MEETING MINUTES

PARKING and TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Portsmouth, NH
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)**

8:00 AM **MINUTES** **January 6, 2022**

I. CALL TO ORDER

City Manager Conard called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Members Present:
City Manager Karen Conard
Public Works Director Peter Rice
Fire Chief Todd Germain
Police Captain Mike Maloney
Mary Lou McElwain
Steve Pesci
Mark Syracusa
Harold Whitehouse
Erica Wygonik (Alternate)

Absent

City Staff Present:
Parking Director Ben Fletcher

III. FINANCIAL REPORT

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they were doing better than what they budgeted for in almost every category except one, which is on target.

Harold Whitehouse moved to accept the Financial Report dated November 30, 2021, and place it on file, seconded Public Works Director Peter Rice. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT (15 MINUTES)

Lenore Weiss Bronson of 828 Woodbury Ave. spoke to the traffic calming request submitted by the Frank Jones Farm Neighborhood for Woodbury Ave. There have been traffic calming requests for this area since the '90s. There have been multiple requests for stop signs and speed bumps to be installed along Woodbury Ave. Ms. Weiss Bronson was told that the request was submitted to the CIP. It was reviewed by the PTS, and it was put on file or is not being dealt with at this point. There is no stop sign between Granite St. and Bartlett St. Action has been promised in the past, but nothing has ever come of it. This area has a history of horrendous accidents. Cars come through this area to get to Home Depot and other shopping areas. However, they should access that shopping area from the traffic circle and Brady Dr. Traffic is being diverted into a residential neighborhood. This problem needs to be addressed. They did install sidewalks, but it's still unsafe. There are no crossing guards in this area for kids getting on the bus. Nobody uses the crosswalk because it's not in a place where they would normally cross. There are 250 homes in this neighborhood and this speeding problem needs to be addressed. This neighborhood should be closed like Echo Ave. was. The City needs to stop deprioritizing this area. It is not an expensive project to put in stop signs. The Committee should propose a concrete solution that is not put on file.

Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the concerns have been heard. The process of coming up with solutions started last fall with the collection of data. There is a project in the CIP that speaks to traffic calming measures. There are ideas being developed to move forward. The concern that has been raised and has been heard. It has not been ignored. The process is underway and there are funds identified in the CIP for traffic calming. This project was not specifically called out in the CIP because it's funding for a series of projects. Stop signs have come before the Committee many times in the past and have not been deemed warranted.

City Manager Karen Conard commented that they would schedule a meeting about Woodbury Ave. and other traffic calming efforts. It will be properly noticed and there can be a larger discussion at that time. For now, the Committee will take Ms. Weiss Bronson's letter.

Robin Russo supported Ms. Weiss Bronson's comments. Ms. Russo sat in the breakout committee for the pilot parking program for the Islington Creek Neighborhood. More people were supporting the program than not supporting it. The program has been an overwhelming success. Ms. Russo lives in the Mcintosh Building and requested that their neighborhood be considered next for a permit parking program. This neighborhood takes the the brunt of tourism. It is their turn for a parking program. Ms. Russo requested that these meetings happen in the evenings instead of the morning, so more people could attend.

V. SITE VISITS: None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

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

A. Request for crosswalk with RRFB, just west of the intersection of Islington St. at Vine Street

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to have Staff review traffic activity in Spring 2022 and report back, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was a citizen request. There will be more traffic in the spring and summer than now, so they will evaluate then.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

B. Request for No U-Turn sign request at Market St. Extension and Nobles Island

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this was another citizen request. The picture shows where the U turn would be located. They need to discuss whether or not it is warranted.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that it was unclear on how big of a problem this really was. There have been no prior complaints about this. Public Works Director Peter Rice had not reviewed the MUTCD requirements about when it is appropriate. They needed to do more research to understand how big of a problem this was and when a U-turn was warranted.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if any part of that road was State controlled. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was not.

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that they do have traffic counts for that area already. They can add a camera to observe how many U-turns are happening.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to have Staff research and report back with regard to traffic data, accident data, standard parameters for disallowing U-turns, seconded by Harold Whitehouse.

Mark Syracusa commented that a lot of people heading outbound realize that they don't want to go all the way down, so people make illegal moves.

Erika Wygonik commented that a warranted U-turn may be based on crash history.

Steve Pesci commented that unless there have been accidents there in the past, then they should keep the U-turn as long as there is engineering capacity. It would be good to have that flexibility if it can be maintained safely.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

C. Request for 4-way Stop at the Intersection of State Street and Union

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that this as another citizen request. The requesting party believes it would be beneficial to have a 4 way stop here.

Erika Wygonik moved have Staff study and report back with regard to traffic volumes, layout and industry standards, seconded by Public Works Director Peter Rice.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if they should add a timeframe for the report back. City Manager Karen Conard responded that they currently had limited staffing resources so, they would work as fast as possible. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that they were working with a contract engineer right now. This would require a warrant evaluation and they would have to collect traffic counts. This will take a few months.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

D. Request to add LED Accent Lighting to New Stop Signs on Banfield Road

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to approve and install four (4) LED-Accented Stop Signs on Banfield Road, seconded by Mary Lou McElwain.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this proposal was brought forward by DPW after looking at the new stop signs along Banfield Rd. and the crash history in the area. People are not aware of the stop signs as they are going down the road. The LED lighting will help bring awareness.

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that the Police Department would see this as a benefit. People are running these new stop signs in excess of 25-30 mph. City Manager Karen Conard questioned how many stop signs this would apply to. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded four.

Harold Whitehouse questioned how they would be powered. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they would be solar powered LED lights.

Erika Wygonik suggested adding a sign about a new intersection control ahead. It might be good to put up a temporary sign to alert people.

Mark Syracusa questioned if the word new was effective on the stop signs. Police Captain Mike Maloney responded that they were effective and working in the sense that the stop sign is clearly visible. People have been driving the street 20-30 years and are not used to stopping. Public Works Director Peter Rice added that the word "new" is on there to tell people that it hasn't always been there. It's not a traffic control element; it's informational.

Steve Pesci commented that he supported introducing the LED signs. However, they should use them judiciously and develop a threshold for appropriate use because of the cost. They should not have these all over town. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that this decision came down to police monitoring and accidents. That was the justification to add it.

Erika Wygonik suggested that they could add the LED for a medium-term duration then move them to another part of the City after people got used to it. Public Works Director Peter Rice did not agree because it would be problematic. If they were doing a temporary sign, then it should be separate from the stop sign.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Confirmation of formation of Sub committee to study Portsmouth Street Inventory and make speed limit recommendations. (NB 11.16.21)

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they were concerned that they forced this through without confirming if Erika Wygonik and Steve Pesci were interested in participating in this. Staff can take the lead or support them in this effort.

City Manager Conard commented that staff should come up with the initial plan and then consult Erika Wygonik and Steve Pesci.

Erika Wygonik confirmed that she would be happy to participate and support the effort. Public Works Director Peter Rice confirmed that staff would put the plan together and take the lead. Then they can report back. Steve Pesci agreed that he would be happy to participate and work with staff.

City Manager Conard commented that they could form a subcommittee to review what staff comes up with. Public Works Director Peter Rice noted that it would be better to start this as a working group and report to the committee in a public format after some work has been done.

City Manager Karen Conard moved to have Staff work to develop a draft Portsmouth Street inventory, share it with a working group, the byproduct of which will come to before PTS Committee for consideration, seconded by Mark Syracusa.

Steve Pesci noted that there were a couple items about minimum speed limits going through the legislature right now. They should keep an eye on that.

On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

B. Request for RRFB at the Intersection of South Street and Broad Street (NB 11.16.21)
Sample Motion: Staff to Place Traffic Camera in Spring 2022 and Report Back

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this was just informational. There was no motion needed for this.

Harold Whitehouse commented that they talked about putting in a blinking light at the corner of Broad St. and South St. but those are not effective. Harold Whitehouse questioned if raised pavement would be more effective. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that the issue wasn't speeding as much as pedestrian crossing visibility. A raised table would not address that concern. It was not a blinking light that was proposed. It was an RRFB.

Steve Pesci commented that this falls into the category of being judicious about introducing electronic signage in the City. This looks like a safe crosswalk. It will be good to see a report back.

VIII. INFORMATIONAL

A. Monthly Accident Report from Police

Police Captain Mike Maloney commented that there were 70 crashes total and 40 in the month of November. They are tacking around average.

Harold Whitehouse questioned if they could stencil the words "look up" in the crosswalk to encourage people to look up from their phones and be aware of the cars. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that there were very specific things that they can and cannot put in the crosswalk, so it may not be possible. Harold Whitehouse questioned how they could educate people to look up. City Manager Karen Conard responded that it was just common sense.

B. Bike and Vehicular Traffic Data

Parking Director Ben Fletcher commented that the counts were considerably higher and closer to the 2019 numbers in both Noble's Island and the South St. locations.

C. Middle/Miller Street presentation by Derek Caldwell from Sebago Technics 12.9.2021

Traffic Engineer Derek Caldwell and Project Manager Brad Lyon from Sebago Technics spoke to the redesign proposal for this intersection. Mr. Caldwell commented that the purpose of the project is to modernize the signal and increase mobility for vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes. The intersection is at Middle St., Miller Ave., and Summer St. Today the four-way signal operates on a fixed time setting. There is no detection for vehicles, so the signal runs regardless of the vehicle demand. The existing pedestrian crossings will be maintained, and the curb ramps will be upgraded. There are no separate bike facilities out there today. The concept designs show opportunity for a more formal bike lane. There is no emergency vehicle preemption today, and this design will incorporate that. Today there is one traffic signal on a mast arm and the rest are on posts. Overhead traffic lights are better for visibility. Traffic volumes are based on traffic counts taken this past summer and adjusted for Covid. Middle St. had the major movement and northbound had the highest. Miller Ave. had a heavy right turn movement. The first option would maintain the existing lane configuration. One change would include new signal equipment and they would implement a left turn green arrow to allow for a protective left from Middle St. to Miller Ave. This option would also pull the curb lines to create a shorter pedestrian crossing and defined bike lanes. The other alternative would put in a left turn on both Middle St. approaches. For both alternatives all signal equipment will be replaced at the intersection and there would be curb reconstruction to meet ADA compliance. The exclusive crosswalk pedestrian phase will be maintained. If they keep only one lane in each direction for option 1, then there will be excess shoulder space. That would give the opportunity to create a defined bike lane too. The concern with this configuration is that there would not be a defined turn lane for the protective left onto Miller Ave., so the protective phase would come up each cycle. It could be turned off for certain times. The benefit of this layout is that the on street parking can pretty much remain the same. The second option would have a dedicated left turn on Middle St. in both ways. The curb lines would stay the same. They can put in some form of bike lanes, but it comes at the expense of on street parking. This provides protected phasing for left hand turns and an area to queue up. Operationally the intersection would be more efficient. The turn lane would only activate if a vehicle was there to turn. The left turn lane onto Summer St. would not have as high of a volume, but they would have to mirror the left lane on both sides. The vehicle capacity analysis outlines the level of service. The option without a dedicated left turn shows that the northbound approach would suffer. The second option has a better level of service. Today cars can bypass a vehicle. That may not be an option if the curb lines are brought in. There would be 20

spaces to the south and 7 to the north of the intersection with option 1. The second option would have 6 on street parking to the south and 4 spaces to the north.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this presentation was the start of a public discussion. The intent was to bring this to the Committee then they will have a public input discussion. This will come back to the Committee with a recommendation after that. The goal of today was to get any feedback.

Harold Whitehouse commented that people were complaining that the current ADA mats get slippery. Derek Caldwell responded that the panels are required. The material of them can be different. Plastic can be more slippery. Brad Lyon commented that the mats were required to let blind people know they were entering traffic. They can steepen the slope while staying ADA compliant to help make sure water slides off before freezing.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that this project was a long time coming. This intersection is very unsafe and needs major changes. The no turn on red signs should remain. They should not lose any parking spaces.

Steve Pesci questioned if there was a possibility of a hybrid that would allow the southbound side of Middle St. to have a dedicated left turn only lane. Option two doesn't quite fit the neighborhood. It is important to look at the level of service and account for pedestrian safety with the shorter crosswalks. Derek Caldwell responded that if they provided a left lane for the south, then they would have to mirror it on the other side in some fashion on the northbound side. It could be a painted island. Steve Pesci commented that option one was a better fit at this point.

Erika Wygonik agreed with Steve Pesci's comments. It will be good to upgrade the signal. The protected left should have its own lane. It would be good to look at a hybrid that could have a taper and save some parking. Pedestrian safety is important. Improving the intersection to help facilitate bike lanes is an important factor. The level of service results are reasonable.

Mark Syracusa questioned when the public session was. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it was not scheduled yet, but it will be advertised. Mark Syracusa commented that it is important to notify abutters because parking would be impacted. Public Works Director Peter Rice agreed. They would not make changes without informing abutting properties.

City Manager Karen Conard questioned when the last time this intersection was comprehensively studied. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that 15

years ago they made effort but had an issue with easements. They were unable to move forward. That has been resolved now.

Mark Syracusa questioned if there was an increase in accidents in that intersection. Police Captain Mike Maloney responded that there was not.

Mary Lou McElwain commented that they need to consider the bus and emergency routes at this intersection.

Erika Wygonik commented that they should try to pull the curbing in to better align Miller Ave. and Summer St. as much as possible.

D. Bartlett St public meeting review presentation, by Staff Engineer Tyler Reese

Tyler Reese commented that staff had a public input session with the residents of Bartlett St. for planned improvements. Bartlett St. is in need of a full roadway reconstruction and replacement of underground utilities. They are in the fact finding and data collection phase and seeking input from PTS as well as the community. Bartlett St. has substandard crosswalks and sidewalks. The speed on Bartlett St. is 29 mph for the 85^{ht} percentile and the average was 25 mph. This project will try to bring the speeds more in line with posted 20 mph. The pavement on Thornton St. is fair but the lane widths are wide. That can lead to speeding. Narrowing the lane width will help to reduce speed through the intersection. Morning St. is a quiet low volume street, and the pavement will be resurfaced. There are three potential layouts that were presented to the public for comment. These improvements for Bartlett St. would go from the Thornton St. intersection to the Woodbury Ave. section. The other section of Bartlett St. has further constraints and will remain largely unchanged. Option 1 is similar to Dennett St. It will create 2 marked lanes and parking on both sides of the road. That is how Bartlett St. is currently, so it is the no build option. Option 2 is similar to Aldrich Rd. There would be two designated lanes of travel and parking on one side. That would be a reduction in parking from the existing condition. Option 3 would be an alternate yield similar to Cass St. This option would slow traffic and push cars to use Cate St. Lower Bartlett St. will remain largely unchanged, but they will add a sidewalk on the eastern side. Thornton St. will remain largely unchanged with the addition of delineated parking on one side of the street. Morning St. will be largely unchanged. Because it is a low volume and speed street, the residents did not feel that sidewalks were necessary. There was a large amount of public interest on lowering traffic volume and speed on Bartlett St. There was a large interest in adding more trees and greenery and pedestrian improvements on Bartlett St. The public preferred option 3. The yield traffic model will slow speeds and discourage traffic. There are valid concerns about using this design on a high-volume road. It may not work correctly. There is a

COAST bus stop on the street that may cause difficulties as well. There is emergency vehicle access concern as well.

Steve Pesci commented that the public meeting was well run and there were good comments. They should look at any 2021 volume or speed data they have after Hodgson Way was opened. That would be important data to consider. Bartlett St. is an important arterial street, and it will remain that way. The public positively received option 3 but Steve Pesci's professional opinion was that it was not workable for the volume of the street. There are two transit systems that use that corridor. Steve Pesci questioned where the plans would be posted for the public to view. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that it would be posted at the DPW and on the web site.

Erika Wygonik questioned how many people were currently parking on Bartlett St. Public Works Director Peter Rice did not have an exact number, but it is congested. Erika Wygonik commented that the yield wouldn't work if there was not enough on street parking demand. Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they would monitor that.

Fire Chief Todd Germain commented that option 3 was less desirable from an emergency response perspective. It is hard to get vehicles down Cass St. especially in the winter. If option 3 is the design, then they will need to work with engineers to get some concession on the width. It is not an often traveled route emergency response.

Police Captain Mike Maloney agreed that option 3 was not his first choice because of the traffic volume on the street. It works on Lincoln Ave. because it is low volume. It doesn't work as well on Cass St. because there is more volume.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that this was the start of the discussion. They have not evaluated the possibility of improving intersection safety by potentially creating one-way streets. There are a number of streets where it is dangerous coming out onto Bartlett St. It may make sense to look at making some of them one-way streets. That would be well vetted through the public and this Committee before it happened. The neighborhood wants wider sidewalks and more amenities. Given the width of the road option 3 is the only way to accommodate that. It is not great to take a high-volume road and choke it down to a yield. They need to look at traffic data and functionality. There could be an option to pilot something to see how it works before making a permanent change.

Steve Pesci commented that they could consider making a three way stop at Pine St. and Bartlett St. That was raised at the public session.

Erika Wygonik commented that it looked like total paved area was similar between options 2 and 3. That gives flexibility parking demand and switching between the two options if option 3 is not working. Erika Wygonik noted that it looked like there was an extra 4 feet of space on the side and questioned what the plan was for that. Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that this was just a rough design to present some initial options. A 6-foot sidewalk is the minimum and additional green space for a buffer is good.

Harold Whitehouse commented that these streets were designed in the horse and buggy days and sometimes a change they want is not practical.

Public Works Director Peter Rice commented that they will take this feedback and apply it to the proposal. This will come back with an updated presentation in the upcoming months.

E. Borthwick Update: East Coast signal will be onsite at the Intersection of Borthwick and Rte 1 Bypass around Christmas to install the wiring. The new Mast Arms/Signals and Cabinet are due to be installed between Jan 15th and the 21st.

City Manager Karen Conard requested an update on the Borthwick Ave. item.

Public Works Director Peter Rice responded that they were out there for wiring and the mast arm installation was scheduled for next week.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

A. NPP Letter from Liz Bratter

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to place the letter on file, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to place on February New Business Agenda, seconded by Harold Whitehouse. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Public Works Director Peter Rice moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 a.m., seconded by Mark Syracusa. On a unanimous roll call, motion passed 9-0.

**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_bFS4wpRlSeCWhwnzvkjI6w