

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

Thursday, April 28, 2005

Members Present: Capt. Matthew Cummings (Police), Candace Havens (Chair), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Christine Samuelson (Aldermanic Representative), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer) Rosalie Myers (Clerk)

Aldermen Present: Danberg, Fischman, Johnson, Lennon, Merrill

#432-04(2) ALD. LENNON requesting installation of 4-way stop at the intersection of Clinton and Hawthorn Streets (Ward 1).

ACTION: **DENIED 4-1 (Cummings opposed)**

NOTE: The Traffic Council recommended moving the stop signs from Hawthorn Street to Clinton Street approval of a stop sign at Hawthorn Street in September 2004 and since that time, there has been one accident at the corner. Neighbors expressed concerns about this street being a speedway and a cut-through and wished to add stop signs on Hawthorn to make it a four-way stop.

Clint Schuckel indicated that volume and accident warrants for a stop sign are not met at this intersection; there were about 50 cars per hour on Clinton and 30 per hour on Hawthorn, with a late afternoon peak. There were 2 accidents before the existing sign was relocated from Clinton to Hawthorn and one since. Members of Traffic Council noted that the higher volume street is forced to stop at this intersection. He did not recommend a four-way stop to reduce speed. He noted as in previous meetings, that installation of stop signs where volumes are low can cause people to ignore them and this can lead to conflicts. He also noted a Handicapped Parking sign near the corner that is not on the books.

Ald. Merrill concurred that the street is a cut-through and urged the Council to approve a stop sign. Ald. Johnson wanted to make sure nothing serious happens at this corner because of speeding cars and also urged installation of a stop sign. Several neighbors related their concerns about speeding and pedestrian safety in this area.

Capt. Cummings felt it might help the situation to add a stop sign, but the rest of the Traffic Council felt it would be inconsistent with State standards and a poor precedent. Candace Havens suggested a raised intersection as a more appropriate remedy and one that may be possible in

the near future if approved by the City. The Traffic Council recommended denial of the request (4-1, Cummings opposed).

- #449-03 ALD. CICCONE, JOHNSON, LINKSY requesting discussion with Traffic Council on the following:
- (1) Keeping the all-night parking restrictions in effect on Rochester Road and part of Westchester Road all year;
 - (2) Requesting a one-hour restriction on Rochester Road from 8 am to 6 pm;
 - (3) Requesting a one-hour parking restriction on the top half of Westchester Road from 8 am to 6 pm (Ward 2)

ACTION: **NAN 5-0**

NOTE: Residents and staff noted that parking on these streets has not been a serious problem this year and may be a result of actions on the part of Boston College. The neighbors were willing to continue to watch the parking patterns and work with Boston College on such matters. The Traffic Council moved to take no action on this item (5-0) with the understanding that the petition be reconsidered right away if conditions change.

- #409-04 ALD. VANCE requesting on behalf of JEAN FULKERSON, 51 Middlesex Road, “No Parking, Monday-Friday” on the west side of Dunster Road for two car lengths to the intersection of Dunster and Middlesex Road to facilitate turns onto Dunster from Middlesex by Bowen School bus (Ward).

ACTION: **NAN 5-0**

NOTE: David Koses noted that a sign recently was posted at this intersection to delineate the 20 foot no parking restriction from the corner and the problem was solved. No one from the neighborhood was present to discuss the proposal. Without further discussion the Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend no action on this item.

- #411-04 ALD. SAMUELSON, MANSFIELD & CANDACE HAVENS requesting the creation of two-hour parking on Homer Street alongside the Trinity Church (Ward 6).

ACTION: **APPROVED 5-0**

NOTE: Candace Havens noted that items 411-04 and 412-04 are intended to work together to address some of the problems that have been previously noted by those who live and work in this area. Two-hour spaces on Homer Street are proposed to replace long-term parking in front of the Trinity Church so parents can drop off and pick up children during the week and alleviate some of the traffic on Furber Lane. The long-term parkers would be shifted to proposed long-term metered spaces a block away on Centre Street.

Ald. Samuelson further explained this parking management strategy whereby long-term users park farther away from their destination to provide easier access to their patrons and guests. She noted that parking meters are much easier to enforce than time limits, generate income for the City and are not proposed in front of residences. The docketed proposals are intended to regulate traffic flow and parking in an orderly way.

Clint Schuckel said the street width on Homer is difficult to ascertain because the south side is unfinished. He wasn't sure if the street was wide enough to handle two lanes of traffic with cars parked on both sides, as is the current practice. He suggested completion of design and then designation of appropriate parking, with some restriction on the south side if street width is inadequate. He added if the Greek Evangelical Church parking lot could be used for any weekday parking, it would help to alleviate some of the parking problems in the area.

Neighbors and representatives of the Trinity Church agreed that use of the Greek Church's lot would be useful and they would continue to discuss this with their leaders. However, the Trinity Church representatives did not want to lose long-term parking in front of the church for their employees. Residents could not see how these changes would help them and disagreed with the proposed changes.

The Traffic Council members expressed confidence that proposed changes would provide relief to the neighborhood and voted (5-0) to recommend approval of two-hour parking from 7 am to 6 pm on weekdays on the north side of Homer Street between Centre Street and Furber Lane.

412-04 ALD. SAMUELSON, MANSFIELD & CANDACE HAVENS requesting creation of long-term meters on Centre Street, Newton Centre in front of the Greek Evangelical Church (Ward 6).

ACTION:

HELD 5-0

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel said the west side (southbound) of street is 27 feet wide and east side (northbound) is 24 feet. Given the street width, he felt the west side could support parking. He also felt the existing two northbound lanes should remain for queuing for left turns and thru traffic at the approach to the intersection of Centre Street and Commonwealth Avenue. There are no restrictions on either side of this stretch, yet nobody parks there. He said about 8 spaces would fit in that area and expected they would add a traffic calming effect. He noted these spaces would be an extension of metered spaced recently approved on Bowen Street, but not yet installed.

The representatives of the adjoining neighborhoods expressed concerns about the use of long-term parking on Centre Street since they thought it would be in the path of cars speeding towards Newton Centre. They also

pointed out that those who live on Gibbs Street and the east side of Centre Street who turn left into their driveways from Centre Street, will block traffic approaching Newton Centre from the north if parked cars are allowed on the west side of the street. They also were concerned that cars parked on Centre would block visibility of cars turning onto Centre from Homer Street and that conditions would be worse when it snows. They also wanted to make sure emergency access would be provided and not blocked by parked cars on either street.

Ald. Danberg also expressed concerns about fire access and was concerned that parking in the proposed location would be unsafe.

Clint Schuckel said he did not feel emergency access would be impaired on Centre Street and would likely be improved with more orderly parking on Homer Street. No parking is allowed between Bowen Street and the first shops in Newton Centre where cars shift from one lane into two.

Candace Havens said she felt that a comprehensive parking plan for Newton Centre that includes focused parking in one or more leveled parking facilities in Newton Centre was a better long-term solution and that a task force was recently formed to discuss such options. In the meantime, the fine-tuning of existing spaces was the City's best option.

Ald. Samuelson reassured neighbors that the spaces would be sited so they will not block visibility.

In response to neighborhood concerns, the Traffic Council voted (5-0) to have a 60-day trial of 8 unmetered 12-hour parking spaces on the west side of Centre Street between Homer Street and Bowen Street where metered spaces are proposed in order to assess the impact of such a change before making final recommendations on permanent spaces.

413-04

ALD. FISCHMAN, requesting on behalf of MARILYN PEREZ, 5 Bound Brook Road requesting relocation of "No Parking" sign to location beyond driveway to provide cars from blocking her driveway (Ward 8).

ACTION:

HELD 4-1 (Samuelson opposed)

NOTE:

Ald. Fischman and Ms. Perez said that Countryside Elementary School parents park in front of her house at drop-off and pick-up times and often block her driveway when she needs to leave. She requested parking be restricted from the corner at Dedham Street to five feet west of her driveway.

Clint Schuckel showed some pictures of large vehicles parked across from one another near the intersection of Dedham Street and Bound Brook that impaired emergency access on this 24' wide street. Although the situation is for a brief period, it nonetheless poses a threat at those times.

Ald. Samuelson felt that moving the “No Parking” sign past Ms. Perez’s driveway would provide a simple fix for the problem. Other Traffic Council members were concerned the problem would be pushed up the street and the same emergency access issue would occur there. They also felt it is not good policy to regulate conditions for a single house when the Council’s practice has been to look at a block at a time.

The first motion to restrict parking from the corner to five feet beyond 5 Bound Brook was defeated. A second motion to restrict parking on the south side of the street from Dedham to Leewood died for lack of a second. The Traffic Council voted to hold the item in order to have a trial restriction for “No parking from 8 am – 4 pm” school days on the north side of the street (Dedham Street to Leeward Road see how parking patterns shift and to allow adjacent neighbors to have input on restrictions that could affect them (4-1, Samuelson opposed).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair