

AMENDED MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – August 2, 2018
City Hall – Conference Room A

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
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Member, Ronald Cypher
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Alternate Member, Ralph DiBernardo

Member Absent:

Public Works Director, Peter Rice

Staff Advisors Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer, Eric Eby
Parking Director, Ben Fletcher

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Ronald Cypher moved to accept the meeting minutes of the June 7, 2018 meeting, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

No financial report.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Liz Good, North Church moderator, spoke to agenda item (VI.C.) regarding motorcycle parking on Pleasant Street. Ms. Good noted that the North Church conducts public tours in the summer and is currently increasing programming at the building. Ms. Good was concerned about the noise impact.

Caroline McMullen, North Church deacon, expressed concerned about agenda item (VI.C.). She stated motorcycle parking was moved to the other side of Pleasant Street a few years ago because North Church's windows are so fragile. She also expressed concern about the noise impact.

Cate Jones is a resident of Portsmouth and spoke to agenda item (VI.C.). Ms. Jones did not see any need to provide any motorcycle parking in Market Square.

Roger Pederson is a resident of Portsmouth and spoke to agenda item (VI.C.). He stated the Police Department has equipment to measure motorcycle noise and to ensure compliance. He said that the motorcycle spaces maximize parking in the City.

Robin Rousseau lives on the corner of Fleet Street and Congress Street. She stated the motorcycle noise level is very high. Ms. Rousseau suggested that motorcycle parking be added at the entrance of the new Deer Street Garage. She felt it would redirect motorcycle traffic out of Market Square.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request for a loading zone on Brewster Street, by The Kitchen. City Manager John Bohenko moved to approve a time restricted loading zone on Brewster Street, north of Islington Street. Seconded by Shari Donnermeyer.

Eric Eby provided background on this agenda item. The loading zone that was there was not in the City ordinances. This action will make it an official loading zone. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the restaurant owner requested that the space be restricted as a loading zone from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Ralph DiBernardo added that the owner did not need the space on the weekends.

City Manager John Bohenko amended the motion to approve a loading zone between the hours of 7 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, on Brewster Street, north of Islington Street. Seconded by Harold Whitehouse. Motion passed 8-0.

B. Request to reaffirm parking restriction on both sides of Hill Street between Bridge Street and Autumn Street, by Martin Burns. **Harold Whitehouse moved to prohibit parking along both sides of Hill Street between Bridge Street and Autumn Street, seconded by Shari Donnermeyer.**

Eric Eby noted that the matter was presented by a resident. Currently, there is No Parking signage on Hill Street at this location. However, there has been a problem with enforcement because it's not in the City ordinance. PTS voted in 2001 to prohibit parking on both sides of Hill Street, but it was not recorded in the ordinance at that time.

The Committee discussed enforcement issues associated with it not being in the City ordinance.

Motion Passed 8-0.

C. Relocate motorcycle parking spaces in Market Square from east side of Pleasant Street to the west side of Pleasant Street. **City Manager John Bohenko moved to table the action item, seconded by Ronald Cypher.** City Manager Bohenko elaborated that this would give City staff more time to research the options presented by speakers in today's public comment period.

Ralph DiBernardo requested Police Captain Frank Warchol explain the state regulations on motorcycle noise and enforcement. Police Captain Frank Warchol commented that motorcycle noise is specifically governed by decibel levels by the State of New Hampshire. NH State law limits the volume of motorcycle exhaust noise at different levels, depending on speed and engine type. He stated that NH State law is specific about how and where motorcycle noise should be measured and provided details. He also stated that by state law, a police officer cannot walk up to a motorcyclist and request to test the bike. In order to legally test a motorcycle's exhaust noise, the driver must be stopped because of a violation e.g. running a stop sign, speeding, having a tail light out. NH State law prohibits the enforcement of motorcycle noise level restrictions at motorcycle-only roadside checkpoints.

Shari Donnermeyer questioned what motivated this proposal. City Manager John Bohenko responded that there has been a lot of frustration about the issue in the area.

Motion Passed 8-0.

D. Request for a handicap parking space at 30 Sudbury Street, by Randle Wright. **Harold Whitehouse moved to designate parking space on south side of Sudbury Street in front of #30 Sudbury Street as Handicap Parking Only, seconded by Ronald Cypher.**

Mary Lou McElwain commented that Randle Wright requested that it not be marked on the pavement, but she felt that it should be marked to be consistent with other spots in the City. Eric Eby noted that the law required a sign that is visible all year round. The City has been adding the pavement markings for extra visibility, but it is not required by law. City Manager John Bohenko pointed out that pavement markings make it more difficult to move the spot, if needed.

Ralph DiBernardo noted that the requester Randle Wright referred to the spot as his designated spot in the letter. He clarified that it would be a public handicap parking space.

Motion passed 8-0.

E. Reinstall NO TURN ON RED signs at the intersection of Middle Street, Miller Avenue and Summer Street. **City Manager John Bohenko moved to prohibit right turns on red at the intersection of Middle Street, Miller Avenue and Summer Street, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.**

Eric Eby noted that this was presented by residents in that area. The sight lines at this intersection are not conducive to allow right on red. He spoke to the visibility challenges of the intersection.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if there was a way to realign the crosswalks to allow for better visibility. Eric Eby responded that the intersection geometry does not allow for realignment because the crosswalks are designed to use the shortest route possible. If they went corner to corner it would increase the crossing distance and create delays for pedestrians and traffic.

Shari Donnermeyer questioned if it was still prohibited to go right on red from Middle Street to State Street. Eric Eby responded there is a blank-out sign that displays only when pedestrians cross.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that it was hard to see the pedestrian lights from the intersection. City Manager John Bohenko responded they would look into adding it to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for next year.

Motion Passed 8-0.

F. Two hour time limit on tennis court and playground parking spaces in South Mill Pond lot. City Manager John Bohenko moved to restrict 9 parking spaces nearest the tennis courts, and the 7 parking spaces currently designated as Playground Parking Only in the South Mill Pond parking lot, to 2 hour parking time limit, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Eric Eby noted that this parking lot is filled to capacity almost every day. It's a free lot that is within walking distance of downtown. People who come to use the facilities have nowhere to park because cars are parked all day. This is an attempt to create turnover.

City Manager John Bohenko questioned if there could be a seasonal restriction added. He stated people will not be using the facilities in the winter. He recommended restrictions be in effect from April to December.

City Manager John Bohenko amended the motion to restrict 9 parking spaces nearest the tennis courts, and the 7 parking spaces currently designated as Playground Parking Only in the South Mill Pond parking lot, to 2 hour parking time limit, from April 1st through December 1st, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the parking spaces would be for the playground only or if they would just have a two-hour time limit. Eric Eby responded that the parking spaces now are marked for playground only and they do not have a time limit. This change would add a time limit to the playground use.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned how this would be enforced. City Manager John Bohenko responded that it would be enforced by making chalk marks on the vehicle tires.

Harold Whitehouse pointed out that there were only three handicap spots in the parking lot. Is that compliant? Eric Eby responded that it was. Harold Whitehouse noted that they were full all the time.

Motion passed 8-0.

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Report back: Langdon Street parking changes. Eric Eby commented that at the last meeting the Committee voted to restrict parking on both sides of Langdon Street except for the one space nearest to the McDonough Street intersection. When City staff erected signage, it became clear that there was not enough room for a parking space because of the crosswalk. Currently, parking is restricted on both sides of Langdon Street from McDonough Street to the end of the street. This report back to the Committee was supposed to address that one spot, and if it was impacting Regan Electric trucks. Since the space does not exist, no report back is needed.

B. Report back: Chairman Robert's parking space suggestions. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that there was a meeting to discuss the parking suggestions on Fleet Street. The final decision was to not do anything in the short term but wait until the roadway is reconstructed. When reconstruction is completed, it will be reevaluated to see if there is room to add parking.

Eric Eby commented on Chairman Robert's parking space suggestion on Maplewood Avenue next to the Bridge Street parking lot. He stated there is a long-term design project on Maplewood Avenue and parking could possibly be added. He stated it is not a good recommendation in the short term because the City is using the area for message boards. Chairman Roberts noted that doing something in the short term could still be beneficial depending on how much parking could be added.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Echo Avenue closed on July 20, 2018. Eric Eby stated the neighbors have noticed a significant benefit to the closure. There is less traffic through the neighborhood. Shari Donnermeyer questioned if the City had notified Google Maps. Eric Eby confirmed that they had.

B. Quarterly accident report. Police Captain Frank Warchol noted that there had been one pedestrian accident during the second quarter of 2018. It happened on the corner of Daniel Street and Penhallow Street. The pedestrian did not use the crosswalk. The July numbers show that the number of accidents in the City is up 2% from last year.

Mary Lou McElwain noted that she had seen quite a few cyclists riding on the sidewalks. Police Captain Frank Warchol stated lack of enforcement was due to the limited number of police officers in the downtown. He stated if they see it, they do address it. The Committee briefly discussed that bicycles are not allowed on sidewalks unless the bike has 16-inch wheels or smaller.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that there was a motorcycle accident recently and asked if they were wearing a helmets. Police Chief Frank Warchol confirmed they were not. Chairman Doug Roberts noted that over 20 people are killed in motorcycle accidents a year in the state. In 2015, 23 people were killed and 37% of those could have been prevented if they were wearing helmets.

Chairman Roberts cited data from the Traffic Safety Facts on Motorcycles dated March 2017 published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration National Center for Statistics and Analysis.

Link to publication provided here:

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812353>

Chairman Roberts moved to forward recommendation to the Portsmouth City Council's Legislative Subcommittee that motorcycle helmets be required in New Hampshire, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. Motion passed 8-0.

C. PTS open action items.

No action required by the Committee.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Possible site visit time change. Chairman Roberts noted that site visits on Tuesdays would happen at 9:00 a.m. instead of 8:00 a.m.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned why parking issues with new developments were not coming in front of PTS. She asked why the Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA) project did not come before PTS. City Manager John Bohenko responded that the land was owned by the PHA. He stated anything on public property should come to this committee. Anything on private property becomes a land use issue. Chairman Doug Roberts added that the PHA made an argument that their project would not be as feasible if they had to fulfill the parking regulations. They used the space to provide more housing rather than more parking. City Manager John Bohenko suggested the Committee could always send a letter to the Planning Board to weigh in on issues.

Harold Whitehouse raised concern about shared motorized scooters. City Manager John Bohenko stated that it was on the August 20th City Council Agenda.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that the property owners on Aldrich Road at Islington Street were straddling the curb and ruining the grass, but it had been addressed by DPW. However, he stated there is another house on the street doing the same thing. He asked if it could be addressed. He also requested staff look at 1244-1246 Islington Street due to vehicles obstructing the sidewalk.

Chairman Doug Roberts had received an email about Madison Street. There is an apartment building where people are parking on the dirt, which is City property. The owner had put up his own boulders. Staff responded that the boulders were removed. Drainage is an issue in the area and would need to be investigated before installing any curbing.

Chairman Doug Roberts and City Manager John Bohenko presented Ronald Cypher with a plaque commemorating his 18.5 years of service on the Committee. This was his last meeting as a member serving on the Committee. City Manager John Bohenko noted that Ronald had seen a lot of changes in the City and worked on many parking solutions. The City staff really appreciated Ronald and his willingness to serve. City Manager John Bohenko stated it was an honor to have someone who was as interested and committed as Mr. Cypher on PTS and he would be missed.

X. ADJOURNMENT – at 9:05 a.m., VOTED to adjourn.
Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary