

Peaks Island Council Meeting

February 24, 2015

6:15 PM, MacVane Community Center

Special Island Safety Concerns Meeting

Council Members in Attendance: Mary Anne Mitchell, Lisa Penalver, Timmi Sellers, Kathleen Hayward.

Public Members in Attendance: 53 people at start of meeting.

Call to Order: 6:20 p.m. by Penalver.

Introduction of Guests: Police Chief Michael Sauschuck, Lieutenant Cliff Strout, Sergeant Michael Rand, and Mike Murray.

Sauschuck thanked the PIC Safety Committee for all the hard work they have done presenting the safety issues. Sauschuck talked about the series of meetings they had with Island public services personnel and the survey they did which covered everything from parking to what the signs should look like to other issues that impact the entire Island. Results of the survey can be found on the Portland City website. Sauschuck boiled down the concerns brought up in the meetings and the survey to three different basic problems: 1) 72-hour parking lot violations, 2) Traffic on Island Avenue and Welch Street during ferry activity and ferry queue line, and 3) Parking enforcement. Sauschuck discussed some possible solutions to these problems:

- 1) 4-WAY STOP SIGN at Island/Welch
- 2) Self-serve PARKING MACHINE (no cost) with time tickets for lot parking
- 3) CADET hired to direct ferry lane traffic

The 4-way stop was discussed as a way to alleviate traffic danger at Island and Welch. Although there have only been two accidents recorded for that intersection, there is concern of future accidents that may occur. For the 72-hour parking lot violations, set up a parking machine to log vehicle time in and out was discussed, although there is no money in the budget available for this expense at this time (Cost approx \$650). The third idea was to hire a cadet during high-traffic times as was done in Portland for specific issues such as illegally tossing cigarette butts in parks, leaving police officers available for 911 calls. The cadet would be paid \$11.00 an hour for a 37.5 hour work week, and would focus primarily on traffic issues during heavy summer ferry use times. Sauschuck would also be willing to assign a part-time cadet for just the weekends (3 days/week), for example, if that's the only time the Island really needs additional enforcement assistance. *(Postscript note by L. Penalver: the full cost for a Cadet had been quoted to the PIC as over \$8300 for the summer)*

General Questions for Chief Sauschuck from the Public:

Q: How should we deal with vehicles, including golf carts, with under-age drivers, speeding, and drinking alcohol while driving?

Sauschuck: The enforcement angle is something that he has considered and is a stand-alone issue, and which would cover addressing this issue. What has been found in other neighborhoods that ask for more enforcement is that many of the locals get the tickets which the neighborhoods then complain about. Sauschuck asked that we are absolutely sure that we want more enforcement before we ask for it and he can make it happen.

Q: What do you think are the biggest public safety issues on the Peaks Island?

Sauschuck: He has heard that the local police should be doing more. What is most important to him is what the citizens think is the most important safety issue on the Island. What he hears the most about is the traffic issues from vehicles leaving the ferry and how congested that entire ferry area is which could lead to accidents.

Q: How should we deal with speeding issues on Island Avenue due to people trying to make the ferry on time, especially concerned are those families that live on Island Avenue with kids?

Sauschuck: He has talked to the local police about the possibility of using radar to help enforce speed limit. Speed bumps may also be a solution but he has seen that many neighbors who get them end up not liking them in their neighborhood although they definitely end up slowing traffic. Enforcement may be a solution but there are not enough police to do enforcement on the roads and meet the ferry at the same time. However, the goal would be voluntary compliance and this could be done by having more of a police presence on the roads as a deterrent.

Q: Relative to the speeding issues for the boat, it's usually the same people who are late every time. If the officers are down at the boat, they miss those speeding individuals.

Sauschuck: The officer is at the ferry to meet the ferry because that is the community's expectation. Consensus needs to change that, if the officer is not at the ferry, they are still working and not just watching TV at the barn. Does the community want the one officer to be at the ferry or out in the community? He would like more feedback on that. A peer component, including education, should also come into play but voluntary compliance doesn't always happen.

Q: Instead of a cadet or parking machine, why not take pictures during specific intervals showing cars parked in the lot?

Sauschuck: The difficult part to that is keeping the tape and playing the tape back plus people may have left and come back to the parking area. How do you replay all that information? However, it is an intriguing idea.

Q: Why can't we get radar to show people how fast that they're driving because we do need an officer at the boat?

Sauschuck: Each radar unit costs \$6,500. They have only ONE unit for the entire City of Portland with a long list of neighborhoods who are asking for it. It was bought with grant money and can only be put out in good weather. Cost and demands for the one unit is an issue. However, there is a possibility that it can be brought to Peaks but only for the allotted three-week rotation.

Q: Instead of a 4-way stop, could the person who handles traffic issues for the City come out to Peaks during the busy summer traffic times to help deal with the bottlenecks that occur on a regular basis in the ferry area during the summer and help figure out a better flow of traffic?

Sauschuck: He agreed. There are actually traffic engineers that come out to look at such issues and he has discussed this with them, but those engineers stated that they are not sure what the community wants or how to actually fix the problem.

Public Comment: One idea: remove one of the pedestrian sidewalks from Island Avenue down to the ferry (on the parking lot side) and then widen the street to allow easier flow of traffic. The cadet could then help make sure that people don't park their cars where they should not be parked, like what occurs continually at the turnaround, which would help with congestion. The cadet could also help funnel the people onto the sidewalk and off the road out of the way of the vehicles? It was thought that a ticket machine would only add to the confusion and traffic congestion.

Q: Could there be a second "long-term" parking lot somewhere near the transfer station for those people who are going on vacation and for parking bans?

Murray: Probably about 5 or 6 years ago, a group of Islanders came to the City with that idea but unfortunately, the City does not have a lot of land available for such an option.

Q: Concern over the numbers of vehicles on the Island, the number of people getting on and off the ferry and the number of cars blocking the road. The problem is not only from visitors but many year-round Islanders do not follow the rules either.

Sauschuck: He knows that he is not going to make everybody happy and the officers can do their job better but it may be a shock to the community if there's an increase in consistent enforcement.

Q: During the summer, how many police + fire personnel are allotted to Peaks? (# police ___ # fire personnel ___). What is the start date/end date on this extra "summer" service?

Sauschuck: This has been the same for the last three years. There is a line item in the budget for an extra police officer detail for Peaks Island, which costs approximately \$35,000. There is also one officer allocated for fire and medical assistance with the Fire Department. ONE additional police officer is sent out from Memorial Day to Labor Day starting at Friday at 4:00 p.m. through Sunday at 6:00 p.m. (i.e., just Sat & Sunday), unless it's a holiday weekend, and then they stay over to 6:00 p.m. on Monday.

Q: Could we have more strict enforcement on the No Parking rules for the ferry lane?

Sauschuck: You will have increased enforcement on the Island. Even visitors will be held accountable for paying with warrants issued for failure to pay fines.

Q: Can there be a rotation of individual officers for Peaks Island?

Sauschuck: That is not possible because it is a specialty position and because of unions, the type of training the officer needs, and not enough funding available to provide additional officers to Peaks Island. However, the officers that are qualified to work on Peaks Island will be rotated.

Q: Can strict enforcement of driving laws increase, especially in respect to golf carts?

Sauschuck: There will be increased enforcement on the Island equally for both golf carts and vehicles.

Q: How will you deal with the speeding issue?

Sauschuck: Speeding enforcement will be increased over the whole year, not just the summer and should help deal with those individuals who continuously speed, hot spots in the community, and increase voluntary compliance.

Q: How to ensure police responsiveness when Islanders call for help?

Sauschuck: He wants to make sure that the officers are responsive to our needs and are available when we call. He does not know the details about what occurs on Peaks Island. He hears from Islanders that the police are not doing what they should but the officers tell him that they're helping people in the community by just going out dealing with things but don't log in all the time, so he is not sure what the actual situation is. He feels that the officers are doing a good job but he would like them to "step up their game." The officers have been encouraged to create more formal reports on what they do, log in on a consistent basis, be more responsive, and enforce all laws. There also exists a local nonemergency number for situations that do not require a 911 emergency response which is: 874-8575.

Q: Danger with visitor/pedestrians/cyclists that illegally walk/cycle in the middle of the street. Somebody needs to inform them that we are a neighborhood of the City of Portland and we should not be treated differently.

Sauschuck: He feels that the police do deal with visitors that are not following the rules but they do need to keep an eye on that.

Q: How do we deal with vehicles who are left in the parking lot over the 72-hour limit since we don't have a licensed 72-hour tow truck service on the Island or a secure lot?

Sauschuck: There is an official list of tow truck drivers that the City uses to tow abandoned vehicles. However, that is difficult for Peaks Island since there is no official

tow truck service on the Island. Keep in mind that the City of Portland does not tow vehicle, there are private citizens that have a permit from the City to tow.

Q: What are the rules about riding in the back of a pickup truck?

Rand: If the seats of a pickup truck are full, then it is legal to have riders in the back of the truck. However, they cannot be seating on the panels or standing.

Q: Problems with Dispatch because they are not familiar with the Island locations and are "hung up" on protocols like street addresses. Not all houses on Peaks Island have addresses.

Sauschuck: When the information is being taken by a dispatcher, they are actively dispatching that call to local police or firefighters to address the problem. Quality assurance is done regularly to make sure that happens. They have to ask questions like addresses so that help is sent to the correct place and what is occurring, like a cardiac situation, to determine if they need to direct CPR or other actions until help arrives. They have a job to do and they have to ask those questions but, be assured that there is also another dispatcher sitting nearby who is actively dispatching help to address the call while the other is collecting your information and assessing the situation.

PIC Chairman Mitchell would like to note that there is a nonemergency number to use for the local police, which is: **874-8575**.

Meeting Adjourned by Penalver at 7:38 p.m.