

## MEETING MINUTES

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

8:00 A.M. – October 8, 2020

Remote Meeting via Zoom

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

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

#### **II. ATTENDANCE BY ROLL CALL:**

##### Members Present:

City Councilor/Chairman Peter Whelan

City Manager Karen Conard

Public Works Director Peter Rice

Fire Chief Todd Germain

Police Captain Mike Maloney

Steve Pesci

Jonathan Sandberg

Harold Whitehouse

Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

##### Absent:

Mary Lou McElwain

##### City Staff Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby

Parking Director Ben Fletcher

Planning Director Juliet Walker

#### **III. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Jonathon Sandberg questioned if the Bridge Street Lot closure for Pop-Up NH was included in the budgeting projections. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded it was not. The adjusted budget was based on the changes and reductions made during budgeting in response to COVID-19. The City is currently tracking above what was projected. Parking Director Ben Fletcher added that they are tracking ahead, but they are entering the slowest portion of the season, with reduced events.

**Harold Whitehouse moved to accept and approve the financial report as presented, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed.**

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Liza Hewitt spoke in favor of lowering the speed limit on Middle Road and considering other safety measures. Speeds of over 40 mph occur regularly on this road. Ms. Hewitt submitted a petition to lower the speed limit to 25 mph. There are a lot of pedestrians on the road and they need to be able to cross the street safely.

Molly Wilson spoke in support of lowering the speed limit on Middle Road. The City worked to lower the speed on South Street, but the City needs to lower speeds on Middle Road as well. The goal is to keep the neighborhood safe for everyone.

John Thompson commented that his house was the first driveway on the left after the blind curve on Woodbury Avenue. Mr. Thompson noted that Janet Thompson submitted a detailed proposal, asking to reroute traffic from the one-way section on Woodbury Avenue. Mr. Thompson supported making this stretch of Woodbury Avenue restricted to resident only traffic. Otherwise traffic will only get busier. Most cars go over the 25 mph speed limit around the blind curve. Removing two parking spaces in the area may help with visibility, but parking is already an issue.

Janet Thompson echoed John Thompson's comments. There continues to be an abundance of traffic on this street. Trucks continually use this street even though they shouldn't. Ms. Thompson proposed blocking this part of the street off to non-residents and make it a U-turn cul-de-sac.

Andrea Ardito commented that she moved her shop, Nest, to 100 Albany Street. She was worried that parking would not be available for businesses on Albany Street. The small businesses on Albany Street can't survive without parking. Ms. Ardito requested adding 2 curbside compact car spaces with a time limit of one hour. Public spaces could also be provided in the lot across the street with 1-2-hour parking. Additional parking will provide relief to the small businesses in that area.

Michael Shea commented that backing out of his driveway is not safe. He supported the suggestions made about Middle Road. Pedestrians are walking in the street to keep social distancing precautions. Motorists need to slow down and be more aware of people in the street.

Thomas Morley commented on removing the 30-mph sign to make the road 25 mph. It is good to learn that most drivers go under the speed limit, but not putting up a new sign will reduce awareness. The new speed limit sign should be posted. Chevrolet Ave. should be 25 mph or lower. Lowering the speed limit is critical for pedestrian and traffic safety.

Rebecca McBeath echoed the previous comments about Middle Road and encouraged the Committee to look at the petition. The traffic needs to be slower on Middle Road.

Janelle Beaudry-Clark spoke in support of Ms. Hewitt's petition. Children use Middle Road to walk, bike and scooter. Cars are frequently moving too fast. Essex Avenue is used as a speedy "cut through". The Committee should consider lowering the speed limit on Islington Street.

Elizabeth Kinney spoke to the traffic on Bartlett Street. Traffic has become reckless with speeding. Cars are not stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Traffic calming measures need to be put in place. There should be more signage.

Kristen Wilson owns Decades antique store at 100 Albany Street. She spoke to the public parking on Albany Street and the complaints about where vehicles are parking. Businesses need available parking on the street. Instead of eliminating parking spaces, the Committee should stripe lines for spaces and post signs. The two spaces near the Weekender should be

marked as 1-2-hour parking. She stated that employees are parking in the spaces all day, which eliminates turnover for business customers.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Request for 2-hour time restriction for new parking spaces at corner of Albany Street and Brewery Lane.** Eric Eby commented that there was no recommendation at this point, but there were some options to discuss. Two spaces may be able to be striped against the island. The area is mostly on public property. However, City staff would need to work with the Weekender owners because some of the area may be on their private property. It could be designated public parking with a sign. Putting a time limit on the spaces would need to be approved by this Committee and City Council. Another idea is to keep parking on Albany Street. Traffic is not too bad on Albany Street. However, it can be tight if someone is trying to turn onto Albany Street and a car is at the stop sign and another car is parked on the street. Right now, there is temporarily no parking until the Islington Street Corridor project is completed. The options are restricted because of the private property in the area. The Weekender gets tractor trailer deliveries regularly. Right now, cars can park up to 72 hours. Time restrictions would be required to encourage turnover. Traffic will increase in this area. Being a yield street may not be a long-term solution. The Committee will need to look at a long-term solution.

Jonathon Sandberg suggested putting a couple of spaces in front of the pet grooming business across the street. Mr. Eby responded that would result in the same problem of cars sticking out in the street. It is a difficult area to accommodate parking.

Erica Wygonik questioned if the yellow lines on the road could be shifted to make more room for parking. Mr. Eby responded that the road was 26 feet wide. An 8-foot parking lane would leave two 9-foot travel lanes. Erica Wygonik noted that it would be nice to have parking for the businesses, but the Committee would not want to create a safety concern. It is not a good place to have long-term parking.

Chairman Peter Whelan suggested putting a time limit on parking between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. This would allow for overnight parking.

Steve Pesci commented that the Committee needed to think through a reasonable accommodation and he was concerned that they were trying to create too much parking. It is not necessarily the best public policy to squeeze parking spaces into every inch of asphalt. This neighborhood is changing dramatically, and it may make sense to make the street a one-way for a long-term solution. The Committee should do something in the short term, but they need a long-term plan.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the Committee could implement a temporary solution and look at a long-term solution later. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that a temporary solution could not be implemented until after construction ended in the area.

Erica Wygonik noted that a comprehensive look at the block and the overall area was a good idea. It would be nice to try 30 minute parking for a month or two to see if it alleviates concerns. Erica Wygonik questioned if it would be possible to move the yellow center line to reallocate road space. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed it would.

Chairman Peter Whelan requested that City staff report back with a recommendation for a temporary solution when the detour ends and then look for a long-term solution. Chairman Peter Whelan questioned if they should wait to take action on the two spaces at the Weekender lot. Mr. Eby responded that he needed to work with the owners before any action is taken.

**Erica Wygonik moved to have staff report back at the next meeting on reasonable intermediate plans to address concerns on this block of Albany Street, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.  
On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

**B. Report back on traffic calming request on Chevrolet Avenue, by Thomas Morley.**  
Eric Eby commented that a traffic recorder was installed on Chevrolet Avenue. The average speed was 22 mph and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile was 26 mph. The recommendation was to remove the 30 mph speed limit signs. Removing the signs would keep speeds as they are. There is no speeding issue at the present time.

Steve Pesci commented that this case may be worth going to the City Council to establish and post 25 mph speed limit signs. No signs could create a potential challenge.

Police Captain Mike Maloney noted that no signs could be problematic because awareness is part of motor vehicle and traffic laws. It doesn't make it impossible to enforce, but it would be harder.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the 30 mph signs should be removed now and then submit the speed limit change proposal to the City Council. There is currently a design to build sidewalks on Chevrolet Avenue. Traffic in that area is dangerous.

Steve Pesci moved to have staff remove the 30 mph signs on Chevrolet Avenue and prepare a proposal to make that street a 25 mph speed limit with posted signs. Additionally, the Planning Department and Public Works Department should start work on a neighborhood traffic pattern plan, in coordination with the sidewalk work, and address logical street naming according to E-911, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Harold Whitehouse requested a shorter motion.

**Steve Pesci moved to remove the 30 mph speed limits signs on Chevrolet Avenue and prepare a recommendation to the City Council to change the ordinance to make Chevrolet Avenue a posted 25 mph street corridor, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.  
On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Steve Pesci moved to have staff begin the process to develop a comprehensive street development plan, as resources permit, and use addressing street naming conventions for E-911, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he supported the concept, but allocation of resources was outside of this Committee's authority. The Committee should request for the City Council to include money in the annual budget to complete this study.

**Steve Pesci moved to respectfully request that the City Council allocate funds to the Planning and Public Works Departments to conduct a comprehensive street network plan for the Chevrolet Avenue, Brewery Lane and Albany Street area, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.**

**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

**VI. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Report back on the intersection of Marcy Street and Mechanic Street.**

Eric Eby commented that they have not had any new response from the owner, but are continuing to reach out. The owner stated in a letter that they were not willing to do more than was required by the Boards. Mr. Eby was hopeful that when a dialogue happens the owner will understand it would not be a large endeavor.

**VII. INFORMATIONAL:**

**A. Monthly accident report, by Police Captain Mike Maloney.**

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that the month of August had 74 reportable crashes. A reportable crash is when the cumulative damages are over \$1,000. There have been 492 reportable accidents this year. There was one bike accident in July at the intersection of Mechanic Street and Marcy Street. There were minor injuries to the bicyclist. There were no pedestrian accidents to report.

**B. Maplewood Avenue pedestrian signal changes update.**

Eric Eby noted that the contractor made the final changes to the signals downtown. Pedestrians will now get a 5 second head start to the traffic. Turning traffic must yield to pedestrians. There are now two buttons at each corner; one for each crosswalk. Overall, there is less delay for pedestrians and motorists. There will be a learning curve.

**C. Traffic volumes during pandemic.**

Eric Eby commented that traffic volumes continue to run 80-85% compared to last year. Bike lane usage at South and Lafayette has 30-40 bikes per day.

**D. PTS Open Action Items.**

No Committee discussion.

**VIII. MISCELLANEOUS:**

**A. Bartlett Street neighborhood traffic calming report back.**

Eric Eby commented that the Committee has talked about this several times in the past. Plans have been presented to the neighborhood with several traffic calming measure options. They were left with the neighborhood to discuss and try to reach a consensus. That resulted in installing yellow bollards at Bartlett Street and Thornton Street. It helped reduce speeds. There were also bollards installed at the Pine Street crosswalk. Now there needs to be further consensus on what the neighborhood would like to see happen. There is a proposed roundabout at Bartlett Street and Thornton Street. However, this is currently a truck route until the Cate Street Connector is completed.

Jonathon Sandberg commented that the bollards were not installed after the winter season. Eric Eby responded that the neighborhood did not want the bollards put back in. It was not a consensus to use them long-term.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that there were a number of options for traffic calming. In order to do significant improvements, truck traffic will need to be restricted. There is an item in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) identifying a new multi-phase project to upgrade the neighborhood.

Steve Pesci requested the Committee get historic data about traffic and speeds in that area. The new connector may change things dramatically. The Committee should be cautious of any dramatic changes at this point.

City Manager Karen Conard commented that she and others met with the neighbors. A short-term consideration could be to call more attention to stop signs in that area. There were concerns about the obvious disregard for the stop signs.

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that for the last 3 years, that intersection has had more dedicated traffic enforcement efforts than in any other part of the city. There is plenty of enforcement in that area, but the intersection continues to be a little bit of an issue.

Erica Wygonik commented that updating the stop signs for better retro reflective signs would be a quick fix. They should be evaluated for any visibility issues. Eric Eby responded that the biggest issue was the lack of side street traffic. People roll through the stop sign because of it.

Steve Pesci questioned if putting in a two way stop on Woodbury Avenue and Cottage Street would help. That would force Woodbury Avenue southbound traffic to stop at the intersection. Mr. Eby responded that he would need to review the traffic volume data.

Staff will report back with recommendations on short-term measures. Staff will also report back once the Cate Street Connector has been constructed and opened to traffic in the summer of 2021.

**B. Middle Road speed and safety concerns, by Liza Hewitt.**

Eric Eby commented that there have been concerns about this crosswalk, but they have not found speeds in excess. The speed limit is 30 mph and cars are complying. The speed limit can be lowered, but the data doesn't justify it. The real solution is to change the character of roadway to adjust the speed in the area. Currently, there is not a lot of reason to slow down because the road is wide and straight.

Steve Pesci commented that this was an arterial street. It does not make sense to make this a 25 mph speed limit because of the physical nature of the road and enforcement. Steve Pesci commented that it was important to respect the residents' concerns and also to respect the data.

Chairman Peter Whelan commented that it may be worthwhile to collect more data. Eric Eby confirmed that he would update the data.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented there may be an opportunity to try a pilot, with a temporary configuration change, to monitor speed and see if it changes speed levels. That

could give the residents a feeling of some forward motion. They need to constrict the road to slow down traffic.

**Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to have staff collect and evaluate speed data, and make a recommendation at the next meeting for a pilot project on temporary speed reduction mechanisms, seconded by Steve Pesci.  
On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

C. Aldrich Road petition submission by residents. Chairman Peter Whelan spoke to the letter and petition submitted. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he did not have a chance to review the letter, but was involved in the previous traffic calming effort. An exhaustive review with input from residents dictated the configuration of the current roadway.

**Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to have staff review previous work done on Aldrich Road concerning traffic calming and report back to the Committee, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.  
On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

Harold Whitehouse commented that the City Hall demonstration on the “Dutch Reach” was very informative.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT:**

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn at 9:56 a.m., seconded Steve Pesci.  
**On a unanimous roll call, motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky Frey  
PTS Recording Secretary