

MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

3:00 P.M. – August 5, 2021

CONFERENCE ROOM A

CITY HALL, MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE

*Members of the public also have the option to join the meeting over Zoom
(See below for more details)**

3:00 PM

August 5th, 2021

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ATTENDANCE

Members Present:

City Councilor/Chairman Peter Whelan

City Manager Karen Conard

Public Works Director Peter Rice

Mary Lou McElwain

Steve Pesci

Jonathan Sandberg

Harold Whitehouse

Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

Absent

Fire Chief Todd Germain

Police Captain Darrin Sargent

City Staff Present:

Parking Director Ben Fletcher

III. FINANCIAL REPORT

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the financial report shows the entirety of fiscal year 2021. They finished 30% ahead of the revised budget but still lower than the original budget.

Chairman Peter Whelan noted that 2.4 million went into the general fund from parking revenue. Parking Director Ben Fletcher noted that there was also 1.8 million in services.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the financial report dated June 30, 2021, as presented, seconded by Public Works Peter Rice. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT (15 MINUTES)

Lisa Oaks of 315 Little Harbor Rd. noted that the amount of traffic and speeding on the road was awful. It is difficult to get out of the driveway. It is a popular recreation area and the traffic and speeding make it dangerous. The request is to put in a 15 mph speed limit sign and increase the police presence in the area.

Chuck Collins of 3 Little Harbor Rd. noted that the area has undergone changes with the Carey cottage and a new day camp. It is a good recreation area but has become heavily traveled. It has been difficult for pedestrians especially during peak drop off and pick up hours for the camp. The 30-mph speed limit is too high. It should be 15 mph. There should be signage posted telling people to be respectful of the recreational area.

Scott Forte of 777 Middle Road recently had a parking ticket appeal denied but has proof he paid for the parking. Mr. Forte was told that if he wanted to appeal that decision, then he would have to sue the city. Parking Director Ben Fletcher noted that they could discuss this issued further offline. Public Works Director Peter Rice clarified that the public should contact staff with these types of issues not the Parking Traffic and Safety Committee.

Joan Griffin of 75 Walker Bungalow Rd. was supportive of the Little Harbor Rd. request. Also, people should not be parking at the egress of the cemetery. Ms. Griffin asked when the parking would be given back from the restaurants. City Manager Karen Conard responded that the restaurants have the spaces until the end of October.

Lisa Oaks of 315 Little Harbor Rd. questioned who owned the road down to the water. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was a city right of way all the way down to the water.

Scott Forte of 777 Middle Rd. questioned if the restaurants would get the parking space back in the spring. Chairman Peter Whelan responded that would be a City Council policy decision that will be addressed year to year.

V. SITE VISITS

273 Austin Street- Citizen Request for No Parking zone across from private drive access (Aug 3rd, 3pm-3:30pm)

VI. NEW BUSINESS

(No public comment during Committee discussion without Committee approval.)

A. Request to post NO PARKING across from private drive at 273 Austin Street.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that the request was to eliminate a one parking spot to allow the people at 273 Austin St. to enter and exit their driveway. There is a stop bar near that area and there should be 20 feet of no parking before that. It would be a benefit to box out no parking and leave one space. Parking is a premium in that area, so

it is important to be sensitive to that. The recommendation is to box out one space and monitor it for a year.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to have staff paint an area to delineate one parking spot on Austin St., seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that she has seen the same car parked in that area a few times. That block of Austin St. is narrower. It is a reasonable request because it is hard to get out of that driveway.

Erica Wygonik commented that it was complicated because it is hard to take public parking away. Erica Wygonik questioned if parking had to be 20 or 30 feet away from the stop bar. It is a very narrow road and hard to get out of that driveway if there was parking there.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned why this issue was being brought up now. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that he was not sure what the driver behind it was. It has been a complaint in the past. Parking is at a premium. Delineating one space is a balance to both sides. A similar action was taken on Brewster St. a couple years ago.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that it could be a neighbor issue. There is parking on both sides on the upper end of Austin St. There could be questions raised about making accommodations for off street parking.

City Manager Karen Conard requested clarification on if there was already only one space in that location because of the no parking 20 feet from the stop bar, and this would just be making that clearer. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that it does help clarify it. If they were truly following state guidelines, then there would be restrictions for parking around any driveway. Public Works Director Peter Rice was hesitant to be too much of a stickler as long as it was not a safety issue. There is a narrow section of parking that is part of 274 Austin St. The committee can choose to hold on action and monitor for a report back if they wish.

Erica Wygonik questioned if neighbors were alerted that this was on the agenda. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that only 273 Austin St. was notified.

Mary Lou McElwain moved to refer to staff to monitor and report back, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

B. Request for RRFB (flashing beacon) at crosswalk situated at 2 Greenleaf.

Mary Lou McElwain moved to evaluate intersection and its crosswalks with the redesign of the intersection, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

C. Request for RRFB (flashing beacon) at crosswalk(s) situated at Marcy and Pleasant (Sanders Fish Mkt.).

City Manager Karen Conard moved to staff to monitor traffic and report back, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Erica Wygonik questioned which crosswalk was being discussed. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it was the one that went across Pleasant St. They have already placed a camera on the pole and there is a view of all of the crosswalks.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

Chairman Whelan allowed for public comment.

Chuck Collins of 3 Little Harbor Rd. questioned if it would monitor pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that it would specifically monitor pedestrian traffic.

Steve Pesci noted that the city should consider laying out a policy on when and where RRFB's would make sense. They are only effective if they aren't overused and if they are used in the correct locations. They are not designed to be used at controlled intersections. They are more for midblock use.

D. Request by Resident for traffic calming measures and speed limit signage on Little Harbor Road.

Mary Lou McElwain moved to staff to monitor traffic and report back, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that Little Harbor Road was 30 mph because that is the default speed according to state law. The minimum speed that can be posted is 25 mph if it is supported with a warrant study. There are many streets in the city that posted at a speed that is not enforceable. The challenge is posting a speed limit that is enforceable and is not arbitrary. Part of that effort would entail monitoring speeds and determining the average speed through the area. The key to speed control is to create a feeling of constriction to prevent people from going fast. They will look at the flashing sign and alternate means of slowing traffic.

Jonathan Sandberg noted that this area was studied a few years ago and the time average speeds were in the 20s mph. There may have been more monitoring that the Committee didn't follow up on. Staff should look back at that data.

Erica Wygonik noted that they should look at speeds during the summer while the camp is running, and recreation is high. Then they should monitor it again in the fall to assess if there is a big difference.

Chairman Peter Whelan allowed public comment.

Lisa Oaks of 315 Little Harbor Rd. questioned how they would monitor the traffic. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they would install a speed radar that logs the speed and volume of traffic.

Chuck Collins of 3 Little Harbor Rd. commented that the three-year-old data would be inaccurate because the camp did not exist then, and recreation has increased during the pandemic. Walker Bungalow Rd. is 15 mph and Little Harbor Road should be too.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Request for two 1-hour limit spaces on Portwalk Place, by Seacoast Spine & Sports Injuries. **Sample Motion: Staff to provide recommendation at 8.5.21 PTS.**

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that initial observations showed that one spot was underused because the paint had faded. That was repainted and usership increased. After more observation it was determined that cars were parking in those spots for an average of 1.5 hours. The spaces are turning almost at the requested 1-hour limit. There are no other 1-hour limit signs in the city. Setting one up here would cause confusion and would be hard to enforce effectively. The recommendation is no change at this time.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to make no change at this time, seconded by Steve Pesci. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

- B. Discussion of time limit for handicap vehicles in downtown on-street parking spaces. **Sample Motion:**

Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini commented that they reached out to the NH Office of Disability to understand what obligations there were to provide free parking for those with walking disabilities with the new stay and pay program. They were informed that they can set a reasonable time limit for free parking. At the last meeting the Committee discussed a 3-hour time limit and this revision to the ordinance was drafted in response. There were some housekeeping items that were cleaned up in the draft. The new paragraphs outline that the reserved parking spaces would allow for 3-hour free parking and would be permissible during hours of enforcement. After that three hours the car parked there would be unlawfully parked. The ordinance makes the distinction that this only applies in parking meter zones. The last paragraph defines that they are entitled to a free three hours at any other space and then can utilize the stay and pay program if they want to stay longer.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if the state recognized the service-connected disabled. Assistant City Attorney Jane Ferrini responded that there are plates for disabled veterans and that would be recognized in this ordinance.

Mary Lou McElwain questioned if veterans had to pay for parking. Parking Director Ben Fletcher responded that there was nothing official in the ordinance about that, but it's been a long-standing unspoken policy. After this change is complete the intent is to officially codify it.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer this to City Council, seconded by Steve Pesci. On a roll call, motion passed 7-0-1.

Harold Whitehouse abstained from the vote due to conflict of interest.

A. Request to review sight lines, traffic calming and crosswalks at Kensington and Middle. Sample Motion: Staff to provide recommendations at 8.5.21 PTS.

