



Peaks Island Council

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

6:15 p.m., MacVane Community Center

Call to Order: 6:15 p.m.

Roll Call: Lisa Peñalver, Timmi Sellers, Mary Anne Mitchell, David Stankowicz, Stuart Jackson, Patrick Flynn, Mayor Ethan Strimling

Number of Audience Members (AM) in attendance: 20

Peñalver made the motion to approve the November 17th meeting minutes, Sellers seconded. Unanimous vote to approve. Motion passed.

Police Report: Officer Danny Rose stated that 13 vehicles will be removed from the island on Friday by LPA. He stated that \$2200 has been raised and will be distributed to organizations such as the Peaks Island Fund, PI Children's Workshop, the Lions Club and the American Legion, to name a few. Officer Rose recognized LPA and the Kamp brothers for volunteering their time and equipment in order for the vehicle removal to occur.

Officer Rose reminded residents to please stay informed over the winter about parking bans that are enforced both on the mainland and on the island. He stated that Officers have been asked to issue tickets for vehicles left in the street.

Mitchell asked if people donating cars are able to determine where money goes? Officer Rose stated that yes, while donating vehicles people have the option to designate where the money will be sent.

Flynn suggested that the PIC recognize LPA and the Kamp brothers for their efforts in the vehicle fundraiser. The Council agreed.

Treasurer's Report: Please see budget summary attachment.

Committee Reports:

Island Advisory Committee: Sellers stated the next quarterly meeting will be held next week and she will be presenting preliminary ideas and gathering feedback related to island etiquette signage.

Safety Committee: Peñalver stated the Safety Committee has not met recently, but stated there has been communication among the members related to abandoned bicycles, loss of sticker parking on the mainland and the recent rate increase at the Casco Bay Garage. Sellers stated that notices were sent recently with information on the garage rate increase, and she stated she had confirmed that any year-round resident is eligible for the \$10 discount.

AM stated that Joe Gray and Sid Gerard both have extensive knowledge on the original agreement for island resident parking in the Casco Bay Garage.

Zoning Committee: Peñalver stated the Housing Committee was meeting tonight in Portland and would be discussing regulations related to short-term rentals and Airbnb. She stated that Betsey Remage-Healey from the Affordable Housing group had informed her the islands would be discussed at a later date. Mayor Strimling stated islanders should stay informed as decisions made may have impact to the islands.

Sellers stated that the abandoned boats had been cleared from the ferry landing beach, adding that the Zoning Committee is working to make recommendations to the City for the Working Waterfront on Peaks Island in order to keep the beach clean, safe and used appropriately for the enjoyment of all.

AM asked who will lead creating a community plan for Peaks Island? Sellers stated there will be an additional meeting to review the most recent plan, and then move forward in making updates and recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan for the island. Peñalver explained that Portland's Comprehensive Plan is available for review online and input is still welcome as it has not yet been finalized.

Environmental Committee: Mitchell stated that there was an adequate number of applications received to move forward with weatherization week, and the work will be completed the week of January 16-20th.

Mitchell stated the window insert build was very successful again this year. She went on to say the minimum number needed for next year is 200 inserts, and stated that anyone who knows they will need windows next year should contact Bob Villforth at rvillforth@gmail.com.

Mitchell stated that PEAT has decided to place more attention on plastics in the ocean and members will begin a monthly beach clean-up day starting this month. She went on to say PEAT has a Tree Committee that will be meeting in January to discuss the Portland Tree Coop program on the island and replanting street trees that have come down. She stated that through this program residents can work with Jim Lausier to identify and select a tree and then City crews will deliver and plant the tree. She stated that information about the Portland Tree Coop program will be posted in the spring. Mitchell added the tree must be planted in view of the public. She stated they will also ask the City to consider supporting a Memorial Tree program in lieu of the Memorial Benches on the island.

AM stated that at a previous meeting concerns were discussed regarding CBL using plastic shrink wrap for freight, and asked if there has been any follow up on the issue? Peñalver stated that there are several items needing follow up with CBL. Sellers added that a letter of concern had been sent from PIC to CBL regarding the plastic debris. Mitchell stated that some deck hands are working on finding an alternative to shrink wrap for freight, and stated that she has noticed less plastic debris in the terminal area.

Q&A with Mayor Ethan Strimling:

Mayor Strimling opened the Q&A session by stating he will be delivering his State of the City address in January and invited attendees to share their thoughts on what's going well, what challenges there are, and creative ideas for future consideration. He went on to say that some of the topics being focused on currently include rebuilding and repairing elementary schools, the pesticide task force, housing demand and short-term rental regulations. Mayor Strimling stated that the City is looking to create the Office of Economic Opportunity which will work with new Americans on integration and job placement efforts.

Among the topics during the open forum with Mayor Strimling islander parking on the mainland was a focal point of discussion including loss of designated stickered parking and affordability for garage parking. It was also mentioned that the lack of affordable mainland parking causes more visitors to bring vehicles to Peaks, increasing congestion and safety concerns on the island. AM stated that parking limitations on the mainland make it challenging for family to visit the island and offer child care. Mayor Strimling stated that the City is exploring options for parking and trying to determine the best use for multiple locations including the possibility of subsidized pricing for islanders vs. visitors. He went on to say that recommendations and suggestions are welcome.

Sellers stated that in the original PIC documentation from 2007 reference is made to approval of a Parking Plan for island residents but that document has not been located or provided by any City Contacts thus far. Sellers asked Mayor Strimling for his assistance in researching and locating that original parking plan in order to use as a starting point for updated parking and comprehensive planning efforts. Mayor Strimling made note and agreed to follow up on the parking plan document.

AM stated she feels it is important that the City host a meeting or forum to gather feedback and concerns from all islands related to parking. Further discussion included coordinating with CBL or a member of their board to use the conference room as a central location. Mayor Strimling stated he would follow up.

AM stated there has been increased reports of hate speech in schools, and asked what is being done to demonstrate that Portland is a welcoming community? Mayor Strimling stated he has not observed a local increase in hate crimes or threats locally, but went on to state he has been personally approached by people fearing deportation. Mayor Strimling stated that Portland has not been declared a 'sanctuary city' but there is no standard definition of this designation. He stated the City strives to clearly communicate its position on matters of immigration and stated that local police would be present in any federal level effort in order to facilitate communication and ensure safety. Mayor Strimling stated that he is in communication with Xavier Botana, Superintendent of Schools, and has not been advised of increased school incidents. Mayor Strimling encouraged everyone to be diligent in reporting school incidents to Superintendent Botana and public incidents to the police for further inquiry.

AM stated the Peaks Island Council budget has decreased from the amount originally mandated and requested restoration to the original amount. She went on to say she feels the PIC budget amount is miniscule in comparison to the taxes paid by Peaks Island residents. She stated with more funds the PIC would be able to better address items of safety concern including parking lot lighting and ferry landing incline walkways. Mayor Strimling noted the stated request and concerns stating he would check in to the decreased amount.

Sellers stated that she has observed much change and growth in the past 10 years, and stated that a challenge for Peaks is affordable and workforce housing. She went on to say she would like to see the City come up with new and creative ideas. Further discussion included tiny houses and utilization of the Franklin Street corridor. Sellers went on to say that she feels communication between the City and the PIC could be further improved, stating that there doesn't seem to be a clear channel related to capital improvement projects for Peaks Island. Mayor Strimling stated that the PIC should create a list of suggested capital improvements and send it to himself and Belinda Ray to start the communications. Sellers commended Ethan Hipple and his collaborative approach to working with PIC on Parks and Recreation items.

AM stated she has been a resident since 1971 and commended the City for its amazing nonprofit community, adding that the energy assistance and window insert efforts on Peaks make a tremendous difference in assisting residents. She went on to say that public restroom facilities and parking are two areas that need improvement in Portland.

Stankowicz stated that the cost of living in cities including Portland and Peaks Island continues to increase, adding that it is also very expensive to live on the island. He asked Mayor Strimling to really consider what the future vision is for Portland: Will it be a place that caters to the wealthy and those buying vacation homes, or will the City work to be affordable and inclusive for families and those living here full-time who do not have as much money? Stankowicz stated that the number of students enrolled in the Peaks Island School and Portland High School has been declining, stating that families are critical to the sustainability of Portland and the island. Mayor Strimling stated that he recognizes the gap between the wealthy and those who are very poor, stating that there need to be more focus on wages and housing for the middle class and lower-middle class. He stated the Housing Committee had to focus on housing security related to short-notice evictions and major rent increases, adding that he is hopeful the focus can now shift to new housing solutions.

Waterfront concert permits were discussed as well as police and fire staffing, including costs associated and staffing ratios. Mayor Strimling stated that on site staffing is covered in cost of permit and emergency services are provided by the City as normal. AM suggested that staffing ratios should be applied to the number of visitors to Peaks Island in summer, stating that two police and one fire/EMT is not adequate. Further discussion included cross-training of police for advanced EMT and fire response and instances in the winter season when the single police officer cannot respond alone such as a domestic violence situation. Mayor Strimling stated that supporting documentation would be required to show those instances where response was delayed due to understaffing. It was also stated that the police staffing on the island was reduced around 2008 due to low crime statistics.

AM stated that the public transportation system for Portland is lacking direct connectivity between the major hubs: Metro, CBL Terminal and the Transportation Station at Thompson's Point. He went on to say that there is a significant increase in travel time with the current connections, which acts as a deterrent for using public transportation. Mayor Strimling stated that there are efforts to make public transportation more integrated in daily life such as high school and USM students using the Metro. He stated that often the service will not be created unless the demand increase is present. AM stated that the service needs to be in place in order for people to use it.

Peaks Island School: Highlights discussed include:

- Enrollment currently at 43, up from 38 at the beginning of the school year. Would like to increase enrollment and create a sustainable population.
- Recent results from MEA placed PI School ahead of the mainland schools in 6 out of 7 categories.
- Have applied to be the first school in Maine to be recognized as a Green Ribbon School and would like to set the standard to share and teach other Portland Schools on process and possibilities.
- Recent capital improvements include boiler replacement, brick work, library renovation and repairing leaks.
- Moving toward a 0% emissions kitchen.
- Possibly housing the public library collection during the Peaks Library renovations.

