

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2006

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

Aldermen present: Albright, Gentile, Harney, Johnson, Linsky, and Sangiolo

#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).

ACTION: **APPROVE TRIAL “LIVE PARKING” (4-1, Koses opposed)**

NOTE: Lauren Merz, Health and Safety Chairperson of the Zervas PTO and Blue Zone Guard for the school said cars usually line up along the school side of Beethoven at pick-up and that if anyone parks on the opposite side of the street at that time, it causes traffic jams and blocks emergency access. She said parents park from the school to Puritan Street. In addition, there are Saturday morning sports activities in the fall and spring that impact circulation in the area.

Stephanie Kogan, 98 Allen Avenue, said she runs the soccer program from 9-10:45 am in the fall and from 9-noon in the spring on the Richardson field and Zervas field at the same times.

Bruce Henderson, PTO president, said the “No Parking 8-4” zone extends only 300 feet from the corner at Beacon and is not sufficient for assuring emergency access. He did not feel there was a problem on Saturday afternoons and Sunday. He noted that the school was built for 250 kids and now there are 330. He also said the faculty occupies all the spaces on the lot and there is not enough room for buses and cars in the parking lot as configured. He said that modular units may be added in the parking lot in the near future. He was especially concerned about parking at the top of the hill on the curve near Puritan Road.

Clint Schuckel said that the street is 23.5 feet wide. There is a “No Parking 8-4 pm” restriction on the west side for 300 feet from Beacon Street and No Parking on the east side for 175 feet from Beacon Street. He agreed that most parents park their cars on the east side of the street between the blue zone and Puritan Road and that the street is not wide enough to support parking on both sides. He also observed some parents double-parked at pickup. He also noted two cars dropping off kids from the west side.

Letters received from neighbors Karen Siller, Solomon Friedberg, and Abram Penyok opposed changes to existing restrictions. Several neighbors also spoke in opposition and voiced concerns that traffic has worsened over the years. Some expressed an interest in relocating drop-off and pick-up on school property as was done in years past. They did not want to have parking eliminated directly in front of their homes, although parking would still be allowed on the opposite side the Beethoven Avenue.

In response to a suggestion that a turnout be created so cars can move off the road for loading, Clint Schuckel indicated that the situation would be similar to that at Williams School and it would be necessary for cars to wait until buses had completed their loading and unloading before proceeding into the area, which would require supervision and monitoring. Ald. Samuelson added that several years ago buses dropped off on-site, but this practice ended because of hazards to children in the lot at such times.

David Koses felt the operation works better than in most of the City's schools, especially the queuing. However, he was concerned about securing access on such a narrow road and favored restricting parking on the west side at all times to assure it would not be blocked.

Ald. Samuelson supported the efforts to improve the situation and also expressed her concern that children don't walk to school as much as they did in the past. She also felt schools should pay for crossing guards so they can assure safe access and relieve parents of the need to drive. She saw enforcement as a problem.

Sgt. Norcross felt the situation was working well and did not want to see more restrictions if they would compromise the neighbors' needs.

Chair Havens, noted that despite the fact that the students will turnover, the school is likely to be a long-term use at this location and needs of both should be considered. She suggested "Live" parking on the east side of Beethoven so parents would stay in their cars and children be encouraged to walk to their parents' cars. She also suggested limiting parking on the west side of Beethoven during drop-off and pick-up so residents and their visitors could park legally there most hours of the day but not when cars are queued.

The Traffic Council took action to approve a trial for "Live Parking" from 8-9 am and 2:30-3:30 pm on the east side of Beethoven Avenue from the southern school property line up to the existing blue zone during December and January, so the Traffic Council can review the outcome in February (4-1, Koses opposed).

#308-06

ALD. SAMUELSON requesting long-term parking on Beacon Street, south side, adjacent to Waban Library, just east of Woodward (Ward 5).

ACTION:

NO ACTION NECESSARY (5-0)

NOTE:

Ald. Samuelson felt long-term parking will be in greater demand once parking meters are installed and that such spaces on one side of Beacon Street would provide a traffic calming effect as well as offer additional parking for employees. Her intent was to have parking allowed only on one side of the street. She pointed out that parking meters are easier to enforce than time restrictions.

Clint Schuckel described the restrictions around Waban Square and indicated that the restrictions on the books differ from posted signs. On the north side of Beacon Street, there are two-hour parking signs and no parking is allowed on the south side, although no signs are posted. He observed no parking at this location and was concerned that parking on Beacon Street would adversely affect sight lines on Wyman Street turning left onto Beacon Street and felt that long-term parking on other adjacent streets might be better. He pointed out that changes in parking behavior are likely to result from installation of parking meters and that it might be wise to wait and see what happens before instituting further changes.

Raymond and Dorothy Roberts, 1501 Beacon Street said there is a lot of parking demand in the area and that the speed limit is 30 mph from Woodward to Chestnut Street. They have witnessed an increase in traffic, especially at peak times, and said it is difficult for residents to get out of their driveways due to fast moving traffic. They felt parking should be allowed only on the north side .

Richard Slater, 37 Wyman Street, suggested use of the Waban Market for long-term parking.

Chair Havens said that the City's Zoning Regulations don't encourage shared parking at this time. She explained that businesses cannot rent spaces to others if the spaces are required to satisfy their on-site parking requirements. Whether that was the case for Waban Market would require further investigation.

A letter from Robert and Patricia Jones was received that opposed parking on both sides of Beacon Street.

Sgt. Norcross suggested no parking from 7 to 10 am instead of a two-hour parking restriction for ease of enforcement.

David Koses was concerned about the impact of commuter parking. If free, long-term parking were available near the Waban MBTA station, some commuters would seek out these spaces and park there rather than pay to park at the MBTA parking lots in Waban or at other Green Line stations.

The Traffic Council voted "no action necessary" (5-0).).

#309-06

ALD. SAMUELSON requesting new parking restrictions on Wyman Street to facilitate emergency vehicle access (Ward 5).

ACTION:

APPROVE (4-1)

NOTE:

Louise Freedman, 32 Wyman Street, said she has lived in the neighborhood 40 years and that in the last 5-6 years, turnover has increased significantly. There are many active businesses in the area including Starbucks, a salon, the post office, and apartments. People often park illegally in the area and she has repeatedly called police when parked cars block access to the street and driveways on the residential end of Wyman Street.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 37 feet wide nearest Starbucks and can support parking on both sides there. The street narrows to 24 feet past the post office and parking on both sides creates an access problem. The ordinance mandates a two-hour parking restriction on the north side, but the signs are posted on the south side. During the daytime, cars are parked continuously on the south side as far as #32 and the north side has fewer cars. He observed 11-15 cars on the south side and 6-8 on the north side at midday. He recommended prohibiting parking on one side between the MBTA parking lot and Chestnut Street.

Neighbors supported the request to restrict one side of the residential area. One noted that many parkers are commuters who choose not to park in the MBTA lot or who park longer term. Delivery trucks and other large vehicles are unable to pass through at times.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend “No Parking” on the north side and “Two Hour Parking from 7-7, Monday – Saturday,” from the MBTA parking lot to Chestnut Street (4-1, Norcross opposed).

#310-06

ALD. SANGIOLO & HARNEY, requesting 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)

ACTION:

HOLD (5-0)

NOTE:

Former Ald. Stewart said that the streets listed are impacted by parking on both sides during day games at Fenway Park when the Riverside lot is filled. He indicated that in the past, temporary signs have been put up to assure public safety, but that this has been cumbersome. He sought some permanent signing that would prohibit parking on one side of these roads to make implementation easier and protect the neighborhood from unsafe conditions.

Ald. Sangiolo agreed a new notification system is needed that is easier on residents and aldermen who must follow-up each time a day game occurs. She said the Law Department indicated a need to post the actual times of the parking ban for enforcement purposes, but that knowledge of those games in advance often is difficult.

Ald. Harney concurred that the least restrictive mean of securing safe access is needed.

Clint Schuckel said the streets are 24 feet wide and normally are clear of traffic, but parking on both sides of the street poses a public safety issue. He said the existing practice of signing is labor intensive and time consuming. In addition, the baseball schedule is hard to predict due to rain days and sandwich boards may not provide sufficient notice. He recommended two options: (1) a seasonal restriction, such as from 12-5 pm from May to October, noting that it was unnecessary to restrict parking for 5 months if these situations arise only a few times a year; or (2) a hinged (flip) sign that can be dropped down for temporary restrictions and is much easier to administer.

Josh Crenshaw, representative of the Lower Falls Business Association, noted this problem sometimes occurs after Patriots games. He supported whatever restrictions the neighbors favored.

Sgt. Norcross said that a two-hour restriction would not be much of a deterrent to people who may find it cheaper to pay a \$15 ticket to park all day at this location and favored another solution.

David Koses suggested a sign at the Riverside lot that tells people to park at Woodland if the Riverside lot is full.

Chair Havens, asked about including Goff Street, since it is surrounding by the streets proposed for restrictions. The petitioners agreed.

The Traffic Council voted to hold this item in order to allow the Traffic Engineer an opportunity to research the potential and associated costs for installation of flip signs (5-0).

#311-06 ALD. GENTILE, HARNEY & SANGIOLO requesting peak period (7-9 am, 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 Street and Commonwealth Avenue (Ward 4).

ACTION: **APPROVE TRIAL (5-0)**

NOTE: Ald. Gentile described the situation on Lexington Street during rush hour when cars back up over the Masspike Bridge. He felt that removal of 9 spaces along the street would not be a hardship because there is an underutilized municipal parking lot across the street where people can park. Removal of 9 parked cars would allow right turning cars to advance to the light and reduce back-up on the street.

Clint Schuckel said there are about 400 cars traveling northbound on Lexington Street from 8-9 am and 5-6 pm. There is a through/left-turn lane and a right-turn lane. The maximum observed queue on the right-turn lane is four cars and the maximum queue on through/left lane is 13 cars. Every signal clears the cars on the right turn lane completely and about half the cars on the through/left lane.

Removal of the parked cars will allow 4-5 more cars per light to advance in the right-turn lane. He said pedestrian cycles also affect the wait time at the light. He was supportive of a trial of the proposed change.

Ald. Sangiolo expressed concern about patrons of nearby businesses, especially in the morning rush hour. She also noted that it is sometimes difficult to turn left into the municipal parking lot off Lexington Street as busy times.

Ald. Harney pointed out that if one car blocks the single northbound lane, the cars back up and removal of the parked cars would allow cars to advance beyond a single car blocking the street.

The Traffic Council approved a trial of the parking restriction as proposed (5-0).

#323-06

ALD. LINSKY, JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT requesting stop sign (Crafts Street) at intersection of Crafts Street and Linwood Avenue. (Ward 2)

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (5-0)

NOTE:

Ald. Johnson indicated that the area around Albemarle Road, North Street and Crafts Street are all difficult streets in this area. She said it's hard for cars and pedestrians to cross Crafts Street at Linwood Avenue, especially during rush hours. The existing warning sign in the crosswalk gets battered by cars hitting it. She said people use the street to travel to Day Middle School, the Ed Center, and Horace Mann School, and a student recently was hit by a car in this intersection. She thought more children would walk if were safer, but emphasized that the problem is two-fold: there are few gaps in which cars can enter into or cross Crafts Street from Linwood Avenue and it is also unsafe for pedestrians.

Ald. Linsky noted that a crossing guard at this post was not likely because of the limited number of crossing guards available and the existing priorities for their posts.

Clint Schuckel said that at the morning peak, there are nearly 500 cars traveling south and nearly 400 traveling north on Crafts Street; there are about 120-135 vehicles entering Crafts Street from Linwood Avenue at this hour. He counted 27 pedestrians crossing Crafts Street and 4-13 people crossing Linwood Avneue at the morning peak. He noted the existing locations of crossing guards in the area and discussed the tradeoffs of locating guards at signalized intersections with exclusive crossing phases. He thought a crossing guard could be added or located, but concurred with Ald. Linsky that there are a limited number of enforcement officers that could provide this service and they are already committed elsewhere. He offered a number of other options including a mid-block warning/crossing, a mid-block signalized crossing, and a full traffic signal at the Crafts/Linwood intersection. He listed the number of reported accidents (\$1000 or more in damage) as follows: 2001 (5), 2002 (4), 2003 (3), 2004 (7), 2005 (4), 2006 (4 to date). Crafts Street is 32 feet wide and has adequate sight lines. A stop sign is not an appropriate solution to the problem given traffic volumes. Note: The traffic

signal at Park and Tremont Streets constructed in 2004 with Mass Turnpike funding, cost about \$150,000.

Neighbor, Francis Leary, 243 Crafts Street, suggested a speed limit sign be posted along with a red blinking light.

Ted Paschkis, 300 Linwood Avenue, observed many accidents that have not been reported and agreed that visibility from Linwood Avenue is difficult at times.

Gina Pini, 276 Linwood Avenue said cars don't stop for children and pointed out a mailbox that may block some views.

Sgt. Norcross indicated there are frequently directed patrols in the area to monitor traffic.

David Koses recapped the previous consideration of traffic signals at Crafts Street and Walnut Street and advocated for an area-wide solution. He supported a traffic signal in the area to help create gaps for traffic flow and provide safe pedestrian crossing. He suggested holding the item to collect additional information about where a traffic signal would make the most sense (Linwood Street or Walnut Street). He also suggested examination of an additional traffic signal at the end of California Street.

After hearing public testimony and considering a variety of options, (many of which would require a funding appropriation via the Board of Aldermen), including traffic calming measures such as chicanes and roundabouts, and painting of the intersection to bring more attention to it, the Traffic Council recommended a request for a traffic signal in the vicinity of Crafts Street and Linwood Avenue be committed to Public Safety and Transportation Committee for consideration and that a resolution be forwarded to the mayor to request a crossing guard at Linwood Avenue and Crafts Street (5-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair
Traffic Council