

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007

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

Aldermen present: Pres. Baker, Albright, Johnson, Linsky, Sangiolo, and Vance

#112-06 ALD. JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT, AND LINSKY requesting discussion in order to determine the best ways to address parking, vehicular and pedestrian traffic issues in the Morseland Avenue area.

ACTION: **HELD 5-0**

NOTE: Ald. Linsky summarized the nature of the neighborhood issues. There are three synagogues in the vicinity and two are expanding their facilities. The neighbors would like to improve pedestrian safety, especially during holidays and special events and have concerns about future expansions.

Clint Schuckel said Ward Street is a one-way street nearest the temple with no parking restrictions. Parking can be accommodated on both sides, even though it is only 24 feet wide where it is a one-way street but not where it is two-way. The street is heavily parked and is narrower when it snows. He observed no more than 3 cars parked on side streets such as Channing Road and Elmore Street, and between 6-17 cars on Ward Street near Elmore that he assumed to be associated with the temple. The cars parked in front of homes did not pose a safety hazard, but posed more of a nuisance to neighbors. In response to a concern about cars parked too close to the intersection, Clint Schuckel noted that he can post restrictions for safety reasons up to within 50 feet of an intersection.

Several residents spoke about a number of problems with parking and traffic in the neighborhood. At times, both sides of Ward Street are heavily parked near the intersection at Morseland Road and it is hard for residents to park there. They indicated that parking and pedestrian problems occur on Jewish holidays, at celebrations, concerts and other activities at the temples. Some mentioned that temple visitors begin to arrive at 6 am others by 8 am on all days of the week. There was also concern about the speed at which some travel down Morseland Road and that it is difficult for some to get in and out their driveways at times and the enforcement is sparse. Rabbi Kaufman said there was no consensus on the remedies for problems among his congregation.

Candace Havens noted a letter was received from Jason Gish who expressed concern about pedestrian safety due to automobile traffic and poor sidewalks. She summarized the general concerns in the neighborhood into several categories including speeding, over-parking (daily and for special events), enforcement and pedestrian safety. Given the complexity and number of problems she suggested

gathering additional information to inform future decisions about how to address these concerns.

David Koses suggested obtaining the temple calendars so the Council can observe the impacts at busy times. Ald. Samuelson questioned whether the demand for parking on the street was created by legal uses.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to hold the item to allow time to gather information regarding compliance with on-site parking requirements at the synagogues, to observe activities in the area, especially during the upcoming holiday on March 3-4, and to check out the condition and extent of the sidewalks. All agreed to schedule review of this item at the April 19th meeting of the Traffic Council.

#305-06 LAUREN MERZ, 58 Fuller Street, Waban, requesting that the “No parking 8-4 on school days” restriction on the west side of Beethoven Avenue be changed to “No parking 8-4 all days” and extended to Puritan Road, west side only (Ward 5). **(60 DAY TRIAL APPROVED ON 11/16/06 FOR LIVE PARKING)**

ACTION: **NAN 4-0 (Havens absent)**

NOTE: Clint Schuckel recapped the past review of this item. No parking is allowed from 8 am to 4 pm on school days for 300 feet on the west side of Beethoven south of Beacon Street. The Traffic Council approved of a trial on November 16, 2006 for live parking in the area south of the existing blue zone. He observed that people are not getting out of their cars but are not moving ahead in the queue.

Stephanie Cogen, 98 Allen Avenue, represented Zervas School. She said the trial of live parking near the school hadn’t improved or degraded conditions. She agreed with Clint Schuckel that people still park in the designated area, but don’t get out of their cars. She felt lengthening the blue zone would be more effective, especially if the handicap parking space is relocated. She added that the school promotes parent contact with the school and many parents enjoy walking their kids into school and socializing with other parents. She was glad to see that parents had not begun parking on the west side of the street during the trial as they feared would happen.

Residents present said they would prefer not to have additional restrictions on the street so as not to inconvenience residents and so as not to inadvertently encourage speeding by removing parking along the street. However, they noted some congestion on Saturdays.

Clint Schuckel said that the parents of students at Zervas have been very good about how they have used the streets safely and wasn’t clear about why the same behaviors couldn’t be initiated on Saturdays. He noted that if a blue zone was extended, it was proposed in front of conservation area and not in front of homes.

Ald. Samuelson felt live parking should be eliminated if it was not effective and did not favor extending the blue zone because it would create more enforcement

for the police. She objected to the numbers of parents who drive their children school and urged them to park on side streets and walk a little farther.

David Koses expressed his opinion that the drop-off and pick-up at Zervas School is better than at most schools. He also noted that the handicap parking space is poorly placed and hinders good circulation.

Sgt. Norcross indicated that Officer Hough felt strongly that the handicap space should be relocated or eliminated for safety reasons.

While the Traffic Council supported removal of the handicap parking space, they deferred action pending review by the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities and final action by the Traffic Council at a later date per established protocol for review of handicap spaces.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0) to discontinue the trial and take no further action on the proposal.

#310-06 ALD. SANGIOLO & HARNEY requesting restricted parking on one side of road to be in effect only on Red Sox day games and Patriot's Day in Newton Lower Falls for the following streets: DeForest Road, Clearwater Road, Sherrin Road, Pierrepont Road, Asheville Road, Hallron Road, Crehore Drive, Longfellow Road, Grove Street (both sides from Hagar to Woodland Road) (Ward 4)
HELD ON 11/16/06

ACTION: **NAN 4-0 (Havens absent)**

NOTE: On behalf of former Ald. John Stewart, Ald. Sangiolo suggested a simple, straightforward sign that could easily be put out by City employees for special occasions. She described some cost-effective signs that might work.

Clint Schuckel felt the nature of the request was an operational one that is beyond the purview of the Traffic Council. He also found the flip signs to be very costly (a base cost of about \$10,000). Based on the upcoming Red Sox schedule, there will be 7 days that are currently known. The challenge is to post signs quickly for games that are rescheduled due to rain delays or other unscheduled games. He offered to look at additional products that could be used for this purpose without unduly restricting the neighborhood. In order for restrictions to be enforced on game days, it is necessary to post the game dates.

Ald. Samuelson suggested a no parking restriction on weekends during Red Sox season to deter long-term parkers who could otherwise park at Riverside on weekends.

The Traffic Council agreed to take no action on this item (4-0).

#311-06 ALD. GENTILE, HARNEY & SANGIOLO requesting peak period (7-9am, 4-6 pm) parking restrictions on the east side of Lexington Street between the

Masspike bridge and Commonwealth Avenue (up to 9 metered spaces) to facilitate traffic flow at the intersection of Lexington St. & Comm. Ave. (Ward 4)
60 DAY TRIAL APPROVED 11/16/06

ACTION: **APPROVED 2-1-1 (Koses opposed, Samuelson abstained, Havens absent)**

NOTE: Clint Schuckel said there are two lanes on northbound on Lexington with a right turn lane and through/left turn lane. He noted that restricting parking would increase access to the right lane during these times, which would allow right turning cars to progress. However, since most cars go straight or turn left, the benefit is minimal. He observed one car idling in the restricted area in the morning, which negated possible benefits of the restriction. He received no complaints about the trial and indicated Ald. Gentile has been monitoring conditions during the trial from his office nearby.

David Koses felt it was unnecessary to create a restriction that shows no significant benefit. A motion to hold this item failed (3-1). A motion to approve the trial was approved (2-1-1, Koses opposed, Samuelson abstained, Havens absent).

#359-06 ALD. VANCE & BAKER requesting that the existing no parking restrictions on both sides of Old Orchard Road, from Hammond Street 600 feet westerly, be extended down the hill and curve to the easterly property line of house #40 Old Orchard Road or thereabouts. (Ward 7)

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-0 (Havens not voting) 60 DAY TRIAL**

NOTE: Ald. Vance said that there is a no parking restriction on both sides of Old Orchard Road nearest Hammond Street for 600 feet from the intersection. Since Boston College began charging for parking, some students have been parking just beyond the restricted area on a curve in the road. He read a letter from resident Samuel Perry who stated that the parked cars are causing traffic and parking hazards on the street. He also received a letter from the Metcalfs who supported extending the restriction around the curve including their house at 116 Old Orchard Road.

Clint Schuckel confirmed that there have been a number of pole transfers by NSTAR and a reposting of signs, but that the current signs match the restrictions on the books. He also confirmed observing significant amount of parking on the even side of the street. He was concerned that the restriction as proposed would simply shift the vehicles further down Old Orchard Road, and recommended extending the existing parking restriction to the entire street.

Ald. Vance would support a trial to assess the impacts. He said parked cars around the curve narrow the street and present a public safety concern and no parking should be allowed there. He preferred a two-hour restriction in the morning, for example from 8-10 am, to deter most parkers and make it easier to enforce.

Neighbor, Jane Hoch said there is also a problem with overnight parkers. She also pointed out that construction and landscape vehicles cause periodic problems.

Ald. Baker agreed that restricting the curve at all times should happen irrespective of the trial for safety reasons. Ald. Vance added that school buses add another hazard on this street and repeated his desire to restrict parking at all times on the curve for safety reasons.

Sgt. Norcross said cars may be towed if the driver has five unpaid tickets. He said one-hour restrictions are very hard to enforce and preferred a restriction during a period of time rather than a one- or two-hour restriction.

The Traffic Council approved a trial to extend the restriction for no parking from the end of the existing restriction at the top of the hill to the eastern property line of house # 40 (no parking anytime). The trial will also include no parking 9-11 am from Monday to Friday on both sides of Old Orchard Road from the eastern property line of house # 40 to Woodman Road coupled with active enforcement of violators. Review of this item will resume in May 2007.

#388-06 PATRICIA FRANCHI, 149 North Street, (Albemarle Gardens) requesting that parking be restricted to only one side of NORTH STREET and that parking be restricted 10 feet from the entrances to apartment complex rather than the current 5 feet. (Ward 3)

ACTION: **APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0**

NOTE: Clint Schuckel did not observe a significant amount of parking on North Street, although there were cars parked near the driveways to Albemarle Gardens. On the opposite side of the apartments, cars parked in front of the cemetery near the City line. He recommended extending the existing no parking restriction for 20 feet on each side of the apartment entrances to improve sightline visibility for cars leaving the apartment complex.

David Koses paraphrased a letter from resident Diane N. Smith supporting parking on one side of North Street and a 10-foot restriction adjacent to driveways at the apartments.

Candace Havens felt that a ten-foot restriction might not be sufficient to offer a good view of approaching cars because of the curve in the road and favored a 20-foot restriction.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend approval of no parking for 20 feet on either side of the entrance to Albemarle Gardens parking lot, but to otherwise allow parking on both sides of North Street.

#390-06 SGT. NORCROSS, ALD. ALBRIGHT, ALD. JOHNSON, ALD.LINSKY requesting restricted parking (2 hr) on the west (odd) side of Walnut Street from Linwood Avenue to Crafts Street, the east (odd) side of Crafts Street from Linwood Avenue to Walnut Street, and the south (even) side of Linwood Avenue from Walnut Street to Crafts Street. (Ward 2)

ACTION: **APPROVED 60-day trial, 3-1-1 (Schuckel opposed, Havens abstained)**

NOTE: Sgt. Norcross noted that the petition request should have read Sundays only, and that the Police Department has received calls for enforcement in this area on Sundays. In recent months, the Chinese School, which rents the Day Middle School on Sunday afternoons, has hired a police detail, “no parking here to corner” signs have been added, and enforcement has increased.

Ald. Johnson indicated that the Chinese School? had been trying to manage parking. She said some people don’t park close to the curb and it slows traffic on these busy streets. Some people also park in nearby parking lots; however the traffic is disruptive to the neighborhood.

David Koses read a letter from resident who objected to restrictions.

Clint Schuckel asked the Traffic Council to consider whether the increased enforcement on Sunday is sufficient to address the problem or whether it is necessary to establish restrictions to alleviate congestion around the area. He was opposed to the trial because he felt the Sunday restriction should be on the side opposite the triangle for two reasons: 1) to maintain sightlines for the driveways, and 2) to reduce pedestrians that must cross Crafts St.

The Traffic Council approved a trial of no parking 1:00-4:00 on Sundays on the triangle/park sides of Walnut, Crafts & Linwood. This item will return to Traffic Council in May 2007.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair