

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2007

Present: Candace Havens (Chair), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Ald. Christine Samuelson, Sgt. Norcross (Police)

Also present: Aldermen Danberg and Lennon

#348-06 REBECCA & ROBERT KAPLAN, 4 Janet Road, Newton Centre requesting parking restriction on Janet Road to maintain access for emergency vehicles. (Ward 2) **HELD 1/18/07 for 60-Day Trial, No Parking 7am-10am, M-F**

**ACTION:** Approve 60-day trial (5-0)

**NOTE:**

In January 2007, a 60-day trial on Janet Road was approved to allow no parking from 7 am to 10 am, Monday through Friday. Clint Schuckel said he that the number of nonresident cars parked has been reduced by about ½; some students still park there illegally during the restricted hours. The street leads to an unpaved roadway and has little through traffic. It is 23 feet wide and is too narrow to support parking on both sides safely.

Petitioner Rebecca Kaplan said that Boston College was on vacation when City staff observed the parking and that the problem is generally worse than reported. She showed some dated pictures to illustrate the parking problem remains and noted that the school lot parking is not filled. She added that the problems seem worse in the spring.

Maryellen Pfeifer, 26 Janet Road, pointed out that the residents have different needs for parking and they had not reached consensus on the best solution, but all wanted to have emergency access at all times. She suggested a resident permit parking district to address the problem.

Kenneth Grooms, 41 Janet Road, agreed with his neighbors and added that in April, students leave their cars long-term. He said a \$5 ticket is no deterrent to overnight parkers.

Richard Green, 25 Janet Road, felt that the 7-10 am restriction worked fairly well, but compliance depends on good enforcement. He asked for a one-hour restriction on Janet Road for consistency with nearby streets and for the City to address over-parking by afternoon, evening and overnight parkers.

Howard Fineman, 42 Janet Road, concurred with his neighbors' comments and favored a resident parking program for the street.

David Koses said that he witnessed a modest number of cars on his many visits and didn't see two cars parked across from one another, although a resident provided a photograph that showed cars parked across from one another, thereby blocking emergency vehicle access. While he thought the street could tolerate some nonresident parking, he agreed with the neighbors that Boston College-related vehicles should park on the BC Campus, not on Janet Road.

Ald. Samuelson felt that enforcement of parking restrictions is needed to assure that the restrictions are respected.

Sgt. Norcross noted that one-hour parking is extremely hard to enforce and that the neighbors would need to call the police for enforcement if people disregard the restriction.

Chair Havens explained that in order to have a resident permit parking district, another restriction would need to be in place for a year prior. The Council generally recommends the least restrictive means for controlling a problem so that neighbors aren't unnecessarily inconvenienced.

The Traffic Council approved (5-0) a new 60-day trial of one-hour parking on both sides of Janet Road from 7 am – 7 pm on weekdays.

#215-06

DAN REILLY, 21 Bradford Road, Newton Highlands requesting "No Parking" on BRADFORD ROAD between 9 am and 11 am on weekdays. (Ward 5)

**HELD ON 9/21/06 UNTIL MARCH 2007**

**ACTION:**

NAN (5-0)

**NOTE:**

Chair Havens said the petition had been held since the fall in order to see if the January fare decreases on the MBTA Green Line would adversely affect parking in the neighborhood. She indicated that petitioner Dan Reilly asked that the request be withdrawn due to lack of neighborhood support and because anticipated problems have not materialized.

Neighbors present reported that very few nonresidents park in the immediate vicinity. They opposed restrictions because they support the use of public transit, feel commuters need a place to park, and are not troubled by the few who park in their neighborhood.

Clint Schuckel confirmed the neighbors' observations and recommended no changes.

Chair Havens reported that the Council received a letter from Robert and Lisa Unsworth confirming other neighbors' observations and opposing restrictions.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend no further action on this proposal.

#361-05

ALD. SAMUELSON requesting relocation of existing Stop Sign on

(211-00) Chestnut Street northbound at Rte. 9 service road from the south side of the bridge to the north side of the bridge. (Ward 5)

**Note: Requires State approval. HELD 12/15/05**

**ACTION:** NAN (4-1, Koses opposed)

**NOTE:** Ald. Samuelson said neighbors have complained to her about confusion at this intersection before stop signs were installed and she was interested in exploring options to improve the situation.

Clint Schuckel recapped the history of the companion proposals #361-05 and #362-05. The State (CTPS) studied this intersection six years ago and the Traffic Council first reviewed them in December 2005. Stop signs were installed north and south of the overpass and the crash history has been significantly reduced. However, traffic on southbound Chestnut Street back up about 1000 feet and it takes 4 minutes or more for some cars to pass through the intersection at peak times. If the signs are relocated to create a 4-way stop under the bridge, it may be more familiar but also harder to see because the signs will be under the bridge. Due to traffic volumes, he recommended a traffic signal.

Jack Neville, resident of 68 High Street and president of the Upper Falls Corporation, felt no more restrictions are needed and the current stops signs are an inconvenience. He had witnessed 2 accidents since they were installed.

Debbie Whitehill, 12 Bradford Road, supported the installation of a traffic signal and didn't think rerouting traffic around the intersection will work.

Ron Mauri, 35 Bradford Road, said a traffic signal might not be the best solution if it inconveniences cross traffic in favor of reducing long queues on Chestnut Street. He questioned whether the changes would be safer because it will take people awhile to adapt to the changes.

Clint Schuckel felt a traffic signal would reduce backup and explained that timing mechanisms in the signalization would allow cross traffic to proceed without undue delays in both directions. He added that the signal would be on State property and would need to be funded by the State.

Ald. Samuelson said she received complaints about the dangerous intersection before the signs were installed in their present locations, but has received no complaints about the congestion since that time.

David Koses thought the existing signs were odd and that a more typical four-way stop would be better understood than the current set of 3-way stops. He supported the proposed solution, which would relocate the northbound Chestnut Street stop sign to the north side of the bridge. He did not believe that a "No Left Turn" restriction (see item 362-05 below) is necessary.

Chair Havens expressed concern about relocating existing stop signs since people have established habits and the signs' relocation could cause accidents to occur when they're removed from current locations and placed in new ones.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend no action on this item (4-1, Koses against). The Traffic Council also recommended the Traffic Engineer forward to the State the Council's support for installation traffic signal at this location.

#362-05 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting No Left Turn on eastbound Route 9 service road south side of the bridge) onto Chestnut Street northbound. Suggested route from eastbound Route 9 off-ramp; turn left onto Quinobequin Road, turn right onto Route 9 service road, and left onto Chestnut Street (north side of bridge). (Ward 5)

**Note: Requires State approval. HELD 12/15/05**

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

**NOTE:** (See notes for #361-05 above)

#428-06 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting a four-way stop at the intersection of Avalon Road and Upland Road and traffic calming measures on Avalon Road between Chestnut Street and Upland Road. (Ward 5)

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

**NOTE:** Tracey Hyams, 34 Upland Road, who lives on the corner of Avalon and Upland Road recalled two crashes in the last two years during the first week of school in the morning when children were walking to school. She described the streets as cut-throughs from Chestnut to Beacon Street and Woodward to Beacon Street. She noted there are many children in the neighborhood and she fears for their safety. The stop signs on Upland are hard to see because of trees and people sometimes breeze through them without stopping.

Clint Schuckel confirmed there have been two crashes in the last 3 years. About 450 cars per day travel on Avalon Road. He said the intersection doesn't meet the traffic volume warrants or other criteria that would justify a stop sign. He did not perform a speed study, but explained that the faster cars are moving, the less likely the State is to approve a speed reduction because it assumes that most people are traveling at a safe speed, which is 30 miles per hour on these streets. He was concerned that establishing a "no right turn from 4-6 pm" restriction, such as that located at Washington Street and Commonwealth Avenue, might push cut-through traffic onto adjacent streets. In response to a question from Chair Havens, he indicated that most stop signs are 24", and that 30" stop signs recently have been mandated, so the City will be replacing them with the larger ones over the next few years.

David Koses said the intersection would also rank very low according to Traffic Calming criteria because there is very little pedestrian traffic, it is not near a school, and does not have other qualities that would make it a priority candidate for Traffic Calming.

Chair Havens said the Council received letters in support of a 4-way stop from residents Jessica and Bruno Miquel, Nancy Rittenhouse and Dale Larson. Both letters referenced speeding and rolling stops at the intersection.

Kathy Goodfriend, 62 Avalon Road, disagreed with the Traffic Engineer's assessment. She believed traffic calming is needed to protect small children in the neighborhood, including one blind child. She said the problem is worst during the evening rush hour; cars speed and do not come to a full stop at the signs. A curve in the road also makes it hard to see them.

Damon Spitz, 71 Avalon Road, agreed. Some drivers speed down the street in the evening when traffic backs up on Chestnut Street, otherwise it is a quiet neighborhood. The curves make it confusing and there is no posted speed limit.

Fred DeLorey, 115 Avalon Road, supported some form of traffic calming, although he noted that speed bumps could cause drainage problems and sitting water would turn to ice in the winter. He wants the streets to be safe for kids that are out playing and riding their bikes.

David Koses, Sgt. Norcross and Chair Havens all agreed with the Traffic Engineer's conclusions that there is little basis for adding a stop sign or pursuing traffic-calming measures because of low traffic volumes.

Ald. Samuelson pointed out that these streets are wider than most and that facilitates speeding. She was concerned about restricting the entry in a way that would push traffic to other streets. She expressed her concern about children playing in the street and supported traffic calming, but not a stop sign.

After further discussion, the Traffic Council voted to recommend no action on the proposed ordinance change (5-0) and also recommended replacing the existing stop signs with the new, larger ones as soon as possible and pruning the trees that obscure the views of the stops signs. Sgt. Norcross indicated he would place a speed monitor in the area from time to time to alert people to their speeds.

#385-06

CANDACE HAVENS & ALD. LENNON on behalf of Vernon Street residents requesting speed study and consideration of traffic calming or other measures to assure safe conditions. (Ward 1)

**ACTION:**

**HOLD (4-0, Samuelson absent)**

**NOTE:**

Chair Havens and Ald. Lennon introduced the petition, stating that the neighbors have been concerned about the speed at which people travel on Vernon Street and the Park Street approach to Bigelow Middle School. Ald. Lennon said that there should be a 20 mph sign posted for the school zone on Vernon Street.

Clint Schuckel summarized the past actions to improve conditions around Bigelow including relocation of a bus stop to improve its accessibility, removal

of a 4:30-6:30 pm parking restriction that conflicted with a two-hour restriction on the street, consideration of a stop sign (not approved) at Park and Vernon Streets, and removal of a 30 mph sign. Restrictions on Arlington and Park Streets were recently revised to improve drop-off, pick-up and teacher parking and a traffic signal was installed at Park and Tremont Streets. The speed limit on Vernon Street is 30 miles per hour and 85% of drivers travel at 33 mph. There is no accident history on Vernon Street which carries approximately 3000 cars per day. He showed a design of a proposal to extend the curbs which reduce the length of the crosswalks at the intersection of Park and Vernon Street which also serve to slow cars on the approach to the intersection. The design included a raised crosswalk. Possible funding sources include CDBG funds for Newton Corner and Safe Routes to School monies.

Tony Salvucci, 70 Vernon Street, said that it's hard for cars to exit their driveways, whendrivers speed and residents' views are blocked by parked cars. He suggested traffic mirrors at the intersection of Park and Vernon Streets and removal of cars from intersections; aerial photographs showed cars parked continuously around the northwesterly corner.

Richard Belkin, Newton Corner Association, has long been concerned about speeding in the area and was pleased with the proposed solution.

Neighbor Nathan Gibson, suggested the use of Jersey barriers and/or curb stops to revise curb lines and slow traffic down while other plans for permanent solutions are pursued.

Sean Roche, 42 Daniel Street suggested medians as a way to slow traffic and create pedestrian links and/or sandbags to test alternative designs prior to installation.

Clint Schuckel said medians are sometimes more expensive but provide physical separation and could reinforce traffic calming. Flexible curbs and portable raised crosswalks also can be used for trials.

David Koses suggested that the street be evaluated according to the City's Traffic Calming Criteria which would include the number of crashes, Fire Department review and pedestrian analysis. He also suggested the proposal be submitted to the City's CDBG planner for comments. The Traffic Council agreed he should do pedestrian counts from 7:30-8:30 am.

Ald. Lennon mentioned that there is \$187,500 available for five projects and requested more information about Safe Routes to School funds. He asked that the corner parking restriction be enforced with signs and for a pedestrian warning sign to be placed in the crosswalk. He also advocated for applying to the State for a lower speed limit in this location and suggested the left and right turn lanes

be defined by painting the street near the intersection of Vernon and Waverly Streets.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0, Samuelson absent) to hold the petition in order to gather additional information about funding, CDBG review, and Traffic Calming analysis.

#427-06

ALD. DANBERG, on behalf of Gary F. Snerson, 40 Pleasant Street requesting further parking restrictions on the south (even) side of Pleasant Street between Centre Street and Crescent Avenue (existing 2-hour limit). (Ward 6)

**ACTION:**

**APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-0, Samuelson absent)**

**NOTE:**

Petitioner Gary Snerson requested modification of the 2-hour parking restriction on Pleasant Street between Crescent Avenue and the public parking lot. He said there are lots of nonresident parkers in front of 40, 42 and 45 Pleasant Street and the residents need parking for their use and their guests. His house overlooks the City parking lot and he noted it is seldom full, but people often choose to park for free in front of his house at all hours of the day and night, sometimes in front of his entry walk. There is residential parking on Pelham and Crescent Streets so nonresidents are not permitted to park there. He added that the police have been very helpful in enforcing parking restrictions when they are notified of violations.

Clint Schuckel said that some of the parking restrictions posted on the street fail to match those listed in the City Codes. According to existing ordinances, there is a two-hour parking restriction on both sides of Pleasant Street from 7 am to 10 pm all days, however the north side is signed for no parking. The south side of the street between #45 and the City parking lot is unrestricted and there are metered spaces and loading zone on Pleasant Street between the parking lot and the corner at Centre Street.

Kathy Kelly, 42 Pleasant Street said she thinks the Police Department believes that Pleasant Street in front of 40, 42, and 45 is a 2-hour parking zone because she has been ticketed in front of her house. She feels that resident parking on adjacent streets forces parking onto Pleasant Street.

John Hosbeck said that Pelham Street had residential parking because parking there is free and people can park a long time. He supports a change from two-hour to residential parking.

Clint Schuckel pointed out that a residential parking district cannot be considered on this street under the current ordinance because it is not 100% residential, although that ordinance is pending reconsideration. He also noted that if it were eligible, an alternative restriction judged to be ineffective would need to be in place for a year before residential permit parking could be considered. He also said that parking between the driveways could be restricted without ordinance changes.

Ald. Danberg said the parked cars make it hard for residents to enter their driveways. She suggested extending the 2-hour restriction so if residential parking can be considered in a year (pending an ordinance change) that the restriction will have been in place for a year.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0, Samuelson absent) to recommend 1)no parking on the south side of Pleasant Street from #42 to the westerly property line of the City parking lot and 2)no parking on the north side of Pleasant Street from Crescent Street to Centre Street (to match posted restrictions).

#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: Recommend committal with Public Safety and Transportation Committee (4-0, Samuelson absent)**

**NOTE:** The Traffic Council agreed it is appropriate to consider an ordinance to allow parking on a temporary basis for construction vehicles and health care workers so they can be closer to their destinations. The temporary permit would exempt such vehicles from time limit parking, as approved on a case-by-case basis by the Newton Police Department. After amending proposed text, the Traffic Council voted (4-0) to refer it to the Public Safety and Transportation Committee for review.

HP-15 ALD. SAMUELSON & TRAFFIC COUNCIL CHAIR HAVENS requesting removal of HP parking space on Beethoven Avenue in front of Zervas Elementary School. (Ward 5)

**ACTION: HOLD (4-0, Samuelson absent)**

**NOTE:** David Koses reported that the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities will be meeting to discuss this petition on March 18, 2007 and recommended holding the item so the Traffic Council can review the Committee's findings before taking action.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0) to hold this item until its next meeting.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Next Meeting. Since the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Traffic Council falls on the Newton Public Schools vacation week, the Traffic Council voted (4-0) to hold its April meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup>.
2. Public communications. The yellow-striped envelope is now being used for Traffic Council notices. The Traffic Council reviewed an information sheet about the Traffic Council and a new introductory paragraph to the agenda and agreed to use both in a double-sided format.
3. Herrick Road Study. David Koses reported that the RFP for Herrick Road was still being developed and has not yet been advertised or distributed to consultants.



4. Newton North High School. The Council discussed the possibility of convening in the near future to continue discussing options for addressing parking at NNHS during construction; alterations to existing on-site parking could occur as early as July 2007.
5. Traffic Council Changes. The Board of Aldermen discussed proposed Traffic Council changes at its meeting on March 5, 2007 and referred the proposal to the Law Department to draft ordinance language. The Council agreed it would be useful to meet again with Public Safety and Transportation Committee to discuss options for appeals processes at its April 2007 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair