



PORTSMOUTH CITYWIDE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE
CONFERENCE ROOM A, CITY HALL
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

This was the final meeting of the current Board membership. The committee will resume meeting after the new year begins.

Present: Peter Somssich, Co-chair; Kathleen Boduch; Larry Cataldo; Will Gatchell; Lori Soloway; John Tabor.

Absent: Elaine Apatang, Co-chair (excused).

There were no neighborhood representatives present at the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Peter Somssich at 6:30 p.m.

GUEST SPEAKER: BILL LYONS, Transportation expert and member of the Transportation Climate Action Planning group.

Mr. Lyons was invited to speak to the ongoing conversation of improving transportation in Portsmouth in order to address climate issues, ease congestion, and address the need to broaden the exposure of residents to better, more efficient, timely (on time) transportation. The discussion focused on how the city can promote better transportation so that it can thrive and change its transportation culture while reducing its carbon footprint.

The continuing discussion both among the residents and with the city leadership will focus on sustainability, viability of shared public and private transport that will support a livable community, and maintain and support the cultural and historic

elements of the city by improving connectivity between and among all areas of the city and the region.

The conversation will consider how we can reduce parking demand and congestion, and support green modes by reducing the number of vehicles on the road. With better, more thoughtful thinking about transportation, the city can support the economy by bringing more employees and visitors to the core and other work areas and limiting the amount of time anyone spends getting to the places they need/want to go. The project hopes to encourage better use of bikes, ride sharing, buses, scooters, trains, etc. and reduce residents' need to travel by car.

New Hampshire is 49th among the states in spending for transportation, allotting about \$.04 per capita. The gas tax is spent on roads, not on transit.

The project will hope to promote a better reality: more and varied set routes for buses and shared rides; flexible routes for elderly, handicapped and those who need to be picked up and delivered to specific places without further travel needs; schedules that will require fewer long walks with better connections between destinations (not having to catch several buses or move to distant locations to catch that next ride).

The project could partner with the hospitality sector to support and design the best routes to service both residents and visitors. Employers could support the plan by suggesting routes and providing incentives for their employees to use efficient transportation to get to and from work. The building community could contribute to the discussion by adding information about new development and their needs for transportation for themselves and their tenants/owners.

Developers could benefit from an improved transportation system as an incentive in building if it is close to transportation that does not require an automobile.

Shared mobility could be the common goal for both businesses and residents.

Schools, industry, tourism bureaus, hoteliers, health care workers/providers, residents will be asked to share their experiences and the needs they see.

Questions that might be asked as the project moves forward:

Why don't we use ...? Is there a role for ...? Could Coast, C&J, Amtrak, Wildcat, partner with businesses and developers? What could be avenues for financial support of a plan? Would an added hospitality tax support the plan? Would

increased use of the existing parking structures/lots contribute significantly to the financing?

COMMITTEE COMMENTS: any and all systems (buses in loops, shared rides, trains, etc.) will have to be prompt and reliable. The plan must focus on a catalyst, who will benefit and how. And finally, the plan is an imperative because the state and city are losing money to places where affordable housing and efficient transportation are available to everyone.

CSX RAILROAD PROBLEM UPDATE—LARRY CATALDO

Larry has been representing his Islington Creek neighborhood regarding ongoing issues with the CSX trains: long-term idling (up to 3 hours), caustic fumes, vibrations, late night and early morning train car shifting with screeching noise several times a week, railcars side tracked (including chemical containers) that present a hazard to children tempted to play in/on/around them, etc.

Larry has contacted individuals at all levels of control within the company. There has been no movement. The city of Portsmouth's hands are tied because it is a federally controlled entity.

The neighborhood has filed a complaint with the Surface Transportation Board, commenting that the Portsmouth rail area is not what it used to be. There are many more developments along the track and the problems are affecting more and more residents and creating a greater safety hazard. There has been no reply to date.

Senator Shaheen and Representative Pappas have vowed to step in. Portsmouth's City Manager has also been in contact.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS: it was suggested that the group do a formal levels test of toxicity and noise levels. Prescott Park is able to do that at each of its concerts. The group could contact the PPAF to see how they do that and at what cost. Also if the group got developers involved, that might make a difference.

PORTSMOUTH HOUSE PLAQUES—PETER SOMSSICH for ELAINE

The process will continue beyond the PortsmouthNH400th celebration. Several historical investigations have been completed and others are continuing.

HOLIDAY LIGHT CONTEST—PETER SOMSSICH for ELAINE

All judging must be finished by this Friday, with ballots being collected and tabulated on Saturday morning. Awards will be given out on Monday at Portsmouth City Hall during the City Council meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS: The next meeting will be announced after the first of the new year when a new committee sits for the first time. The next Ward Forum schedule will also be arranged at that time.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Boduch

Secretary