

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Approved Minutes June 12, 2024

Members Present: Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett, Councilor Pelletier

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Erin Ferrell, Dena Libner, Mike Murray, Greg Jordan, John Peverada

Meeting was called to order.

May 8 Minutes

The May 8, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon

The Sustainability Office is still running the DIY Electrify! Program to help income-qualified Portland residents access home weatherization and electrification materials; we encourage anyone interested in the program to visit portlandmaine.gov/electrify. After launching “[Mow Tall Until Fall](#)”, the Office is gearing up to host three educational webinars with partners at the Wild Seed Project, Maine Audubon, and UMaine Cooperative Extension throughout the summer. We look forward to promoting sustainable landcare practices all summer long.

The City of Portland received its fully electric waste hauler (Mack LRE) to join the City’s refuse truck fleet used for regular trash collection service. This is the first electric heavy-duty truck in Maine and the first major step toward electrifying the City vehicle fleet. The truck’s charging infrastructure at 250 Canco Rd is operational and the new hauler will be on our City streets after the ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 17.

As a co-collaborator with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) on the Coastal Flooding Community Science Project, we have been engaging with local middle school students on sea level rise and also working to install signs at high-risk flooding areas around Portland where community members can easily participate in the data collection. We also co-hosted Walk the Working Waterfront which was a fantastic opportunity to elevate the conversation around the City’s coastal resilience planning with the second phase of ReCode and our collaborative projects with GMRI. The office has been busy with a number of other community engagement events including May’s Coffee & Climate, Bike to Work Day, Portland Picks Up, a tour with Portland Adult Ed students, and more. We are also pleased to report that we have been awarded a \$15,000 Emergent Learning Fund grant from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. This will provide resources to host community workshops where volunteers will learn how to build raised garden beds and then work collaboratively to build up to 70 raised beds for low-income participants in the Community Garden program.

Discussion on Parking on Monument Square

Presented by Greg Jordan

Monument Square is listed as a dedicated park in Chapter 18 of City Code, and is also listed as a dedicated Land Bank Property in Chapter 2 of City Code. As a park/open space, the primary uses should be those typical of a park: a gathering space for events, concerts, and markets, a place to passively sit and enjoy the outdoors, a place to sit and eat food from a nearby restaurant, a place to travel through on foot or bicycle. The square is not a suitable location for passenger or commercial vehicle parking in most circumstances. In recent years, its use as a parking facility increasingly detracts from its primary intended purpose as park. In no other park space does the City allow vehicle parking outside of a designated parking space or lot.

Prior to the opening of the Public Market House (~2012), no parking was allowed on Monument Square, with the exception of occasional large vehicles that needed access, and contractor service vehicles (e.g., plumbers, electricians, etc.) for which on-street occupancy permits were paid. All other vehicles were ticketed. Following the opening, adjacent business owners and their vendors, who were parking on the Square to conduct business, were receiving parking tickets. The business owners requested an accommodation from the then-City Manager, who approved allowing business owners and their vehicles to park on Monument Square for up to 30 minutes without being ticketed. General public parking continued to be prohibited, but Parking Control Officers and Police Officers were often not able to distinguish between vehicles.

Alternative Parking Options

As part of the effort to make Monument Square a safe and open environment for pedestrians and bicyclists while making accommodations for business' delivery needs, the Department of Public Works (DPW) has identified four (4) on-street locations which can be converted to (or already are) Commercial Loading Zones. The locations include:

- Preble St. (north of Congress St.)
- Elm Street (north of Congress St.)
- Monument Way
- Center St. (south of Congress).

All these locations are immediately adjacent and accessible to Monument Square. Attachment A provides additional information on this plan along with aerial images of the proposed zones. A common challenge of Commercial Loading Zones is that they can be used by private vehicles, including personal vehicles for parking so long as they have commercial plates. With City Manager concurrence, DPW plans to install signs and pavement markings at these locations indicating the spaces have a 30-minute limit from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in order to encourage turnover.

The Parking Division's Parking Control Officers will monitor the square during the hours of 8:00AM -6:30 PM Monday-Friday and will issue tickets in accordance with current ordinances. Outside of these hours, and subject to higher Police Department priorities, Police Officers will monitor the square and issue tickets as appropriate. In certain circumstances, large vehicle

parking may be permissible such as during events on the square or when vehicles are too large to park elsewhere.

City staff from DPW, Parking, PRF and Housing & Economic Development met with the Portland Downtown District and area businesses to discuss the City's intention to discourage long-term parking in the park in May 2024. The news was generally well received by advocates, business owners and residents who want to prioritize the use of Monument Square as a park and expressed concern for pedestrian safety and access to storefronts. Staff from Public Works discussed a number of potential alternative solutions to vehicle loading and parking near Monument Square and Parks Recreation & Facilities staff offered site furniture and planters as a means to disrupt undesired parking in the interim. Parking staff indicated that once alternatives are in place and area businesses have been notified, enforcement of parking violations will begin again in the square.

Resuming parking restrictions on Monument Square is not anticipated to generate any material revenue or add costs.

Councilor Comment on Discussion on Parking on Monument Square

Councilor Bullett asks if there are any load docks and if there are any statistics on crash or injuries here? Councilor Bullett and Councilor Phillips both note the importance of ADA accessibility for these businesses. *As this is being rolled out, ADA accessibility will be assessed.* Could we close Center St for noncommercial traffic? *Closing Center St is likely not to happen.* Barriers are still being decided on that will allow access for emergency vehicles.

Discussion and Workshop Regarding Downtown Worker Parking

Presented by Councilor Rodriguez

Councilor Rodriguez brought attention to the issue of many downtown workers needing to move their vehicles every two hours due to parking time limits in the downtown area. Councilor proposes a pass system where employers can give their employees a permit in their car during the employee's work shift so that employee would not need to move their car every two hours. This proposal would not request removing parking fees but would operate similarly to the residential parking permit.

The Councilors brainstormed different ideas to address the parking issue brought up by downtown workers. Ideas include making garage parking more accessible, downtown worker parking permit. Elm st garage, free st garage, or public market garage are all options with monthly rates.

The councilors note they plan to revisit the topic and staff will continue to look into best practices in similar sized jurisdictions. This is just the beginning of the conversation with Greg Jordan becoming the point of contact.

Motion to Adjournment

The motion was moved by Councilor Pellitier, and seconded by Councilor Bullett.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned