

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

8:00 A.M. – October 4, 2018
City Hall – Conference Room A

I. CALL TO ORDER:

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

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Chairman, Doug Roberts
Public Works Director, Peter Rice
Police Captain, Frank Warchol
Deputy Fire Chief, James Heinz
Member, Shari Donnermeyer
Member, Mary Lou McElwain
Member, Harold Whitehouse
Member, Ralph DiBernardo

Members Absent:

City Manager, John Bohenko
Alternate Member, Steve Pesci

Staff Advisors Present:

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

III. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES:

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to accept the meeting minutes of the September 6, 2018 meeting, seconded by Ralph DiBernardo. **Motion passed 8-0.**

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Shari Donnermeyer noted that only \$4,500 worth of the Foundry Place parking passes have been sold. High Hanover had significantly more sales. Chairman Roberts confirmed this was correct. Shari Donnermeyer questioned if the Foundry Place reinstatement line item was for people who wanted their money back. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed this was correct.

Public Works Director Peter Rice pointed out that this was a special revenue fund that is treated as an enterprise fund. That means the revenue generated covers the cost of operating the services provided by the parking division. It also provides a contribution to the general fund.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned what percentage went to the general fund. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was approximately 22%. Mary Lou McElwain questioned if that could change. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it would

be a City Council decision. Chairman Doug Roberts added that the parking costs had to be covered first. Then an allocation to the general fund is determined.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that parking passes were moving slowly for the new garage. The plan is to open the garage as soon as possible and promote the passes. Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated August 31, 2018, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. **Motion passed 8-0.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Gerald Duffy congratulated the City on making Middle Street safer with the new bike lanes. Mr. Duffy tested the new street system with his car and bike. The traffic has calmed, drivers are paying more attention, and as a cyclist, Mr. Duffy felt safe.

Brent Schmitt lives on the corner of Cass Street and Middle Street. Mr. Schmitt thought that the new street was over-engineered. Middle Street is in the Historic District and the new plastic bollards take away from the attractiveness of the streetscape.

Steve Sanger complimented the staff on making the City more pedestrian and cyclist friendly with the new sidewalks and bike paths. Mr. Sanger was supportive of the Middle Street changes.

David Allen spoke in support of the Middle Street changes as a private citizen and as a representative of Seacoast Area Bike Riders (SABR). Mr. Allen thought that the sight lines for turning onto Middle Street from a side street had been improved. The Middle Street bike lane is a faster and safer way to get downtown.

Eric Weinrieb agreed with Mr. Allen's comments. Mr. Weinrieb also thanked the City for adding the flashing pedestrian sign at Mendum Street back into the project.

City Councilor Rick Becksted commented that there was a lot of concern from the public about what the Police and Fire Departments think of the Middle Street changes. He was concerned about speed, cars maneuvering around other cars that are parallel parking, turning onto Middle Street from a side street, delivery trucks, garbage trucks maneuvering the street, and the infrastructure of the new bollards.

VI. PRESENTATIONS:

IX.A. Middle Street Bike Lane Project status. Planning Director Juliet Walker spoke to the Middle Street Bike Lane Project status. She noted that this project started in 2012 when the City was awarded grant money from the Safe Routes to School Program. The first public meeting was held in 2014. There have been many opportunities to revisit this project and make changes. History of the project is documented on the web site at <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/planportsmouth/middle-street-lafayette-road-bicycle-pedestrian-corridor-project>.

The project's purpose was to improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. The objectives were to slow traffic, improve pedestrian crossings, maintain parking and

an emergency response route, and create a separate bike path. The emergency response route will be monitored and adjustments will be made if they are needed. The project was mostly done with paint.

The bollards are only in places where there was not a parking barrier, physically separating the lanes help people feel safe. This bike lane was designed for people of all ages who may not be comfortable mixing with traffic. This will be an adjustment for drivers.

One of the efforts for this project was to slow traffic. Pedestrian risk of fatality, if hit by a motor vehicle, decreases significantly if the speeds are slower. Also, the road was designed to make it harder for vehicles to go around each other. Post-construction there is a sidewalk, the bike lane, a buffer and then parking on one side of the street. The other side has at least a buffer, then a bike lane, and then a sidewalk.

It was not feasible to have a protected bike lane for the whole length, so some of it is protected. The rest has a minimum buffer width with a bollard. Pedestrian activated signals were part of this project. Unfortunately, bids for those came in very high, so not all were incorporated at this time. They will be considered in the future as part of a Capital Improvement Project.

The Mendum Street signal was added back in and will be a separate acquisition process. Green paint is being added to delineate bike lanes through the intersections and bike boxes will be added at the South Street intersection. Bike boxes provide a safe way for cyclists to turn left at an intersection. There is a video on the web site that demonstrates how to use the bike box.

The City is coordinating with the Police Department to ensure this new system is used properly. SABR is providing bicycle ambassadors along the corridor during October to help explain the new facilities and observe behavior. Post-construction this is being and will continue to be monitored. The staff has heard the concerns about Aldrich Street and will be investigating. Traffic speeds, pedestrian and cyclist counts, parking counts and parking enforcement are all being monitored. Any recommended modifications will be reported back to the Committee. Any construction project will have a period of adjustment.

Ralph DiBernardo questioned if the Planning Staff considered limiting right turns on red lights where there is a bike box. Planning Director Juliet Walker confirmed that the locations where the bike boxes were added already have a no right turn on red restriction.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if there would be a bike box at the entrance of the high school. Ms. Walker confirmed there would be a bike box there. Eric Eby added that they had to wait for the new signal to be installed first.

Planning Director Juliet Walker added that staff was working with Public Works about what to do with the bollards in the winter. Any project that receives federal funding has to go through a Section 106 review, which is an evaluation of impact on historical and

cultural resources. Planning Director Juliet Walker understood the concerns about the aesthetics, but the City only has funds for paint and temporary infrastructure. This may be revisited when the City resurfaces Middle Street.

Harold Whitehouse questioned where the funds came from for this project. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that roughly \$100,000 came from Safe Routes to School and the rest from City funds.

Chairman Doug Roberts requested an explanation of the bollards. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that the corridor is too narrow to put in something that would be difficult to move or prevent emergency vehicle access. The bollards are a physical barrier that give pedestrians added assurance that vehicles will stay out of the bike lane and vice versa. Harold Whitehouse questioned if they were driven into the pavement. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that they were attached to the pavement, but on the surface only. They will be monitored and when the City resurfaces Middle Street, they may be removed depending on what makes sense.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned how many drivers use Middle Street every day. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded it was 11,000 motor vehicle drivers.

Ralph DiBernardo commented that the City should not eliminate right turns on red at intersections where they make sense because they save gas and help to clear the intersections for emergency vehicles.

City Councilor Rick Becksted questioned if the bike boxes would be on all four sides of the Lafayette intersection. Eric Eby responded that there would just be two on Lafayette Road. He expressed safety concerns about cyclists running into open car doors and becoming injured. There was an incident in Durham where a cyclist died because they ran into an open car door.

City Councilor Ned Reynolds thanked and complimented City Staff. This bike lane has been planned and designed according to national standards. There will be an adjustment period, but it's an enhancement for all modes of travel. It makes the road safer.

Brent Schmitt agreed that it was good to slow down traffic, but thought the road looked ugly. Mr. Schmitt requested a reduction in the number of bollards. Aesthetics should be taken into account.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that it was important to get the design out there and ensure that it was working before investing in something that may be harder to change. Middle Street will be repaved in 2-3 years and that may be the time to revisit.

Planning Director Juliet Walker responded to the incident in Durham that Councilor Becksted had mentioned in his public comment. It was a bike lane that was on the outside of the street parking. The bike lane was too narrow and not designed appropriately. It is nothing like the Middle Street design.

VI.A. Market Street Gateway Project. Planning Director Juliet Walker spoke to the Market Street Gateway Project. There had been a study done in this area. The idea was

to look at creating a complete street and accommodate all modes of transportation. It's a gateway into the downtown and an evacuation route. The project looked at improving the lighting and storm water treatment through pocket parks and median landscaping.

In the preliminary construction plans, the alternatives looked at reducing lanes. Instead of eliminating lanes, staff looked at narrowing travel lanes. A bike lane was added on both sides of the road. A portion will also have a multi-use path. Traffic calming measures were considered as the road gets closer to downtown. The project will be implemented in phases. Phase 1 has already been completed and goes from Kersage Way to the Submarine Way signal. That included streetscape, landscape and storm water improvements.

The next phase will go from Submarine Way to Russell Street and include the Riverfront Park and North Mill Pond Park. Planning Director Juliet Walker walked through a cross section of the street. Future phases will include a riverfront park and pocket park at Russell Street.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if the multi-use path allowed for both directions of travel. Planning Director Juliet Walker confirmed that was correct.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the sumac trees would be preserved during the riverfront park construction. Planning Director Juliet Walker was not sure. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that it was reviewed with the Historic and Natural Resources Group and they did not identify anything specifically that needed to be saved. That does not mean that the landscaping would not incorporate it. The design has not been finalized.

Ralph DiBernardo pointed out that the evacuation route is often used to empty the City after major events. Planning Director Juliet Walker agreed and noted that was considered in the design.

Police Captain Frank Warchol questioned where people would park their cars to go to the pocket park. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that there would be limited on-street spaces, but it would primarily be a walking park. For the park on the outbound side, there is some parking available in the area.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request for handicap parking space in front of 194 Concord Way, by Judy Whittemore. Shari Donnermeyer moved to approve a handicap parking space in front of 194 Concord Way, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. Ralph DiBernardo noted that it would be a public handicap parking spot.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to allow public comment, seconded by Shari Donnermeyer. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Judy Whittemore commented that the parking space should really be at 196 Concord Way to better accommodate snow removal.

Public Works Director Peter Rice amended the motion to approve a handicap parking space and refer to Eric Eby, Parking and Transportation Engineer, to determine the exact location on Concord Way and if there are any issues, Eric Eby will bring action item back to the Committee, seconded by Shari Donnermeyer. **Motion passed 8-0.**

B. Request to designate section of Burkitt Street between Clinton Street and Thornton Street as a Play Street between the hours of 3:30 P.M. and 5:30 P.M. on Sundays, by Eileen Laskoski. Ralph DiBernardo moved to have the applicant proceed with a Complete Streets Demonstration Project application, in accordance with Policy 01-2017, approved by City Council, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to allow public comment, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Eileen Laskoski thought this would be a great trial street because there are 11 kids that live on that section of the street. All of the households in the area are in support of the request.

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that this would start off as a demonstration project and as it progressed it could become something more permanent.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS:

No old business.

IX. INFORMATIONAL:

B. Foundry Place Garage update. Public Works Director Peter Rice noted that the garage is close to completion. The opening day will be October 31, 2018. Managing utilization of parking is part of the overall parking program. Wayfinding signage and pricing will be adjusted accordingly as parking behavior is observed. The Committee will be updated as changes are made.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that it would be great to have the extra parking for the Halloween Parade.

Police Captain Frank Warchol commented on the Middle Street Bike Lane project. The Police Department has received comments of concern from the public similar to what the Committee heard today. This project has been in progress for the past four years and there have been many iterations. One observation is that traffic has slowed down considerably. There are concerns about sight lines coming off of the side roads. There is also concern about cyclists going straight at an intersection when a car is going right. This is specifically a concern at the Greenleaf and Lafayette intersection. Drivers and cyclists will have to be more aware.

The green paint marking the bike lanes will help. One of the biggest challenges so far is people parking in the bike lane. Parking in a bike lane is considered blocking vehicular traffic, which means a car could be cited or towed. Police Captain Frank Warchol is looking at other communities to see how they handle these situations. The Police Department is addressing the concerns as they come up.

Public Works Director Peter Rice added that the Public Works Department understands that this will require more effort from them. Any new configuration on a roadway will take time to adjust. This is a matter of collecting data, figuring out what the issues are, and adapting if possible.

Chairman Doug Roberts questioned if there was a specific point of contact for comments on the Middle Street Bike Lane project. Planning Director Juliet Walker responded that she and Eric Eby should receive comments. A link will be added to the web site for comments.

C. Hanover Parking Garage closures. Parking Director Ben Fletcher noted that the report was divided into the first three quarters of the year. Quarter 1 had 13 total closures. 10 were on the weekend, 3 on the weekdays and they averaged about an hour and a half. Quarter 2 had a total of 40 closures. 18 were on the weekend. 12 on the weekdays and they averaged about an hour and a half. Quarter 3 had 60 closures. The average closing time was slightly longer than previous quarters.

D. Fire Prevention Memorandum. Deputy Fire Chief James Heinz was asked about code enforcement as it relates to traffic calming measures. The memo states that the Fire Department has approval over traffic calming devices. Deputy Fire Chief Carl Roediger prepared a memo addressing the topic. If there were any questions, please contact Deputy Fire Chief James Heinz or Deputy Fire Chief Carl Roediger.

E. NH School Safety Preparedness Task Force report. Deputy Fire Chief James Heinz noted that the Governor assembled a task force. They spent about 1,000 hours working on a school safety plan. It is relevant to this Committee because it talks about how lives are measured in seconds. Every second matters when responding to an active shooter event. Every time-saving device, even those that increase response times by mere seconds, must be given full consideration. The report is available online at: <https://www.governor.nh.gov/news-media/press-2018/20180705-school-safety-report.htm>.

F. Quarterly Accident Report. Police Captain Frank Warchol noted that last quarter had three accidents, two of which included bicycles. One included a pedestrian. There were 92 accidents in July and 120 accidents in August. This is slightly less than last year.

Chairman Doug Roberts requested an accident report at every meeting similar to the report submitted to the Police Commission. Police Captain Frank Warchol responded that he would discuss it with the Police Chief Robert Merner and report back.

G. PTS Open Action Items.

No action required by Committee.

X. MISCELLANEOUS:

Chairman Doug Roberts noted that the City Council requested that the Parking Traffic and Safety Committee work on the Neighborhood Parking Program. The pilot program is focusing on two areas: Islington Creek Neighborhood and the South End Neighborhood. The neighborhoods are working with staff to develop the program. It would be presented to the PTS Committee and then forwarded to City Council for final approval.

Harold Whitehouse stated he was the only member to vote against the Middle Street Bike Lane project. He stated he would sit back and watch it very closely. He stated he would accept change, but wanted the public to know that he did not approve of it at first and would be watching it closely.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if there were plans for parking spots on Pleasant Street in front of the Langdon House. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that was not part of the project and there are no plans related to parking.

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary