

Citywide Neighborhood Committee Zoom Meeting
Wednesday, January 27, 2020, 6:00 pm

I. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

II. Committee Attendees: Larry Cataldo, Lori Soloway, Mark Syracuse, Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine, Paul Mannle and Beth Margeson.

City Employees: Peter Stith, Planning Department (coordinated Zoom for City), Peter Rice - DPW Director, Dave DeFosses - DPW, Eric Eby - DPW, Captain Mark Newport - Portsmouth Police Department, and Stephanie Seacord - City Manager's Office

Members of the Public: Councilor Cliff Lazenby, Rep. Jacki Cali-Pitts, Rep. Gerald Ward, Juliet Grant, Kathleen Boduch, Ken Goldman, Wendy Kessler, Stacy Moore, Kelly Sieper, Bob Tuttle, Pat Hughes, Jessica Dundon, Joan Hamblet, Alice Carey, Helen Gettelman, Steve Dunfey, Diane Stradling, Ann Cummings and Janice Hodges.

III. Discussion of Neighborhood Issues:

1. Wibird Avenue/Chevrolet Street/Hannaford's:

Juliet Grant of 243 Wibird Street reported on the chronic issues with Cass Street and Chevrolet Avenue. Ms. Grant explained that the problem is that on Chevrolet Avenue, right as you come off of it onto Cass Street, there is not any sidewalk that extends the whole street, particularly the mini shopping center area e.g., behind Mojos Restaurant. There is more development there - new homes on Cass Street and the development on Chevrolet Avenue. In short, there is no specific safe place to walk as a pedestrian. At night time, it is particularly hard to see and be seen, especially with snow on the road. Diane Stradling raised same concern. There was a Ward 2 Meeting on this issue 1.5 years ago now and she has talked to DPW Director Rice about it more than a few times but nothing has been done to date.

Peter Rice said that he is aware that there have been a lot of concerns about Chevrolet Avenue for a couple of years. City concurs that there needs to be a sidewalk connection. The developers did build some of the sidewalk, particularly Chinburg. However, Chevrolet Avenue is not a city street and a good portion of it is private property. In order for the city to build a sidewalk, it needs to negotiate easements with private property owners.

Dave DeFosses, Project Manager, added that the Parking Traffic Safety Committee requested an evaluation of the traffic impacts in and around that whole neighborhood. Eric Eby received proposal to move forward with that analysis. Dave added that the city hired Ambient Engineering to do a survey of the area, which the City just received that morning. He reiterated that the City recognizes that this is a heavily used area, and added that the safety of the residents is important. The City want to improve it. First 100' is a city street, and the rest is private. The City would need to negotiate public rights of way and easements.

The City has entered discussions with Malt House Exchange. The money for the survey and the engineering design came from the Chinburg development. When asked if this proposal would include lighting, Peter Rice said that adding light poles would be something that could be included in the design phase. Rice added that neighborhood input - having a gentle hand on back

- helps to move things forward. The challenge for the City is getting ability to have work done on private property.

The City Council is not in favor of taking property by eminent domain, so property owners need to be compensated appropriately. Assistant Mayor Splaine suggested writing a letter to the City Council. Councilor Lazenby said that the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) hearings are coming up in February and this is a good context in which to raise this issue. Lazenby also stated that there is an input method for citizen requests for this and said it may be good to get this on that list.

In response to a question from the undersigned secretary, Director Rice said that suggested capital projects can be added to the CIP even before they have been engineered and designed. It can go in as an information request. He said that the funding from Chingburg covered design and survey phase and he wasn't sure if any funds would be left over for the other aspects of the proposal. Additional monies would need to be gotten through CIP for funding by the City Council.

Beginning the Committee discussion, Larry Cataldo suggested that a joint letter from CNC and Wibird neighbors could go to the Council. He asked Captain Newport if there were any traffic safety issues in that area. The Chief acknowledged that traffic has picked up significantly due to development. Chevrolet Avenue is now a quick cut-through to get through to Hannaford's. Juliet Grant asked whether these considerations were embedded in the planning prior to development. Captain Newport said that traffic impacts go through TAC, but they only relate to the actual property that is being developed. Diane Stradling mentioned that the Plaza owns substantial property along Chevrolet Avenue; "have we asked them for permission?" Director Rice said the city was optimistic that an agreement could be reached. But until you define how much of an easement is needed (through a plan and design), a property owner can't commit.

Paul Mannle suggested a "101" session on public rights of ways and easements so that the public can become educated about what these are.

2. Dondero School/Stage Location issue will be discussed at a later meeting per the request of Mark Syracuse.

3. Report on parking issue at Little Harbour Neighborhood for Farmer's Market. The undersigned clarified that there were no issues with the farmer's market neighborhood parking. But I (Beth) asked Director Rice how the restriction of parking during the Saturday farmer's market around the neighborhood came about.

Director Rice said that the neighbors were concerned about overflow parking, and requested that there be no parking including residents not parking on the street as well. As part of the stipulated agreement, the Seacoast Grower's Association, put up and took down parking signs. The issue did not go through the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee as it was part of the emergency Covid-19 situation. The undersigned said that she did not want to revisit the contentious neighborhood parking program for the Gates and Howard Street areas in the South End, but that the neighbors the real so needed parking relief due to the arts festival operating at Prescott Park and would like to get a similar program for this summer. Although they could not have no parking on the streets like Little Harbour School due to the lack of driveways and garages, the

program could be adjusted to accommodate that. Director Rice indicated that with the farmer's market, it was only once a week to which the undersigned noted that the festival operates 6 nights a week so there should be commensurate parking in this case. He suggested getting a proposal together and talking to Councilor Peter Whelan (Chair of the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee) to put it on the PTS agenda, which the undersigned will do.

IV. New Business

1. Holiday Lights Contest Report

Mark Syracuse did a summary of the Holiday Lights contest. There was a total of 76 entrants. 25 people won Honorable Mentions and the top 3 in the categories of Best Overall, Most Creative and Best Classic/Traditional won \$500 gift cards to Lowe's, Home Depot and Ricci Lumber. The idea behind the Lights Contest, according to Mayor Becksted, was to get people together by getting them to decorate their houses and have residents enjoy them. The prizes reflected the need for people to buy essentials - food, home repair supplies and gas - which are much needed at this time.

The poster featuring the winners hangs in City Hall and was given to everyone involved in the event as a thank-you gift. Stephanie still needs some addresses however for some of the participants.

2. Discussion on how to make the 2021 Holiday Lights Contest even better

Moving forward, Mark thought to begin organizing the lights contest by September 2021, continue to have Stephanie Seacord partner with the Portsmouth Herald to run ads in the paper, do online marketing through social media with Laura Brown, which Stephanie felt gave the event good traction and boosted the number of participants.

Larry noted that in 2012-2013 - the last time this event was held – it drew just 30 participants. He thanked former CNC members, Christy Cardozo and Kathy Bergeron, for providing valuable input for the initial planning. Larry received comments received as feedback which will be incorporated into next year's planning and the suggestion was to have the time period for doing this be less compressed. Lori Soloway and the undersigned suggested that we should include condos and historic homes in the contest.

3. The next meeting is on February 24, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

4. Schedule for the remainder of the year.

There will be a meeting a month, except for March, until June, although there may not be a June meeting unless it is needed. After that, August 11th, October 20th and December 11th are planned.

For March, there will be no regular meeting, but in its place a Ward 1 forum to be held on March 31st. Lori Soloway will be coordinating the event.

V. Upon the motion of Mark Syracuse and seconded by Lori Soloway, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Beth S. Margeson

Beth S. Margeson
Secretary