

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2006

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

Aldermen present: Albright, Baker, Danberg, Johnson, Lennon, Linsky, Yates, and Vance

#99-06 JOHN REICHARD, 63 Monadnock Road, Chestnut Hill requesting that parking be restricted to one hour between 7 am and 1 pm, including Saturdays and Sundays, on both sides of Monadnock Road between Wachusett and Hammondswood Roads. (Ward 7) **HELD ON 5/18/06 for Sept/Oct trial**

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0**

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel reviewed the site conditions, noting that the street is 23.5 feet wide. The trial included one-hour parking on the north side of this section of the street from 7 am to 1 pm and no parking on the south side. He observed 2-6 cars parked on the north side of the street before the trial, some of which had out-of-state license plates. During the trial he witnessed a decrease in the number of parked cars (excepting temporary construction vehicles) and noted people generally parked on one side so as to allow free flow of traffic.

Petitioner John Reichard felt the trial restriction had worked well and asked that it be made permanent.

Neighbor Rona Nigh said it is much easier for her to get in and out of driveway now. She added that the restriction has been self-enforcing and police presence has not been needed.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend approval of the restriction as proposed.

#277-06 JANE MULLOWNEY, 10 Monadnock Road, Chestnut Hill requesting one hour restricted parking apply to all on MONADNOCK ROAD between Wachusett Road and Hobart Road. (Ward 7) **HELD ON 9/28/06 for further study**
HELD UNTIL MAY 2007 5-0

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel said parking is allowed on both sides of this 22-foot wide street. Prior to the trial he observed 1-6 cars on this section of Monadnock Road; during the trial he observed no significant parking problems or changes on this block and recommends no further restrictions at this time.

Petitioner Jane Mallowney said the road is likely to be more congested in the spring when freshmen are able to bring cars to school. She is a graduate of Boston College and understands the needs of both residents and students.

Gloria Graves, 21 Monadnock, also a Boston College graduate, suggested that treatment of the streets be consistent. She requested restricted parking for the safety of the neighborhood and its children, for easier access to the street by large vehicles such as garbage trucks, and for ease of access to their steep driveways.

Barb Shelkraut, 45 Monadnock, said some families have limited on-site parking and short driveways and rely on street parking. Restrictions would be a hardship for them. She noted that Wauchusett is a cut-through and is a dangerous place to park due to curves and speeding. She recommended working with Boston College to address neighborhood problems and noted the problems are likely to worsen in the spring when freshmen bring their cars to school.

Chair Havens noted receipt of three letters from neighbors who oppose restrictions including Jean Ungerleider, 28 Monadnock; Fred Adair and Katherine Steiner-Adair, 25 Wauchusett; and Ellen Cohen and Daniel Haber.

Ald. Baker acknowledged the differing needs and interests of the neighbors and thought waiting to take action might be worthwhile.

Ald. Johnson agreed working with Boston College was a good idea, indicated that efforts in the past have been unsuccessful.

Ald. Vance also supported waiting to see if problems worsen in the spring before taking action.

David Koses suggested that the City consider a residential parking permit program. A permit program could take many forms. One example would be a program, which allows those vehicles that display a "Newton Sticker", to be exempt from posted time restrictions. David Koses said that this type of program could be a helpful tool for handling parking concerns in particular areas of the City, such as certain streets near Green Line stations or around Boston College.

Ald. Samuelson was concerned about administration of such a program.

Clint Schuckel said that pricing for a sticker program could be structured to cover the costs of its administration.

Rather than preempting a potential problem, the Traffic Council moved to hold this item until May 2007 to see if long-term parkers occupy this section of the street(5-0).

#147-06

ALD. BURG requesting on behalf of Janet Schuster-Cardoza 1701 Commonwealth Avenue, installation of a STOP SIGN on the westbound carriage lane of Commonwealth Avenue, near Oldham Road. (Ward 3)

HELD ON 9/21/06 pending input from School/Fire Dept and Comm Ave. TF

ACTION:
NOTE:

APPROVED AS AMENDED (3-1, Norcross opposed, Samuelson absent)

Clint Schuckel observed about a car a minute (48 cars/hour) traveling westbound on the carriageway and 682 cars/hour traveling westbound on Commonwealth Avenue during peak hour. He noted that cars approach the bottom of the hill with some speed. He said the school bus drops kids off on Commonwealth Avenue and some cross over to Oldham Road. The bus also does a U-turn at Temple and picks up kids on the carriageway near Oldham Road. He noted that closure of a portion of the carriageway west of Oldham Road is proposed in long-range plans for Commonwealth Avenue and that the School Transportation Department did not oppose a closure; its design would need to be referred to Public Facilities Committee for review. The Fire Department has control of the stoplights in the area for emergencies. The NFD also uses this location as a U-turn for non-emergency calls about once a day and a closure on the carriageway may restrict its movements. He felt a stop sign or yield sign alone might be ignored because of lack of cross traffic and recommended a closure or temporary fence or barrier instead.

Ald. Burg requested a stop sign at this intersection to cause drivers to be more cautious where streets converge. She also urged there be more consistency in traffic control along Commonwealth Avenue and its carriageways.

Petitioner Janet Schuster-Cardoza was against closure of the street. She noted that kids frequently cross Commonwealth Avenue. She was especially interested in slowing traffic towards the bottom of the hill around the curves as the road approaches Oldham Road.

Edwin Cardoza reiterated his prior concern about installing a missing one-way sign on the carriageway (Note: DPW has since installed this sign).

David Koses concurred that a long-term plan should be followed and noted the complexities of this intersection. For the present, he advocated for installation of a stop sign at the carriageway at Oldham Road and a yield sign where the carriageway merges with Commonwealth Avenue in the westbound direction.

Sgt. Norcross objected to the use of a stop sign to slow traffic. He preferred a yield sign, if slowing traffic is the objective.

Clint Schuckel agreed with Sgt. Norcross' concerns about the use of a stop sign for slowing traffic; however he noted most other side streets along Commonwealth Avenue have stop signs and a stop sign here would be consistent with the others.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend approval of a stop sign on the westbound carriageway at Oldham Road and a yield sign at the merger of Commonwealth Avenue and the carriageway west of Oldham Road (3-1; Norcross opposed, Samuelson absent).

#216-06 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting consideration of parking restrictions on SPRING STREET to facilitate plowing and emergency vehicle access. (Ward 5)
HELD ON 9/21/06 for input from DPW re: plowing and trash pick-up
ACTION: RECOMMEND NO PARKING ON BOTH SIDES OF SPRING STREET WHERE LESS THAN 18 FEET WIDE AND PARKING ON ONE SIDE ONLY WHERE WIDER 5-0

NOTE: Resident Seta DerHohannesian indicated that visitors and employees of programs at a nearby church have parked on this very narrow street in the past and have blocked access to the street and to existing residences. A new church in the area is considering a pre-school and the petitioner anticipates more cars could soon start parking there. She said the street is so narrow that in the winter, City trucks have accidentally removed shrubs with snow plows and have sprayed sand and salt on her house which washes into her lawn. Her neighbors can secure adequate on-site parking and do not want parking on the street.

Ald. Samuelson concurred that the street width doesn't support parking and acknowledged the associated environmental concerns.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 18 feet wide at the mouth and narrower elsewhere. On 8 out of 10 visits, he saw no cars parked, and on the other 2 trips he saw one car. He concluded that the street is too narrow to support on-street parking; however the lack of observed parkers did not indicate a current public safety issue. There is no history of complaints regarding trash pick-up or snow plowing operations due to parked cars.

Sgt. Norcross could not support a time limit and felt no parking on one side was needed for safety reasons.

David Koses had concerns about the needs of residents. He did not feel residents have much room to park and wanted to preserve space for their parking needs.

Chair Havens noted that there is an opportunity to secure safer conditions for the residents before new patrons seek parking in this area and recommended restricting parking on both sides of the narrow section of the street.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend no parking on both sides of the street where less than 18 feet wide and parking on one side in the wider section (5-0).

#236-06 CANDACE HAVENS, 25 Hunnewell Avenue, Newton requesting to rescind 4:30 – 6:30 restricted area of Vernon Street between Eldredge and Waverley. (Ward 1)
HELD ON 9/21/06 for input from Bigelow School Traffic Safety Committee

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

NOTE:

Chair Havens said that there are two sets of signs in front of Bigelow Middle School including “No Parking from 4:30-6:30 pm” and “2-hour parking from 7 am – 7 pm.” She said the conflicting restrictions are confusing and suggested simplifying them. She said the neighbors met recently and agreed with the proposed changes and also suggested extending the restriction to Sundays. She also noted that a separate request for a speed study and consideration of traffic calming has been docketed and will be heard at a later date.

Clint Schuckel agreed that the existing restrictions are contradictory. He suggested eliminating one of them. He assumed that the evening restriction was intended to open up the travel lane during rush hour and to discourage commuter parking. He observed 4-15 cars on the south side of the street on 10 recent visits.

Ald. Lennon supported this proposal and also advocated for overall improvement to conditions on the street to make it safer for children and neighbors.

Vernon Street neighbor, Nathan Gibson said that cars speed around the corner onto Vernon Street and wished there was stronger enforcement of speeding and restrictions. He also said parked cars by the church at Park and Vernon Streets block visibility of approaching cars by those who are turning or crossing there.

Neighbor Tony Salvucci also supported keeping the two-hour restriction and concurred that speeding and enforcement are concerns.

Ald. Johnson supported restrictions on Sundays, as she has witnessed unsafe conditions when cars park in the neighborhood during church services.

Antoinette Salvucci agreed the streets are seriously narrowed by parked cars on Sundays.

In response to a question by Sgt. Norcross about whether removal of the 4:30-6:30 would open the door to commuters, Chair Havens indicated that street would still be restricted by the two-hour time limit until 7 pm and that neighbors wanted to see the two-hour restriction extended until 9 pm if it becomes a problem.

The Traffic Council discussed the appropriateness of extending the restriction to Sundays, but since it was not originally docketed with the proposal, the extension was not included.

The Traffic Council voted to recommended approval as requested (5-0).

#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: **APPROVED 60-DAY TRIAL 3-2 (Norcross, Samuelson opposed)**

NOTE:

Ald. Linsky pointed out that there are restrictions on the surrounding streets and that this unprotected street is impacted by Newton North students' cars. He and neighbors, including some on streets beyond the subject area, are interested in restricting the general area so that all are protected from the adverse impacts of too many cars on the street.

Neighborhood spokesperson, Richard Parad added that postal workers also park in their neighborhood and the demands for parking on their street by nonresidents have increased over the years. The street is steep, winding and difficult to navigate in the winter. Parking and street conditions result in downhill speeding, pose safety issues for children as well as difficulties for fire access and garbage collection. Some people park too close to driveways and residents have difficulty exiting. One car recently car hit a tree, which later had to be removed. Most people park on the south side, which keeps the street accessible, but narrow.

Clint Schuckel observed from 21 – 27 cars parked primarily on the south side of Highland Avenue. On Gray Birch Terrace, he observed from 1-5 cars on the east side and from 0-4 cars parked on the west side. He added that parked cars can serve to slow cars by narrowing the street, but that the street is too narrow for parking on both sides. He also acknowledged the nuisance factor of too many cars and inconsiderate behaviors. He concluded that new restrictions will displace between 25-35 cars to other neighborhood streets. He recommended “No Parking 9-11 am on both sides” or a similar two-hour ban rather than setting a time limit (such as two –hour parking) for ease of enforcement. He also supported an area-wide restriction with exceptions for a limited number of student permits by street, such as is offered in Brookline. He mentioned that a residential parking district cannot be established until another restriction has been in place for a year and has not successfully addressed a problem, so this street would not yet be eligible one.

Numerous residents spoke in support of proposed restrictions. Some favored a two-hour limit, since this is used successfully on adjacent streets. They noted that when the street is narrowed by cars parking along the entire street, two-way traffic is impossible. Visibility is difficult along the street and at corners and several people described accidents and near-misses. Snow plowing is difficult in the winter. They noted that students park too close to corners and driveways which causes visibility and access issues and enforcement is lacking.

Chair Havens noted a letter received from Leslie Carter Robinson submitted on behalf of the neighbors who unanimously support restrictions on Highland Avenue between Lowell Avenue and Gray Birch Road, along with a map of existing restrictions and photographs. The Chair also received a petition from neighbors who request a two-hour parking restriction from 7 am to 4 pm on school days in the subject area.

Ald. Johnson advocated for a pro-active effort to make restrictions for a broader area that would offer better, more consistent parking management.

David Koses supported a restriction and also a student parking permit program to allow sharing of the streets by students without causing over-parking.

Sgt. Norcross felt a restriction that is consistent with others in the area should be used and supported a two-hour time limit.

Ald. Samuelson expressed concern about postal carriers' needs. In response to her concern, Clint Schuckel noted that the Traffic Council recently approved 18 long-term meters directly across from the post office, which had previously been one-hour limit meters.

Ald. Danberg clarified that two-hour parking takes two trips for enforcement staff because officers first must record license plates and return later to check for compliance; a two-hour ban needs to be checked once during the restricted time.

Chair Havens agreed that consistency should be a goal, but supported a two-hour parking ban to conserve City resources. In addition, she felt that the pricing of parking should be reconsidered because the current rate structure encourages students to drive and discourages bus ridership. She pointed out that students must pay \$200/year to ride the bus but can park for free closest to the school. Parking in the Austin Street Lot is as close to the school as the neighborhood in question, but no parkers were observed there on two recent daytime visits; there is a charge of \$180 a year to park there. She suggested that students be charged for parking on campus and on Hull Street and the revenues be used to cover the cost of bus service so students can ride the bus for free. She felt the cost of the Austin Street Lot should be reduced to offer an incentive for students to walk farther. Based on her calculations, the revenues generated from student parking fees would more than cover the revenues currently generated by sale of bus passes and could give students an incentive to ride the bus instead of to drive their cars.

The Traffic Council voted to initiate a 60-day trial parking ban from 9-11 am on both sides of Highland Avenue from Birch Hill Rd to Elmwood Park, Gray Birch Terrace, both sides, entire length, and Birch Hill Rd, both sides, entire length, on school days only (3-2, Norcross and Samuelson opposed).

#266-06

ALD. SAMUELSON requesting that parking on WOODWARD STREET, between Chestnut Street and Beacon Street, be restricted to one side only, and that the center line be relocated accordingly.

ACTION:

NAN 5-0

NOTE:

Ald. Samuelson stated that she observed cars parked on both sides of the street on the berms and sidewalks, especially from Chestnut to Pine Ridge. Because of the road width she felt that parking should be allowed only on one side of the street.

Clint Schuckel said that the street has a two-hour parking limit on both sides from Chestnut to Beacon Street and narrows to 25.5 feet over the bridge but is 28 feet

wide closer to Chestnut. He did not observe much parking on the street, but most cars were near Beacon or Chestnut Streets. He didn't feel the street between Pine Ridge and Chestnut was wide enough to support parking on both sides and that the two-hour time limit spreads out the parking so the existing situation is not problematic. He observed from 1-7 cars on Woodward Avenue from Beacon to Chestnut Streets on four recent visits. He reviewed recent decisions to install parking meters and designate long-term spaces in the library lot. He also noted that there is a petition yet to be considered for long-term parking near the library.

Chair Havens noted that she received letters from Eric and Steffie Karp supporting a restriction on the even side of the street.

Resident Bob Wilcox said parking is usually mid-block on the berm. He felt this was because there are curbstones on the other side of the street. He supported parking on one side of the street and recommended curbing the berm.

David Koses felt that the road is functioning fine as it is.

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

#278-06

ALD. YATES requesting two-hour restricted parking on Circuit Avenue between Thurston Road and Elliot Street (Ward 5)

ACTION:

APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0.

NOTE:

Ald. Yates said that restrictions in the area have shifted parking onto both sides of Circuit Avenue, which causes it to be very narrow. He said in the winter, it is 15 feet wide and functions as a single lane.

Dick Edmond, 61 Thurston Road said that in 1978 there were "No Parking" signs in the neighborhood that have since been knocked down, so the police can't enforce the restriction. He also recalled two-hour parking restrictions on Thurston Road and Circuit Avenue. At Thurston Road, Circuit Avenue narrows and both streets are parked all day by commuters. There is a Fire Station at the end of Circuit Avenue and sometimes trucks have trouble getting up the hill in the winter en route to senior citizens in the area. He favored no parking by the fire station and the south side of the road and limiting parking on the north side.

Clint Schuckel observed 10-13 commuters parked on the street all day on this 23 foot wide street. He did not observe public safety problems caused by parked cars and was concerned that new parking restrictions will push commuters onto other streets. Most of the cars are parked at the northwest corner which has no driveways. They may not be legally parked, but pull off to the side of the road to allow free passage. In the winter, snow may push cars farther into the street and could be a problem.

The Traffic Council recommended no parking on Circuit Avenue from Elliot Street to Thurston Street on the west side and no parking from 8-10 am on the east side, Monday through Friday (5-0).

#307-06 PHIL DALEY, 90 Circuit Avenue, Newton Upper Falls, requesting a stop sign on Thurston Road at Circuit Avenue (Ward 5).

ACTION: **APPROVE 5-0**

NOTE: Petitioner Phil Daley agreed with neighbor Dick Edmond, that Circuit Avenue is being used as a cut-through to Elliot Street. He felt that a stop sign is needed for safety sake.

Clint Schuckel said that Thurston Road is 23 feet wide and traffic is extremely light in the area. Since it is a “T” intersection, vehicles on Thurston Road must stop before making right or left turns, however there is no stop sign there.

Ald. Yates felt a stop sign at this location would ensure that people would be alert to the end of the road, especially in the winter when the roads are slippery.

The Traffic Council recommended approval of a stop sign (5-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair
Traffic Council