

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Standing Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2), Chair
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1)
Councilor Jill Duson (A/L)

Minutes

2/28/2017

(approved 3/21/2017)

Councilors Present: Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Ray, Councilor Duson

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Chris Branch

Councilor Thibodeau asked councilors and City staff to introduce themselves.

Approve Minutes: Councilor Thibodeau asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 21. Moved by Councilor Ray, seconded by Councilor Duson, all in favor.

Public Hearing: Councilor Thibodeau opened the public hearing on the proposal to change the name of Franklin Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Jennifer Wickstrom, Munjoy Street: opposed to the proposal, suggested money allocated could go to other social needs associated with Dr. King.

Mary Rickey: Hampshire St / Allen Ave. – MLK worthy of memorial, doesn't feel the name change is the right thing to do. Leave the name as Franklin Street in memory of residents displaced by the Franklin Street urban renewal project.

Carol Noonan: Portland – agrees with Mary Rickey. Loss of homes to Franklin Street was project was traumatic. Would like to honor Dr. King, maybe a great plaque.

Joe Bernacchi: Forest Ave – would prefer to rename Congress Street. Franklin named after Ben Franklin. Maybe the Jetport could be renamed.

Gwen – Danforth Street – Franklin Street has sad history, created from displacement of community.

Matt Suslovic on behalf of Mr. Wilson: Franklin Street should be named for Gerald Talbot who has made significant contributions. Congress Square may be more appropriate place to rename in recognition.

John Wuestoff – Munjoy Hill – This conversation should have been had 30 years ago. Suggests naming Franklin Street after President Obama, which would help inspire young people.

Mary Jane Gardner: Auburn Lane – grew up on Munjoy Hill. Franklin Street heart of the City she grew up in. Franklin is a connection to other parts of the city and has always been there. We should honor Dr. King in another way.

Art Piteau: Born and raised on Franklin Street, hard to find others who grew up there. Supports recognizing Dr. King, Gerald Talbot or President Obama. Displacement of multi-ethnic community was significant. He was 12 when it happened and saw the impacts. Doesn't think the arterial has brought progress. Would be willing to serve on a committee to study. Opposes renaming. It would remove the last vestige of that community.

Joey Brunelle – Kellogg Street – supports naming it after Gerald Talbot or Barack Obama

George Rheault – Bayside: Didn't feel like this was a sincere gesture. A great deal of community dialogue could be conducted through a committee to discuss. Prof. Derek Alderman could contribute, expert on renaming. Should not be top down process.

Nancy Walker – Sheridan Street: After listening to people's comments she is not sure renaming Franklin after Dr. King is a good idea. Feels it is important to honor Dr. King because it is easy to forget how horrible things were not long ago. We need to memorialize civil rights movement. Maybe Congress St. could be renamed.

Daoud Umma : Had served on a committee previously to study this several years ago, did not want to rename after Dr. King. Would like to see an economic development center to reflect Dr. King's commitment to Poor People's campaign. That would honor all the work of the people who suffered. Bring back discussions from previous committee.

Mark Riley – Olympia Street: Franklin Street has historical significance, look at Fore River Parkway, maybe Marginal Way, Congress Street, wonders where the name Franklin Street came from. Fine with recognizing Dr. King but opposed to renaming Franklin Street.

Alissa Armstrong, Spruce Street: Came to Portland in 1968. She knew a woman with 12 children who could not find a place to move when the urban renewal project took place and was evicted.

Michael Curran – Sheridan St. – Greatest memories from youth are from the old neighborhood. Wants Franklin St. to stay Franklin St. Maybe name a bridge after Dr. King because of his bridging people together.

Regina Phillips. Dale Street – appreciates passion and historical memory of the old Franklin St. neighborhood because she was as not aware of it. She pointed out that the history of African American has not been good. People had doors slammed in their faces. Gerald Talbot and Dr. King fought for people and should be memorialized. 15% of population in Portland is people of color, which needs to be considered. Proposal needs more conversation. She was a on the committee in 2009/10 and was told they didn't have money to honor Dr. King. Not for or against this right now because it needs more time, maybe a committee with people who were displaced and those who could not find housing.

Councilor Thibodeau closes public hearing.

Councilor Ray indicated that she appreciates the comments. She agrees with the suggestion to continue discussion. The argument to rename the street after Mr. Talbot or President Obama is good. She wonders if there is a way to change the name and keep the history. When the Armenian monument was put they put in footings for 4 more monuments that could memorialize the displaced communities. Not feeling comfortable moving forward at this point.

Councilor Duson: The idea for renaming Franklin Street came from her. She was frustrated that something could not happen sooner. It was not a shallow attempt at a quick win. She thinks the connection to the waterfront and the Freedom Trail marker is good. She was involved in the discussion to name the Bayside Trail after Dr. King. She would like the Committee to recommend creation of a task force to recognize Dr. King. Agrees there are others who are worthy of recognition. Ruben Ruby, who helped establish the Abyssinian Church, for instance. Recognizing Dr. King is important for the City.

Councilor Thibodeau : Thanked Councilor Duson bringing this forward. He finds it notable that the Council now has four people of color. He pointed out that Franklin Street is bordered by Lincoln Park and Kennedy Park and believes Franklin St. will be a bridge in the future. Thinks the renaming is a good idea but is mindful of the heartbreak that has taken place. He supports recognizing the families who were displaced but the question at hand is to rename the street and the will of committee seems to be continuing discussion. If will is to have a task force to recognize Dr. King he would support. Recognition of Dr. King will happen but will happen with the community.

Councilors agree to postpone a vote on this item to a different time.

Councilor Duson: She feels that the City should move forward to recognize Dr. King and would like to recommend a process that broadens the conversation. There should be a process to see if there is another way to recognize Dr. King.

Councilor Thibodeau would like to continue recognition of those displaced. He recommends that the full council approve a task force to look at permanent recognition of Dr. King, operating under the auspices of this committee.

Councilor Duson makes a motion that a task force with a mandate to recommend a means of recognizing the legacy of Dr. King be created and the this task force operate under the auspices of this committee.

Motion seconded by Councilor Ray.

Discussion: The Councilors discussed the process for creating a task force. The Mayor appoints members with input from the Committee. The Task Force should report back to this committee for action on a recommendation to the full Council. The Sustainability and Transportation Committee could take up honoring others as well.

All in vote favor of the motion.

CAD Cell Update:

The Committee postponed this item to the March meeting.

Climate Action Plan

City staff presented elements of the Climate Action Plan adopted in 2008 and highlighted areas of progress on each.

General Discussion: Councilor Thibodeau suggested promoting sustainability at events including Earth Day. He also suggested that the City work to be a clearing house to help connect people to resources and other groups doing great work. He thinks it would be good to update our GHG inventory.

Councilor Duson would like to develop metrics for items to gauge progress. She would like to see these displayed on some kind of dashboard.

Councilor Ray indicated that she would like to see more bike racks and ways to promote cycling and walking.

Councilor Thibodeau suggested that the Committee take public comment on the Climate Action Plan at their next meeting and for the Committee to discuss next steps after that.

Councilors discussed items for the next meeting:

- Time Limited Parking
- CSO update
- CAD Cell
- Public comment on Climate Action Plan – early on the agenda
- Bike Share Program

Items for future meetings:

- Goals for renewable energy
- Sidewalk clearing ordinance

The Committee set the next meeting date for March 21 at 5:30

Adjourned 7:56 moved by Councilor Ray, 2nd by Councilor Duson. All in favor.