

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Standing Committee on Transportation, Sustainability and Energy

Councilor David Marshall (D2), Chair

Councilor Kevin Donoghue (D1), Vice Chair

Councilor John Anton (A/L)

Councilor Cheryl Leeman (D4)

July 18, 2012

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Chair David Marshall, Councilor Kevin Donoghue, Councilor Cheryl Leeman, Councilor John Anton (absent), John Peverada, Mike Bobinsky, Paul Bradbury, Mike Collins, Tom Errico, Marion Oliver, Jeremiah Bartlett, Ann Freeman, Melissa Graffam

Chair David Marshall called the meeting at 5:40 pm

1. Approval of Minutes from the June 20, 2012 Meeting

Motion made by Councilor Leeman to approve of said meeting minutes. Seconded by Councilor Marshall. Passed 3-0.

2. Staff Communications – Discussion Items

Mike Bobinsky introduced Public Services new Transportation Systems Engineer, Jeremiah Bartlett.

Mike Bobinsky proceeded to ask the Committee for their endorsement with the Oak Street parking change. This change came at the request of Jan Beitzer from the Portland Downtown District. The requested change is to replace a mid-block vehicle loading space on Oak Street (at approx. 38-40 Oak Street) to be changed to a standard metered space. A motion was made by Councilor Leeman to endorse the change. Seconded by Councilor Donoghue. Passed 3-0.

3. Portland Jetport Non-reserved Taxi

Paul Bradbury, Airport Director, stated that along with the Jetport growing, so has the number of taxi cabs. In August of 2010, through a rulemaking process the total number of non-reserved taxi permits was limited to 40. It was anticipated that this number would be achieved over time through attrition from the total of 51 taxi cab drivers permitted at that time. At this time that has not happened and there are still 49 permitted non-reserved taxi cabs at the Jetport. Some of the options are to keep the things the way that it currently is; use a lottery; use a medallion system; or even through the RFP process. Mr. Bradbury came to this Committee for guidance on what Jetport staff should do.

The Committee heard from a lot of taxi cab drivers and/or owners. Some expressed their concern for the process to not change as they do not want to lose their jobs. While many others expressed their desire to be able to have a chance to work at the Jetport.

Councilor Donoghue asked how can we get the numbers down without displacing people? Mr. Bradbury said that we do have a cap for the numbers, but the problem is that some taxi cab owners have given power of attorney to others when they are not able to drive or be in Portland. Thus, the numbers have been not able to go down. Ann Freeman from the City's Corporation Counsel said that we (the City) can't by law not allow them to use Power of Attorney's. No decisions were made at this meeting and this topic will be brought up again at another meeting.

4. Update Discussion on High and State Street Two-way Conversion

Tom Errico, the City's Traffic Engineering Consultant, discussed the traffic volumes, crash history and the general process for the possibility of the two-way traffic conversion on State and High Street. Mr. Errico presented a memo to the Committee with his findings. (This memo is attached with the meeting minutes.)

The Committee asked for public comment. Brian Peterson, a resident of Westbrook, pointed out the loss of parking that would happen if the conversion was to happen. He also mentioned the concern about pollution and the possibility of more traffic accidents. He gave the Committee a packet of information to read.

Kevin Beal, a resident on Cumberland Avenue, mentioned the current high volume of cars that currently use these streets and the rate of speed that they travel. Mr. Beal discussed how when these streets were converted to one-way it affected his family and those families on these roads. They can no longer cross the street freely as in the past.

Doug Sneed, a resident on Grant Street commented that he felt that it was not working well (the one-way) as he has seen many accidents at the intersection of Grant/Park at High. He also said that he feels that the street divides the City.

Other residents also commented that they would support a two-way conversion.

Mike Bobinsky mentioned that the City is still working with Tom Errico along with Maine Department of Transportation during this evaluation stage.

5. UNE Residential Parking Program Recommendation

As a result of parking issues within the neighborhood of the University of New England, the city is proposing to create a new Residential Parking Zone. This area would include Walton Street, Stevens Avenue, Poland Street, College Street and Mayfield Street. This sticker program will be based on the other programs that are currently within the City. This will be on a trial basis and will be reviewed within nine months to a year.

The resident of 12 Poland Street asked why this program did not include in front of his property. It was discussed by staff and the Committee that in front of his property would be included.

Councilor Leeman made a motion to have staff make the traffic ordinance changes for this to go to the August 8th council meeting. Motion was seconded by Councilor Donoghue. Passed 3-0.

6. Recommendation to Create a Task Force to Discuss Plastic Bags and Styrofoam

Councilor Ed Suslovic will be chairing this task force. The purpose is to evaluate the best methods of decreasing the use of these products in retail, local restaurants and within the City of Portland.

The task force will consist of the following: Maine Grocer's Association; Dunkin Donuts Franchisee; Maine Restaurant Association; Hylex Polly; American Chemical Council; Portland Schools; University of Southern Maine; Hutamaki; EcoMaine; Surfinder; Environment Maine; Friends of Casco Bay; Maine Merchants Association; City Staff and three (3) residents.

The task force will separate the two issues and work on Styrofoam and report back to the Committee in November 2012. Then continue to work regarding plastic bags, reporting back in February 2013.

7. Recommendation to Create a Task Force to Discuss the Feasibility of a Streetcar

Councilor Marshall was asked to put this item on the agenda by MEREDA and the Chamber of Commerce to look into the feasibility of a streetcar. It was also mentioned that the task force would be contingent on receiving a grant. Councilor Donoghue asked when the PACTS study applications due are. Mike Bobinsky responded that they are due in 2013.

Councilors Leeman and Donoghue both had concerns on expending staff resources for this if there is currently no funding. Councilor Leeman also asked how do you define a "streetcar"? Councilor Marshall said it would be a fixed guide rail system or a modern streetcar. Burlington, Vermont, Manchester, New Hampshire and Providence, Rhode Island have all done studies about this.

All councilors would like to see more information regarding this and guiding principles in regards to the streetcar. This item will be brought up at a later committee meeting.

8. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm

