

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2007

Present: Candace Havens (Chair), David Koses (Planning), Sgt. Norcross (Police), Christine Samuelson (Aldermanic Representative), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer)

Alderman present: Albright, Burg, Danberg, Linsky, Mansfield, Parker

#237-06 ALD. LINSKY, JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT requesting parking restrictions on Highland Avenue (Lowell Ave. to Birch Hill Road), Grey Birch Terrace and Birch Hill Road to discourage high school student parking. (Ward 2)

ACTION: **APPROVE (5-0)**

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel noted that a trial was initiated by the Traffic Council in October 2006 for a parking ban on school days from 9-11 am on both sides of Highland Avenue from Birch Hill Rd to Lowell Avenue, as well as both sides of Gray Birch Terrace and Birch Hill Road. He pointed out that prior to the trial between 23 and 27 cars parked regularly on the south side of Highland Avenue between Lowell Avenue and Birch Hill Road, 1-2 cars parked on the east side of Gray Birch Terrace, and between 1 and 5 cars parked on both sides of Birch Hill Road. After the trial only one or two cars at a time were cited parking on any of these streets and 25-35 cars relocated elsewhere in the neighborhood, particularly farther west on Highland Avenue near Birch Hill Road and not on Allston Street. For the future, he suggested an area-wide restriction with exemptions for residents and possibly a few student permits on each street. Overall, he felt the trial was successful and recommended it become permanent.

Richard Parad, 109 Highland Street, felt the restriction has given residents relief from the effects of all-day parkers and is a good trade-off.

Allys Spelios, 8 Birch Hill Road, was happy that cars are no longer turning around in her driveway.

Ross Mitchell, 4 Allston Street, didn't want to see areas restricted unnecessarily but also was concerned about pushing cars from one place to another.

George Haivanis, 156 Highland Avenue, said he and other neighbors are pleased with the results of the trial overall. He felt the students should be parking in the City lot on Austin Street where ample parking is available.

Victoria Dean, 171 Highland Avenue, agreed that the trial worked well, but was concerned about possible parking impacts during construction of the new high school and noted many underutilized long-term metered spaces en route to the morning train.

Mary Huse, 221 Highland Avenue, expressed concern about parkers moving up the street and wished kids would walk to school more.

Candace Havens indicated the Traffic Council recently discussed possible permit programs, especially during construction and that it is aware of the demands on the residential neighborhoods surrounding the school.

David Koses supported the least restrictive means of solving the problem and felt restrictions should only apply during the school year. He didn't see much evidence that commuters are parking in the neighborhood.

Sgt. Norcross felt the data shows the trial was a success.

Ald. Samuelson did not support permits for students, but wanted to consider distributing them to school staff during construction if the details of administration could be worked out. She supported making the trial restriction permanent.

Clint Schuckel pointed out that residential permit parking can only be considered if an area has been otherwise restricted for a year and the restriction is inadequate.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to make the trial permanent and recommended restricting parking from 9 am-11 am on school days on Highland Avenue (Lowell Ave. to Birch Hill Road), Grey Birch Terrace and Birch Hill Road.

#387-06

ALD. LINSKY, JOHNSON & ALBRIGHT requesting implementation of parking restrictions on Highland Avenue between Forest Avenue and Grey Birch Terrace and on Allston Street between Highland Avenue and Austin Street to discourage Newton North student parking. (Ward 2)

ACTION:

APPROVE 60-DAY TRIAL (5-0)

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel noted this petition was docketed after the review of the first item (#237-06) so residents on nearby street who might be affected by changes during the trial would be notified and have an opportunity to consider changes on their portion of the street as well. Chair Havens noted the receipt of letters from Douglas and Melissa Ferriman, Ellie Crocker Morse and John Morse, Allston Street residents who oppose restrictions. (See discussion notes above)

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend approval of a 60-day trial of a parking ban from 9 am – 11 am on school days Highland Avenue both sides from Gray Birch Hill to Allston Street.

#347-06

TRAFFIC ENGINEER, on behalf of Assistant Chief Proia, Newton Fire Department requesting a no parking restriction on one side of Homer Street, Centre Street to Water Street to facilitate emergency vehicle access. (Ward 6)

ACTION:

APPROVE 60-DAY TRIAL (5-0)

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel introduced the petition on behalf of Asst. Fire Chief Proia. He said that ladder trucks sometimes have difficulty getting down Homer Street when cars are parked on both sides, especially when there is snow. Cars often park illegally on roadside berms to keep travel lanes open. He noted that the Suzuki School no longer holds classes at the Trinity Church and there are fewer demands for parking from the immediate area. He surmised that most of the current parkers are commuters. To ensure emergency access he recommended either enforcing the illegal parking (i.e., ticketing cars that park on berms) or limiting parking to one side.

Ald. Danberg concurred that some of the demands for long-term parking at the church are now less and that commuters and other employees have found parking in this area, based on her observations. She felt it as important to keep the street clear for fire engines and noted empty long-term parking spaces nearby.

David Koses pointed out that ticketing cars may force drivers to park into the street, thus further restricting access.

Ald. Samuelson suggested two-hour parking on the south side to discourage long-term parkers while permitting occasional parkers. If fire engines need to go down the street, oncoming cars should still have space to which they can move. She felt the curbs should be improved to better define the pedestrian way. She also acknowledged the benefits of parked cars to slow traffic.

After a brief discussion, the Traffic Council voted to authorize a trial on Homer Street that includes 1) no parking from 9 am-11 am, Monday through Friday on the south side between Bowen and Center Streets; and 2) to extend the two-hour parking restriction on the north side from Furber Lane to Grafton Street (5-0).

#348-06

REBECCA & ROBERT KAPLAN, 4 Janet Road, Newton Centre requesting parking restriction on Janet Road to maintain access for emergency vehicles. (Ward 2)

ACTION:

60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 5-0 (ONE HOUR PARKING FROM 7AM-10AM, MONDAY-FRIDAY)

HOLD (5-0)

NOTE:

Rebecca and Robert Kaplan presented numerous photographs which showed cars parked on both sides along this narrow, curved street. Most cars have out-of-state license plates which they believe they belong to BC students, some of whom leave their cars for weeks at a time. Shorter term parkers begin to arrive around 7 am. Their primary concern was to maintain access for emergency vehicles and other City services. They cited times when they couldn't have work done at their house due to congestion.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 23-24 feet wide and cannot safely support cars parked on both sides. He observed from 0-11 cars parked on the street at different times (neighbors noted school when no cars were seen).

Chair Havens acknowledged letters received from residents Holly Gunner, Anne Chalmers, Gertrude Brown, Janice and Howard Fineman in support of a one-hour restriction.

Ed Goldstein, 30 Mill Street, said cars parked on the curve in the street create the worst problems for emergency access and sometimes cars also park on berms.

Richard Green, 25 Janet Road said it is hard to get out of his driveway because visibility is blocked by parked cars. They often do not get their street cleaned or get landscape service at the house. He believed some people left their cars on the street to take the shuttle from the BC Law School to the main campus. He supported one-hour parking to address short- and long-term student parking.

Ken and Karen Morton Grooms, 41 Janet Road said parking is a problem day and night and that a \$5 overnight parking fine is no deterrent. They felt safety is a big issue, but that the related student activities on the street are also a problem

Ald. Linsky said this has been a longstanding issue and supported the neighbors' request for action, noting that restrictions on outsiders also apply to residents.

David Koses witnessed no cars on one visit and 10 on another, which may have reflected the school vacation schedule.

Sgt. Norcross said that enforcement of a one-hour restriction is labor intense and, as a result, is not well-enforced. He preferred no parking or a time limit instead.

Other neighbors concurred with previous comments and agreed that this matter had brought the neighborhood together in support of a one-hour restriction. Some felt a two-hour restriction would not help as much.

Clint suggested imposing the least restrictive means of changing these behaviors, as has been the Traffic Council's practice.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to authorize a 60-day trial of one-hour parking from 7am – 10 am, Monday through Friday.

#360-06

ALD. BURG requesting a consideration of traffic calming measures on Derby Street between Cherry Street and Waltham city line. (Ward 3)

ACTION:

HELD 5-0

NOTE:

Ald. Burg said that neighbors have observed speeding on Derby Street and this is a concern especially near the Franklin School.

Dan Proskauer, 240 Derby Street, is on the Franklin School Safety Committee and felt the long, straight and narrow street makes speeding unsafe, especially when cars are parking on both sides. He said the worst area is between Parmenter and Sheridan Streets where visibility at the intersections is blocked by parked cars.

Clint Schuckel said no parking is allowed on Derby Street from Cherry Street to Franklin School and the speed limit is 25 mph. The street was recently resurfaced and the center line eliminated, but he noted the smooth paving encourages faster driving. He said the street carries about 2900 cars per day and 85% are traveling at 35 mph. The Police Department didn't identify any one problem location. New development in the area doesn't appear to be causing problem.

Chair Havens acknowledged a letter from Linda Hamel, resident of Laurel Avenue who feels cars travel too fast on Derby Street and their visibility is hindered by dips and bumps in the road which is unsafe for pedestrians as well as for people backing out of their driveways. Chair Havens also received a letter from Frank Cannistraro who noted speeding has been a long-term problem in his 40-year residency in this neighbor and suggested speed bumps.

Mary E. Walsh, 154 Derby Street, said the number of trucks has increased and it is hard for her to get out of her driveway due to the situation.

Liz Sullivan, 14-year resident of 105 Tolman Street, said some cars are forced off Moody Street onto Derby Street. She suggested a blinking light or four-way stops to slow cars down and protect the neighborhood.

Amy Murphy, 174 Derby Street, lives across from Franklin School and agreed parking on the street slows traffic, which is sporadic but fast. She favored stop signs.

Pamela Libby, 37 Milo Street, said cars go too fast and it's hard to get out of Parmenter and Sheridan Streets because visibility is blocked by parked cars. She also suggested stop signs.

Ald. Samuelson felt that the street was a good candidate for traffic calming and asked about the status, to which David Koses indicated that a preliminary assessment has not been done yet.

Ald. Mansfield asked about whether a neckdown or other measures would help.

Ald Burg supported the neighbors' interest in stop signs in this situation.

David Koses expressed interest in speed bumps, although not currently allowed in the City. He cited two different sets of problems: 1) speeding and 2) school

safety issues around Franklin School, especially at pick up time when cars park illegally around the area.

In response to a question from Ald. Parker, Clint Schuckel indicated that textured pavements tend to retain water and this causes potholes. They also are noisier. He also pointed out that stop signs are not considered traffic calming measures and may be ignored if there is little cross traffic and can cause cars to make more noise as they brake and accelerate.

Sean Roche, 42 Daniel Street, asked if the street could be reshaped at the time of repaving to save money and improving the design.

Chair Havens felt traffic calming is needed and thought well-designed speed bumps could be appropriate. She was interested in seeing an assessment of the street, using the city's new Traffic Calming criteria. While some of the parking issues mentioned by residents are not part of the petition, the Traffic Engineer could make some improvements to address them, such as posting more speed limit signs and restricting parking from the corners of Parmenter and Sheridan to improve visibility.

Ald. Samuelson offered to docket a petition for consideration of speed bumps as a traffic calming tool for consideration by the Board of Aldermen.

The Traffic Council voted to hold this item (5-0) in order to obtain a traffic calming assessment and the outcome of a proposal to consider speed bumps. In the meantime, it was understood that the Traffic Engineer would add speed limit signs and restrict parking near the corners of Parmenter and Sheridan and the Police Department would assign directed patrols in the area to control speeding.

#384-06

MICHAEL DEFILIPPO, 92 John Street, Newton requesting a no parking restriction on the north (odd) side of John Street from Langley Road to end. (Ward 6)

ACTION:

APPROVE (5-0)

NOTE:

Michael DeFilippo said the street is narrow and when cars are parked on both side, trash pick up and emergency access and deliveries are a problem. He asked the Traffic Council to restrict parking on one side.

Clint Schuckel said the street is a dead end and at 24 feet in width, is too narrow to support parking on both sides. A restriction would affect four houses and he did not feel such a restriction would be a burden on the neighborhood.

Ald. Parker had received complaints from the neighborhood and that a restriction on one side would serve to better organize parking. Ald. Mansfield agreed.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend no parking on the north side of John Street (5-0)

#386-06 NANCY L. KEATING, 108 Herrick Road, Newton Centre requesting that present one-way stop at Chase Street and Herrick Road become a 3-way stop. (Ward 6)

ACTION: **HOLD (3-2)**

NOTE: Tamar Warburg, 102 Herrick Road and Brian Kinney (petitioner's husband), 108 Herrick Road, said that the intersection of Chase and Herrick Road is confusing. There is a stop sign on the downhill leg of Herrick, but no stop signs from the other directions. People approaching the intersection expect others to stop, but they are not required to do so. There has been an increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic due to expanded programs at the Hebrew school. Cut-through traffic moving quickly through the neighborhood also poses challenges and there have been minor accidents at the intersection. Cars traveling downhill have a good view of other approaches and often run the stop sign. A driveway at the end of Chase Street appears as if a continuation of Chase Street and people sometimes enter private property by mistake. They requested stop signs at each corner to address these problems.

Clint Schuckel said there have been no reported accidents recently and cited to material change in the conditions since previous review.

John Koger, 62 Herrick Road, agreed with the petitioners about the dangers of the intersection and feels there's been a huge increase in pedestrian traffic and few people can figure out who has the right of way. A stop sign would force all drivers to stop and take turns.

Ald. Parker felt the traffic volume data should be updated with the expansion of the Hebrew College. He described the conditions of this intersection as extremes; when there is not traffic, cars often speed and when there is traffic, the area is congested.

Sean Roche, 42 Daniel Street said he would familiar with the intersection and suggested a single stop sign on Chase Street since it abuts the "T" intersection.

Ald. Mansfield also cited the change in activity as a result of more dense, active uses area. He felt that some of the problems result from having only one access road to the site.

Ald. Samuelson pointed out the area is most active on Tuesday nights and Saturdays. She felt the stop sign placed on Herrick by the Hebrew School should be eliminated and the entry to the school and adjoining neighborhood should be reconfigured to distinguish it as a more formal entrance to the school and suggested some of the funds be used for a traffic manager.

Clint Schuckel offered to provide updated volume counts if the Traffic Council felt it would be helpful in making a decision.

David Koses said that traffic mitigation funds were recently approved for this area in 2007. He suggested the intersection be included in the study so the results could be used to help the Council decide upon the best solution for the problem.

Chair Havens supported the request for three stop signs, given the confusing nature of the convergence of the streets and the existence of an existing stop sign that may not be well-placed but outside the City's jurisdiction to change or enforce. She felt it would be the easiest way to sort out the conflicts among approaching vehicles while alternative solutions are studied.

After two failed motions for 1) a single stop sign on Chase Street and seeking the removal of the stop sign on Herrick Road and 2) update data on traffic volumes prior to taking action, the Traffic Council moved to hold the item in order to allow for completion of a traffic study in the surrounding area which could include the intersection and entry to the college at Herrick and Chase Street (3-2, Havens and Samuelson opposed). In the meantime, the Police Department vowed to enforce the speed limits in the area.

#361-06 SGT. NORCROSS requesting a change to City Ordinance that would create temporary parking permits for construction, moving, and other residential activities, based on the permit program established by the Town of Brookline.

ACTION: **HOLD (5-0)**

NOTE: The Traffic Council heard a presentation from representatives of the Town of Brookline at its December 2006 meeting and held a general discussion of the issues at that meeting. Sgt Norcross presented the concept once again to the Traffic Council for consideration as a tool for managing construction parking in Newton. The Traffic Council agreed it would be useful too and that additional work would need to be done to develop a proposal for such a permit and its administration. They agreed to meet to discuss and develop it further at a daytime meeting in the near future so it could be moved on to the Board of Aldermen for approval and put to use.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Traffic Council Chair