



City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire Mayoral Blue-Ribbon Committee

Zoom Meeting Minutes, January 26, 2022, 6:30 PM

Committee Attendees: Larry Cataldo, Lori Soloway, Mark Syracuse and John Tabor, City Council representative. Also attending were Kathy Bergeron, former CNC chair and Marie Kelleher and Kathleen Boduch, both former CNC committee members.

City Staff: Zachery Cronin, Assistant City Engineer, Public Works Department and Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer

Members of the Public present at different times via Zoom: Ken Goldman, Laurie McCray, Wendy Keyes, Gayle Blumeberg, Elaine Apatang, Sally Minkow and Diane Strading

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Chair Larry Cataldo.

A. Comments from Neighborhood Residents

- Marie Kelleher commented on speeding problems along Peverly Hill Road. She cited two incidents, one being a police cruiser (without flashing lights) going over 45 mph in a 25-mph zone and the second, a Public Works truck, observed speeding along the road. Zach Cronin said he would mention it to Peter Rice. (After the meeting, I spoke with Chief Newport who said his patrol officers are well aware of speed limits but exceed it only when they are on an emergency call. It is common not to use flashing lights when traffic is light.
- Diane Strading observed that it was very dark in front of the Portsmouth Women's Club on 375 Middle Street. It needs a street light. (After the meeting, Zach Cronin reported that "I looked into this comment and saw that there used to be a streetlight at that location. In the winter of 2021, a large tree fell across Middle Street and a number of telephone poles were replaced, including the pole at that location. I assume this is when the light disappeared. We have submitted a work request with Eversource to reinstall the light."
She also said that often times the "no turn on Red" is often ignored by drivers traveling in the vicinity of Middle-Summer/Miller Streets and Middle-Lincoln Streets. "There should be some accountability."

B. Committee Business

Larry Cataldo opened with suggestions for improving attendance at the CNC sponsored forums, noting that at the forum in November, only a few residents attended. How, he asked, can we increase the attendance, given considerable set-up time at the venue and numerous public announcements. He suggested three ideas to start the conversation: 1. Hold forums on specific topics. For example, hold a forum on sound barriers at the Franklin School with school officials and neighborhood groups speaking

out. Another example is to hold a forum on the results of Islington Creek's neighborhood parking program pilot program. 2. Hold forums sponsored by specific neighborhoods. And 3. Hold a special meeting on parking problems in Portsmouth.

- John Tabor, while not specifically commenting on changes to the forums, highlighted a major objective of the City Council to increase communications with residents. He emphasized that this is an important topic. More comments are needed.
- Kathy Bergeron felt that the low November turnout may not be caused by any specific forum problems but, rather, due to the ongoing pandemic affecting many city residents and people getting over the recent city election. She liked the idea of topic-specific forums and suggested round-table discussions as a way to keep topics in focus. She reminded us that the original idea for the Ward forums was to hear from residents about problems that are not downtown specific. She further suggested holding more forums in the Public Library where residents feel comfortable to attend and the audio/visual facilities are ideal.
- Mark Syracuse suggested that the CNC should continue to use Zoom as an ideal venue for residents to have a safe environment to comment on issues without feeling threatened or challenged.
- Ken Goldman thought that holding a forum on citywide parking problems would be much more acceptable than just speaking about parking in a specific neighborhood.
- Laurie McCray felt confused about the role of the CNC. She suggested that we should spend more time telling residents about what we do and who we are trying to reach. She also liked the idea of holding meetings at the Public Library and also of holding hybrid in-person and zoom sessions.

When asked how she would market what we do, she replied that we should reach out to neighborhood representatives who can share information to their membership.

- Kathy Bergeron concurred with Laurie and urged us to find people from each neighborhood to spread the word about the CNC's meetings and forums.
- Stephanie Seacord, who was unable to comment at the meeting, suggested we use the registration list from the Holiday Lights registration which had 58 respondents. She suggested that we could do a newsletter monthly or every 2 weeks (the way the Public Works announced its construction projects weekly) to keep those interested in CNC and neighborhood news informed.
- Ken Goldman also commented on the successes of the CNC, such as promoting a sidewalk for Chevrolet Avenue. We should advertise that the CNC meetings are a good place to get the City's attention to neighborhood issues.
- Mark Syracuse urged that the CNC should be as visible as possible either through a city newsletter and other city news outlets.
- John Tabor closed the comment session with a suggestion to use social media sites as a way to keep visible. Some sites have thousands of members in special groups.

Larry Cataldo said these are great ideas and plans to share them with the new committee when it is formed. He thanked everyone for making very thoughtful comments.

The meeting concluded at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Larry Cataldo, Chair

