

COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE

FEBRUARY 14, 2018

A meeting of the Committee on Infrastructure was held Wednesday, February 14, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Chair, presided.

Members of Committee present: Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Alderman Ernest A. Jette  
Alderman Ken Gidge

Members not in Attendance: Alderman Tom Lopez, Vice Chair

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Brian S. McCarthy  
Alderwoman Mary Ann Melizzi-Golja  
Tim Cummings, Director of Economic Development  
James Vayo, Downtown Specialist

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PUBLIC COMMENT – None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN GIDGE TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE O-18-001  
MOTION CARRIED**

**O-18-001**

Endorser: Mayor Jim Donchess

**PROHIBITING PARKING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF FRONT STREET**

- Tabled 1/24/18

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN SCHMIDT TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE**

ON THE QUESTION

Mr. Cummings

I am here before you this evening looking for your favorable adoption of a piece of legislation that's before you relative to Front Street and prohibiting on-street parking. On the screen is a map of the area. As you all may or may not know, we have a significant development occurring on Franklin Street with 200 units of housing going in which was a previously blighted and abandoned mill building. That is being done by Brady Sullivan. In conjunction with that project during the site plan process, it was noted by the fire department and other public safety officials that Front Street is very narrow and having on-street parking will cause a problem, particularly when you try to get that to the Cotton Mill building as there is housing back there. Now that this street area is going to become more activated, with Brady Sullivan's acknowledgement and with no opposition from them, there was a stipulation in their site plan that no parking could be allowed on the public's right-of-way with their development. We thought from the city's perspective, it would be best just to memorialize it officially and prohibit any on street parking for Front Street.

It has been raised, as I understand it, some concerns surrounding access to what we have been referring to as a boat launch. I would suggest that is a very generous description of what is there. There is access right in this area to the river and through conversations with Brady Sullivan, and it is memorialized in their site plan approval, they have allowed access to two of their parking spaces that is currently under construction. The

map in front of you doesn't show it because it's dated but if you were to go out there, you would see some 13 or so head-in parking spaces in the area where my arrow is hovering over. The two closest spaces to the access to the riverfront is essentially this area is acknowledged and will be available to the public for access to this "boat ramp."

Alderman McCarthy

The spaces that they are giving us, are they signed as reserved for the boat launch or marked that you are allowed to park there?

Mr. Cummings

I just confirmed with Brady Sullivan this evening that they are signage prepared. I don't know exactly how it reads, but signage will be displayed and make it explicit that parking is available for the boat launch.

Alderman McCarthy

The difference being if it just says available for the boat launch, residents are likely to park in it anyway and then it's not available for the boat ramp.

Mr. Cummings

I will make sure it's explicit with Brady Sullivan. In my conversations with them not even an hour ago understood the intention and want to make sure that those two spaces are available.

Alderman McCarthy

I have been out and looked at the site. Based on the amount of activity that can take place at the launch, which is very nice, but it is just granite steps, you would be hard pressed to take a canoe down there. It would be a long trek. Carrying a kayak and setting it in is possible. I doubt more than two people will do that at the same time. I think two spaces are useful. If we were to run into a problem with it in the future, one of the things you can do is the walkway, itself, has a bollard up near the power substation. If we were to move that back, there's a segment of lawn there that you can see the power pole, which from what I saw, some of it may actually have been in use recently. It would be possible to create an access to that and put a couple more spaces down there if that ever made sense.

Mr. Cummings

I absolutely agree. We could definitely look at that especially as we continue with the planning of the riverfront.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

My concern is also about additional spaces in the development of the riverfront. When we had the presentation around the development of the riverfront, this was indicated as the reason for putting the platform there. It's one of the shallowest spaces in the river. It would make it the easiest for boat launching. Although at this point it may not get a lot of use, in our projects which I would like to believe is true, we will see more use in that area if we make it more accessible. I have two concerns. One is, is two an appropriate and adequate number especially in thinking that if two people come there and spend an hour or two out in the river and someone else comes what is going to happen? Are we going to be able to put more spaces in? I know we talked about doing something in the development of the river with the screening around that power area. I don't know if that will buy us spaces. I am concerned that if we want people to enjoy the river, they are going to want to do more than put their boat in and drive to one of the garages and walk back a couple of blocks.

Chairman O'Brien

It may be the proper time to discuss Millyard Technologies and the boat ramp that is there. If you would be so kind to give us the information. What would be the proper procedure for our citizens to utilize that and the parking available there?

Mr. Cummings

For now, the more logical place to park for long term if you wanted access to the river would be through the millyard technology park. The ownership has given the city permission through a waiver that you can access through their corporate offices in the Millyard Technology Park to the riverfront through essentially a boat launch. Millyard Technology Park has restriped their parking lot to allow for parking including accommodations for trailers and canoes and kayaks because they understand that this area is one of the few areas in a very congested downtown setting that could accommodate the usage as it is currently outlined. That would be my recommendation if someone is looking to access the river and park for a long term.

The point is well taken about the limited access in this area. As we continue to look to activate the riverfront, being cognizant of the constrained parking and making sure we address it, needs to be a priority. I think between myself and Director Marchant, we will ensure that that is addressed moving forward.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I am confident that you will address it. I just feel that it needs to be brought up because we certainly can't look at this in isolation especially since it was a big part of the riverfront development plan. If Brady Sullivan would give us three spaces, I would like it better. In terms of the signage that goes on there, even if we have one that is launching or loading and unloading and the other two may be longer, I am concerned about that whole parking aspect. I do agree with Alderman McCarthy that there may be space up there to do some other things as we look at getting rid of some of the overgrowth and reconfiguring some things that are up there. That boat launch was certainly one of the primary points of riverfront development in that area.

Alderman McCarthy

I just want to make a couple of points about the Millyard boat launch. I think since those photos were taken, they have striped the parking lot to block off a section as trailer access to the ramp only. Also, the section to the right of it is now marked as "boat trailer parking only." Also, with regard to the waiver if anybody is listening, they have actually gone one better now. They have a couple of boxes out there. There's a form that you just fill out the first time you go there and drop it in the other box. It's very easy for the public to access that ramp.

Alderman Gidge

Right across the river, there's Water Street parking lot. Someone can drop them off and float across and pick them up. That might solve all the problems because that is hardly ever full. There are times it is, but usually you can almost throw a rock across where the boat ramp is.

Mr. Cummings

Although this image doesn't really show it, there is a significant grade change between the river and the Water Street parking lot. Access from this side of the river as of today is not conducive. The point I wanted to raise relative to the additional parking, I would be more than happy to continue to have a conversation with Brady Sullivan and see if they would be willing to allow for additional parking. I can tell you that they are very constrained for their own parking, so I don't know how successful I will be in that conversation. That in my opinion is a separate endeavor than really the question that is before you as to whether you want to prohibit any parking on Front Street. The reason why that is before you is because our public safety personnel has

raised it as an issue. If parking is legally allowed on the street, it has been made to me very clear that a fire truck will not have access. I just want to make sure that I separate the two issues. I would like to be sure I have clear direction as to what folks want me to do.

#### Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I have been back there for events prior to you coming to the city, where there has been parking in certain areas on both sides. I would fully support that because regular vehicles have problems getting through.

#### Chairman O'Brien

I think our river is a natural resource for our city that is underutilized. I strongly encourage our residents to use it. Being the former Director of the Dive Team, I know we use the Millyard access point at Technology Square which seems to be good for trailing boats. It's a calmer point in the river. I would say the safer part to learn to navigate initially might be the Technology Square in the back of that facility. The question before us seems to be on the issue of public safety versus the parking, but I'm glad we're bringing up the boat ramp. It's something very important.

#### Alderman Jette

Just while I think of it, if we could go back to the Millyard parking lot. I just want to point out that the boat ramp, the paved area, that's where the boat ramp is. I really am delighted that Mr. Spilios has been gracious enough to allow us to use that but that could change tomorrow. All we need is for some people to misuse that property and he could – I hope he never does – but he could say no, you can't use that anymore. As long range planners, I'm hoping that you would take a longer view. I don't know if there's some way that we can firm up the relationship with Mr. Spilios. That would be terrific if we could.

Getting back to Front Street, I've seen presentations about our Master Plan for the river. It involves extensive development of recreational activity and opportunities and access. The Master Plan envisions our featuring the river, this asset that we have. We don't have an ocean like Portsmouth does but we have a couple of rivers that are underutilized right now. I'm impressed with the Master Plan, but the Master Plan provides for quite a bit of new activity in this area. Maybe it's too late. Maybe we can't do anything about it now, but I'm disappointed that we may have missed an opportunity to provide parking for that. When we talked about this the last time, we weren't sure that there was going to be any parking available. That was a concern that I raised. It's good to know that there are at least two parking spots.

I've used this, and I wouldn't diminish it. People may say it's not a boat ramp, no it isn't but it is very usable for kayaks and also canoes. I've used it. I know a lot of people have used it. As a recreational kayaker, it's nice to be able to enter the river at that point because it's kind of fun to go under the bridge, go towards the dam, turn around and come back along the mill, along Clocktower and under the footbridge. It's quite interesting, the mill buildings there. Yes, as long as the millyard ramp is available, people can enter it there but it is a longer way. The millyard is not the area that the Master Plan envisions development at. I'm wondering are we being shortsighted in not making sure that the facilities that we are proposing to build on the north side of the river, that people are going to have a place to park in order to use them. I don't know what other land is available there. I don't know if there are other people who own parking areas that would be willing to enter into some kind of a partnership with us to provide that. I think the time to do that is now. The longer we wait, the less available that opportunity becomes and maybe in the future the south side of the river. I agree with you. Right now there's no way that you can enter the river unless you jumped off the bridge and swam. I don't know if in the future, we could do something there on that side. If the north side is unavailable to us now, we ought to make sure that in our planning that the south side remains available.

Mr. Cummings

The points are very well taken. I don't want to get into too much of a Riverfront Master Planning conversation this evening. I know that we are going to have a discussion at PEDC later this month or in early March where we can go into the details. I will say for the record that the Master Plan studied four areas within the riverfront, basically starting at Mine Falls Park, looping around the other side of the Millyard Technology Park, which we would have as the Broad Street Parkway Bridge, then another phase going all the way from the bridge to the Main Street Bridge and then from Main Street to Railroad Bridge.

Mr. Vayo

The Railroad Bridge is behind BAE. Then the fourth phase is from the Railroad Bridge to the Bridge Street Bridge.

Mr. Cummings

Yes, ending at the Bridge Street Bridge. Four phases study this area where we have different concepts of how we could activate the riverfront because it is a natural asset that is underperforming for the city. Specifically in this area, to the point of parking, and this is all going to be predicated on whether we can develop public-private partnerships, this land is all spoken for, but we have ideally mapped out this area for potentially a structured parking garage. This is currently privately owned by a church, and we would have to have a more detailed conversation but we have started that conversation. It has been one that we are cautiously optimistic on. The other area is in this area where we would be looking to potentially do some sort of structured parking using the grade to our advantage and have a parking deck on top of it. That's another thought, all in terms of trying to increase our supply. We would need to continue to advance those conversations and create a funding source to be able to allow us to do that. That backs into my previous comment which is during the PEDC meetings and Budget Review, we are going to be talking about ways that we can activate the Master Plan by giving this city a revenue source to be able to try to adopt and operationalize the thoughts that we have developed over the summer.

Alderman Gidge

The parking on the sides that we wish to eliminate, I believe that if that many people started going down there and canoeing, I am sure we could put some stairs down at other spots. At this point, Front Street, you can't park on it. I went down there after the meeting. Across the street you have the credit union. If you think of three cars coming in and three cars trying to get out, and the credit union across the street, it's very busy. There can't be parking.

Alderman Jette

How far does this Front Street actually go? Where does it end? Does it go through the parking lot to the left?

Mr. Vayo

It dead ends. I'm pretty sure right here.

Alderman Jette

Where your arrow is, that's the end of the street?

Mr. Cummings

That's where the city's right-of-way ends.

Alderman Jette

Beyond that is a parking lot.

Mr. Cummings

That would become private parking or private access.

Alderman Jette

The cars that we see there, where are they going?

Mr. Cummings

It's a commercial use, non-residential housing, is all supporting this parking right here.

Chairman O'Brien

There is a gated fence that separates the industrial versus the Cotton Mill Square, which you see as #30 on the map.

Mr. Cummings

They may have some access easements, across access easements. I would have to look into that. But from the city's perspective, our right-of-way ends right there.

Alderman Jette

Front Street doesn't continue and hook up with Franklin Street further down?

Mr. Cummings

The city may have an access easement; I would have to check.

Alderman McCarthy

There is no connection because there's no crossing over the railroad track from Franklin to the other side at the end there. As I recall, there maybe even a two-foot drop from Franklin Street to the level of the tracks. I was going to point out with regard to a question that was asked a little while ago, we do have a written agreement on the boat ramp at the Millyard that was passed last year or a year and a half ago. It's R-16-056.

Alderwoman Melizzi-Golja

I was just going to comment that if you go from Main Street on Franklin Street where it curves, on your left there's a gate that was put in. It was put it at the time Cotton Mill Square was being developed to keep traffic from cutting through there at the time. As Alderman McCarthy pointed out, you go over the tracks and it kind of drops down. Right now, as Director Cummings said, Front Street in terms of the city and the street, this runs from Franklin Street to that line on the map into the parking lots.

Alderman Jette

While you are here and while the map is in front of us, I want to suggest to you that we keep in mind the possibility that we might want to provide access from Franklin Street to the Broad Street Parkway. The whole purpose of the Broad Street Parkway was to lessen the pollution in the Main Street Bridge, Franklin Street,

Canal Street, Railroad Square area with the traffic getting all backed up there and emitting fumes. I remember a number of years ago, I don't know if it was the EPA, but somebody told us that it was at dangerous levels. That was one of the motivations to provide another access across the river to lessen that. With all this development here, with Cotton Mill and the Brady Sullivan building and talk of other stuff, it would be great if we could somehow get that traffic out of there onto the Broad Street Parkway, onto the turnpike so those people wouldn't have to go through the Franklin Street, Main Street Bridge, Water Street intersection.

Chairman O'Brien

If we could move it along because we do have another meeting. I would like to thank Director Cummings for coming up. Mr. Vayo, thank you for coming and answering the questions of the Infrastructure Committee.

**MOTION CARRIED**

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN GIDGE TO ADJOURN  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:33 p.m.

Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Committee Clerk