



**Peaks Island Council
MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 26, 2021

6:15 p.m., ZOOM meeting

NEXT Regular Monthly PIC Meeting–February 23, 2022

February PIC meeting will be a ZOOM meeting

CALL TO ORDER: 6:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Peter Eckel, Fred Somers, Peter McLaughlin, Jerzy Sylvester, SE Rafferty, Natasha Markov-Riss, Scott Mohler

Number of Audience Members (AM) in attendance: 18

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Eckel made the motion to accept the December 15, 2021 meeting minutes. Mohler seconded. No discussion. Unanimous vote to approve. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

McLaughlin shared the expenditure report as of January 18, 2022 via Zoom. McLaughlin reported that the total remaining budget for FY22 is \$3,961.20.

Somers made the motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Eckel seconded. No discussion. Unanimous vote to approve. Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & UPDATES

• Parking – MHR parking garage request, mainland parking

Eckel said that PIC remains committed to developing mainland parking options for islanders because it ensures a diverse and vibrant island population. In 2021, the Peaks Island Council Parking Committee worked with the city to create an islander lot near the boat. But other attempts to expand mainland parking for islanders have not been supported by the city. PIC Parking Committee will use a new approach, namely collaborative meetings with city councilors who will support islander initiatives in the Portland City Council meetings.

MHR denied 24-hour access to the CBL parking garage. MHR said that monthly parkers can gain access to the CBL garage by calling the MHR after-hours number. The PIC parking committee decided not to pursue this issue at this time, and focus more specifically on generating additional mainland parking for islanders.

- **Golf Cart Committee – annual update**

Somers said there is no current chair to the PIC Golf Cart Committee. The two-member committee (Fred Somers and Joanne MacIsaac) is looking for a chair. Somers said he is working with the city to ensure enforcement of the golf cart regulations issued by the City Manager in September 2021.

- **Ferry Service – annual update**

Somers said the PIC Ferry Service committee worked with CBL to implement the Resident Boarding Pass program during 2021. CBL board still has to approve implementation in the coming year.

Committee also worked with CBL board to work on process for enforcing mask wearing on the ferry.

Committee is also monitoring CBL's efforts to build a new boat. The single bid that came in after the RFP was \$6 million over projected budget, and most shipyards did not want to bid on the hybrid propulsion system. CBL is preparing another RFP after contacting the shipyards that did not bid. They have also been working on securing additional funding to cover the budget gap.

Committee was successful with state DOT to secure funding for a Peaks Island-side generator to keep the transfer bridge in operation during power outages. Somers recognized Chris Hoppin for driving the issue.

Somers said the committee is also working with the city to develop solutions to address the issues identified in the City Planning Department/CBL Peaks Island Land Side study. Ideas include reorganizing queueing for the ferry, developing electronic signage at the ferry, and reconfiguring Welch Street.

CBL is looking at implementing new electronic ticketing for car ferry reservations.

- **Anti-racism Committee – annual update**

Rafferty said the PIC Anti-racism Committee was started in early 2021 to look at how Peaks Island as a community can work to dismantle institutional racism together.

The committee wrote a mission statement and collaborated with other island organizations in the committee to develop anti-racist initiatives. The committee has done some initial brainstorming based on the findings of Portland's Racial Equity Steering Committee report.

The committee is working with New Brackett Church to advance the sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nation. There is an event on January 30th, 2pm, on Zoom – registration is available on the New Brackett Church website.

- **Environmental and Sustainability**

McLaughlin reported that the PIC Environmental and Sustainability Committee has only met a couple of times in the past year. They worked with the Peaks Environmental Action Team to educate islanders about invasive species. They also sponsored a program with Eco Maine, to educate islanders about recycling. They are working to determine what other projects are feasible. The dog park at Littlejohn Trott Park is on hold for funding, per the city Parks and Recreation Committee.

Peaks Island Taxi is looking at an electric vehicle, however, there is no public charging station on the island. PIC Environmental and Sustainability committee will work with the City to install a public EV charging station on the island.

- **Executive Committee - emergency preparedness + evacuation workshop**

Portland Fire Chief and the city's emergency planning director met with invited attendees on January 6th to discuss emergency evacuation on Peaks Island. Twenty attendees included Cumberland County Emergency Management, Peaks CERT team, police officers, CBL, PIC councilors, Maine forestry service, and Portland Emergency Preparedness Management. Emergency responses for different scenarios were discussed. The next step is for the city to develop a more detailed plan. There will be public meetings in the future.

Eckel said it will be up to PIC to maintain follow up on this issue because it is easy for this type of planning work to be neglected.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Motion – adoption of PIC By-Laws**

Peter McLaughlin reviewed the newly written Peaks Island Council By-Laws.

Somers made a motion to adopt the Peaks Island Council By-Laws. Rafferty seconded.

AM asked why the Executive Committee was established and when it went into effect? McLaughlin said it was established "before his time." McLaughlin noted that the By-Laws do not give the Executive Committee any additional authority outside of the authority that the by-laws define for the officers that serve on it. The By-Laws simply codify the responsibilities of the Executive Committee.

Rafferty added that the By-Laws help standardize processes and ensure best practices.

Eckel thanked McLaughlin for doing a good job on a tedious task.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Election of officers**

- **Chair** – McLaughlin nominated Peter Eckel as chair. Somers seconded. No

discussion. Eckel abstained. Motion passed with six ayes.

- **Vice Chair** – Somers nominated Rafferty as vice chair. Eckel seconded. No discussion. Rafferty abstained. Motion passed with six ayes.
- **Secretary*** - Mohler nominated McLaughlin as secretary. Somers seconded. No discussion. McLaughlin abstained. Motion passed with six ayes.

AM asked if there are term limits for these elected positions? McLaughlin said there are no term limits in the by-laws but that it can be considered in future edits to the by-laws. Somers said that the city ordinance that set up the PIC indicates a new Chair will be elected each year.

● **Seating of Communications & Outreach Committee***

McLaughlin said that PIC councilors and community members who are interested in working on the Communications and Outreach Committee should contact him.

McLaughlin made a motion to table the seating of the Communications and Outreach Committee until the February PIC meeting.

Rafferty seconded.

No public comment. No councilor discussion.

Unanimous vote to approve.

● **Budget request process update - public comment**

McLaughlin reviewed the written document outlining the process to be used by island non-profits to secure funding via the PIC. No public comment or councilor discussion. McLaughlin said he would be reaching out to island non-profits that have not applied to encourage them to apply.

● **Budget reconciliation due to ferry pass overage - public comment**

Bill Patnaude explained that in a normal school year, the Portland School Department pays for 10 months of student monthly boat passes and PIC pays \$82.45 per student to provide each student with an annual pass.

During COVID, Portland School Department did not purchase monthly passes for the students because of remote learning. In 2021, PIC voted to provide each student with a monthly pass during the two summer months, at a cost of \$164.90/month.

This led to a line item deficit, which can be covered if money is moved from one line item to another. This will not happen on a yearly basis, it only happened because of the remote learning during COVID.

McLaughlin made a motion to move \$250 from item A (Bike Tickets), \$225 from item D (College Student Passes), \$200 from item E (Private Middle/High School Passes), \$926.30 from B (Needs-Based Tickets), moving a total of \$1,601.30 into line item C (Middle/High School Passes).

Rafferty seconded.

No public discussion.

Riss-Markov asked how people qualify for Needs-Based Tickets. Rafferty explained they are available through community organizations that have some familiarity with islander needs.

Motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

- **2020-2021 priority survey + 2022 priority-setting plan**

Eckel said the goal of the 15-question survey of islanders was to create a long term set of priorities for PIC to address.

There were 270 responses, 94% from property owners, 75% from year-round residents. Nearly half of the respondents felt that the overall quality of life on the island has declined.

Priorities that the community survey identified:

Topic	Points
Protection of natural spaces	1002
Operations of Casco Bay Lines	944
Climate impact and environmental best practices	922
Traffic patterns and crowd management Down Front	914
Law enforcement/public safety	881
Off-island parking	877
Enrollment numbers for the Peaks Island Elementary School	874
Overall affordability of living on the island	849
Road infrastructure and maintenance	821
Recreation opportunities for youth	785
Diversity of the island community (racial, ethnic, economic, age)	764
Availability of year-round rental housing	720
On island transportation	680
Use of golf carts - rental	550
Use of golf carts - by residents	524
Average	807

Eckel said that PIC should consider the results of the survey in determining which initiatives to address in the coming year.

- **Parking Committee recommendations**

Eckel said that the city does not share the islanders' concern that there is a pressing need for additional mainland parking for islanders. The Parking Committee wants to define the need for mainland parking for islanders, with a data-driven discussion with the city that references the parking report that the city paid for (the T. Y. Lynn Report).

Mohler asked if it was possible to share the T. Y. Lynn Report. Eckel said he has a hard copy (over 100 pages) but he will try to locate an electronic copy.

Somers said that there is an electronic copy on the city website. He also has a digital copy of it that he can share electronically.

Eckel made a motion:

The Peaks Island Council (PIC) requests that the City Manager direct staff to work with representatives of the PIC to implement the following measures to improve mainland parking:

- ***Establishment of a 50 space reserved monthly parking lot within the Ocean Gateway lot.***
- ***Establishment of a 50 space IR zone section within the Ocean Gateway lot.***
- ***A commitment to designate the new section of Thames St. as part of the IR Zone when it is accepted by the City.***
- ***Restarting the shuttle service to the Marginal Way lot and IR zone parking area.***
- ***Conversion of the part of the Whale wall building currently used for storage as a monthly parking garage for island parkers.***

Somers seconded.

AM said that all five items on the list have been requests of the city for five years, and community members have testified before city council in the past.

AM said that pushing for a back and forth conversation with staff from the city is a better approach, rather than providing unaddressed public comment at the end of council meetings.

AM said staff conversations are a good approach but those conversations should also include the District One Rep from the city.

Mohler asked if the Parking Committee will ask for some of these ideas or all of them. Eckel said he is going to ask for all of them.

McLaughlin said that involving affected community members remains a good strategy for getting the city's attention.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Charter Commission update and advocacy**

McLaughlin said that although several Charter Commission candidates said they would support a separate Peaks Island City Councilor, it is not legally possible to create a city council district with a dedicated city councilor for Peaks Island because its population is too small.

At this point, the city council could legally de-platform the Peaks Island Council, which would remove one aspect of the island's influence on the city's legislation that affects the island.

McLaughlin made a resolution:

Be it resolved that the members of the Peaks Island Council request the Charter Commission protect the institution of the Peaks Island Council by codifying its role as an official elected advisory body of the City Council into the Portland City Charter.

Somers seconded.

AM asked if PIC was established by the city or by the state. McLaughlin said the actual creation of PIC was done by ordinance and is part of the city code.

Councilor discussion:
Somers supported the motion.

Sylvester asked if, in order to have the PIC added to the City Charter, would it have to be voted on by referendum. McLaughlin said yes.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Public bathrooms update**

McLaughlin said he asked Portland Parks and Recreation about when the city would consider opening the public restrooms at the community center every day. City said they would not consider doing that until the spring, due to staffing issue. Instead, the city is keeping the bathrooms at the island parking lot open during the winter (they would normally close in November).

Eckel asked if people just want indoor bathrooms versus outdoor bathrooms?

McLaughlin said it was a larger issue – that there needs to be more public bathrooms available on the island, especially during the summer season.

PUBLIC COMMENT

AM said that the police/fireman used to open and close the community center every day. If they go back to doing that, the bathrooms would be available every day. The Parks and Recreation argument that there are no bathrooms available at the community center is due to lack of staff.

AM asked if there could be an islander city councilor if all the islands are included. McLaughlin said that even with the population of all the islands combined, it would not be enough to substantiate an island city councilor (unless the city council grew to 30 city councilors).

AM said that use of the community center in general being restricted is also a big issue. Many islanders donated to the community center and the city is now doing a poor job of sharing access to the building.

AM said that the city would not close a bathroom on the west end once a week, especially without giving any public notice. Also, signs should be posted that there are bathrooms available in the island parking lot.

AM said that there is a demand for new members of the CERT team – many of them are getting older.

AM asked if PIC could write to MHR to ask them to put electric outlets in the garage.

AM said the parking on the Welch Street parking lot is great, but adding signs to keep golf carts out of car spaces are required.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES

Next PIC Meeting: Wednesday, February 23, 2022, at 6:15 pm via ZOOM.

Eckel made motion to adjourn. Rafferty seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjournment: 8:35 p.m.