



**Citywide Neighborhood Committee
Ward 3 Forum Minutes
September 28, 2022
Senior Activity Center, Portsmouth**

The Citywide Neighborhood Committee is grateful for the use of the Senior Activity Center for this forum.

The panel consisted of: Mayor Deaglan McEachern, City Manager Karen Conard, Asst. Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Asst. Police Chief Mike Maloney, and DPW Director Peter Rice. The panel was led by Lori Soloway, a CNC member.

In the audience: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, Councilor Andrew Bagley, School Board Vice-Chair Margaux Peabody, and State Representatives Joan Hamblet and Peter Somssich.

Each of the panel members made brief statements:

MIKE MALONEY, ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF:

The department has made 8,563 traffic stops to date, equaling about 23 ½ per day. They are focusing on calming traffic throughout the city. They have issued 468 summonses. He noted that the department/city reaps no financial benefit from the tickets given. It all goes to the state. There have been 499 crashes reported, 54 of which resulted in personal injury, one fatality; there have been 2,683 police reports of theft or other infractions. The Assistant Chief recommended that residents lock their cars. Thieves are breaking into unlocked cars and stealing catalytic converters. He said these thieves are brazen. If you hear activity with saws, etc. near cars, contact the police immediately at 911.

There are 2 new hires on the police staff. 16 have retired. The city is attracting young officers. There are currently 22 auxiliary officers who help with a variety of jobs.

Current trends in law enforcement deal with mental health issues. The Crisis Hot Line is an effective tool in helping save someone's life. The city may be getting a "comfort dog" to also help with crisis situations.

If an area is experiencing cars speeding through it, residents can request the use of a speed detector.

JOHN TABOR, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

The council is trying to promote more civic engagement. These forums are a clear way of encouraging that.

DEAGLAN McEACHERN, MAYOR

The budget process is open to the public. The Mayor encouraged city residents to come out and listen, question, and address the budget details.

PETER RICE, DIRECTOR, DPW

If residents want to suggest improvements, work to be done in the city, they should fill out the CIP (Community Improvement Plan) form that is available online. The deadline is September 30, but suggestions may also be made at other times. The CIP helps the city prioritize projects and the allocation of money. The CIP requests go to the Planning Board, then to the City Council, then to the Budget Committee. Before it goes through this process any request is just that. It is not a plan until it is funded and then it becomes a real project.

Much planning has gone into the new bike/walking path that will go through Ward 3. It will make a route for residents to get into town safely.

Some current projects in Ward 3: Lighting is being installed at the sports field; better speed calming has been installed on Banfield road.

Future and ongoing projects: new well adjacent to the Madberry site; rail trail completed by the end of next year for residents to get into the city; Woodbury Ave. traffic calming next year; Middle Road past West Road sidewalks; Pevery Hill Road project plans have been sent to the DOT for easement approval; skateboard park at the Stump Dump will be worked on next year. Funding has already been approved. Maple Haven cross walk is in planning. Sound barrier installation is on schedule for 2023. It will be only on the northwest side for now.

Audience questions for Peter Rice: the residents hope the Community Campus will not create a cut-through off Banfield Road. What will be happening with the Robert Lister Academy building? Will it be sold? Will it be used for housing? The school will be housed at the Community Campus and no decision has been made just yet about how the current building will be used. The mayor and some residents would like it to become affordable housing like the Ruth Griffin complex. Will there be disc golf on the community campus? No decision yet.

The residents feel there should be an open discussion with Portsmouth residents about the use of the Community Campus. Peter emphasized that the current tenants have been told they may remain until 2024. Other current/future uses are open for discussion, with consideration for the spaces that are being used, for a variety of purposes, and future needs. Some of the current tenants occupy several small spaces throughout the complex. Reconfiguration will take the needs and uses into consideration, with better arrangement of the spaces. Will the rail trail be off leash for dogs? Provisions are being considered for that. There is trash at the intersection of Rte. 33 and I 95. Peter will look into that to see if trash bins would be viable there. Residents

would like a speed sign at Portsmouth Ave. The residents were pleased to see the communications going on among departments at the meeting and outside.

The Cate Street bridge sidewalk is a concern for residents. Seniors are walking more to the Senior Activity Center and a good sidewalk is needed. It is still on the CIP. A resident asked about an energy audit for the Community Campus. Apparently, one has been done. Light bulbs have been replaced as has other lighting fixtures and switches.

Rep. Joan Hamblet reminded residents that Ned Reynolds is running for election in this Ward's district. She also mentioned that DPW employees are now first responders and will move to group 1 for retirement. If residents would like sidewalks, they should contact the Parking/Traffic/Safety committee. (Note: the Citywide Neighborhood can help if their requests are ignored.)

One resident mentioned to Peter Rice that Ocean Road could use some speed bumps to calm traffic that cuts through that area.

Rail trail area used by homeless people are concerning some residents. The police know about some of them, but residents should contact the police if they detect unwanted behaviors, vandalism, misuse of others' property.

The Allen Wayside Furniture sign is too large and too bright. Karen Conard said she would take that comment to the Governance Committee. It might be that at some point, when there what not as much going on there, the sign was considered appropriate. It may no longer be so.

No cell service— "dead" zone—Ocean Road to Banfield Road is a cell service wasteland. Lowes and Target areas have no service either. Peter Rice said that maybe the water tank could be used as a cell tower. He suggested the residents petition the Verizon Cable Commission.

A resident commented to the panel that the city parks are great.

The mayor commented that these forums are a good way for residents to air their questions and complaints. They are democracy in action, and he thanked all those who came out to attend this one.

The forum ended at 8:30

Submitted by Kathleen Boduch, Secretary