

Citywide Neighborhood Committee Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2021, 7:00 PM

Committee Attendees: Larry Cataldo, Lori Soloway, Dave Cosgrove, Mark Syracuse, Paul Mannle, Beth Margeson, and Jim Splaine

City Staff: Police Chief Mark Newport, Fire Chief Todd Germain, Department of Public Works Director Peter Rice, William Gatchell, Peter Stith (Planning Department) and Stephanie Seacord, Public Information

Members of the Public Present: Ken Goldman, Wendy Keyes, Darrin Sargent, Scott Forte and Steve Dunfey

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm by Chair Larry Cataldo who announced that this will be the last time that the CNC will be meeting via Zoom.

Kim McNamara, the City's Health Officer reported on the conditions for the August 3 National Night Out. She said that Portsmouth's Covid-19 numbers continue to improve and that there has been a mammoth effort at vaccination. That, by August 3, 12 years olds and up will have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and be passed the two weeks of building that immunity. She pointed out that outdoors is safer than indoors and it is low risk unless it is densely populated. The area of concern is the group of people 11 years and younger - they are not vaccinated. Her recommendations are that, for fire trucks that have that big cavernous area, to limit that to the kids of one family at a time and that for demonstrations for police K-9, try not to have people clumped together.

Comments from members of the public on neighborhood issues:

Robin Rousseau asked about a resident permit parking. Larry Cataldo responded that nothing really happened. The issue has moved forward for the Islington Creek area. The intent of the Parking Traffic Safety Committee is to look beyond just one parking permit trial. He believes that there are a number of developments that are removing parking spaces throughout the city, that the issue is wider than just one neighborhood and that, in particular, the downtown area is being affected.

Assistant Mayor Jim Splaine says that the City Council has been focused on this issue for some time. Peter Rice has been trying to come up with downtown/resident parking and suggested he could work on the issue. All the communities - nationwide and statewide - need to come up with a fair system. He said that Larry Cataldo has come up with good approaches for the Islington Creek neighborhood.

Peter Rice responded to the Assistant Mayor that he will wait for direction from the City Council and that he does not make policy. Larry Cataldo wants to get through the Islington Creek pilot program and wants to hear from the Council. Robin Rousseau would like a committee set up to address it.

Robin Rousseau informed the committee and attendees that on Memorial Day, local historian Sue Polidura will be having a historical talk at North Cemetery on Maplewood Avenue at 2:00 pm on Memorial Day. The rain date is Saturday, 6/5/21, at 10 am. Scott Forte would be willing to donate money for flags for that particular cemetery as it is not on his organization's radar.

The next topic of discussion was the planning for National Night Out on August 3, 2021. Chiefs German and Newport will have representatives on the committee. Dave Cosgrove will be helping Larry Cataldo. Peter Rice commits to providing staff and vehicles to go to different sites, and said that the kids love getting on trucks. The Fire Department will have all their usual trucks and staff on site. Larry asked the neighborhood representatives to send the name of the representative to the CNC. He noted that two years ago, 20 neighborhoods were represented. On July 7, there will be a Zoom meeting for the neighborhood representatives to talk about needed equipment and concerns they may have - a community relations officer may show up.

Scott Forte, president of Seacoast Crimestoppers, talked about National Night Out from his point of view. It's been around since 1983, the goal was to build better community/police relations and has featured Crime Dog McGruff. In that time, 36,000 groups and 13 million people have participated. Next year, they hope to end the night with a firework display.

Mark Syracuse, Larry Cataldo and Stephanie Seacord will put out a flyer - a mark your calendar announcement - and send invitations to the list of individual neighborhood representatives that the CNC has so far and do the usual press release notifications. They will need to identify neighborhood groups who want to participate and contact people to see what they need. Chief Newport will work on equipment distribution. They don't know if banners are still extant as they may have been lost. The group will work with Scott Forte, Rochelle Jones of the Portsmouth Police Department and Detective Robert Munson on coordination of activities and to locate banners.

Lori Soloway asked - when gathering the list of neighborhoods - how many groups can the Fire, Police and Department of Public Works handle. Mark says it can cover everyone - they have about 20 and that may grow a little bit. There were 29 official neighborhoods in 2010 but it has decreased since that time. For Crimestoppers and McGruff - they can only handle 13.

A rain date of August 10, 2021 for National Night Out is good. Scott Forte noted that some surrounding communities - including York and Exeter - do just one larger gathering in a central place as in the past 5 years, NNO had dwindled. It makes sense to bring more people together in one location.

The undersigned asked whether we had information on our attendance. Dave Cosgrove noted that National Night Out is also gatherings of neighborhoods to discuss issues and that there is a convenience factor with young kids. A question could be included on the questionnaire to the neighborhood groups to gauge interest. There are about five or six neighborhoods that have 20 or more attendees but most have less. Steve Forte and Dave Cosgrove will have the ability to merge data to see if there are potential consolidation opportunities. Assistant Mayor Splaine said that even if there were only 10 people, that for the two or three kids that might be there, it would be so impressive for them to see a police car or fire truck or

have a police or fire chief spend ten minutes with them is just something they will always remember. That this was all worth the effort. Scott Forte stated that they will do what is best for whatever the neighborhoods decide. He asked the group to keep in mind the start times - sometimes when it begins at 5 pm, no one is there and they can't always get back to that neighborhood - so to consider varying the start times. He did say that it was hard to hit all of the neighborhoods, they are often looking to get on to the next neighborhood.

The next meeting of the CNC will be a Ward Forum in September - the date to be determined. With no further items to discuss, the meeting ended at 7:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Beth S. Margeson

Beth S. Margeson
Secretary