- \$32k has been raised privately since August to continue with outside improvements to pay for items not approved by the City including new fencing, landscaping, lettering for building, recycling/trash housing, paint.
- Curbing and drainage surrounding the school needs to be replaced estimated at ~\$12k without a survey. Asking PIC and the City for funds for this effort.

Old Business:

Winter Public Restroom Facilities: Peñalver stated that a closing date for the library building has yet TBD, as the permit requirements are still in progress. She stated that PIC meetings will remain at the McVane Community Center and the public restrooms in the building will remain open until further notice.

Abandoned Bicycles: Peñalver stated that the ordinance regarding abandoned bicycles is inadequate, and would like to make a recommendation to the City for amended verbiage related to the island. Further discussion included some of the existing ordinance criteria as well as how to best determine how long a bike has been abandoned. Mitchell stated it would be a good idea to contact the Maine Bicycle Coalition for information on their process and guidelines because the Maine Bicycle Coalition had initiated the ordinance. Flynn suggested this topic be tabled until the entire Council has the opportunity to review the existing ordinance.

CBL Boarding Protocols: Peñalver stated that PIC would like to request time on CBL Board agenda for PIC to discuss crowd-control/boarding concerns and possible management solutions. AM stated that CBL staff will offer assisted boarding upon request. AM stated electronic ticketing has been in progress for approximately 8 years, but there is limited space to work with for boarding. Flynn stated he feels a public meeting is the best option but stated he feels attendance needs to be better than the last CBL meeting.

Downfront Signage & Striping: Peñalver stated that follow up is needed regarding outstanding items that were proposed in the report written by Traffic Engineer Jeremiah Bartlett.

Dog Park: Peñalver explained that a dog park is proposed for the Trott-Little John Park area near the community garden. She stated that City approval for Capital Improvement funds is still in progress, and stated that the old school fence will be re-purposed for use at the dog park.

New Business:

School Curb/Drainage: Peñalver stated that she would like to request that funds from the City budget be allocated to pay for the curb and drainage work proposed for the Peaks Island School. Further discussion included the possibility of a good faith gesture donation of some amount from PIC. AM asked if other City neighborhoods are expected to pay for school improvements and stated she feels the City tax dollars should cover the amount needed. Peñalver stated there needs to be better established communication between PIC and the City regarding the Capital Improvements needs for the island. Sellers stated that Councilor Belinda Ray should be contacted for guidance on the best process for direct communication and input.

Peñalver made the motion to recommend that the City allocate funds in its budget to pay for the curb work needed at the Peaks Island School. Sellers seconded. Unanimous vote to approve. Motion passed.

Trees Committee: Peñalver stated that there has been concern regarding trees coming down with no communication and not replanted. Mitchell stated that PEAT will be hosting a tree meeting in January. Peñalver stated that she would like to request communication from the City regarding tree removal and replacement. Further discussion included selective pruning options, associated costs and notifications to neighbors on the community board.

AM stated the PEAT group hopes to be able to identify and suggest where trees could be added on the island in order to improve the environment on the streets and foster better communication and collaboration with the City. Mitchell stated that proper sizing and maintaining views would be part of the considerations for replacements as well, and that PEAT has been working with the City Arborist continuously but it has been a slow process.

AM stated the stairway removal to the parking lot was similar in that there was no communication and happened as a surprise to island residents. He stated that communication to inform the residents seems like a reasonable request.

Sellers stated that she participated in an effort with the City Arborist approximately two years ago to survey and identify locations for trees to be planted which has not yet been completed, adding that the committee work is in an effort to improve communication and input on the efforts. AM stated that signage in the location of removal with a brief explanation could be effective in informing the community.

Flynn proposed table the subcommittee formation for now and stated the Environmental Committee should be asked to be engaged in the meantime. Anyone interested in working with the PEAT efforts should contact Mary Anne Mitchell or Randy Schaeffer.

Council Retreat: Stankowicz stated this should be tabled until the vacant seat is filled and the Council membership is complete.

Announcements/Updates:

Council Seat Vacancy: The deadline will be extended until January for submitting letters of interest for the current Council vacancy. Letters may be submitted to any member of the PIC until January 20th.

January PIC Meeting to include: Jon Dow from Waterfront Productions (Maine Sate Pier Concerts) will be invited to attend, PIC Officer Elections: nominations to come from PIC only.

Meeting on Island Community Comprehensive Planning will happen again with the City probably in March and we will re-convene the Ad Hoc Planning Committee before that time.

Public Comment:

AM stated he feels Belinda Ray should be reminded that she is unable to attend the PIC meeting, she is supposed to be identifying an alternate attendee.

Next Regular PIC Meeting: Wednesday, January 25th, 2017, 6:30 pm at the Community Center

Meeting Adjournment: 8:21 p.m.