

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Standing Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2), Chair
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1)
Councilor Brian Batson (D3)

Minutes

May 16, 2018

Members Present: Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Ray, Councilor Batson

Other Councilors Present: Councilor Pious Ali

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Christopher Huff, Jon Jennings

Review and approve minutes

Motion made by Councilor Ray, seconded by Councilor Batson. All in favor.

Sustainability Updates:

Cobrahead light conversion nearly complete. Lights have been swapped out in all parts of the city including the islands. We're currently comparing the inventory with field conditions and will work with CMP to reconcile differences. Technicians continue to work on the control network but we expect it will take until the end of June to be fully operational on the mainland. It will be sometime this summer before it is fully operational on the islands. The project has gone extremely well and stayed on schedule despite the rough winter.

We're getting very close to turning on the adaptive traffic control system at Morrill's corner. Early June start date expected.

Public WiFi is also very close. Phase 1 will be Monument Square and Post Office/Tommy's Park. Early June announcement for that, too.

City Hall decorative lighting will be ready in early June as well. We will be able to project colors and images.

Deering Oaks Fountain lighting is being upgraded as well and should be done by the end of next week. It will also feature the ability to have colors.

Riverside Golf Course Solar install is complete. Once we complete the paperwork for CMP net energy billing it will begin generating power.

Ocean Ave Solar -- we'll be having CMP begin constructing the power line shortly using \$50,000 of CIP funds approved in the FY17 budget.

EV Charging: Troy participated in a working meeting held by the Efficiency Maine Trust to help create a plan to build out an EV charging network in Maine using the VW Settlement funds in the amount of \$3.15 million. Staff has also been working with the Governor's Energy Office in

an effort to convince Electrify America to invest additional VW Settlement funds in Portland. We also have plans to install some highly visible charging stations in public places this summer/fall.

Our Sustainability Fellow, Ayden Eickhoff, will begin work on June 4. She will be here for 10 weeks and will work on the Energy Benchmarking Ordinance.

The City Clerk has been recruiting for open positions on the Pesticide Management Advisory Committee. There have been several applications but we need more. She will be extending the deadline in hopes we get some more applicants. The ordinance goes into effect for City property on July 1.

Julie Rosenbach and Troy Moon have been working on the RFP for the climate action plan consultant. We plan to issue it by the end of June.

Councilor Thibodeau asked that we have a report on landfill in June.

Communication regarding assessing solar power

Christopher Huff reports that assessing valuation of solar panels is a big discussion in the assessor community. In Portland it hasn't been practice to add value based on solar. His office notes on property record but that is it. Solar panels considered personal property based on the theory that they could be removed and taken away.

Depreciation of the panels also makes it a challenge to value the panels. Also, federal and state policies change, PPAs change, 26 states have guidelines about how to value renewable energy but all of them are different. Not enough sales of homes with solar panels to analyze how panels impact sales price. Chris said a majority of appraisers don't put values on the panels.

Different assessors have taken the approach to add a dollar figure per panel.

But consensus of the assessor group is that they are looking for guidance from the state.

Incentives for solar -- property tax exemption given for green value, already do it. Tax reduction - we probably don't have the authority. Property tax credit - give money back to solar installers. Often based on a standard such a LEED.

Moving into the revaluation we should look to see if there is enough data to create a value and determine whether this is something we want to do.

Councilor Ray: Residents brought this issue up. We don't want to dis-incentivize people from installing. She doesn't want people to pay more tax because of solar.

Councilor Batson: Were there any examples of laws that could work well for Portland?

Mr. Huff did not see any New England examples.

Councilor Thibodeau: On commercial side, do we include solar in our calculation of value?
Mr. Huff said no.

Councilor Thibodeau: Tax credit would be interesting - wondering if there could be some sort of return some portion of the investment, like a TIF. Check in with corp counsel re: a sustainability district or TIF

Councilor T - does the state factor solar in overall City assessment?
Chris Huff, no, only on sales data

Councilor Ray -- Do you think sea level rise will have impact on this reval?
Mr. Huff -- not on this one, but future ones it will be. Wonders why the assessment field is not talking about this more.

Councilor T - Recommendations for going forward -- suggestion or guidance that the council provide regarding keeping the current practice.

C. Huff -- we should talk to the company hired to do the revaluation. They will have more information about this.

Martin Luther King Recognition Task Force

Councilor Ali and Regina Phillips present the findings of the Task Force to recommend the Bayside Trail -- primarily the plaza near Franklin St. -- as the location to rename after Dr. King.

Councilor Batson asked if the Task Force was in full agreement.
Councilor Ali said yes

Regina Phillips, Task Force member -- was on 2008 task force. That previous group looked at examples of how other cities recognized Dr. King and ultimately put out an RFP for an artist to offer suggestions

Councilor Ray: Likes the recommendation of the Bayside Trail. It has lots of opportunity for educational material. Maybe some sort of walkable monument. The neighborhood is developing so this is a great opportunity. Was surprised about the resistance from the community about renaming Franklin Street.

Councilor Thibodeau: Asked for some feedback from the committee members. Understands why Fort Sumner, Amethyst Lot, and Congress Square weren't selected. Intrigued by the proposal for the plaza on the square. He still believes that Franklin Street should be renamed. But there was no space available for commemoration -- maybe a hybrid could include the plaza.

Councilor Batson ; Open to looking at the location. Would be curious if the Task Force looked at Franklin Street.

Councilor Ali - Franklin Street was not discussed -- focused on an alternative based on the reaction of the public.

Councilor Ray - strongly favors the Task Force proposal. Supported Franklin Street because it could be expedient and it might become worthy. She likes the trail proposal better -- it has opportunity to interact and more opportunity to be thoughtful. More potential for education and thoughtfulness.

Councilor Batson: Is being drawn to the Task Force proposal.

Jon Jennings: Looking at the trail - we can definitely achieve the elements reference by Councilor Ray. Thinks we can choose both proposals. Feels passionately that Dr. King deserves the recognition of Franklin St. It is the heart of the City. MDOT has already indicated they could make signage changes. No cost to renaming Franklin St. Lots of opportunity to do things on the trail as well.

Councilor Ray: If we go back to considering Franklin Street -- would like the Task Force to take a look at both.

Councilor Thibodeau -- Get feedback from the Task Force. Didn't think of Franklin St. as expeditious but hadn't considered both.

Councilor Ray: Would like the minutes and feedback from the previous meeting to be part of the record. Concerns were not just on urban renew, many felt that Franklin Street is itself divisive because it physically divides the neighborhood.

Councilor Thibodeau: Have the record from the January 2017 meeting for record. Would like to consider both.

Councilor Batson: Surprised that people saw Franklin as divisive. Was not part of the committee last time. Wants to respect the process and open to further discussion. Won't discount the possibility of Franklin St.

Councilor Ray: The greatest concern was that people felt like their neighborhood was bulldozed and that renaming the street erased the last vestige of their neighborhood.

Regina Phillips: In full support of both. Didn't feel that Franklin Street was on the table.

Councilor Thibodeau: If we can't get a quorum of the task force, maybe emails from the members.

Councilor T: Next meeting, MLK Recognition. Parking issue, Wharf Street -- closing off part for a longer time, June meeting

Jon - would like to discuss parking on June. Could also be ready to report on collaboration with TPL regarding Portland Landing. In July further updates such as Andrews Square and other transportation related issues. Also, public process regarding Veranda Street bridge replacement, India Street -- should we be looking at that?

June 13 -- Parking - alert Metro, Ocean Avenue

June 20 -- MLK. bike share,

July 20 - Wharf St.+ outdoor dining

Public Comment: Update regarding Ocean Avenue

City Manager said that Chris Branch will report back in June with a full report on the landfill.

We'll have Revision talk about the solar. We'll put data on the City website -- make a micro-site

Councilor Ray requests that we hold a Neighborhood meeting

Councilor Thibodeau: Committee Binder -- things we need to check on periodically; regarding tasks that the committee assigns itself