

CITY OF NEWTON

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

Thursday, June 24, 2010

Present: Clint Schuckel, Associate City Engineer, David Koses, Transportation Planner; Jerome Grafe, Resident Representative, Sgt. James Norcross, Newton Police Department and Ald. Harney

Also present: Ald. Johnson, Linsky, Danberg and Ciccone

TC17-10 TRAFFIC COUNCIL CHAIR, on behalf of School Department, requesting parking restrictions on Walnut Street between Hull Street and Otis Street. (Ward 2) [05/12/10 @ 4:30 PM]

HELD 5-0 on 05/27/10

ACTION: A. Approved (4-0-1, Harney), no parking anytime, both sides, for the 3-lane section between Otis Street and a point where the northbound left-turn lane to Elm Road begins.
 B. Held for 60-day trial (5-0), no standing, both sides, school days 7:00am to 4:00pm, between a point where the northbound left-turn lane to Elm Road begins at Hull Street.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel said there are three issues. First, he asked if there is a need for Traffic Council to be pro-active on parking restrictions because the school was built so close to Walnut Street perhaps creating a temptation to park, drop off or live park. Second, Traffic Council received a letter from Newton Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force requesting that this portion of Walnut Street be banned from parking to accommodate bike lanes. Third, residents would like to have the street available for parking all or part of the day.

Currently, there are time limits and no parking restrictions posted on Walnut Street. Tiger Drive and Elm Road allows access to the school entrances. This summer, a pedestrian crossing signal will be installed between Trowbridge Avenue and Clyde Street. The proposed striping on Walnut Street will keep the double yellow line in the middle of the street and a white edged line approximately 5-6' from the curb. Mr. Schuckel indicated at the turn lane section between Otis Street and a point where the northbound left-turn lane to Elm Road begins there is not enough room for parking, because there are three travel lanes total.

Mr. Schuckel opened the discussion for public comment.

Ald. Linsky said he spoke with Newton North Principal Jennifer Price who informed him she did not request this item be docketed. He said it would be important to begin any Newton North traffic issues on a trial basis in order for it to be closely monitored. He said constituents contacted him requesting a discussion regarding the Walnut Street corridor. He said constituents do not favor a complete parking ban on Walnut Street, but favor ideas that would accommodate the school. He suggested no action be taken on portions of Walnut Street not abutting the school property until a future meeting allowing neighbors the opportunity to attend a meeting. He then said he has not heard from the Newton Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force regarding their request, and asks no action be taken until a future meeting. He said the Walnut Street corridor should be reviewed in sections. Ald. Johnson agreed. She said years ago, that the decision was to wait on traffic issues until school began. It appears Traffic Council is going against that

decision and it appears they are not deciding on the least restrictive options. For safety reasons she supports no parking on Walnut Street during school hours but she does not support no parking all day every day. She recommends waiting until the school session begins. She also said she does not know who requested this item be docketed. Jennifer Price, Newton North Principal said this item was not docketed from the School Department. Mr. Schuckel said this item was originated in the Liaison Committee because neighbors expressed their concerns about how the new school location might encourage parking on Walnut Street. Ms. Price said if Traffic Council does not restrict parking during the school day or consider some sort of restriction on Walnut Street, it will be parked up and this is concerning. She said all neighboring streets are used for the Tiger Permit Parking Program. She said a one-hour parking restriction would make it difficult for Parking Control Officers. She is also concerned students will dart across Walnut Street, and probably would not use the crosswalk.

Mr. Koses said for years, the Newton Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force has been requesting bike lanes on Walnut Street. He agrees with their request because Walnut Street is closely located to many places and feels Walnut Street is a proper corridor for bicycle accommodations and recommends their installation. Sgt. Norcross suggested a restriction be instilled on the east side of Walnut Street during school days, perhaps deterring students from darting across Walnut Street. Mr. Grafe suggested holding this item until a future meeting when residents perhaps could attend. He agreed with Mr. Koses and suggested changing the widths of the road to accommodate bike lanes and parking.

Mr. Schuckel recommended this item be broken into A and B. First, he made the following permanent motion: A): No parking anytime, both sides, for the 3-lane section between Otis Street and a point where the northbound left-turn lane to Elm Road begins.

Ald. Harney expressed his concerns. He said this is a difficult issue and is concerned about the safety of students, bicyclists and residents. He recommends holding the motion of bicycle lanes, as he cannot support them. He recommends this item be a trial. Council members passed the motion 4-0-1, Ald. Harney abstaining.

Ald. Linsky said he strongly objects to a permanent motion. Ald. Johnson said she feels this motion will be appealed and suggested a trial. Ald. Linsky agreed. She then said she agrees with Ald. Harney's concerns.

Mr. Schuckel made the following second motion: B): 60-day trial no standing, both sides, school days 7:00am to 4:00pm, between a point where the northbound left-turn lane to Elm Road begins at Hull Street. Council members agreed 5-0. Mr. Schuckel announced this item would be discussed in September.

TC35 -09 ALD. CICCONE AND LENNON on behalf of Steven Groleau, 45 Jefferson Street, Newton requesting a thorough discussion regarding parking restrictions and potential one-way traffic flow for Jefferson Street, Newton Corner. (Ward 1)
HELD 5-0 on 01/21/10 to continue a 60-day trial established on 11/19/09.

ACTION: Held for new 60-day trial (5-0), no parking/tow zone, both sides, between Centre Street and Nonantum Place. Rescind one-way flow restriction, for trial of two-way traffic flow between Centre Street and Nonantum Place.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel reviewed with Council members the parking restrictions. He said currently on the north side parking is restricted. On the south side, there is a one-hour parking limit. Mr. Schuckel said Jefferson Street is only 18 ½' wide. Observations in the past showed approximately 50-75% occupancy rates, 5-8 spaces available for parking. In November, Traffic Council approved a trial adding additional restrictions and tow zones.

Mr. Schuckel reminded residents that a resident parking program could not be considered at this time because the Ward Aldermen filed the petition. City Ordinance states a resident parking program cannot be considered unless residents file a petition with the appropriate amount of signatures. He said if residents desire a resident parking program a new petition with 50% of resident signatures would have to be filed.

Mr. Schuckel opened the discussion for public comment.

Steven Groleau, 45 Jefferson Street said the trial has made a small improvement. People park in the spaces marked tow zone, they continue to park with a large distance from the curb and block driveways making it an inconvenience and also difficult to enter and exit his driveway. Mr. Schuckel said a tow zone is the most restrictive sign and asked him for his suggestion to help alleviate the problem. Mr. Groleau also said delivery trucks continue to block the street. He said the neighborhood has become a parking lot for the Café'. Judith Groleau, 45 Jefferson Street said she understands the tow zone is the most restrictive sign. She suggested changing the one-hour parking restriction to no parking on Jefferson Street on either side. She then said her neighbors with signs at the end of their driveways, still have difficulty entering and exiting. She does not suggest a resident parking program. Alison Buchi, 58 Jefferson Street said the trial has not helped; people continue to block their driveway and park on the wrong side of Jefferson Street. She said the Café' has deliveries at all hours of the day. The trucks park on the wrong side of the street, face the wrong direction and block the street. She asks if the one-hour restriction could be enforced.

Sgt. Norcross encouraged residents to call the Police Department when a car is parked in the tow zone. Delivery trucks may also be towed.

Mr. Koses suggested a trial of no parking/tow zone on both sides of Jefferson Street between Centre Street and Nonantum Place. This will also allow Jefferson Street to return to a two-way street. Mr. Grafe agreed. Ald. Harney said implementing a no parking restriction would also prevent residents from parking in front of their own home. Ms. Buchi said most residents have driveways and should have room for guests to park.

Mr. Grafe made a motion to a new 60-day trial, no parking/tow zone, both sides, between Centre Street and Nonantum Place. Rescind one-way flow restriction, for trial of two-way traffic flow between Centre Street and Nonantum Place. Council members agreed 5-0. Mr. Schuckel announced this item would be heard in either September or October. He asked residents to submit written comments to Traffic Council on the new trial if they are unable to attend.

TC41-09 ALD. HARNEY, SANGIOLO AND GENTILE request an evaluation of placement for possible stop sign at the intersection of Myrtle Avenue and Seminary Avenue in Auburndale. (Ward 4)

ACTION: Approved (4-0, Grafe not present), add stop signs to both approaches on Myrtle Avenue at Seminary Avenue.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel said he inquired with the City's Law Department as to whether the City has the authority to place a stop sign on Myrtle Avenue (a private way) at the intersection of Seminary Avenue (a public way) without seeking the consent of the abutters. Mr. Schuckel referenced the Law Departments memo indicating that Traffic Council has the ability to install a 2-way stop sign on Myrtle Avenue without the consent of the abutters if a stop sign is deemed necessary for public safety.

Ald. Harney said this area is a walking route for school children. He is concerned with Lasell College students and other drivers who have the tendency to speed on Seminary Avenue because it is a straight street and visibility is limited due to trees.

Ald. Harney made the motion to add stop signs to both approaches on Myrtle Avenue at Seminary Avenue. Council members approved 4-0, Grafe not present.

TC3-10 ALD. DANBERG, BLAZAR AND SHAPIRO on behalf of Peter Tamm, Jaimie Heywood, Jonathan Wismer and Kevin Slayne requesting a discussion of traffic calming and pedestrian safety issues on Walnut Street (between Lakewood Road and Forest Street) and on Hyde Street. (Ward 6) [02/25/10 @1:38 PM]

ACTION: No Action Necessary (5-0).

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel reviewed the area with Council members. He said traffic data indicated the following:

There is an All-Way Stop at Hyde Street and Lake Avenue intersection.

Walnut Street

Classification: Minor Arterial, approx. 11,900 vehicles per day, speed limit is 25 & 30 mph, mean speed of 31 mph, 85% percentile speed is 35 mph and 3% trucks.

Hyde Street

Classification: Local Road, approx. 770 vehicles per day, speed limit is 30 mph, mean speed of 21 mph, 85% percentile speed is 25 mph and 2% trucks.

Crash Data: There have been 25 crashes on Walnut Street between Lakewood Road and Forest Street since 2005. Crashes typically occurred at intersections and there were two vehicle/bike crashes in 2009. Two crashes on Hyde Street since 2005, not including Hyde and Walnut Streets.

Mr. Schuckel said there were three primary concerns raised at the April 29 meeting. 1) Cut through traffic on Hyde Street, 2) Lack of pedestrians' ability to cross Walnut Street and 3) Walnut Street striping allowing parking. Mr. Schuckel indicated this was a discussion item and suggested residents docket specific items in the future.

Mr. Schuckel opened the discussion for public comment.

Barbara Krzewicki, 1028 Walnut Street said Walnut Street has become a parking lot for the MBTA and commuters making it difficult to enter Walnut Street from side streets because parked cars block the sight line. She suggested parking be restricted to a 2-hour limit eliminating commuter parking. A resident of 296 Lake Avenue agreed a lot of commuters park on Walnut Street. She then said the reason Walnut Street is parked on all day is to support the Lincoln Street businesses. Schuyler Larrabee, 10 Laurel Street said it is difficult crossing Walnut Street without crosswalks. He suggests additional street markings. Joe Sanroma, 1000 Walnut Street said it was his understanding Walnut Street has been taken over by the state. He then said the street has become an MBTA commuter parking lot.

Mr. Schuckel clarified Mr. Sanroma's comment and said the state is not taking over Walnut Street. During the construction phase the state owns the road and will revert it back to the City when construction is completed. The City is moving forward and is paying for a survey and design work in order to request state funding for the project. The state has granted a bicycle lane waiver without banning the parking.

Peter Tamm, 22 Hyde Street requested this item be held in order to docket a more specific item such as a pedestrian activated warning signal at a location to be specified. He then said residents value on-street parking. He suggested crosswalks be added on Walnut Street. He also suggested designating a section of Hyde Street as a one-way section from Norman Road to Lake Avenue hoping to deter cars from heading north on Hyde Street during peak hours.

Ald. Danberg said this item was docketed because of safety, crossing and parking issues on Walnut Street. People also use Hyde Street as a cut-through and have the tendency to speed. She said Hyde Street is on the City's plans to be reconstructed. During construction, residents can pay for the installation of granite curbs in front of their homes. Installing curbs will narrow the street and deter people from speeding. She suggested a no action necessary on this item in order to docket a specific item at the conclusion of neighborhood meetings. She suggested to the residents to consider a 2-hour restriction or do not enter signs with a specific time perhaps deterring people from parking and cutting through Hyde Street. These types of signs would be the least restrictive to residents.

A resident asked if a few spaces could be designated as no parking on Hyde and Walnut Streets. Sgt. Norcross said a clearly marked no parking zone would be easy to enforce.

Mr. Koses said if a one-way section were instilled on Hyde Street, cars would be forced to use side streets and opposed this idea. He then briefly described the "Share the Street" program and asked residents if they would consider this program as a pilot. Sgt. Norcross expressed his concerns over residents constantly requesting one-way restrictions in their neighborhoods hoping to deter cars and commuters from cutting through their neighborhood. He then said that perhaps the City and the Board of Aldermen should consider these types of restrictions before approving them. Ald. Danberg agreed.

Mr. Schuckel reiterated this was a discussion item and suggested residents docket an item with specific language so that neighbors who sign the petition have knowledge of the proposal. Mr. Schuckel said Traffic Council does not have the authority to approve locations for crosswalks on Walnut Street but Traffic Council could recommend a location to the Board of Aldermen and with the mayor's support and approval of associated funding, a crosswalk with a warning signal or refuge island could be installed on Walnut Street. The City's crosswalk policy would require something in addition to just paint and signs, given the vehicular traffic volumes on Walnut St.

Mr. Grafe made the motion for no action necessary. Council members agreed 5-0.

TC55-09 ALD. CICCONE, LENNON AND MERRILL requesting a safety analysis and improvements at the intersection of Lewis Terrace, Lewis Street and Newtonville Avenue. (Ward 1) [01/12/10 @ 10:44 AM]

ACTION: Held (5-0). Affected properties to be noticed 1-2 weeks prior to next hearing, Fall 2010.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel announced this item would be held because notification letters on this item were sent out to residents at the intersection of Harvard Street and Newtonville Avenue. Residents at the intersection of Newtonville Avenue and Lewis Terrace should have been notified.

Mr. Schuckel said traffic data showed the following: There are approximately 6,500 entering vehicles per day (counts taken during Harvard Bridge closure). In 2005-08, there were 11 reported crashes. Crash Rate: 1.15 crashes per million entering vehicles. District 4 average un-signalized rate: 0.59. There is no consistent trend in manner of collision or direction of travel.

Mr. Schuckel said this intersection does not meet the warrants for a 4-way stop sign. He suggested bushes being trimmed to open the site distance in both the north and southbound approaches. He then said the City could make this request.

Mr. Koses said he recalls an earlier discussion of adding additional stop signs on Newtonville Avenue but at the time it did not meet the warrants. Mr. Grafe asked if this location met the MUTCD requirements for a stop sign. Mr. Schuckel answered no; more cars are currently passing through because of the Harvard Bridge Closure. Mr. Grafe then asked Mr. Schuckel to review the MUTCD warrants at the next meeting. Mr. Koses asked for a vehicle re-count in the fall when the bridge is complete.

Mr. Koses made the motion to hold this item. Council members agreed 5-0.

TC6-10 ALD. DANBERG on behalf of Schuyler Larrabee, 10 Laurel Street, Newton Centre requesting a seasonal parking restriction be imposed on all of Laurel Street, on both sides from May 1st to October 1st. (Ward 6) [03/23/10 @ 4:04 PM]

ACTION: Held for 60-day trial (5-0), no parking east side, entire length.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel said during five site visits the following parking counts were taken: On the East side there was an average of seven cars parked, on the West side there was an average of four cars parked. Laurel Street is approximately 21-23' wide, there is no curb on the east side, there is a sidewalk on the west side. A 'no parking here to corner' had been added.

Mr. Schuckel opened the discussion for public comment.

Schuyler Larrabee, 10 Laurel Street provided Council members with photographs illustrating typical parking conditions and litter on Laurel Street, both are attached to this report. He thought the average number of parked cars was a low observation. He said typically, there are approximately ten cars on the east side and five to six on the west side especially on hot weekends. He said people block driveways and park to close to corner. He suggested the installation of no parking here to corner signs on the three other corners. He said litter, safety, people blocking driveways, cars parking on both sides of the street, partying, inappropriate behavior and nudity are all concerns and issues. He suggested a seasonal parking restriction be imposed on all of Laurel Street, on both sides from May 1st to October 1st, hoping to avoid these concerns. Marc Fogel, 15 Lake Avenue said he is concerned with restrictive parking in the area. It is difficult for guests to park. He suggested a one-side restriction on Laurel Street addressing crowd parking allowing access for emergency vehicles and leaving parking opportunities for guests. Debra Fogel, 15 Lake Avenue suggested parking enforcement on Laurel Street. She does not support any parking restriction on Laurel Street because she does not think this would resolve people behavior. Robert Reed, 15 Laurel Street said it is difficult to exit his driveway. The street is narrow and does not feel parking should be allowed on both sides. Marion Glasgow, 9 Laurel Street said she is concerned because emergency vehicles cannot get down the street with vehicles parking on both sides. She feels the no parking here to corner sign has helped the situation. She said she is also concerned with nudity; they use Laurel Street as if it were a bathhouse. She then asked the area to be enforced. Art Glasgow, 9 Laurel Street said he is also concerned with nudity, inappropriate behavior and the difficulty for emergency vehicles having access to the street. He said people do not respect the area as a neighborhood. Toby Reed, 10 Laurel Street said people have the tendency to park up on the dirt rather than the street. She also has difficulty exiting her driveway. Barbara Reidel, 296 Lake Avenue said Laurel Street is impassible on the weekends and agreed there is a litter issue. David Putnam, 10 Lake Avenue said he is also concerned with the partying, inappropriate behavior and nudity. He asked if Traffic Council approve a parking restriction would the Police Department support a temporary permit when a resident held a party.

Sgt. Norcross said Parking Control Officers have expressed their concerns about the safety in the neighborhood because cars are being allowed to park on both sides of the street. He suggested eliminating parking on one-side. He said parking tends to deter people from speeding. Mr. Grafe said he is also concerned with emergency vehicles having difficulty accessing the street. He suggested eliminating parking on one-side. Mr. Koses agreed with Sgt. Norcross and Mr. Grafe.

Ald. Harney said public safety is concerning. He agrees parking should be eliminated from one side of the street. He asked what side would benefit residents to park on. He said the Police Department should be called when residents witness inappropriate behavior. Sgt. Norcross said he would ask the department to add this area to their roster.

Ald. Danberg suggested the City installing signs “no parking 5’ driveway” and “no parking between signs” at the end of driveways allowing easy exiting. Mr. Schuckel said having all these signs would not be appealing.

Mr. Koses suggested a 60- day trial rather than a permanent motion in order for signs to be installed within a few days. Ald. Danberg agreed. Sgt. Norcross said it is very clear, the street is too narrow and cars cannot park on both sides.

Mr. Koses made the motion to hold this item for a 60-day trial, no parking east side, entire length. Council members agreed 5-0. Ald. Harney asked Ald. Danberg to follow up with the Department of Public Works to install additional “no parking here to corner” signs, on the west side. Mr. Schuckel announced this item would perhaps be discussed in October.

TC10-10 DAVID KOSES requesting the inclusion of pedestrian beacons in the TPR for the following intersections: Langley Road and Langley Path, Centre and Pelham Streets, Harvard and Washington Streets. [04/12/10 @ 1:32 PM]

ACTION: Approved as amended (5-0), add the following locations to TPR-146, flashing light locations: Crafts Street at Linwood Ave; Waverley Avenue at Arlington Street; Waverley Avenue at Franklin Street and Langley Road at Langley Path.

NOTE: Mr. Schuckel said the Law Department requested this item be docketed in order to add the location of these pedestrian warning beacons to the TPR. Flashing warning lights are included in the TPR.

Mr. Koses said he thought beacons would be added to the TPR once they have already been installed. Langley Road and Langley Path should be included. He said Centre and Pelham Streets should not be added to the TPR because the beacon has not been installed. He said the Planning Department prefers the installation at Centre and Pleasant Streets rather than Centre and Pelham Streets.

Mr. Koses said The Carroll School for the Blind has contacted him expressing their concerns on installing a yellow flashing beacon on Washington and Harvard Streets. They feel a solid traffic signal should be installed. Mr. Schuckel suggested a new item should be docketed.

Mr. Schuckel made the motion to approve this item as amended, add the following locations to TPR-146, flashing light locations: Crafts Street at Linwood Ave; Waverley Avenue at Arlington Street; Waverley Avenue at Franklin Street and Langley Road at Langley Path. Council members agreed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Clint Schuckel, Acting Traffic Council Chair

Typical parking conditions on Laurel Street



Typical Litter left on Laurel Street

Photos taken at night to avoid confrontations