- a. Install an RRFB (flashing beacon) crosswalk system for crosswalk across Middle Road to Lafayette Park.
- b. Removal of parking spaces on north side of Middle Road, directly west of Kensington, to increase sight lines
- c. Add a Speed monitor with display
- d. Install a Seasonal Speed Hump

Parking Director Ben Fletcher noted that there were initially 4 requests from the citizens email, and he would address them one at a time. The first request was to put in an RRFB across Middle Road to Lafayette Park at Kensington Rd. They collected data at this intersection. In order to warrant an RRFB there should be 20 crossings in an hour. During peak hours this crossing maxed out at 6 for the 3-hour period. There were also large enough gaps in traffic that resulted in no wait time to cross. At this time, it is not recommended to add a crosswalk in this location. The second request was to remove parking spaces on the northside of Middle Rd. directly west of Kensington Rd. There is a well observed no parking sign for 20 feet from the intersection. When the signage was originally placed it was correct. Now the sign needs to move to meet specifications to be 20 feet from the inside of the crosswalk. That will increase sight lines. The third request was to add a speed monitor with display. The speed limit is 30 mph. They collected data in this area and the average traffic speed was 25 mph. At this time, it is not recommended to add a speed monitoring sign. The last request was to add a seasonal speed bump to reduce speed. Middle Rd. is an arterial roadway, and it is not general practice to install physical traffic calming measures on these streets.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to adjust no parking sign to be placed at the crosswalk, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Chairman Peter Whelan commented the making the Middle Rd. and Middle St. intersection a T has helped as well. Harold Whitehouse requested details on the plan to change that whole road. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that monies have been identified in the CIP to do traffic calming along the entirety of Middle Rd. One anticipated solution would be to T up the intersection.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

B. Request for traffic calming measures on Sherburne Road, by residents of Sherburne Road.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to refer to staff for report back, seconded by City Manager Karen Conard. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL

A. Cate Street and Bartlett Street progress update by Public Works Director Peter Rice.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that historically there has been a problem for traffic coming from Islington St. and going to Cate St. There was often a conflict with Bartlett St. traffic. There is a new road to the Bypass and a reconfiguration of this intersection was necessary. This has been done in an iterative process. The existing configuration is what was settled on. The goal was to promote traffic flow in a safe manner and change the through traffic from Bartlett St. to Cate St. There is still a challenge with traffic going up Bartlett St. from the Ricci Lumber side and limited sight lines. Mid-block crossings are dangerous, so a stop bar was chosen as a safer option. They are currently monitoring the area with a traffic camera. Traffic is flowing well with very little conflict. One area that remains a concern is the slip lane for pedestrians. They are looking at alternatives to address that. Additional time is needed to evaluate the change in traffic pattern. It takes time to acknowledge the change in a traffic pattern. They are not ignoring the concern but are evaluating options while monitoring the traffic pattern change. Staff will evaluate and report back.

Harold Whitehouse requested clarification on the conflict with Hodgson Way. City Manager Karen Conard commented that staff investigated this concern. There is a Hodgson Farm Lane in Newington, NH. There was a Hodgson Lane in Portsmouth, but that is now Woodbury Ave. There was confusion because Portsmouth and Newington share a zip code. Staff reached out to 911 services, and they don't have an issue with Hodgson Way in Portsmouth and Hodgson Farm Lane in Newington.

B. Monthly accident report from Police.

Police Captain Darrin Sargent was absent, so no report was presented.

C. Bike and vehicular traffic volume data.

Jonathan Sandberg questioned if data from the Islington St. and Bartlett St. intersection could be included as well.

Traffic Engineering Intern Andy Rosenberg responded that the graph for that intersection does exist, but it is not accurate right now because the traffic is impacted by the construction in that area.

D. PTS Action Items.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if they were still looking to paint the crosswalks rainbow, and if that should come to this Committee. City Manager Karen Conard responded that staff gave guidance to the nonprofits and asked them to consider painting the sidewalks instead. They are not planning to paint the crosswalks anymore.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that there was a neighborhood meeting for Mount Vernon St. to talk about the speed and traffic on that street. That street has mostly city employees and it is very narrow. Mary Lou McElwain requested that they respect the speed limit on the road and pay attention. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed that staff should be following the speed limit on any street.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

X. ADJOURNMENT

Harold Whitehouse moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m., seconded by Mary Lou McElwain. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 8-0.

Respectfully submitted by:
Becky Frey
PTS Recording Secretary

**Members of the public also have the option to join the meeting over Zoom, a unique meeting ID and password will be provided once you register. To register, click on the link below or copy and paste this into your web browser: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-qiCVaQASUyLTwMV-r0b9A*