

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH AND TRAFFIC

August 31, 2009

5:00 PM

Chairman Shea called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Shea, O'Neil, Sullivan, J. Roy

Absent: Alderman Ouellette

Messrs: J. Burkush, R. Fortin, P. Chiesa, A. Vachon

Chairman Shea addressed item 3 of the agenda:

3. The Traffic and Parking Divisions have submitted an agenda which needs to be addressed:

STOP SIGNS:

On Cloyde Street at River Road - SWC

Alderman Mark Roy

On Ridgewood Street at Sandy Brook Street – NEC

Alderman DeVries

CROSSWALKS:

On South Main Street at the Piscataquoug Trailway

Alderman Smith

On South Willow Street, south of Weston Road

Alderman DeVries

On Gold Street at the South Manchester Trailway

Alderman Garrity

On Kelley Street, east of Rimmon Street

On Kelley Street, west of Montgomery Street

On Kelley Street, east of Boutwell Street

Alderman Ouellette

On Massabesic Street, north of Hospital Ave.

Alderman Osborne

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS:

On South Willow Street and Weston Road

Alderman DeVries

METERS – 2 HOUR LIMIT:

Stark Street, south side, from a point 60 feet west of Hampshire Lane to Canal Street
Alderman Sullivan

METERS – 2 HOUR LIMIT:

Stark Street, south side, from a point 50 feet west of Elm Street to a point 66 feet westerly
Alderman Sullivan

15 MINUTE PARKING:

On Lake Ave., north side, from a point 53 feet east of Hall Street to a point 22 feet east
On Spruce Street, south side, from Wilson Street to a point 65 feet east
Alderman Osborne

RESCIND 2 HOUR PARKING 8AM – 6 PM:

On Spruce Street, south side, from Wilson Street to a point 65 feet east (Ord. 6539)
Alderman Osborne

ONE HOUR PARKING:

On Almond Street, south side, from a point 30 feet west of Boynton Street to a point 80 feet west
Alderman Smith

ONE HOUR PARKING – MONDAY – FRIDAY- 8AM – 6 PM / SATURDAY - 8 AM – 1 PM:

On Kelley Street, south side, from a point 20 feet west of Moore Street to a point 36 feet west
Alderman Ouellette

RESCIND ONE HOUR PARKING:

On Howe Street, north side, from a point 155 feet east of Maple Street to a point 65 feet east (Ord. 3149)
Alderman Shea

NO PARKING ANYTIME:

On Lake Ave., north side, from Hall Street to a point 53 feet east
On Massabesic Street, east side, from Hospital Ave., to a point 85 feet south
Alderman Osborne

NO PARKING ANYTIME - EMERGENCY ORDINANCE:

On Candia Road, south side, from Little Ave., to a point 55 feet east
Alderman Shea
On Merrill Street, north side, from a point 105 feet west of Beech Street to a point 171 feet west
Alderman Shea

NO PARKING – MONDAY – FRIDAY:

On Somerville Street, north side, from Lincoln Street to a point 218 feet west

Alderman Shea

RESCIND 30 MINUTE PARKING:

On Wilson Street, west side, from Dix Street southerly a distance of 50 feet (Ord. 6358)

Alderman Shea

RESCIND NO PARKING ANYTIME – EMERGENCY ORDINANCE:

On Litchfield Lane, north side, from Manhattan Lane to a point 55 feet east (Ord. 9685)

Alderman Sullivan

RESCIND NO PARKING TOW ZONE:

On Prospect Court, from the west entrance from Prospect Street to a point 90 feet northerly and then 45 feet easterly on the south side (Ord. 8655)

Alderman Sullivan

RESCIND METERS – 2 HOUR LIMIT:

Stark Street, south side, from a point 50 feet west of Elm Street to a point 45 feet westerly (ORD 7406)

Alderman Sullivan

NO PARKING ANYTIME TOW ZONE:

On Prospect Court, west side, from Prospect Street to a point 90 feet northerly

Alderman Sullivan

NO PARKING - 5 AM – 11 AM/ MONDAY – FRIDAY – EMERGENCY ORDINANCE:

On Litchfield Lane, north side, from Manhattan Lane to a point 34 feet east

Alderman Sullivan

PARKING – 2 HOUR LIMIT - SATURDAY (Emergency Ordinance)

Commercial Street, east side, from a point 1,100 feet south of Canal Street to a point 137 feet southerly.

Ms. Heather Freeman, Vital & Legislative Records Supervisor, stated if I could just add to the second page, 15 minute parking on Spruce Street is being taken out and right below that rescind two hour parking on Spruce Street, is being taken out as well.

On motion of Alderman O’Neil, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to accept the Parking Division’s agenda as amended.

Chairman Shea addressed item 4 of the agenda:

4. Ratify and confirm phone poll conducted on July 29, 2009 accepting the request from the Team Crompton Car Club to use Arms Park on September 20, 2009 from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. for a benefit event.

On motion of Alderman J. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to ratify and confirm the phone poll.

Chairman Shea addressed item 5 of the agenda:

5. Ratify and confirm phone poll conducted August 17, 2009 approving the request from the Palace Theater to park free of charge in two spaces on Hanover Street on Monday, August 17, 2009 and five spaces on Friday, August 21, 2009.

On motion of Alderman J. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to ratify and confirm the phone poll.

Chairman Shea addressed item 6 of the agenda:

6. Communication from Frank C. Comerford, Chairman of the St. George Orthodox Cathedral Board of Directors, requesting "No Parking" signs be placed on Kenney Street and Merrimack Street as outlined on Saturday, September 18, 2009 and Sunday, September 19, 2009 for Glendi.

Ms. Freeman stated we are adding Laurel Street, east and west of Kenney Street.

On motion of Alderman J. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman Sullivan, it was voted that the request for no parking signs be approved.

Chairman Shea addressed item 7 of the agenda:

7. Communication from James Burkush, Fire Chief, requesting permission to sell 41 obsolete street fire boxes for \$75.00 per box.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Sullivan, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman O'Neil stated this may be more of a Finance question, but this will go into the general fund?

Mr. James Burkush, Fire Chief, replied that's correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated I know a program that has been very successful between OYS and your department, Fire Setters Program. You don't happen to know if we can dedicate it to a certain...

Mr. Burkush interjected no. We checked with the City Solicitor and it has to go into the general fund unless the Board changes that.

Alderman J. Roy stated there is nothing stopping us from looking for more funds and pulling it back out of the general fund.

Alderman O'Neil stated if I recall, we were a little short. It seems to be an appropriate use to fund the fire service.

Mr. Burkush replied we would like to direct it to that cause, but those are the rules we were told were in effect.

Alderman J. Roy asked that is the juvenile fire?

Mr. Burkush replied Juvenile Fire Setters Program.

Alderman O'Neil stated I'll follow up with the Solicitor and Finance Officer on this.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted that the request to sell street fire boxes be approved.

Chairman Shea addressed item 8 of the agenda:

8. Communication from James Hoben, Deputy Traffic Director, requesting approval to execute an agreement for Interstate 293 Exit 5 Ramps/Granite Street Traffic Signal Maintenance.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted that the request to execute an agreement for Interstate 293 Exit 5 Ramps/Granite Street Traffic Signal Maintenance be approved.

Chairman Shea addressed item 9 of the agenda:

9. Discussion regarding the Canal Street Parking Lot Operational Policy.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 08/18/09.)

Alderman Shea stated we don't have anyone here from the Traffic Division.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Shea addressed item 10 of the agenda:

10. Communication from Rene Fortin of Gold Street, requesting alternate solutions to commercial expansion in the Gold Street neighborhood.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 08/18/09.)

Alderman Shea stated with the permission of the Board, I would like Rene Fortin to be able to come forward and present his comments to the Board.

On motion of Alderman J. Roy, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to discuss this item.

Mr. Rene Fortin, 116 Gold Street, the reason for my being here tonight is to request consideration of barricading and isolating a neighborhood that is currently having severe traffic problems. We have a very narrow street. As you may or may not know, Gold Street is a very narrow street with houses and families on both sides of the street. Right now, we are concerned that we are carrying somewhere between 4,500 and 5,000 cars a day up and down that street. The average speed from various surveys that have been done is somewhere between 31 and 38 miles per hour. We are very concerned with bringing in additional commercial or industrial businesses on the other side of the railroad tracks. According to what is being spread around the City, there are going to be some additional retail businesses that are going to increase traffic. We are asking that Gold Street at Ross Avenue, Sewall Street at Ross Avenue and President Road at Greenwood Court be blocked so that we can take back our neighborhood and we can go back to having a quality of life that everyone expected when they purchased property. We want to enjoy living there. We're not complaining. We love the Airport, but we do have the noise coming right over that section of the south end of town. It is strictly for safety reasons and regaining quality of life and trying to control and minimize traffic that is already at a peak point right now that we are requesting this.

