

**Public Safety Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2021
6:00 PM
Council Chambers**

Members Present

Councilor Peter Lachapelle, Vice Chair
Councilor Palana Hunt-Hawkins
Councilor Chris Rice

Members Absent

Councilor Don Hamann, Chair (Excused)
Councilor Jeremy Hutchinson (Unexcused)

Others Present

Michael Bezanson, PE, City Engineer
Deputy Chief Gary Boudreau, PD
Dan Camara, GIS Asset Mgmt. Technician
Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation & Arena
Sheila Colson, Recreation & Arena Advisory
Commission Chair
William Schreiber, PDGA, Rochester Resident
James Chambers, 132 Pickering Road
Eli Barnes, Utility Advisory Board Member,
10 Echo Brook Road
Tom Plourde, 116 Autumn Street

Minutes

Councilor Lachapelle brought the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

- 1. Approve Minutes from September 15, 2021, Public Safety Meeting.**
Councilor Rice made a motion to approve the minutes from September 15, 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hunt-Hawkins. Unanimous voice vote carried the motion.

- 2. Public Input**

The members of the public in attendance were present to address items already on the agenda.

- 3. Flat Rock Bridge Road/Salmon Falls Road Intersection Safety Concerns (Kept in Committee)**

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson updated the Committee and he said he reach out to Ms. Littlefield to let her know that he is working on setting up a meeting with her surveyor. His understanding is that there is some sort of heath issue going on, so things are a little delayed. Ms. Littlefield had informed Mr. Bezanson that she could not attend the meeting tonight, but she did want to reiterate that she remains concerned about line-of-sight issues at the

intersection with parked vehicles; and, with winter approaching, the potential of snow piles creating line-of-sight issues, as has been experienced in previous years. Councilor Lachapelle asked Mr. Bezanson if there was time frame when they will find out about the City Right of Way. Mr. Bezanson said he was going to continue to try to set up a meeting; he reached out others at the surveying company, but they said the primary surveyor isn't available right now. He said he will continue his efforts on this front. Councilor Rice said regarding the snow it's not a great situation to be in. He recommended talking to the Codes Department and maybe having the Police Department engage the neighbors on this issue. Deputy Chief Boudreau did say that they have been out there for other reasons, not for the snow. Councilor Rice asked if the neighbor was receptive to discussions. Deputy Chief Boudreau said to a point, but that he is disputing the property lines. **(Kept in Committee)**

4. Washington Street (Route 202)/Estes Road Intersection-Reduced Speed and Stop Light Request

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. He stated that this has been in the Public Safety Committee before; and, it is a dangerous intersection. About 5 years ago a condemned house was removed and some grading work was completed along Washington Street; and, while these efforts did improve the line-of-sight, it is still not enough. The Washington Street right-of-way is State-owned. Councilor Rice said that he saw on the DOT Facebook page they were installing "Traffic Entering When Flashing" signage in certain areas around the state; he envisioned these signs on the Route 202 stretch and the sensors on the Estes Road approaches. He knows that the City cannot install these on its own, but if the State is installing these elsewhere maybe they could be installed in this location. Deputy Chief Boudreau presented the available crash data for the intersection. Since 2015 there were 28 accidents: 20 with no injuries, 7 with injuries, and 1 fatality. The NHDOT safety improvements project was completed in 2016, including the removal of the house and the re-grading along the roadside. Mr. Bezanson said because there was a fatality, the City is now eligible to apply for a Road Safety Audit, as was conducted at the Old Dover Road/Tebbetts Road intersection. An application is being pulled together with SRPC, and the Police Department is compiling the redacted crash reports. The State has stated that only the reports for crashes occurring after the previous safety improvements were completed in May 2016 should be included with the application; there have been 26 crashes reported in this timeframe, which averages about 5 crashes per year. The application is due to NHDOT by December 1, 2021. As Councilor Rice mentioned, one of the options that has already been discussed with NHDOT, and will likely be evaluated in any Road Safety Audit, is the installation of "Traffic Entering When Flashing" signage. Councilor Lachapelle said to get the application submitted by the due date of December 1, 2021 and it will be **kept in committee**.

5. Squamanagonic Gate Discussion

Chair Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. He stated that he is taking full responsibility, as he didn't think about having the members of the disc golf

community come to and get involved with the discussions on this issue. Councilor Lachapelle said there have been some issues and break-ins and other activities that don't belong in the area; and, that this park is unique because it is remote and no one knows that you're out there. Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation & Arena, was present to talk about the issue. He stated there are a few recommendations and several different avenues that he wanted to talk about. He gave a little background on the park. It is a 40-plus acre park off of Hansonville Road. It was deeded to the City of Rochester in 1971 from a group called Rochester Community Activities, Inc. It was deeded to the City of Rochester "with the restriction that it must be retained as a public recreation area". Since then, it has remained open wooded space; in the late 70's, and 80's into the early 2000's the hunting group Profile Bowmen entered into a long term lease until around 2010. They were there for a number of years they had exclusive use of the area at the time. A proposal was presented to the City Council to put a disc golf course out there. It has been a very successful endeavor. Some complaints were received in early part of this past summer; they have been looking for some solutions and one was to put up a gate and some boulders to the upper part of the parking area so vehicles couldn't make their way to the roadway that connects back to a further gravel area where vehicles didn't need to be. The Profile Bowman group had some huts in there and were vandalized and someone actually took up residency and the huts have since been removed. They were looking to put a barrier system up so vehicles couldn't get to the area and to put a gate near the split in the roadway. This area serves dual purpose. The Police Department operates a training facility in the area, and most of the time it serves as a park and disc golf course. The disc golf area is closed down when the police are training, which is generally Fridays and the month of November. Back in August this issue came to the Public Safety Committee and it was suggested to put up a gate. There is one gate now that prohibits vehicles from proceeding to the split in the road. DPW widened the entrance road on the left and the right to park vehicles on the Hansonville Road side of the gate. Mr. Bowlen said his concern with the gate being locked at night is that it gives people the opportunity to go in the park and not be seen. The parking area is also a challenge because it's out of sight. Park hours were posted in June, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset. That proved to be a success; there were 14 contacts made with people that were in there after those hours and 4 move longs. The hours signage worked quite well. The suggestion was made to install a park sign that indicates Police Training Facility and Disc Golf. Mr. Bowlen said there is no concrete plan to say what we want to do. Councilor Lachapelle said there was a gate that was locked; people are going to go down there no matter what; there is an access point on Gear Road that you can walk into the park. They did before, do now, and will do in the future. Members of the disc golf community were present to talk about their concerns. William Schreiber, a disc golf course user and a resident of Rochester for 4 years, was present to voice his concerns. He has been playing disc golf for 20 years. He said Jim Chambers was the one that started the disc golf course in the area; he put a lot of his own money in it and a lot of work. He said the gate puts a damper on all the work they have done this year. They went from being able to park 60 to 70 cars to 15 cars; it defeats the purpose of all

the work they have done. Councilor Lachapelle asked how many times they have 60 to 70 vehicles in the parking lot. Mr. Schreiber said nice weekend days and tournaments they can get up to 60 to 70 vehicles. Mr. Schreiber said he felt they were being punished; he has kicked out the homeless and junkies. Councilor Rice said he feels the gate was rushed through City Council too quickly without all the facts. He asked if there was any way the City staff could give the disc golf group a key to the gate until the plan is solved. Councilor Lachapelle said it's a great idea, but the thing with a key is that they need to make sure the gate is opened in the morning and the last one out needs to lock it. Mr. Schreiber said that is the problem; he would personally have difficulty maintaining a locked gate every night as he works full time, has a wife and kid at home, and other commitments. Councilor Lachapelle said the disc golf course is a great asset for the City. He said the park is unique and off the beaten path. Councilor Rice suggested that they could be given access to a key for events, and then return it. Mr. Schreiber said the current parking structure is good for daily use. During summer months the parking lot could be full. James Chambers, a Gonic resident and disc golfer, said he came to the City in 2013 to ask to build a disc golf course. It's not inviting with the gate; he said it looks sketchy and like you are going into a detention facility. He said they lost a lot of people due to the gate installation and the current parking situation. Councilor Lachapelle said at the end of the day whatever is decided someone is not going to be happy. He said it is the City Council's responsibility to do what is best for the City. Mr. Schreiber said he thinks step one would be to install the sign for the Police Training Facility and Disc Golf. A similar sign may deter the unsavory people. Sheila Colson, Recreation & Arena Advisory Commission Chair, said she thinks they've done a great job getting the disc golf course up and going. She thinks we need to find a way to make it work because it's a great fitness activity and it's a benefit to the community. Councilor Lachapelle suggested a CIP project could be discussed for clearing an area for additional parking. Councilor Rice said he respects Councilor Lachapelle for wanting to add a project to the FY23 CIP Budget discussions, but respectfully disagrees, and thinks something needs to be done now. Approval of a CIP budgeted project would make funding available for July 1, 2022, but something should be done now. Eli Barnes, member of the Utility Advisory Board and a Rochester resident, added that a CIP project to clear an area for additional parking would not address the fact that the parking would not be visible from the street. There is already parking available and having two gates at the split in the roadway would allow the gate to the police training facility to be locked while the gate to the parking area is unlocked. Councilor Rice stated that he plans to go check out the area. Councilor Lachapelle indicated that he would like to join him. **(Kept in Committee)**

6. Charles Street-Request for “No Parking Between Hours of 2:30PM and 3:30 PM” on Northbound Side of Charles Street between Academy and Hope on Haven Hill

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. He said that the William Allen School was designed for walking to and from school and bus drop off and pickup, not for a significant number of vehicles dropping off and picking up school children.

Councilor Hunt-Hawkins said the school has a bizarre placement in a tight neighborhood. Councilor Rice said this issue should be kept in committee and the Superintendent of Schools invited to the next meeting to hear these issues, so that he can address them with his administration. Councilor Lachapelle said vehicles back up on Charles Street waiting to make a left turn onto Granite Street; parked cars on Charles Street prevent through traffic from moving around the waiting cars on the right and are stuck in traffic. Councilor Rice asked what the law was regarding standing cars. Deputy Chief Boudreau read from RSA 265:69, Stopping, Standing or Parking Prohibited in Specified Places. Deputy Chief Boudreau said you can let out and pick up passengers in a no parking area. Councilor Rice asked Mr. Bezanson if there was an MUTCD compliant sign for "No Standing". Mr. Bezanson said he would need to review the Manual for options. Mr. Bezanson noted that DPW continues to work toward finalizing the Woodman Area Infrastructure Improvements project, but there is no plan to add turning lanes; and, the traffic is likely to get worse due to the construction before it gets better. He also said that, if you allow through travel on the right of the standing vehicles, it may create a line-of-sight issue in this area with the crosswalk location there. **(Kept in Committee and the Superintendent of Schools will be invited to the next meeting)**

7. Autumn Street-Safety Issues and request to Install sidewalks

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. Mr. Bezanson stated that the annual CIP budget for sidewalk rehabilitation would not apply to this location as this request is for a new sidewalk on Autumn Street. He suggested that, similar to Portland Street, the City could apply for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant to add a new sidewalk in this location. The City is currently in the process of receiving a TAP Grant award for Portland Street. Councilor Rice said he would like to include sidewalk on Salmon Falls Road from Autumn Street to Highland Street in a TAP Grant application. Tom Plourde of 116 Autumn Street was present to discuss his concerns; he has two grandchildren that live across the street and he would like them to be able to walk up and down the street. It's a cut through street that has seen increasing traffic. He is concerned about all of the people out walking along Autumn Street and he wants to get the ball rolling on a sidewalk project. Councilor Lachapelle said that by sending in the letter and by addressing the Committee tonight he did get the ball rolling. ***Councilor Rice made a motion to send this item to the Public Works & Buildings Committee for review. The recommendation was seconded by Councilor Hunt-Hawkins. Unanimous voice vote carried the motion. (Kept in Committee and will explore applying for a future TAP Grant for a sidewalk on Autumn Street)***

8. 4 Corners-Meaderboro Road, Estes Road, 202A-Requesting a Mirror

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. He asked Mr. Bezanson if we typically install mirrors in the right-of-way. Mr. Bezanson said no, the only times a mirror has been installed in the right-of-way is when a homeowner requests one for driveway line-of-sight and they install it themselves in a location acceptable to the DPW. Mr. Bezanson said he understands why a mirror has been requested in

this location, and recalls previous similar requests. The Route 202A and Meaderboro Road rights-of-way are NHDOT jurisdiction; DPW has met with NHDOT regarding safety issues at this intersection and are continuing to work with the State on solutions. No action taken.

9. Blue Hills Drive-Speed Limit Reduction Request

Councilor Lachapelle summarized the issue. He asked Deputy Chief Boudreau if the City can post speed limits lower than 30 mph. Deputy Chief Boudreau said yes, but 30 mph is the typical speed limit in a neighborhood like this; this is a closed neighborhood and it would be the residents that live there and their visitors that are travelling on these roads. Councilor Hunt-Hawkins said she was driving in the neighborhood yesterday and noted that because the roads are so curvy she doesn't know how folks drive much over 25 mph in that neighborhood. Councilor Rice suggested a public information campaign to encourage motorists to slow down. No action taken.

10. E911 Update

Deputy Chief Boudreau said all he has are small changes to specific locations that needed to be addressed. Recently there was a City Council presentation regarding the Tebbetts Road renumbering. The E911 Committee would like the City Council to bring the Tebbetts Road renumbering back up for a vote. There was a resident that bought a lot and waited for over a year for an address number to be assigned; he does have a temporary number now and can finally obtain a building permit.

11. Emergency Management Update

No members of the Fire Department were present for an update.

12. Other

Ians Way-Streetlight

There was a streetlight out on Ians Way; it was apparently fixed and one day later the streetlight was out again. The pole number is SL1J2.

Lowell Street-Signage Area of Arena

The concerns were of vehicles entering and exiting the arena. The concerns are regarding traffic in the Lowell St./Harding St./Edgerly Way area. Councilor Lachapelle or Councilor Hamann will call the resident for details; the concerns did not include a specific request. **(Kept in Committee)**

Update on Radar Speed Signs

Deputy Chief Boudreau wanted to give the Committee an update on the radar speed signs, he has received some prices but waiting for more and will update the Committee next month on the pricing.

Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon

Mr. Bezanson wanted to inform the Committee that due to the success of the rapid

rectangular flashing beacon (RRFB) installation on North Main Street, the Department has considered another installation. Commissioner Nourse plans to bring to the Public Works & Buildings Committee tomorrow night a proposal to install a solar-powered RRFB at the crosswalk on Wakefield Street/South Main Street at Hanson Street and Parson Main. Councilor Rice asked about the solar one on North Main Street, how it was operating. Mr. Bezanson said it seems to be operating well, but it is still a fairly new installation. Councilor Rice asked Mr. Bezanson if these were going to be installed at Strafford Square. Mr. Bezanson said yes, they are included in the project area. The first phase of work on the underground utilities is in construction right now. The second phase will go out to bid this winter and will include the RRFBs. He said the decision of whether the Strafford Square RRFBs will be solar-powered or hard-wired will be made soon as the plans are finalized for bidding.

Councilor Lachapelle adjourned the meeting at 7:23 PM.

The minutes were respectfully submitted by Laura J. McDormand, Admin. Assistant II.



TRAFFIC
ENTERING

WHEN
FLASHING