

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

3:00 PM – June 3, 2021
Remote Meeting via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Peter Whelan called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.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
Mary Lou McElwain
Steve Pesci
Jonathan Sandberg
Harold Whitehouse

Member Absent:

Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

City Staff Present:

Parking and Transportation Engineer Eric Eby
Parking Director Ben Fletcher

III. FINANCIAL REPORT:

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept and approve the financial report as presented, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. **On unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.**

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Judy Miller commented on the pedestrian crossings on Maplewood Avenue, at Deer Street, Hanover Street and Congress Street (into Islington Street). She believes signal changes to be problematic. Also has a concern about the decibel level of motorcycles in the downtown, she has noticed motorcycles revving engines, would like better monitoring of this. When she went to City Hall noted there is no longer a crosswalk from the parking lot to City Hall entry, recommends it be repainted. Spoke at Police Commission meeting on May 25th on both issues.

Andrew Bagley commented on Congress Street /Middle Street /Islington Street intersections. Feels pedestrian cross signal is dangerous. Wants to see safety data.

Jason Combs commented on speed testing since installing bollards and additional measures put in place on Middle Road, says that placement of crosswalk flashers has been helpful.

Evan Mullen filed an online traffic calming request application so they can have a discussion in the future. He commended and thanked the Committee and DPW staff for significant effort towards making the City safer and more pedestrian oriented.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Request to post NO PARKING HERE TO CORNER sign on end of McNabb Court, by resident. Eric Eby provided an aerial view of McNabb Court showing the residence, garage, and street. Eric Eby commented that McNabb Court is only a 240-foot wide street, and it is difficult to get out of the garage at the residence. He noted that the end of the street is an intersection, and there is technically no parking within 20-feet of an intersection.

Harold Whitehouse commented that he did a site visit of the area. Harold Whitehouse moved to approve the installation of a sign 20-feet from the corner at the end of McNabb Court, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Chairman Whelan questioned if installing the sign was within the Committee authority. Eric Eby confirmed that it was and stated this can be done without further approval.

On unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to approve placement of sign 20-feet from corner at end of McNabb Court.

B. Proposed parking safety violation fine increases, by Parking Director Ben Fletcher. Parking Director Ben Fletcher clarified all changes approved by City Council on May 17th, 2021 were for the selected categories to move from \$15 to \$35, and increase to \$55 at 30 calendar days. The Snow Ban fine was approved at \$35/55, not \$50/100 as originally proposed in early discussions. The adjustments approved on May 17th for emergency snow ban violations are correct, and require no further adjustment, motion is to approve the other fines (noted in table below). All items listed are recommended to go from the \$15 to \$25 and then to the \$50.00 after 30 days.

Description	Recommended Fine	Recommended Fine After 30 Days
Parked within 15 ft of Fire Station	\$25.00	\$50.00
Obstructing Traffic During Construction	\$25.00	\$50.00
Double Parking	\$25.00	\$50.00
Parked in Wrong Direction	\$25.00	\$50.00
Back to Curb	\$25.00	\$50.00
Distance from Curb	\$25.00	\$50.00
Parked Too Close to Intersection	\$25.00	\$50.00

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve fine adjustments as presented, seconded by Steve Pesci.

Public Works Director Peter Rice stated this was something the City Council was concerned about and referred back to the PTS Committee. He wants to be sure there is consensus.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented the fines presented previously and that were approved by the City Council represented about 90% of the citations written. Chairman Peter Whelan asked if the violations presented here are approximately 5% of the fine revenue. Parking Director Ben Fletcher clarified it is actually 2% to 3%.

On unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to approve increases in fines for parking safety violations as presented, and forward to City Council for request for First Reading.

C. Request for traffic calming measures on Sherburne Road, by residents of Sherburne Road. Eric Eby commented this request was submitted online. He monitored the vehicle traffic and averages speeds were well over the posted speed limit of 20 mph. The fastest speed recorded was 63 mph and the average speed was 29 mph, with 85th percentile speeds of 34 mph. He stated this is a legitimate concern.

He stated the next step is for the applicants to gather signatures from at least 50% of the neighborhood showing support for the request. Eric Eby has been in contact with the applicants, and they are aware of the process. He commented it should be noted that Sherburne Road is a dead-end street and the excessive speeds are coming from the residents.

Chairman Peter Whelan stated he received a phone call about this agenda item and there was an accident involving a car that rolled on its side.

Mary Lou McElwain stated that one ticket to a resident would change the behavior in the neighborhood.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer to staff, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. **On a unanimous roll call 9-0 voted** to refer to staff for report back.

D. Request for two 1-hour limit spaces on Portwalk Place, by Seacoast Spine & Sports Injuries. Eric Eby stated the request was submitted by Seacoast Spine and Sports Injuries. They have requested two spaces in front of their office be designated as 1-hour for patients. Currently these are Stay and Pay spaces, so vehicles can stay as long as they want while feeding the meter. Eric Eby commented that there is not a lot of information at this time, and therefore he does not have a recommendation for the Committee.

Eric Eby noted that while this request may help this business, it has potential to harm other businesses in the area. Chairman Peter Whelan questioned if the road is private. Eric Eby stated the road is private, but is administered as public. Parking rules and regulations apply to the street. It's a matter of how the revenues are collected and distributed back to the property owner.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if this is approved, would a person/patient need to show a handicap placard to occupy the space. Parking Director Ben Fletcher stated not as currently proposed. A separate handicap space exists nearby already. He stated there are no other 1-hour limit spaces in the City. These spaces represent about 40% of the parking inventory on this street. It would only be fair to reach out to the other businesses and property owners to get their thoughts on this requested change.

Mary Lou McElwain moved to refer to staff to report back with recommendations, seconded by Steve Pesci.

Steve Pesci commented on the precedence that could be set by allowing a business to have its own 1-hour limited parking spaces, and concerns on the practicality of enforcement. If the Committee starts receiving more of these requests, it could defeat the purpose of the Stay and Pay program. He recommended moving forward cautiously.

On unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to refer to staff for report back and recommendation.

E. Discussion of time limit for handicap vehicles in downtown on-street parking spaces. Parking Director Ben Fletcher stated the State RSA does not allow the City to charge for handicap parking, but the City can enforce the time limits. Stay and Pay allows for the time limit to be a maximum of one day. There have been complaints that people with handicap placard are taking advantage and parking in a space all day.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher stated Attorney Jane Ferrini has been in conversation with the State. They understand what the City has done with the pricing and are looking into what is the best way to move forward. He stated he wants to be sure to get it right and that it is fair.

Harold Whitehouse asked if the handicap license plate is different than a handicap placard. Parking Director Ben Fletcher clarified they are treated the same in regards to enforcement. Harold Whitehouse commented he would like to see what other communities are doing in this scenario. Chairman Peter Whelan questioned if this should be tabled until Attorney Jane Ferrini gets more information. Members confirm.

Steve Pesci moved to table and bring back when Attorney Jane Ferrini has done more research, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard.

On unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to refer to staff for report back and proposed ordinance.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

No agenda items.

VII. INFORMATIONAL:

A. Public input session to kickoff intersection improvement project at Greenleaf Avenue and Lafayette Road on June 3, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. No Committee discussion.

B. Islington Creek Neighborhood Parking Program public meeting on June 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers and public participation will be via Zoom and in person.

C. Monthly accident report from Police Department. Police Captain Mike Maloney stated there were 53 total crashes in April. This is about double from last year during COVID, which is not surprising since people are out and about again. He stated there was one motor vehicle crash involving a bicyclist, and one involving a pedestrian. In the bicycle accident, the operator of the vehicle was summonsed for failing to yield. The pedestrian accident occurred on Bridge Street in a parking lot and is part of a criminal case.

He stated that additional patrols will be present in May, June, July, and August. They will

be specifically targeting everything from distracted driving, speed, pedestrian / bike safety, and DWI patrols.

Mary Lou McElwain commented about distracted driving. She stated the law has been on the books since July 2015. She is seeing so many distracted drivers. She asked if the Police Department was ticketing or just giving verbal warnings. Police Captain Mike Maloney agreed and stated they are issuing tickets and giving verbal warnings.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if verbal warnings could be eliminated. Police Captain Mike Mahoney explained why they could not eliminate verbal warnings.

D. Status of Chevrolet Avenue sidewalk. Public Works Director Peter Rice stated staff met with property owners in the area. The City Council has approved the transfer of the property. Staff has secured enough easements to be able to construct the project. Construction is anticipated to begin in September.

E. Status of Chevrolet Avenue/Brewery Lane area traffic study. Eric Eby stated the traffic study has been submitted by the consulting firm. They have recommendations and staff want to meet to discuss before presenting to the Committee. A couple things being considered are; making a 4-way stop at Brewery Lane and Jewel Court that was in place during construction last year, a 4-way stop at the intersection of Cass Street, Chevrolet Avenue, and Lovell Street, and a one-way traffic pattern in the area.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if there was a need for another stop sign at Cass Street, coming out of Brewery Lane. This is a well-traveled street. Eric Eby confirmed that was a recommendation.

Steve Pesci questioned if Jewell Court at Islington Street was part of this study. He is concerned about Jewell Court at Islington Street. It is a right turn only and he is concerned about safety. Eric Eby said that the intersection was not part of the study, but Jewell Court at Brewery Lane was reviewed. He stated that having "Do Not Block" markings at the intersection would be beneficial.

F. Locations of speed feedback signs and pedestrian RRFBs. Eric Eby presented the updated map. Staff added RRFBs at Foundry Garage at the corner of Deer Street and Bridge Street. One was added at Middle Street and Aldrich Road. Jonathan Sandberg commented there looks like there are two new ones on Cate Street. Eric Eby stated they were installed by the developer. He stated that more speed feedback signs have been ordered.

G. Bike and vehicular traffic volume data. Eric Eby presented the bicycle volumes at Lafayette Road at South Street. Activity has picked up in May due to the good weather. He presented traffic volumes at Lafayette Road at South Street as compared to 2019. He stated traffic volumes are coming back and were about 90-95% of pre-pandemic levels.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if this was the only vehicular and bicycle monitoring signal in the city. Eric Eby stated there is another one at Market Street and Nobles Island at the Port Authority signal. We also have a new one at Islington Street and Bartlett Street. Bicycle and vehicular data at Islington Street and Bartlett Street has been collected for the last 6 months, but construction traffic has been a factor.

H. Middle Street bike lane status update. Eric Eby stated the bike lane section with parking between Cabot Street and Lincoln Street was blacked out and parking was put back to the curb. Staff have been monitoring speeds and volumes regularly and the data is in the packet. Vehicular speeds have increased slightly in that section. Bicycle activity is about same as last year. There isn't a permanent counter installed so data is collected periodically. Middle Street speed data shows an increase in April when parking was placed back at the curb.

Eric Eby stated they are in a 6 month process working with NHDOT. Staff will be bringing on a consultant to do some public process work and they will be looking for input on a permanent solution for the bike lane, as well as other alternatives to meet the requirements of the federal grant funding.

Jonathan Sandberg asked when the 6 month period started. Eric Eby stated April 1st was when the parking was moved back to the curb. He stated they are in discussions with NHDOT about specifics.

Harold Whitehouse commented that he's heard nothing but good reports about the changes. He stated people are worried about the funding being returned to NHDOT. Eric Eby stated that it is part of the 6 month process, they are hoping to find an alternative to satisfy everyone.

I. Aldrich Road traffic calming update. Public Works Director Peter Rice stated staff are having discussions with the residents of Aldrich Road. Discussions included explaining the proposed traffic calming approach, which was to add 3 speed tables as part of the CIP process. However, there is an area in the roadway at Boss Avenue where a speed table could be installed. The problem with installing speed tables is having drainage in the appropriate places. He stated the Boss Avenue location has the appropriate drainage, and as a pilot effort, the DPW staff will be installing speed table.

Public Works Director Peter Rice stated the other 2 locations would need to be included in the CIP due to the additional drainage work required.

Chairman Peter Whelan questioned when the Boss Avenue speed table would be installed. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he anticipates it would be installed this summer.

Fire Chief Todd Germain confirmed that the Fire Department prefers speed tables over a series of speed bumps.

J. PTS Open Action Items. Mary Lou McElwain commented that some of the action items on the list go back to 2017, and she would like to review the entire list at the next meeting. She specifically spoke to the stop sign at Marcy Street and Mechanic Street. She stated it is not effective. She asked if the stop sign could be installed in the street. The existing one is placed too far back and people ignore it. Chairman Peter Whelan agreed.

The Committee will review the entire PTS open action items list at the next meeting.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS:

A. Moped parking dos and don't's, public outreach forthcoming. Chairman Peter Whelan commented that he has been getting calls about mopeds and scooters parked on sidewalks and in front of stores. He asked about public outreach to educate the owners. Public Works Director Peter Rice stated that any outreach needs to clearly state that mopeds and scooters cannot obstruct the sidewalk. The enforcement officers are ticketing mopeds and scooters when they are improperly parked. He stated outreach is needed and he will discuss it with the Public Information Officer. Jonathan Sandberg suggested reaching out to scooter shops. The Committee discussed several public outreach ideas.

Steve Pesci commented as a scooter owner, he supports moped and scooter parking restrictions. He believes some polite enforcement is needed, and suggested tracking the plate numbers for scofflaws and repeat offenders.

B. PTS meeting times for July, August, and September at 3:00 p.m. Harold Whitehouse requested the July meeting be scheduled on July 8th. Chairman Peter Whelan concurred.

Harold Whitehouse requested DPW look into the crosswalk at City Hall mentioned in public comment. Eric Eby commented it was not restriped because it didn't meet ADA standard; it did not have tip downs, and grades were not compliant. It would need work done to do it. Public Works Director Peter Rice said staff will look at it again.

Chairman Peter Whelan spoke to the concerns expressed in public comment about the pedestrian signals on Maplewood Avenue, at Deer Street, Hanover Street and Congress Street. Eric Eby stated the signals are working properly and it is a matter of public education. Mary Lou McElwain requested the signals be discussed in-depth at the next meeting. Chairman Peter Whelan stated it would be on the agenda under old business for the next meeting.

Mary Lou McElwain provided an update on speed signage to be created by school children. It is moving forward and funding options are being looked at.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she saw people pay for parking on Memorial Day because there was no signage. Public Works Director Peter Rice comments the ordinance does not say free parking on Holidays, the ordinance says no enforcement on Holidays. Chairman Peter Whelan stated the issue will be put on the July meeting agenda.

IX. ADJOURNMENT:

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn. Mary Lou McElwain seconded. **On a unanimous roll call 9-0, voted to adjourn.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathryn Chodor and Shanleigh McGonagle, Department of Public Works