

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

Thursday September 22, 2005

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

Aldermen Present: Baker, Harney, Mansfield, Sangiolo, Vance

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

ACTION: **APPROVED (4-0-1)(Norcross abstaining)**

NOTE:

The Traffic Council held this item on April 28, 2005 pending a trial striping of un-metered parking spaces in lieu of proposed metered spaces. This proposal was docketed with #411-04, a proposal to establish 2-hour parking on Homer Street in front of the Trinity Church which was held by the Board of Aldermen pending final review of this petition.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 43 feet wide and one of the widest in the City. He felt there is adequate space for parking and through traffic, especially with striping the spaces to maximize turning areas and visibility. He received no reports of problems from the Police or Fire Departments; he deemed the trial a success. David Koses added that Centre Street is a minor arterial.

Robert Woernle, 1122 Centre Street, stated that he felt there is insufficient street width for free flow of traffic and turning movements and there will be problems when there is snow. He also has seen valet parkers from the Dellaria Salon parking customers' cars in these spaces and elsewhere in the neighborhood. Neighbor, Adriane Kuller concurred and both requested the trial be continued to demonstrate the possible winter problems as well as the effects on traffic with the return of students to the area and asked for a comprehensive look at this area in the larger context of Newton Centre's parking and traffic situation. .

David Koses witnessed no problems and the considered the street a proper place for added parking, given the width, previous parking problems in the vicinity, and the need for additional spaces.

Ald. Mansfield welcomed the discussion with the neighborhood and hoped it would help alleviate problems on Furber Lane, though he was concerned about the spaces potentially being used by a single business. Alderman Samuelson felt that together, the Centre Street and Homer Street proposals will help to balance parking in the neighborhood.

Candace Havens explained that people park long-term on Homer Street and consequently, parents dropping of children for day care and violin lessons during the week at the Trinity Church, must park on Furber Lane and this disturbs the residents. By creating short term-parking next to the church on Homer Street and long-term parking on Centre Street, the drop-off and pick-ups can take place on Homer Street and less on Furber Lane. Employees at the church will then be able to park on Centre Street.

In response to an inquiry from Adriane Kuller regarding future plans for Newton Centre, Candace Havens explained that a task force of 24 local residents is evaluating the current conditions in Newton Centre and will be asking for citizen input on improvements, including ways to address parking and traffic issues among other things. She urged Newton Centre residents to participate in the process and to check the City website for current information. In the meantime, she supported the proposed parking strategy for this part of Newton Centre.

Sgt. Norcross questioned whether the parking needed to be metered. Other members noted that adjacent spaces on Bowen Street will be metered and that for parking at different rates enables pricing as a means of influencing parking behavior. Candace Havens felt these meters should be 25 cents an hour to attract long-term parkers and noted that the ordinance regarding meter rates would need to be amended; the current ordinance designates all curbside spaces at 50 cents per hour.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0-1, with Norcross abstaining) to recommend approval of the proposal with the understanding that meter rates would need to be addressed by another docket item.

#113-05

LOIS A. LEVIN, 497 Chestnut Street, Waban 02468, requesting no parking on both sides of MOFFAT ROAD from CHESTNUT STREET westerly approximately 150 feet (Ward 5)

ACTION:

APPROVED AS AMENDED (5-0)

NOTE:

Resident, Lois Levin explained that cars traveling down Chestnut turn into Moffat Road without slowing much and she and her neighbors fear for their safety. The street is used as an alternative route to Waban Center.

Clint Schuckel said that Moffat Street is 24 feet wide. The signs that restrict parking at the corners are at 75 feet and 40 feet from the corner,

which is farther than allowed by ordinance. No corresponding restrictions have been previously approved. He observed 4 cars or fewer on the street on his site visits.

Resident John Barry, concurred that cars turn swiftly from Chestnut Street. He and neighbor, Helen Rittenberg felt that restricting parking near the corner would help this situation. They and another neighbor feared for the safety of the residents.

Ald. Samuelson suggested limiting parking only at certain times.

David Koses was also sympathetic, but felt that parked cars in the area would function to calm traffic on the street and also noted that restricting one part of the street would push the problem farther down the street.

After a brief discussion, the Traffic Council moved to approve no parking from the corner to the first driveways west of Chestnut Street (5-0).

#213-05

KARIN MILLER, 27 Devon Road, Chestnut Hill, requesting the installation of no parking and tow zone signs between the hours of 7:30 am and 5:30 pm Monday-Friday on the north side of Middlesex Road in Brookline between the City line and Dunster Road (Ward 7).

ACTION:
NOTE:

NAN (5-0)

Karin Miller described the situation as a complex collection of streets that cross over into Brookline in the area around Brimmer and May School; Middlesex is the main access to the neighborhood, the school and the T. She approached the Town of Brookline about this restriction and they postponed a decision pending review by the City of Newton. She said that the school is in the process of making several changes to acquire on-site parking, yet it is difficult to access Middlesex from the side streets when the street is parked up at certain times. She feels the congestion poses as safety issue for kids and commuters and the residents and school want to make the street as safe as possible. She noted that the street is a cut-through from Route 9 to Riverside at rush hours.

Clint Schuckel pointed out that there is currently construction in the area and conditions now may be atypical. There is currently a 2-hour limit on the north side of the street, and no parking allowed on the south side. The street is 24 feet wide, which is typical of Newton streets. There is a stop light near the school with no parking allowed on either side of it. He saw 2-5 cars parked on the north side of the street and suggested some short-term parking on the street may be desirable to slow traffic.

School representatives stated that the school has made many improvements to address school safety for the 380 kids at drop-off and

pick-up, but there are still conflicts. Several neighbors spoke in support of the proposal and reiterated the seriousness and complexity of the problems in the area.

David Koses read into the record, a letter from the Fulkersons, who live nearby urging the Traffic Council to wait until the proposed projects are completed before taking action on this petition. Clint Schuckel agreed that there are presently many unknowns and advised that it would be best if the school completed their plans for projects and submitted them to the City along with the rationale for why any proposed parking changes support their plan.

Ald. Vance and Baker expressed their concern about the situation and questioned where people will collect their children if no parking is allowed on either street if on-site improvements aren't in place yet. Ald. Baker posed the option of restricting parking on Middlesex Road where incoming streets abut it, to ease turning movements there.

After reviewing possible restrictions at the ends of abutting streets, the Traffic Council recommended that no action be taken at this time to allow for the school to complete its planning work and to demonstrate how proposed restrictions on the street support their plan (5-0).

#214-05

ROBERT HEENAN, 15 Belmont Street, Newton, requesting 2-hour parking restriction 7am-6pm on Belmont Street westerly side (Ward 1).

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-1, Koses)

NOTE:

Robert Heenan stated that his street has become increasingly impacted by commuters arriving from 7-9 in the morning and parking until 8 at night. He and his neighbors are not able to park on their street during the week. They find it hard to get out of their driveways and have limited street cleaning and snow sweeping because of parked cars.

Clint Schuckel indicated that the street has no parking on one side and is unrestricted on the other and the parking capacity of the street is about 11-12 cars. He observed many cars by 9 am. He noted the regional benefits of parking for access to public transit, but also acknowledged how it impacts the local streets. All day restrictions would likely push more traffic onto adjacent streets and he favored a 7 am -10am restriction which would still allow some on-street parking during the daytime and is consistent with the restriction on Arlington, which abuts Belmont Street.

Candace Havens noted that letters from neighbors Lisa Piel, Penny Hoarty, and Mr. & Mrs. Rand opposed the proposal and a letter of support was received by Jessie Amodeo. Neighbor, Mrs. Heenan also supported

the proposal and confirmed the nature of the congestion, since she works out of her house and observes the activities.

David Koses felt that the responsibility for providing some places for commuters to park is better if spread out and shared among the community than pushed onto particular blocks. He feared that if parking is restricted, fewer people will have access to the bus and service to our city will be terminated.

Ald. Samuelson preferred the least restrictive means of limiting disruption to the neighborhood. Candace Havens pointed out that a morning restriction would still allow commuters who arrive later, but may be more modest impact on the residents.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend approval of “No Parking from 7 am – 10am, Monday through Friday” on the westerly side of Belmont Street (4-1, Koses against).

#145-05

ALD. SANGIOLO, on behalf of Nancy Brown requesting “No Right Turn” from northbound Washington Street onto Day Street 7-9 am and 4-6 pm; discussion to consider Hope Street and Leslie Street (Ward 4).

ACTION:
NOTE:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (1-2-2); motion failed.

Nancy Brown spoke on behalf of the neighbors on the abutting streets. She said Day Street is a cut-through from Washington Street to Commonwealth Avenue at rush hour. If traffic down Day Street is stopped, adjacent streets, Hope and Leslie will become cut-throughs. The worst traffic occurs while kids are walking to school and to the bus that picks up on Day Street. Parents worry about all these hazards when their young children leave for school. She noted the problem worsened when the tolls on the Mass Pike changed and said the first leg of Day Street, when entering from Washington Street, is a private way. She and her neighbors felt volume and speed of cars passing through is dangerous.

Clint Schuckel didn't think the street was consistently used as a cut-through, only when traffic backs up at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Washington Street. He added that the congestion increases when the Fire Department Station 2 responds to calls and stops the traffic in all directions during peak commuter hours. He noted that the primary source of congestion is left turns from Route 16 onto Route 30 in both directions. He said added that there are \$90,000 funds available from proposed developments at Arbor Point, Newton Wellesley Hospital, and the MBTA to improve this intersection and would help their situation. He counted 90 cars entering Day Street from Washington from 7 am – 9 am (less than a car a minute on average).

Several neighbors from all three streets voiced their concerns about traffic volumes, speed, and difficulty getting out of driveways especially when children are present.

Ald. Sangiolo requests this change to improve the situation along with enforcement at the onset to call attention to the change. She said the Law Department confirmed that the residents could not limit access to this part of the street that is a private way. Because there is not a current timeline for improvements to the intersection, she felt the problem should be addressed immediately in some way.

Ald. Harney mentioned the construction that's anticipated would make matters worse before they get better and also argued for changes now.

Sgt. Norcross said the proposed solution is not easily enforced and as a result, may not be respected.

Ald. Samuelson suggested a one-way street to deter traffic. David Koses thought no right turns would also be inconvenient for residents and that access would need to be restricted on all three streets to be fair. Improvements to the intersection are optimal. He noted the condition of the cut-through is not very attractive and it surprised him that it was so popular.

Candace Havens acknowledged the difficulties of the neighbors' situation and also of proposed solutions, which are each imperfect. She agreed with improvements to the intersection and traffic calming to discourage nonresident use, possible a trial of the proposed restriction to see if it's effective without active enforcement. Mr. Schuckel felt he could reconsider the turn restrictions only after the improvements to the Commonwealth/Washington intersection are made.

Ald. Samuelson moved to approve the request for no right turn from 7 – 9 am on all three streets: Day, Leslie and Hope. The motion failed (1-2-2, with Koses and Norcross against, Schuckel and Havens abstained).

#187-05

ALD. SANGIOLO requesting "No Turn on Red" restriction at the light at intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Auburn Street (Ward 4).

ACTION:

NAN (5-0)

NOTE:

Ald. Sangiolo noted this petition and the following petition, # 234-05 address unusual challenges posed by the carriage lanes and stops lights (the discussion that follows addresses them together). She said many people turn right on the carriage lane instead of waiting for the light at Commonwealth Avenue and is a nuisance for residents facing the carriage lane.

Clint Schuckel said the stop line is behind the carriage way. He agreed it is a confusing intersection. It is difficult to know when and where to turn right or left from various approaches. The stop lights on the carriage lane and Commonwealth Avenue are green at the same time, since they run parallel to each other. However, a car turning right from Commonwealth Avenue onto Auburn Street could conflict with traffic on the carriage way. This condition could be improved if the traffic signal on the carriage way changes independent of the signals on Commonwealth Avenue.

Residents, Jack Panner and Christopher Weinmann concurred. They have witnessed accidents in the right of way and the traffic affects pedestrians and joggers. They noted lots of confusion, screeching of tires, near misses and more traffic than is desirable for a frontage road.

Ald. Samuelson suggested a neckdown where the carriage lane abuts Auburn Street, to make the street look more private, but didn't favor restricting right turns where useful for relieving traffic, especially onto Commonwealth Avenue, so as to avoid cars backing up on Auburn Street.

David Koses supported reducing travel onto the carriage lane to secure use of the street for joggers, bikers and pedestrians.

Candace Havens supported revising traffic lights for better queuing and posed the option of closing the carriage way to through traffic and allowing two-way traffic. Ald. Samuelson pointed out that then this section of the lane would be different from all the others along Commonwealth Avenue.

Sgt. Norcross said the proposed restriction would be difficult to enforce.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend no action on the request to restrict right turns from Auburn Street onto Commonwealth Avenue (5-0)

234-05

ALD. SANGIOLO requesting "No Right Turn on Red" onto carriage lane on Commonwealth Avenue and Auburn Street (Ward 4).

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-0-1, Samuelson abstained)

NOTE:

See discussion notes for #187-05

The Traffic Council voted to recommend "No Right Turn on Red" from westbound Auburn Street to the carriage lane from 7 am- 7 pm" (4-0-1, Samuelson abstained).

#HP-7 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting on behalf of Louise Toney, 103-107 Hancock Street, a handicap parking space in front of her home on Hancock Street (Ward 4).

ACTION: **HELD UNTIL OCTOBER 2005 (4-1, Samuelson against)**

NOTE: Ald. Sangiolo said that Ms. Toney has a driveway at the rear of a multi-family house off Fern Street and her door is uphill, on the opposite side of the house facing Hancock. She has a handicap sticker and has received the endorsement of the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities for the request.

David Koses requested the item be held pending a report from the Mayor's Committee, as he has unanswered questions about the basis for the Committee's approval of the request. He also noted that Hancock Street will be reviewed at the next Public Safety and Transportation Committee meeting and the outcome of that review could affect the acceptability of this request.

The Traffic Council voted to hold the item until the October Traffic Council meeting (4-1, Samuelson against).

HP-6 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting on behalf of Louise Toney, 103-107 Hancock Street, a handicap parking space in front of her home on Hancock Street (Ward 4).

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

NOTE: Duplicate petition to HP-7

#264-05 ALD. SANGIOLO requesting on behalf of Louise Toney, 103-107 Hancock Street, a handicap parking space in front of her home on Hancock Street (Ward 4).

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

NOTE: Duplicate petition to HP-7

Discussion Items:

Traffic Calming. Discussion of Traffic Calming was postponed due to the lateness of the hour.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair