

Maine Medical Center Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)
Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Time: 12:00p.m.

Location: via Zoom

Recurrence: Monthly, 2nd Wednesday

Minutes Submitted by: Natalie Dubail

Minutes Edited by: NAC Members

Attendees:

Anne Pringle (WPNA) co-chair

Marie Gray (PNA)

Peter Dugas (PNA)

Steven Scharf (WENA)

Damon Yakovleff (LNA)

Zack Barowitz (LNA)

Moses Sabina (SJVNA)

Sophie Vanderburgh (SJVNA)

Matt Wickenheiser (MMC)

Natalie Dubail (MMC)

Nell Donaldson (CoP)

John Peverada (CoP)

Brian Batson (MMC)

Matt Wickenheiser (MMC)

Jennifer McCarthy (MMC)

Walter Pochebit (MMC)

1) **Minutes** Minutes of July 12th, 2023 and August 9th, 2023 were **APPROVED** as presented

2) **Construction Update (Q&A) – Walter Pochebit (5 Minutes)**

For the remainder of this month and during the first couple of weeks October, there are no scheduled/planned Project construction activities that could impact surrounding neighborhood vehicle traffic, pedestrian flow, noise, after hour work, etc.

3) **MMC Update – Jennifer McCarthy (5 minutes)**

Discussion Summary: Jennifer updated the group by stating there has been a slight uptick in COVID-19, with 26 patients testing positive in the hospital as of yesterday; although these are still considered to be mild cases. MMC is not testing for COVID-19 quite as robustly, as have they have in the past. There also continues to be a nursing home crisis within the state. With more nursing home facilities closing, MMC is caring for many of these patients who do not have anywhere else to be released; due to them requiring a certain level of care that isn't available anywhere else in the state. There are currently 76 patients awaiting a home; out of 658, the numbers are running roughly about 12% of the hospitals population.

The question was asked if MaineHealth has considered taking on more nursing home care. Jennifer explained that traditionally the hospital wouldn't, but they may not have a choice other than to keep St. Joseph's nursing home open, which was intended to be replaced with a new nursing home facility, named Fall Brook Commons. The state doesn't seem to be doing a lot around the issue and with the amount of nursing home patients awaiting beds, MMC believes they will not be able to close St. Joseph's as soon as they previously intended to.

4) Revised 2023 Work Plan (attached)– Anne Pringle (5 Minutes)

Discussion Summary: With the work plan finalized, Anne mentioned that she is also going to be working on the annual report for the group as well. The annual report will be a wrap up of what the group has done and accomplished this year.

On another note, the IDP final draft deadline is approaching and will be submitted by Al Green to the City sometime this fall, after review by the NAC at its October meeting.

Action to be taken: Steve asked that the work plan is reworded to reflect that there will be an **election** for co-chair at the end of the year.

5) Neighborhood Parking – Resolution of Concerns (40 Minutes)

Discussion Summary: The NAC Co-Chair/NA representative requested that a meeting be held prior to the NAC meeting to "problem-solve" the longstanding issue of MMC employees parking in adjacent neighborhoods. Unaware of this request, the City representative convened a meeting, including John Peverada (CoP, Director of Parking) and MMC staff. No NAC members were present. The purpose and goal of inviting John to the meeting was to discuss solutions and actions that could be taken surrounding residential parking issues.

John began by explaining that staffing has been a challenge for his department over the past few years, which has been common knowledge to this group. Challenges with staffing have obviously correlated with the lack of enforcement over the past few years and it just hasn't been possible to ticket everyone. Despite this, John remains positive that he will be able to be fully staffed in the future, which would be a total of 12 parking enforcement officers.

Due to the concerns and recommendations of this group, John sent two of his staff to survey the St. John Valley area. During the hours they surveyed, they found that 50% of the cars parked on the street had resident stickers and there were multiple available spots. On behalf of the residents of the Western Prom neighborhood, it was expressed that their biggest concern with parking is nighttime parking. No surveying has been done of that area at night. On behalf of the residents of the St. John neighborhood, it was expressed that the hours between 2pm and 6:30pm are the most critical for having parking available for residents returning home from work, and that many MMC employees park on the street between those times. It was pointed out that little of the survey was conducted during those hours, to which John agreed. More enforcement was requested during the 2pm to 6:30pm time frame when parking officers are still on duty.

John reminded the group that they do not have anyone to monitor parking at night, MMC has notified employees of their parking policy and MMC and CoP have encouraged residents to report repeat offenders. Although when it comes to enforcement, the hospital cannot control public parking and again, the city does not have the ability to ticket after a certain time due to staffing. There is also signage in certain areas that reflects there is no enforcement policy after a

certain time at night. John stands by his decision to not issue any visitor passes, as it will create another barrel of issues.

Residents of the SJVNA pointed out that safety issues exist in the St. John neighborhood and that the garage and shuttle provide a level of safety. Residents of the WPNA inquired why the South Lot and Visitor Garage is not used for nighttime employee parking. MMC's response is that there wasn't enough space for all of the night employees and those who didn't get slots would default to parking on the street. As to the idea of trying it as an experiment, the answer was that if parking access is given, it would be difficult to take it away if the experiment failed.

In summary, the only way for serious changes to occur is for an individual neighborhood, which does not have adequate signage, is to create a petition to change the signage on their street. A viable petition will need 60% of the neighborhood's votes to agree on the change. Directions on this process can be found on the city's website, **portlandmaine.gov**

As the discussion wrapped up, it seemed clearer that there were at least 2 different neighborhood issues:

- Issues with enforcement parking in SJV – new signage will not fix this problem, as there is already adequate signage there. John encouraged residents to keep reporting issues to the parking department.

- West End nighttime parking, which is currently unregulated - the neighborhood can petition to advocate for a policy change.

Members of the SJVNA commented that they have repeatedly asking for a time line approach of subsequent steps of resolution and that MMC has not taken up. To this point, the parking policy has been updated and distributed, but MMC has shared that it cannot enforce the policy. SJVNA members voiced that after two years of discussion, nothing is being done to solve this issue. The parking issue differs from others in the city because there is adequate parking available in the employee garage that is not being used.

Jennifer added that, while she is disappointed that some do not recognize the efforts that MMC and the City have made, she will continue to work with the CoP in the future and looking to uphold MMC's promise to be a good neighbor.

6) Old Business (5 Minutes)

- Food Pantry Mural – Brian Batson

Discussion Summary: Brian recently toured the mural location with Candice Gosta – the chosen artist. They are waiting on the release of funds for Candice to start getting her materials to start the mural, hopefully will be seeing some art in the near future! Brian also talked about additional signage for the community policing area. It will be going to say "Welcome!" in additional languages, he is not sure who is doing that specific signage yet.

6) New Business?

- "Glacier" Issue

Action to be taken: It is not clear that MMC owns this piece of property, which creates a safety hazard, due to run-off freezing during the Winter. Walter will confirm if MMC owns this – Nell (CoP) will also check into this to see if it may fall within the City’s jurisdiction.

7) Adjourned 1:07 pm

Next meeting: October 11, 2023 @ 12pm

Submitted by: Natalie Dubail

Acronym List:

CoP- City of Portland

LNA – Libbytown Neighborhood Association

MMC – Maine Medical Center

NAC – Neighborhood Advisory Committee

PNA- Parkside Neighborhood Association

SJVNA – Saint John Valley Neighborhood Association

SNF- Skilled Nursing Facility

WENA – West End Neighborhood Association

WPNA- Western Promenade Neighborhood Association