

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Roberto Rodriguez (At-Large)

Minutes June 8, 2022

Members Present: Councilor Zarro, Councilor Rodriguez

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Erin Ferrell, Mike Murray, John Peverada, Jeremiah Bartlett

Meeting called to order.

May 11 Minutes

Councilor Rodriguez moves to approve the May 11th meeting minutes. Councilor Zarro seconds the motion. May 11th minutes passed unanimously, 2-0.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon

EV charging is going well with a large increase in usage of charging stations. There were 1500 vehicles charged Jan- May 2022 which is over 500 more than the same months last year. The City's recycling rate is still about 37% which is good and 2nd in the ecomaine service area. There have been about 140 energy benchmarking reports so far although it is not clear how many are required to report this year. Once CMP releases new technology, all buildings 20,000 sq ft or more will be required to report. This would be about 600 buildings in total. Electrify Everything! Is continuing with residents signing up for home visits from ReVision Energy. Sustainability Office staff is growing with Erin moving to full-time hours as well as a Resilience Corps member starting full time in October. The Office will hold an Organic Landcare event in September.

Committee Comment on Sustainability Update

Councilor Zarro noted the benefit of having a follow up survey for Electrify Everything! signups.

Adjusting Tow Fees

Presented by Mike Murray

The City of Portland regulates the fees paid to tow companies/operators for services provided to the City of Portland. Private towing companies are an integral component to safe streets in the City of Portland as they provide services to accidents, illegally parked vehicles, and assist in achieving snow ban compliance. Representatives of the towing companies have requested that the tow fees be increased as a result of increased costs since the fees were last adjusted. Recently, the City Manager's Office received a request from the tow operators to review and increase tow fees, as the last increase took place in November, 2017. The Department of Public Works reached out to the tow operators for more details on the request, and representatives of the Portland Police Department, Portland Parking Division, and Public Works reviewed the requests and have established a list of recommendations. Additionally, Portland Parking Division

provided staff with survey results of parking fees paid by other Maine cities to tow company operators.

Public Comment on Adjusting Tow Fees

No comment.

Councilor Comment on Adjusting Tow Fees

Councilor Rodriguez notes that the adjustment would make the fees higher than other municipalities. Would like to keep in mind possible outcomes.

Councilor Zarro asks how the adjustment came to be higher than surrounding municipalities. *Every community does it differently. Wanted to find an amount higher than what is currently being paid at the request of tow companies while still keeping in mind those affected.*

Recommendation of Adjusting Tow Fees

Councilor Rodriguez motions to recommend to the council. Councilor Zarro seconds. The recommendation is approved 2-0.

Thames Street Parking

Presented by Jeremiah Bartlett and John Peverada

Presently, there is no parking allowed on Thames Street Extension, (which runs approximately from the entrance to the Amethyst Lot to Freedom Way, a private drive). The road has not yet been accepted as a City Street; as such, both sides have been signed for No Parking as it is technically a City-owned parcel at this time. At the request of Island Residents, the Manager's office has proposed to establish the south side of Thames St. Ext. as One Hour parking to be included in Residential Parking Zone 11-IR. This would add approximately eight (8) spaces for Islanders with a residential permit to use. It is likely that the north side will be established as two-hour metered parking, in order to serve incoming and future development.

This would come into effect with the street being accepted. Noted maps located in the agenda packet.

Public Comment on Thames Street Parking

No Comment

Councilor Comment on Thames Street Parking

Councilor Rodriguez asks who can apply for the island parking stickers? *Anyone with an island address that can be verified can purchase the parking pass.*

Councilor Zarro notes that including island residents in the decision making is important.

Recommendation of Thames Street Parking

Councilor Rodriguez motions to recommend the proposed Thames St Parking. Councilor Zarro seconds. Passed unanimously, 2-0.

Presentation regarding regulation of gasoline powered small equipment

Presented by Troy Moon

Concerns related to leaf blowers include noise level concerns with leaf blowers, high levels of air pollution, destructive to topsoil. 16 states have communities with some kind of restriction related to leaf blowers. Most restrictions concern the time of day or the noise level of the leaf blower. Dc banned leaf blowers; Brookline, MA limited time of year with exemption for DPW; Burlington, VT limited by time of year and time of day. California banned small gas powered engines which would include leaf blowers.

Councilor Comment on Presentation regarding regulation of gasoline powered small equipment

Councilor Zarro asks for the presentation to be accessible to the public. This policy would be in line with One Climate Future goals. Why are municipalities looking at leaf blowers and not lawn mowers? *It is less common, likely due to the noise level. Leaf blowers are much louder and produce noise pollution.* Councilor Zarro notes interest in discussing this further. The Sustainability Office will do more background research and look into ordinance possibilities.

Councilor Rodriguez asks if our DPW uses gas powered leaf blowers. *Yes, DPW uses leaf blowers. The Parks Dept is starting to use battery equipment for small parks and playgrounds.* Would DPW be exempt if we were to move forward with banning leaf blowers? *We would need to consider the options and include the Parks Dept in the conversation.* Is there concern about battery time and efficiency? *Landscaping companies using battery powered lawn tools noted the tools have improved drastically.*

Status Update on committee actions and requests

Presented by Troy Moon

Rapid Transit resolution will go to the council in July.

PMAC recommendations on fertilizer should be ready to be taken up in the July S&T meeting although the site plan recommendations will need to go to the Planning Board.

Bird friendly glass ordinance - Troy has been working with the PSA and Maine Audubon to create a working group and draft ordinance language. This is on track to be taken to the council this year.

Councilor Comment on Status update on committee actions and requests

Councilor Zarro asks if the bird safe glass ordinance would be connected with the lights out initiative. *This would need to be reviewed.*