



CNC – Ward 4 Forum
Dondero School
April 6, 2023

Moderator and committee member Lori Soloway opened the forum just after 6:30.

Present

Panel: Mayor Deaglan McEachern, City Manager Karen Conard, Police Chief Mark Newport, Deputy Police Chief Mike Maloney, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Gionet, Director of Public Works Peter Rice, School Board Member Ann Walker, City Council and CNC representative John Tabor.

CNC Committee members: Elaine Apatang, Peter Somssich, Lori Soloway, William Gatchell, and Kathleen Boduch; neighborhood residents.

The Panel opened with comments about their positions and general goals.

Peter Rice: addressed on-going work in Ward 4: sidewalks, drainage, Long Meadow intersection work that is complete; paving on McKinley (south) and out to Harding.

Deputy Chief Maloney: there are job openings in dispatch and patrol positions. Dispatch positions are very rewarding opportunities. The department is making about 24 traffic stops a day (1 an hour) 365 days a year. The fines for these stops go directly to the state, not to Portsmouth. There have been 546 reportable crashes, 877 total crashes, 324 calls for service 2,662 police reports, 983 arrests. The top calls have been for theft stalking, assault, disorderly behavior. They have held 4 Safe Streets sessions that remind drivers about safe driving habits. They are focusing on awareness and education of parents about internet crimes against children, online safety.

Assistant Fire Chief Gionet reported that the department is also hiring in services and inspection positions. The department has attended to 2,871 fire calls, which include accidents, lockouts, building fires, along with 3,635 ambulance calls. 14% of those calls are the result of falls. The deputy said that there is a good working relationship among service providers in the city.

School Board member Ann Walker said that the turf field at the high school will be fixed this summer. The Lister Academy moving plan to the Community Campus is moving along nicely.

QUESTIONS FROM THE NEIGHBORS

The panel then addressed questions from the floor. These included-

- Urban Forestry Trail (engineering study is done, some easements will probably be needed, but the trail will connect the ward with downtown better)
- Rail Trail
- Peeverly Hill Road paving and sidewalks; possible speed tables, speed pillows, calming devices on various streets
- Elwyn Park sidewalks (spring and summer of next year)

- Safety for school children during leave-off and pick up times especially (Deputy Chief said he would look into that)
- City's preparedness for violent events at schools (training being done and safety officers are available. Help can be on its way in minutes)
- Solutions for speeding, including narrowing of roads, tree plantings close to the road, parking on one side of the street. The mayor said that people speed when they feel comfortable moving fast. The idea of all the remedies that are available is to make drivers feel less comfortable in volatile areas so they slow down.
- Sidewalk considerations in the area are being considered but won't be put where the residents don't want them. They will work to minimize the impact on residents. Rice said his department and residents got a better feel of the situation when they do a walkabout. They understand that it needs to be a conversation. Everyone is happier when they know the work is not being thrust upon them. Abutters will be notified of changes.
- Some residents asked about stop signs and Rice said they require warrants and may be challenging to place where sight lines are difficult.
- Rice reminded residents to use Click N' Fix to report potholes, fallen trees, bad road conditions, missed trash pickups. It's an easy way to get repairs done. If the situation needs more than that, a contact with the Parking & Traffic Safety Committee will get a situation, such as a stop sign, under consideration. Road change requests should go to Eric Eby, the city engineer.

ENERGY

John Tabor led this topic. The discussion turned to the change in energy supplier from Eversource to Portsmouth Community Power. Residents can choose to opt out of that change or accept it. It is projected to reduce costs. If, when you are asked, choose to change, you do not have to do anything. Only opting out requires a response. However, those on Direct Energy must opt out to go into Portsmouth Community Power. It will all be made clear through mailings. Eversource will continue to own the operation of transmission of power. Cable and Broadband Internet are being combined as part of the commission.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

The mayor and various members of the panel admitted that the presentation about using the Sherburne/Lister Academy as workforce housing was not done well. There is a misunderstanding about how workforce is defined. Those who occupy Workforce residences are hardworking, salary-earning employees throughout the area. They go to work, bring in income, pay taxes. They may not be earning large salaries, but they are contributing to the community.

THE COMMUNITY CAMPUS

The mayor and Peter Rice commented on the potential of that property. The discussions include an indoor recreation facility, ice rink, curling facility (a Ward 4 forum attendee mentioned), an arena, another playing field. The consolidation of sporting event facilities into once space will increase accessibility for parents with kids in more than one sport, or for kids whose parents do not have the time in their work schedule to drive to multiple sites. More information will be available as the conversation continues and public input is gathered.

The forum ended at 8:15 and residents stayed to talk further with panelists or meet with other neighbors.

The next Citywide Neighborhood Committee public meeting will be at 6:30 on May 18th in Conference Room A at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Boduch, Secretary