Alderman O'Neil stated I certainly sympathize. The vote has been made to move on with the rezoning and Wal-Mart will build at the old Associated Grocer's site so there is no need to go back and revisit that issue, but I know that if I lived in neighborhoods similar to those of the Gold Street neighborhood, I would be putting up a fight. I certainly respect their wishes. I don't think it is coming with a lot of comfort from them because it is going to be an inconvenience to them as well. As soon as this gets to South Willow Street they are either going to have to get on the highway or go all the way around by the Shaw's plaza. Of the neighbors that I have spoken to down there, I don't think they are unreasonable in their request, but they believe it is the most appropriate thing moving forward to protect their quality of life in that neighborhood.

Alderman J. Roy stated I agree with what Dan said. It is a tough situation down there. We have to respect what the residents want, but at this moment in time, I'm going to suggest that this may be out of sequence because next Thursday we are having the public hearing at the Planning Board on this issue. I think it is better for this Committee to have all the information from the Planning Board before we act on something like this. I think Dan put it correctly. If you go forward with this, for everyone in that neighborhood, there is essentially going to be one way to get down South Willow Street and that is going to be down Alpheus Street or go on the highway. Thinking ahead, the reality is, if this moves forward, then all the traffic is going to go to Wal-Mart and there is a new rental company going in on the corner. Everything would be going onto South Willow Street and your only option would be to get on the highway. It would make it very difficult. My mind certainly isn't closed to this option, but I think we should wait and see how it plays out at the Planning Board before we go forward with it.

Alderman Garrity stated I can certainly sympathize with Mr. Fortin. I am a Gold Street resident, too. I have been there 18 years and I realize there is a lot traffic there. Gold Street is in pretty rough shape the way it is now. This is not something that happened overnight. It was five years in the making. There have been many neighborhood meetings, first with Home Depot and now with Wal-Mart. This plan does close President Road and Sewall Street. The folks on Mapleton Street will not be affected by it. The folks on Sewall Street will not be affected by it. Is everybody happy? No. It is pretty tough to please everyone, but an overwhelming majority of my constituents are pleased with the plan. Can it be tweaked? Absolutely. Mr. Fortin, of the 120 people on Gold Street, not one has called me. After speaking with Mr. Perry of Mapleton Street he seems alright with it. Everyone knows where I live in that neighborhood. They can certainly knock on my door. I don't have a problem with that. I am a Gold Street resident, too. The way Gold Street is right now without a light or a bypass...President Road is a mess right now because it is such a wide street. This plan proposes to close President Road. It also proposes to close Sewall Street. Some folks on the lower end of South Gold Street are not pleased with the plan. Not everyone is pleased with the plan, but an overwhelming majority of my constituents are. Can we deal with the light on South Beech and Gold Street in the winter? Yes. I'm not a traffic engineer, but I have been assured by the traffic

engineers that that problem could be solved when bad weather comes in for the winter. Do we need to meet again as a neighborhood? Absolutely. I tried to reach out to the attorney for Wal-Mart, but she was out of the state. I think the best time to do something with a neighborhood meeting would be after the holiday. I would like to request that we still discuss the other option, but we table this and let the planning process go forward.

Alderman Shea stated one of the issues is that the Traffic Committee is responsible for the request that you have, either accepting it or not. Certainly, in my judgment, the more information that we can receive, the better, but the ultimate decision rests with this Committee and whatever our recommendation might be is submitted to the full Board for their approval or disapproval. That's how the process works. In discussions we heard different issues.

Alderman O'Neil stated in clarifying this with the Solicitor's Office, I think you said that it is our responsibility, not the Planning Board's, on what streets need to be closed. They can recommend it, but at the end of the day it is our responsibility. I will take the request very seriously. As a courtesy to Alderman Roy who serves on the Planning Board and has put a lot of time in on this issue I know he has started to look at the various traffic studies that are out there. I'm willing to table this. Does it make sense that we send a communication to Planning Board?

Alderman J. Roy replied absolutely.

Alderman O'Neil made the motion to table this item. It was duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy.

Alderman J. Roy asked is it this Committee and the Board that closes streets?

Mr. Peter Chiesa, Solicitor's Office, replied this would go to the full Board. That's correct.

Alderman J. Roy stated it brings a question to the forefront about the gates that are going to go up. Who is responsible for saying whether or not a road will be gated? Will it be the Board or the Planning Board?

Mr. Chiesa replied it would ultimately be the Board. Planning will make its recommendations, but with regard to gating or discontinuing a street or opening a street, that would be through the Board.

Alderman J. Roy asked if there is any gating that goes on with this plan, the Planning Board is going to have to come to this Committee and then on to the full Board?

Mr. Chiesa replied right. The full Board would consider the votes of this Committee and the Planning Board.

Alderman Garrity stated I had a chance to have a conversation with Alderman Pariseau. Some years ago, Gold Street was closed. I asked him what the effects were on Ward 9 and he told me that it affects everybody west of South Willow Street, including the West Side, Ward 8, and Ward 9 because there is so much traffic on there. If you close Gold Street there are going to be a lot of unhappy people. I'm a Gold Street resident. With the new bypass I think it is a marked improvement from what we have now. Let's continue to talk about it and let the planning process move forward. Hopefully after the Labor Day weekend we can get another neighborhood meeting together. This is not going to be a one month process for Wal-Mart in front of the Planning Board, I would assume. I'm not an expert of the process over there, but I'm sure they are not going to be back with any recommendations soon.

Alderman J. Roy stated they may not and if they aren't it would have to stay on the table. If the planning process isn't done we wouldn't have the answers that we need. You are absolutely right. When we hear this at the Planning Board next Wednesday we have a long agenda. The reality is that if there are too many large questions that remain. The Planning Board may not close that public hearing and it may remain open for the whole issue or specific issues and we would continue that.

Alderman O'Neil stated Rene, believe it or not, the process is moving forward. It seems like it went a little astray, but I think as Alderman Roy suggested, this is probably the best course of action at this time.

Chairman Shea called for a vote on the motion to table this item until more information from the Planning Board is received. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

Chairman Shea addressed item 11 of the agenda:

11. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, requesting an ordinance amendment to Section 70.57(B) Parking lot rates which removes parking meters from the Pine Street Parking Lot and creating permit parking within the lot.

Alderman J. Roy stated there are several items here, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and Brandy isn't here. I was wondering if we could table them all right now.

Alderman Sullivan stated I would agree. I don't think these are terribly controversial, but I think there are some technical questions that we are going to have and I would be a little reluctant to go forward without Brandy here.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Shea addressed item 12 of the agenda:

12. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, providing information related to a Board request for details of enforcement activities on July 4, 2009.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Shea addressed item 13 of the agenda:

13. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, requesting an ordinance amendment to Section 70.78 Penalty which adds new fines for parking in a permit only parking space without displaying a permit and for occupying more than one stall.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Shea addressed item 14 of the agenda:

14. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, informing the committee that both the Parking Division and Highway Department is beginning implementation of the reconfiguration of a portion of Elm Street from West Auburn Street to the Rockwell property.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Shea addressed item 15 of the agenda:

15. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, submitting two requests from the community. The first request is seeking permission on behalf of the American Cancer Society to paint pink ribbons on several intersections along their annual walk route. The second request is seeking approval on behalf of Intown Manchester for free on-street and Victory Garage parking for their annual Taste of Downtown event.

On motion of Alderman Sullivan, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to approve the community requests.

Chairman Shea addressed item 16 of the agenda:

16. Communication from Andy Vachon, Parks & Recreation, requesting permission to install traffic calming measures along the Livingston Park access road.
(Note: A copy of the communication and photos were sent to the Committee under separate cover.)

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman J. Roy, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman O'Neil stated I apologize we didn't reach out to you prior to this evening. This is my opinion of speed bumps in the City. I have spoken to the folks who have them on Donahue, Westwood or Sherwood Streets in south Manchester. What I have heard from the residents is that all speed bumps do is force people to speed between them. I don't personally think they are a great traffic calming measure. If we need to get the police up there then we will. They need to write tickets if people are driving improperly. We can help you in making that happen. I'm very hesitant on speed bumps because all people do is speed between them. We use stop signs as a tool improperly because people speed between stop signs. I'm a huge advocate that if people are driving improperly they need to be penalized for it. I'm not going to support speed bumps. I think a crosswalk is a great idea if we can get one of those yellow identifying markers in the road. That seems to help as long as we have someone who can put it up and take it in at the end of the night. I'm going to vote against speed bumps, but I will certainly work with you to get the police up there. I think we have the right to enforce the speed limit if people are speeding.

Alderman Sullivan asked how many people per day travel along this stretch?

Mr. Andy Vachon, Parks and Recreation, replied I know that through the pool season we had 30,000 people last year go into the pool.

Alderman Sullivan asked you're talking about that back road that hooks behind the park?

Mr. Vachon replied yes, it goes past the playground, past the pool and up to the Gatsas Building.

Alderman Sullivan asked this must be an area that has a large amount of kids out there through the summer?

Mr. Vachon replied correct and the overflow parking for the playground is across the street so that's where the crosswalk would be.

Alderman J. Roy stated I have this letter, but was there any other plan sent out? The way it read under the minutes is that it was sent out under a separate cover and I didn't know if there was a detailed plan that was sent out to us or just this letter.

Mr. Vachon asked did you get the pictures as well? There should have been pictures attached.

Alderman J. Roy replied no, I never got that. Having served for quite a while on the Fire Department, I witnessed a lot of the problems that are associated with speed bumps, the least of which is snow removal. It raises problems with your plows and trucks. The other issue is car problems and the toll it takes on cars to go over them. Alderman O'Neil is absolutely correct that it is human nature that once you slow down you want to speed up again. They don't help as much as you would like to think. The other issue is the people who don't realize they are there because it is dark, rainy, or snowy. They clean off the entire oil pan from the bottom of the car and that calls for the hazmat team. The people who live with a speed bump in front of their house are not too happy. I'm totally against the things. I agree that the key to it all is enforcement. If there is no one there to write a ticket, people aren't going to abide by the rules. You need to enforce things, not just come up with a reaction like this. There are adverse consequences to speed bumps.

Alderman Sullivan stated I am going to respectfully disagree with my two colleagues here. I don't think using our police officers to hang around and write tickets is the most productive use of their time and energy. We have some real crime problems in the City that we need to address and I don't think the way to go about dealing with those problems is by having guys hanging around Livingston Park all day. Are there other ways of implementing traffic calming measures? Yes, there are. I would be happy to hear someone from Highway with the alternatives. I would rather have the police officers out on patrol rather than writing speeding tickets. If this helps save a kid's life, then I am all for it.

Chairman Shea asked are you for the speed bumps?

Alderman Sullivan replied I am.

Alderman O'Neil stated over the last five or six years if we look back, the Board has worked to increase the number of police officers specifically assigned to the Traffic Division. Now, I think we have more officers doing traffic enforcement than ever in the history of the City. It is their dedicated job. They work in every ward in the City. This is a fairly unique situation where this is a roadway that is part of the public park system. It might be one of the longer roadways. I don't disagree with you, Alderman Sullivan, but we have committed the resources, leased more motorcycles, and invested in new speed counters that can calculate speeds during certain times of the day. I think it would be good to collect the data. I think it is probably going to be slowing down because the summer peek is over, but there is activity on that back field all the time. I'm in favor of crosswalks. I know we've done the raised crosswalks.

Alderman O'Neil made the motion to direct the Police Department to work with the Parks and Recreation Department to collect data, identify times and types of problems and take corrective enforcement actions to address those. Alderman J. Roy duly seconded the motion.

Mr. Vachon asked is it the simulated brick you are talking about?

Alderman O'Neil replied no, there is another term. Stamped asphalt gives the impression that it is higher than it actually is. It seems to work. We've done it on some of the streets around the City.

Alderman J. Roy stated I agree with Alderman Sullivan that there is more important police work to do and I would look forward to other traffic calming measures, other than speed bumps, being implemented. Speed bumps, for me, are out.

Alderman Shea stated we would like a report back at some subsequent time so we can see if there is a necessity for additional types of provisions.

Chairman Shea called for a vote on the motion. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

TABLED ITEM

17. Communication from Brandy Stanley, Parking Manager, submitting a snow removal policy clarifying the duties of certain departments.
(Tabled 1/20/09)

This item remained on the table.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Sullivan, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee