

CITY OF NEWTON
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT
SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2007

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

Also: Ald. Merrill, Ald. Johnson, Ald. Albright, Ald. Linsky, Ald. Weisbuch, Renee Murphy, School Committee

#152-07 ALD. SAMUELSON & LINSKY requesting creation of an ordinance to provide permit parking on designated streets in the vicinity of Newton North High School effective for duration of the construction of the new high school (Ward 2). [04/24/07 @ 12:41 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0**

NOTE: Candace Havens, Chair of the Traffic Council, said they were meeting to establish a permit program on designated streets in the vicinity of Newton North High School to address the parking needs during construction.

Clint Schuckel noted that 1300 letters had been sent notifying residents that this hearing would be held. The reason for this proposal is that there will be a new high school at the site of Newton North and essentially when the construction fence is put up later this month, about 340 present parking spaces will become part of the construction site. The relocation of teachers along some of the areas of Elm Road and along Hull Street will displace a fair number of students that are presently parking there. This meeting did not discuss contractor parking since all of the parking for construction workers school will be provided inside the construction fence.

A survey has been done to show number of employees at the school including custodial staff, part-time teachers, student teachers and that resulted in approximately 422 employees. Another proposal is the idea of student permits. That number (108 spaces) comes from the total number of students who park on Hull (47), Elm Road (46) and Lot 3 (15). The proposal is to give 108 permits on a priority based system to students based on need such as employment right after school, or a family situation. Seniors would be given first priority. There has been discussion about having 20 resident permits in some very special circumstances where the permit parking for the school would essentially take up all of the available parking. One example would be Hull Street. Most of the current parking for the majority of the school day at that location is students and that would become permitted to teachers with the exception of some Hull Street resident permits.

Mr. Schuckel stressed that emergency vehicle access must be maintained, which would mean that parking on most of the area would have to be kept to one side. He would also attempt to create an equitable distribution in all four directions around the school. Within the past month, every street within 2000 feet of the school has been looked at, the width and distance between driveways has been measured and there has been calculation of how many parking spaces would be available if the street were full of vehicles. The student permits would be located in areas that are further out. There is a concern, both that a student would be parking much closer than many of the teachers, and also that a street or part of a street would be 100% students and the preference was to try and spread out the student parking, rather than consolidate it to just a few streets.

A philosophy of the Traffic Council has been to try to implement the least restrictive regulations first, to not limit parking on a street where there does not yet appear to be a problem. A component to this plan is somewhat reactive. If there are students or teachers that create access issues for emergency vehicles, restrictions will have to be added. There has been difficulty doing this before any problem does occur.

The Hull Street area between Beaumont Ave and Lowell Ave is a high-traffic area, and with new restrictions, the City hopes to maximize its usage. Short-term visitor parking could also be provided at this location after drop-off in the morning and before the athletic buses arrive in the afternoon. The Austin Street parking lot has been studied and observations show that the lot has never been more than two-thirds full. A total of 55 spaces could be dedicated to Newton North permit holders. There would be two rows of three-hour parking nearest Austin Street, two rows of 12-hour parking and the spaces in the rear would be the 55 Newton North permits.

The construction fence along Elm Road will prevent anyone from turning around and going out as they do now. More study is needed in that area to make some changes. One idea for Elm Road would be to put in angle parking and take out the sidewalk along the south side. The goal is to have the most parking possible on Elm Road so that it reduces the amount of parking needed at other places that are further from the school.

Lowell Avenue near "Claflin Park" could possibly have 21 spaces. In this type of area, there is no proposal for permit parking on the opposite side of the street. If permits are only allowed on one side, it would be acceptable. It could be problematic at times in the winter with snow banks. On Lowell Avenue, between Hull Street and Elm Road, there about 20 potential spaces. It is important to keep parking far enough away from the bus entrance so that there is no impact on vision for the bus drivers. Lowell Avenue near "Elmwood Park" is an area that could possibly have 20 or more spaces. In total, the areas of Hull Street, Austin Street, Elm Road and Lowell Avenue could possibly have 230 spaces. The 550 spaces is the approximate goal number. This would be not quite half; the rest of the spaces needed are referred to as Part B.

The proposal would require each permit holder to display a permit on the windshield of their vehicle. The permit would indicate the address for which that permit is good as well as the school year the permit is for. Hull Street, a street with no current parking restriction, would become permit parking only, school days 7am to 4pm. Most of the streets around the school currently do have some type of restriction on them already and for those streets, any current restriction would still remain in place. For example, if there is a one hour limit on the street, or no parking 9 to 11, resident permit parking; all those rules would still apply. What the permit system would do is give the permit holder an exemption to that, preventing them from getting a ticket. For example on a street with a one-hour parking limit, anybody without a permit would potentially get a ticket if they park more than one hour. It is not proposed to add any more signs on streets that already have restrictions. Permit holders will be instructed where to park and they will park in roughly the same place everyday. After the first week, they'll become familiar with the street.

There is a separate docket item filed to increase the parking fines due to concern that a \$15.00 dollar ticket will not change behavior.

In a 2000 ft. circle, 880 parking spaces were found on streets that could support permit parking. About 320 spaces (36%) still need to be found on the streets around the school.

As an example, Mr. Schuckel said that on the east side of Fairfield Street measurements were taken between each driveway. Taken into account was No parking within 20 ft. of an intersection or 5 ft. from a driveway, figuring about 20 ft. per space. In this example, we found three parking spaces between the intersection and the first driveway, three to the next driveway and three to the next intersection. This would be 9 spaces total so 3 permits would be assigned. Since those permits are assigned to an address, there would be one permit for 50 Fairfield, one for 42 and one for 38. Three permits would be acceptable for that block of Fairfield and that essentially would be done on every street; choose a side, measure between driveways and then give every third space or so to a permit.

There was a question about how odd or even were chosen. It was decided that in most cases, parking would not be put where there is a current ban on parking at all times. Parking was put closest to the school side. Locations of fire hydrants and driveways were considered and if all things were equal, and there was no clear choice, the side closest to the school was chosen. There are a number of streets that were not considered for permit for a few reasons such as too narrow, dead-end streets. For example, Walnut Place would not have any permits assigned. In other cases, the traffic flow on a street was considered, for example, Walnut Street, Mill Street, and Cabot Street were not assigned permits. If you go around the school for a distance of 2000 ft, using the same method as Fairfield, there will be about the 320 spaces, if you give a permit to about every third space on one side only.

Mr. Schuckel reiterated that the approach was to be as equitable as possible trying to treat every street in the same fashion to spread the parking. The reason for address based permits is the fear is the fear that if you don't all six cars or however many they are, will all park in front of the house or two houses closest to the school so this spreads the parking out. We are trying to keep 60% of the spaces for the people who live there.

Handicapped parking is presently located in Lot 1 and those will all be blocked off by a fence in a couple of weeks. What is being proposed doing is to create some additional handicapped spaces on Elm Road near Blithedale, as well as the loading dock which has an accessible entrance. There is anticipation that a number of teachers will have special needs and many of those are pregnant teacher that for a time can't qualify for a handicapped parking space but do have needs to be closer to the school. Mr. Schuckel and Principal Price are working to create up to 24 spaces along the Lowell Avenue side of the school for this purpose.

The plan was presented to a group of teachers and it has been noted that one big concern was the walking conditions. The condition of potholes, lighting and ice in the winter are all concerns. Mr. Schuckel said the City will have to examine the sidewalk plow routes.

There is concern that tickets will not deter the students. The state will allow us to charge only up to \$25.00 for this type of parking violation. A separate docket item proposes to maximize the ticket amount to as much as the state will allow. Hopefully there will be some spaces in reserve for teachers, for unforeseen circumstances, where a space cannot be found at their permitted location.

Part of the plan is keeping people informed about the changes related to parking that will result during the construction of the school.

Mr. Schuckel said some ideas have come forward about carpools. Other ideas have been to modify the bus restriction and if you live further out than two miles; however, if you are just inside that two mile radius, you can walk back and take the bus. The School Department said there have been empty seats on the bus and if necessary, another bus will be added but there is agreement to providing a ride to the school if we can find ways to have students use bus transportation.

Another idea has been "adopt a teacher" idea. If you were voluntarily interested in providing a space in your driveway for a teacher, the City will neither encourage nor discourage that. Everyone will have a street permit; if they find alternative parking, that will just mean less cars on the street.

Another issue is having work done on homes or need health care; there is a docket item to address a temporary permit that would be a card placed in the vehicle that would enable residents to have consideration for whatever parking restriction that might be on the street. such as a one hour limit.

The next three weeks will be a comment period and enable the Council to write the report for this meeting and to assemble all thoughts. The full Board of Aldermen will meet on the 9th of July to deliberate further on this and vote a final plan. A new City Ordinance must be passed by the Board for this permit system to take effect. In summary, this plan is an attempt to strike a balance between the parking needs of the school and those of the residents, such that public safety is maintained and the parking is equitably distributed.

Chairman Havens read portions of letters received by the Clerk's office (see attached)

David Berkeley of 34 Otis Street. He had concern that there is no signage on local roads indicating the speed limit. He asked how the spaces (approx. 500) would eventually be put back on high school property.

Ms. Havens responded that the proposal would terminate the parking permits as soon as parking spaces are available again at the site on Newton North. Mr. Schuckel explained that by city ordinance the speed limit must be posted at 25 mph.

Andrew Green of 206 Mill Street. Mr. Green questioned what would prevent parking on the streets that do not currently have parking restrictions. He also had concerns about speeding. Mr. Schuckel noted that on the streets that have no restriction, parking would be okay on that street if there are enough school related cars that show up there, changes will have to be made. If someone has a permit for an unrestricted street, the only way to address parking in the wrong spot would be to revoke the permit. He further explained the Chief of Police has emergency powers to implement parking restrictions in the interest of public safety. Mr. Schuckel also noted that on-street parking has a benefit of slowing cars down. There is no budget for traffic calming at this time for this project.

Elizabeth Seaman of 347 Cabot Street Ms. Seaman spoke on behalf of the St. John's Church and the Bowen Nursery School. She supports the plan but is concerned about the 30% additional permitted spaces along the portion of Lowell and Otis. She said the nursery school operates every morning with staff and also the church has a thrift and gift shop that raises funds for church activities. What she would like to see is a portion of Otis and Lowell just for the use of church and nursery school and not for the high school use during the school week. Plowshares would need parking.

Joe Tischler of 44 Bullough Park. He said having parking on the even side and not on the pond side, in his opinion, would be easier.

Jill Geigar of 82 Madison Ave. She stated the plan sounded reasonable and well thought out. She questioned how spaces would be allotted on streets that only have parking on one side. Mr. Schuckel said Madison Ave is out of the 2000 ft. circle. so would not be included in the permit proposal.

Guy Asaph of 47 Gay Street. He felt the plan was equitable and well thought out.

Bill Newman, 445 Highland Street. He asked that a sign be put up to state not to park within 5 ft. of driveway.

Myron Simon, 20 Somerset Road. Somerset Road has been used as a short cut. He asked if landscape trucks could park in the driveways that they are working in. He also asked for single side parking be vigorously enforced.

Susan DeMarco, 11 Craigie Terrace. She had concerns as Craigie Terrace is very narrow. She suggested that permits be revoked if they are not used appropriately.

Anna Ferguson, 42 Sheffield Road. – The cars parked on Highland Street block the view of anything coming up the hill and found it to be a very dangerous intersection.

Amy Spilios, 8 Birch Hill Road, She asked about consideration of the Commonwealth Avenue carriage lane for bussing and parking of students and teachers. She asked why there was more space in the west rather than the east. Mr. Schuckel said that the number forecasted for Birch Hill Road would be five. The reason for more of a map to the west side is because the school building itself was used as the center of the circle and the school is obviously on the Lowell side now and that is why you end up with more space within that zone. It does not take into account the big hill. The Commonwealth Avenue carriage way is not included because it is outside the 7 or 8 minute walk. There is nothing currently on the book to prevent people from parking there and walking but there has not been any kind of shuttle included. It would be difficult from a cost point of view as well as a convenience point of view. There were many teachers and staff that wanted the ability to run errands and have the flexibility of leaving any time of day and that would mean the shuttle would have to be on demand all the time. It is currently a park and walk program.

Joan Tepper, 386 Highland Street. She asked about permit parking rather than the one hour parking.

Jeremy Rapson, 113 Beaumont Street. He asked about expanding the parking on Washington as well as Commonwealth Avenue, and possibly having visitor parking permits. Clint Schuckel said the south side of Washington Street, the south side from Lowell to the west. The meters end at Lowell so that does include 25 to 30 spaces in the permit program for Washington Street. There was discussion about parking on the Elmwood Park grass as well as the Claflin Park and that was determined that there were institutional barriers to that including the fact that there is a board for Parks and Recreation and they would effectively have to vote to eliminate a park and make it into a parking lot. It did not appear that that Board would eliminate a green space for the parking.

Vicky Stein, 23 Otis Street. She asked that there be no permitted parking spaces behind driveways even if they are on the opposite side of the street. She also had concern about trash trucks. She also suggested rerouting some buses. She also indicated a dedicated hot line.

Sgt. Norcross said enforcement will be key to the success. Of this project. He said there will be some dedicated parking personnel in this area and suggested that calls be made to be sure there is enforcement.

Reenie Murphy, 53 Trowbridge Street. She encouraged that people sign up for email lists to keep people up to date. She also urged people to continue to attend the Liaison Committee meetings that are still ongoing.

Sheila Goldstein, 15 Grove Hill Park. She also wanted to be sure that there will strong enforcement.

Ald. Samuelson pointed out that Newton North High School Liaison Committee will continue to meet all through construction. The Police Department will be available for enforcement. In addition the new principal of Newton North High School will play an important role in this project.

Ald. Johnson commended Clint Schuckel and said she was very impressed on his work on this project.

After a break, the Council reconvened in Room 222 to continue discussion on this item.

Candace Havens feels this is a great opportunity to educate students about the advantages of not using their cars for school transportation.

Mr. Schuckel explained that the 108 permits were equal to the number of spaces on Elm Road, Hull Street, plus the fifteen spaces the school was giving out by lottery. The draft ordinance states that the students may be charged for the issuance of tiger permits. There was discussion regarding the number of permits that will be issued. The Council felt the total number of permits has not changed; number of students has gone down by 8, 10 permits for Hull Street, 10 for other residents and 8 discretionary permits. The time that the program is in effect was discussed. and the Council felt that would not be an issue.

It was noted by Mr. Schuckel that the ordinance proposed by the Law Department showed that the no parking restriction on the south side of Hull Street was not on the books and it was suggested that restriction be legalized. A strong recommendation from Mr. Schuckel was to maximize parking on Elm Road. It was noted that the Mayor's position was to not remove the barriers at this time.

There was discussion about parking permits that were photocopied and not valid. This will have to be a policy agreed on by the high school.

Mr. Schuckel moved to approve three handicapped spaces on Elm Road.

In conclusion, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the ordinance as amended.

The meeting adjourned at 10:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalie Myers, Clerk