated that the information from Mr. Choquette was provided in the packet. The request was to restrict parking further back on Thaxter Road. The concern is that Thaxter Road is very narrow where it intersects with Islington Street. When vehicles are parked near the intersection on Thaxter Road, it makes it hard for cars to turn in from Islington Street, while vehicles are waiting to get out. It can create a bottleneck at the intersection point. Mr. Eby looked at the intersection on Tuesday morning and there were plenty of cars parked at the location.

Jesse Choquette stated he was home when the site visit was conducted by the committee. He stated parking goes all the way up to the stop sign, and if cars are parked on both sides of the street, it is virtually impossible for a large vehicle to get through. There are cars parked along the left hand side of the street regularly. If the parking were brought back away from the corner of the intersection, it would be a safer option. Then vehicles could at least swing in, and then they would be able to pass a little more easily. There have been enough near accidents at this corner, so this would make sense. There is ample parking along Islington Street.

Ralph DiBernardo asked who was parking there. Were they residents of the neighborhood or businesses parking on the street? Mr. Choquette responded that it was a mixture of both.

Chairman Roberts noted that there was another concern there as well. If too many spaces are removed, then people will drive fast around the corner. No parking tends to encourage speeding. Mr. Choquette noted that Thaxter Street is not really a pass through

street. He was not proposing to eliminate all the parking, 150 feet was an arbitrary number and probably is enough space to open up the corner at the intersection.

Ronald Cypher stated he was at the site visit and thinks the 150 feet option is excessive. A compromised figure would be much better.

Ralph DiBernardo moved to restrict parking on both sides of Thaxter Road to the east side of the two driveways closest to Islington Street. Seconded by Public Works Director Rice for discussion. He commented that the sample motion was to have staff collect data, evaluate and report back with a recommendation at the next meeting. Ralph DiBernardo withdrew his motion.

Harold Whitehouse moved to have staff collect data, evaluate and report back with a recommendation at the next meeting. Seconded by City Manager Bohenko.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that they often have one or two neighbors come in with a request and she just wanted to ensure that all of the neighbors who park there were aware that this change may occur.

Chairman Roberts commented that it would be easy to bring the agenda to the neighboring houses during on-site visits. He stated it is not always easy to do in a large area, but in this case it would be.

Mr. Choquette asked if it would be helpful if he informed the neighbors and had them email the committee. City Manager Bohenko requested all correspondence be directed to Eric Eby.

Eric Eby explained that he would set up a traffic camera on Thaxter Road to evaluate traffic. The preference would be to eliminate parking based on queueing and traffic flows.

Harold Whitehouse noted that he was not a fan of signs and preferred that they restrict the parking with the minimum amount of signs required.

**Vote 8-0, to have staff collect data, evaluate and report back with a recommendation at the next meeting.**

**VII. OLD BUSINESS:**  
No old business.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:**  
No public comment.

**IX. INFORMATIONAL:**  
A. City public outreach process. Memorandum provided in the packet. No action required.

B. Quarterly accident report. Chairman Roberts commented that there were more than 1,100 car accidents in Portsmouth last year. Data from the Fire Department showed there were 110 accidents requiring transports to the hospital.

Mary Lou McElwain commented on two crosswalk areas: Greenleaf Avenue at Route 1 Bypass and Harvard Street at Route 33. She explained the issue and asked if there is a better way to light the crosswalks. She suggested blinking lights and asked if it could be presented to NHDOT. She presented the issue because it relates to crosswalk safety and the number of crosswalk accidents noted on the report.

City Manager Bohenko stated the Police Department (PD) would be asked to investigate the areas regarding vehicles not stopping for school buses.

Eric Eby noted that the Greenleaf Avenue crosswalk has the green light to cross at the same time traffic has a green light. Vehicles are supposed to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. He could suggest to NHDOT that signs be added instructing cars to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if the traffic lights could be changed. Eric Eby responded that the lights are programmed for concurrent phasing and could not be changed.

City Manager Bohenko stated staff could look into adding a crossing guard at the location during school hours.

C. PTS open action items. Chairman Roberts mentioned Rick Chellman's presentation noted on the list. He followed up on the item and gave Eric Eby a list of spots that could result in more parking. Eric Eby is reviewing the list and will report back.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the parking restrictions by South Street in the city hall parking area and the signs being installed. Public Works Director Rice responded that the signs are related to the City Hall facade project. Some of the Police Department parking behind city hall has been displaced because the contractor needed a staging area. The area is reserved space for the PD.

Harold Whitehouse commented on the Middle Street bicycle improvement project. Bids were above the anticipated project cost. He asked about the next step. City Manager Bohenko responded that this has been a long project with high resident involvement. City staff are looking at alternates as part of the project. Harold Whitehouse stated he is still opposed to the project and spoke to other areas that are away from Route 1.

D. Vaughn Street parking and traffic restrictions during AC Hotel construction. Chairman Roberts noted that it would be helpful if this was explained further. City Manager Bohenko noted staff met with the businesses to ensure them that the City would work closely with them.

Public Works Director Rice explained there is a hotel project on the corner of Green Street and Vaughn Street. In order to construct the building, the contractor will need to stage materials and equipment in one of the lanes on the roadway. This will restrict the roadway and cause some parking issues. Staff is working with the impacted businesses to mitigate the problems. It is a narrow section of roadway coming off of Maplewood Avenue at that corner. He stated the issue of keeping the street open to two-way traffic during the construction would make it even more difficult to travel.

Public Works Director Rice stated the right-hand lane on Vaughan Street coming from Maplewood Avenue would be restricted at the two lots where the hotel is being constructed. Because the corner of Maplewood Avenue and Vaughan Street is tight, City staff felt that it would be appropriate to have one-way traffic on that section of Vaughan Street. He stated it is something the City had considered in the past. This is an opportunity to treat it as a pilot project to evaluate traffic flows during the project.

City Manager Bohenko commented that an important issue to review is large vehicles turning onto Vaughan Street from Maplewood Avenue. Ten on-street parking spaces will be eliminated for safety. There was a discussion about the need for parking turnover and 3-hour parking in the area. Presently, cars can park all day.

Ralph DiBernardo clarified that they were suggesting a one-way traffic flow entering from Maplewood Avenue onto Vaughan Street continuing through Raynes Avenue. A Do Not Enter road sign would be posted at the entrance of Raynes Avenue from Maplewood Avenue. City Manager Bohenko confirmed that was correct. Ralph DiBernardo noted the one-way traffic flow might eliminate traffic queuing and the backups to the railroad tracks. City Manager Bohenko agreed.

Mary Lou McElwain asked how this related to the September 27, 2017 action items regarding the request to restrict parking on the inside corner of Vaughn Street. Eric Eby said that action eliminated 2-3 spaces right at the corner. The two corners are currently restricted on parking. However, cars that park on the street now can still restrict access for larger vehicles. Mary Lou McElwain clarified that it would just extend the current restriction. Eric Eby confirmed that was correct. Public Works Director Rice commented that the 2017 action item was a concern relative to the traffic flow in that area.

City Manager Bohenko stated staff would discuss the inconsistency regarding metering in the area.

Harold Whitehouse asked about the materials proposed in the staging area and a timeline. Public Works Director Rice stated that the staging area would contain a combination of construction material and equipment. The project timeline would be approximately one year.

City Manager Bohenko noted that they were trying to minimize the loss of on-street parking. The goal is to increase parking somewhere else. He spoke to the importance of communication between the businesses and the developer.

Chairman Roberts stated the long-term plan for Maplewood Avenue included one-way traffic on Vaughan Street.

**X. MISCELLANEOUS:**

A. July 5<sup>th</sup> PTS meeting is cancelled due to the Independence Day holiday. Public Works Director Rice commented that because the July meeting is the day after a holiday and there are staffing challenges, the meeting should be cancelled. City Manager Bohenko stated that if something came up that needed to be addressed, the Chairman could call a meeting. Harold Whitehouse requested a meeting be scheduled for July 12<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Roberts suggested cancelling the meeting now and deciding in June if a meeting needed to be held later in July.

City Manager Bohenko moved to cancel the July 5<sup>th</sup> PTS meeting and reassess at the June 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Seconded by Public Works Director Rice. **Vote 8-0, to cancel the July 5<sup>th</sup> PTS meeting and reassess at the June 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

**XI. ADJOURNMENT** – at 8:37 a.m., VOTED to adjourn.  
Respectfully submitted by:

Rebecca Frey  
PTS Recording Secretary