

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 2007

Present: Candace Havens (Chair) Ald. Samuelson, Jim Norcross (Police) David Koses (Transportation Planner)

Absent: Clint Schuckel

Also Present: Ald. Linsky, Johnson, Merrill, Harney, Albright, Mansfield, Ald. Gentile

#89-07 ALD. LINSKY, JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT, LENNON, MERRILL AND WEISBUCH, requesting development of parking, pedestrian and vehicular traffic management strategy for the Cabot School and surrounding neighborhood (Parkview Ave., Eastside Pkwy., Cabot St., Bridges Ave., Norwood Ave., Clarendon St.), taking into account existing concerns as well as those relating.

ACTION: **HELD; 60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 4-0; BRIDGES AVENUE, ONE-WAY TRAFFIC, NORTHBOUND; PARKVIEW AVENUE, ONE-WAY TRAFFIC, SOUTHBOUND, BETWEEN CABOT STREET AND NORWOOD AVENUE**

NOTE: Ald. Linsky presented this item to the council. Candace Havens reviewed the present restrictions in this area. Field studies showed that traffic flow filters through all adjacent streets and that cars are parked bumper to bumper on the west side of Clarendon Street, Bridges Avenue and the east side of Parkview Avenue. Some cars are parked on the east side of Clarendon and Bridges in violation of the “No Parking” signs. It was noted that very few cars were using the blue zone as it was intended to be used.

Consideration was given to changing Parkview Ave. to one-way all day, as it is often confused to be one-way from 8 am – 4 pm on school days. Enforcement is needed to control illegal parking. Removal of the “No Parking” zone on the west side of Parkview Avenue between the school and Norwood Avenue (north of the school) was recommended.

Residents who were present talked about parking that blocks driveways, parking on sidewalks, as well as parking on both sides of the street. A number of residents discussed the advantages of making Bridges Ave. a one-way street.

Ald. Merrill suggested exploring the possibility of using part of the park for parking.

David Koses did not see any problem making Bridges Avenue a one-way. He suggested signs on Parkview Ave. to prohibit entry so cars could exit, but so residents at the Norwood Ave. end of the street would not be limited by a one-way street and could enter and exit their driveways via Norwood Avenue. He also felt spaces on East Side Parkway could be available for parking.

Ald. Samuelson also felt East Side Parkway could offer a solution to some of the parking problems and did not support use of park space for parking cars. She had concerns about designating Bridges Avenue as a one-way street because she felt it might encourage speeding; Ald. Linsky stated that he agreed with the concerns raised by Ald. Samuelson.

David Koses hesitated to recommend a permanent teacher permit parking program for schools and did not want to take park land away to use for parking and favored a conservative approach.

Ms. Havens wanted to encourage people to use the bus as well as walking to school and commended the PTO for its efforts to promote both.

The Committee voted to have a 60-day trial from August through September of:

One-way traffic going north on Bridges Avenue between Cabot Street and Norwood Avenue;

One-way traffic going south on Parkview Avenue in front of the school only (extend from the northerly property line to Cabot Street).

*The council recommended **no changes** to the east (unrestricted) side of Parkview or “No Parking” zone on the west side of Parkview Avenue.*

#59-07 ALD. HARNEY & SANGIOLO requesting parking restrictions on Woodland Road between Hancock and Grove Street in Auburndale (side opposite church) from 7-9 AM and 2-4 PM on school days. (Ward 4) [02-13-07 @7:30 PM]

30 DAY TRIAL APPROVED 5-0 FOR NO PARKING 8 a.m. – 9 a.m. AND 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m SCHOOL DAYS ONLY on 5/24/07

ACTION: APPROVED PER TRIAL 4-0

NOTE: The trial appears to have been a success. Cars no longer queue and cause congestion at drop-off and pick-up times.

The Traffic Council voted 4-0 to approve “No Parking from 8 am – 9 am and 2:30 – 3:30 pm on school days on Woodland Road (side opposite the church) between Hancock and Grove Streets.

#429-06 ANDREA ROMAN, 35 Bracebridge Road, Newton Centre requesting prohibiting parking on the even-numbered side of the road (southeast side) during school “blue zone” hours. (Ward 6)

60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 4-0 on 4/26/07

ACTION: APPROVED 4-0; AMENDED TO INCLUDE RESTRICTION ON TUESDAYS AT NOON

NOTE: Bracebridge Road is too narrow to support parking on both sides and is unpaved, but the problem with overcrowding at drop-off and pick-up times was solved by restricting parking to one side. It was recommended that the trial be made permanent with the **addition of a Tuesday restriction around noon.**

The resident representative who was present at this evening’s meeting agreed with the findings and supported making this trial permanent.

The Council voted to recommend 4-0 to approve “No Parking 8-9 am and 2:30-3:30 pm on School Days” (this will also include the Tuesday noon restriction).

#6-07 ALD. DANBERG, PARKER & MANSFIELD requesting (1) to change Erie Avenue to One-Way eastbound between Bowdoin to Hartford, (2) add a STOP sign on Bowdoin at Erie Avenue. (Ward 6) [12-19-06@9:06AM]

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 3-1 (Norcross opposed)

NOTE: Ms. Havens described the existing conditions. The south end of Bowdoin Street terminates at Erie Avenue. From there, traffic flows one way to the west and two ways to the east. There is no parking allowed on the north side of Erie Avenue and one-hour parking allowed from 9 am to 5 pm on the south side. The petitioners recommend making the east end of Erie Avenue a one-way street to reduce speeding from Hartford Street westbound on Erie Avenue. Erie Avenue is 24 feet wide and traffic counts are relatively low for a local street; between 7:30 am and 8:30 am, a total of 13 cars were counted proceeding down Erie and 5 pedestrians were seen. There were 532 cars per day traveling westbound and 239 traveling eastbound. If the easterly end of Erie becomes a one-way street, the cars that now travel west from Hartford onto Erie, will be forced back onto Hartford which will increase traffic on Lincoln Street and pose more potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians in the village of Newton Highlands. The 85th percentile speed is 20 mph. There were no reported accidents in the last five years. The Fire Department did not have any objection to this proposal. The Engineering Department was not in favor of the one-way street or of a stop sign.

Ms. Havens read a letter from Lowell Haynes on behalf of residents at 82 Lincoln Street stating that a number of people with disabilities who live at the Newton Housing Authority apartments would be endangered at the intersection of Hartford and Lincoln as a result of increased traffic.

Sgt. Norcross felt a longer study was needed on this item, especially to assess speeding.

Residents of the area expressed views both in favor of and opposed to the request. Those in favor cited the occasional cut-through speeding that endangers the residents, especially the numerous young children that live there and visitors to the field at the corner of Bowdoin Street and Erie Avenue. Opponents of the proposal feared that proposed changes will cause traffic and safety issues elsewhere in the square. Residents of the housing units on the corner of Hartford Street and Erie Avenue were concerned that access to their properties would be compromised by the proposed one-way street change.

Ald. Mansfield urged the Traffic Council to consider alternative action to improve the current situation if it did not feel the proposal was optimal.

David Koses thought that traffic calming may be needed in the Highlands, but not necessarily on Erie Avenue. He felt that Erie Avenue is no more a cut-through street than hundreds of other streets throughout Newton and did not feel it merited the changes requested. He further stated that reducing traffic on Erie Avenue simply pushes traffic onto other streets, such as Lincoln Street.

Candace Havens felt a traffic calming assessment should be done. She also pointed out that the low existing speed may make the street eligible for a lower speed limit than the State-mandated speed of 30 mph and encouraged the neighborhood to consider such a request.

Ald. Samuelson was in favor of voting NO ACTION NECESSARY on this item to allow for consideration of alternative solutions without prejudice in the future.

The Council voted 3-1, with Ald. Norcross opposed, to recommend NO ACTION NECESSARY on the proposed change.

#123-07 SONYA KURZWEIL, 203 Lake Avenue requesting no parking on the odd side of Lakewood Road between Lake Avenue and Walnut Street. (Ward 6) [04-02-07 @11:51AM]

ACTION: **HELD; 60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 4-0**

NOTE: Field studies showed that the adjacent streets have restricted hours on one side and no parking allowed on the other. There appears to be a demand for parking by users of the nearby MBTA stop and visitors to Crystal Lake. Throughout the day, from 3-9 cars were parked on the street, generally not blocking through traffic. The street is wide enough to support on-street parking, but when cars park across from each other emergency access could be compromised. A two-hour restriction was recommended to deter some of the nonresident parking.

Residents expressed concerns that a two-hour restriction would address only commuter traffic, but not the Crystal Lake visitors. They did not object to visitors parking on the street; their primary concern was that of securing emergency access and all agreed that restricting parking to one side was acceptable to them.

Mr. Koses felt that the street was too narrow to have parking on both sides. Candace Havens suggested a trial on the north (odd) side between Lake Avenue and Walnut Street as suggested by residents.

The Committee voted to approve a 60-day trial of “No Parking” on the north side of Lakewood Road between Lake Avenue and Walnut Street.

#77-07 WADE ALLEN on behalf of Evangelical Baptist Church, 23 Chapel Street, Nonantum, requesting a change to existing restrictions on the west side of Chapel Street to allow parking during normal business hours near the church. (Ward 1) [2/22/07 @ 12:08 PM]

ACTION: **HELD; 60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 4-0**

NOTE: Candace Havens indicated that no parking is allowed on the east side of Chapel Street from 7 am to 1 pm. From the northwest corner of Chapel and California Streets to the southerly property line of the church, no parking is allowed from 7 am – 1 pm. On the west side south of the church, one-hour parking is allowed from 7 am to 7 pm. The street is 32 feet wide and can support parking on both sides. From 2-4 cars were observed parking in front of the church during the study and were presumed to be church vehicles. Removal of the restriction in front of the church was recommended.

Petitioner Wade Allen requested the “No Parking” restriction be lifted in front of the church so they may have use of it for their daily activities.

There was concern that it would be inconsistent with past actions for the Traffic Council to allow unrestricted parking only in front of the church with no parking to the north and one-hour parking to the south. The Traffic Council felt it made sense to close the gap by extending the existing hourly restriction up to the no parking zone, but that the one-hour restriction seemed overly restrictive for the church. However, unrestricted parking might encourage all-day parkers from elsewhere once they discover it. In any case, it was noted that a separate request would need to be docketed to change the one-hour parking zone to a two-hour parking zone and extending it up to the no parking zone on the north. In the interim, a trial will show the outcome without restrictions.

The Council voted 4-0 to approve a 60-day trial of removal of the existing “No Parking” restriction on the west side of Chapel Street in front of the church.

#151-07 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting on behalf of Angier School “no left turn” westbound on Beacon Street onto Manitoba Road on school days during drop off and pick-up hours to relieve traffic back ups in front of the school

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 3-1 (Samuelson opposed)**

NOTE: The problem was not considered to be significant enough to warrant this type of change. Enforcement of such a restriction was also cited as a challenge. A motion to approve the proposed change failed.

Therefore, the Council voted 3-1, with Ald. Samuelson opposed, to recommend NO ACTION NECESSARY on this item.

#210-07 ALD. SANGIOLO, HARNEY AND GENTILE requesting (A) installation of a stop sign at the corner of HAGAR and GROVE streets, south side, and (B) installation of a stop sign at the corner of GROVE and HAGAR streets, north side in Auburndale (Ward 4). [06-13-07 @ 6:20 AM]

ACTION: **DENIED 4-0**

NOTE: Candace Havens presented the findings of an engineering study for this intersection. On June 25, 2007 from 7:30-8:30 the overall traffic counts were relatively low, but it was noted that school was no longer in session when the counts were taken. There were 263 cars traveling westbound on the one-way section of Grove Street and 161 cars were observed heading south from Grove Street onto Hagar Street. There were 108 cars proceeding north from Hagar Street onto Grove Street and 5 cars turning from Colgate onto Grove Street. Five pedestrians were counted crossing at Colgate and the northerly side of the intersection across Grove Street. In the evening, counts were slightly lower for westbound traffic on Grove Street (167) and southbound counts on Grove Street were slightly higher (206). Five pedestrians were counted in the same locations. There was no reported history of motor vehicle accidents at this intersection in the past 5 years. Traffic volume counts did not meet State warrants for stop signs at any of the approaches and were not recommended at this time.

City Engineer, Lou Taverna presented a design that introduces curves and an island in the road. However, a sandbag trial of this configuration was found to be confusing to drivers.

Josh Krintzman presented an alternative that showed reshaping of the streets into a four-way intersection with four stop signs.

Ald. Harney indicated that the neighborhood has evaluated numerous options and felt that the proposed 4-way stop was the best solution and this plan had garnered consensus among the neighborhood.

Ald. Gentile felt that four stop signs would make the area safer.

A motion to approve a trial of the neighborhood plan with 2 stop signs failed.

Sgt. Norcross noted that the Traffic Engineer did not like to approve trials of stop signs for safety reasons.

David Turocy said it was ideal to do the street reconstruction this year, since Concord Street is being paved. However, Grove Street will be paved in 2008, so changes approved this calendar year could be included in next spring's paving schedule.

The Traffic Council considered various design scenarios and combinations of stop signs, however each solution had its problems and no "best" solution presented itself. Concerns were expressed about people breezing through stop signs where volumes are uneven.

The angles at which traffic enters and exits the intersection, especially from Colgate Road make it difficult to resolve. Neither the existing configuration nor the proposed configuration offered acceptable permanent solutions for slowing traffic at this unusual convergence of streets. A mini-roundabout was discussed as a possible alternative.

The Traffic Council voted 4-0 to deny the request for two stop signs at this intersection.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalie Myers, Clerk