

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2004

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

Aldermen Present: Mansfield, Harney, Sangiolo, Albright, Johnson, Parker, and Baker

#79-04      ALD. JOHNSON & LINSKY requesting on behalf of Margaret Doris, the creation of a handicapped van accessible space on ALBEMARLE ROAD near the entrance to the Albemarle Playground. (Ward 2)

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED AS AMENDED (4-0-1) Ald. Samuelson abstaining**

**NOTE:**      Petitioner Margaret Doris indicated that the existing handicapped spaces near Horace Mann School are inadequate for loading and unloading disabled children who use the playground and school at Horace Mann; the existing curbside handicap space in front of the school isn't always safe because it may necessitate loading and unloading from the street side of the vehicle. In addition, access to the playground from the handicap space in the adjacent parking lot has been damaged and partially blocked. She requested a third space be created from one of the diagonal spaces closest to the driveway to the teacher's lot and the playground.

Traffic Engineer Clint Schuckel confirmed the site conditions and noted that there is also a blue zone and bus loading zone in front of the school. He recommended reconfiguring the arrangement of spaces to improve their usefulness by swapping the bus loading zone with the curbside handicap space.

Ald. Samuelson was concerned that others be consulted before the Council takes action on this matter including the school principal, Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities, and appropriate City staff. Margaret Doris indicated she had spoken to the principal about the problem and was authorized by him to act on his behalf. She had also spoken with City staff about improving the handicap space in the teachers' lot and noted it was in line for consideration.

Candace Havens indicated that Alderman Linsky was unable to attend, but supported the applicant's request to improve handicapped access for children at this site.

The Council voted to approve reconfiguration of the bus loading, handicap space and blue zone subject to the Horace Mann principals' approval the includes: 1) a handicap loading zone to be created north of the school driveway that incorporates one diagonal parking space; 2) a bus loading zone south of the driveway and north of blue zone, and 3) elimination of the existing handicap space south of the driveway. Alderman Samuelson abstained from voting on this item.

#40-04      RACHEL YAPANOGLIN , 147 Oakdale Road, requesting handicapped parking space in front of 147 Oakdale Road. (Ward 6)

**ACTION:**      **DENIED (5-0)**

**NOTE:**      Rachel Yapanoglin explained that a relative who lives with her and is blind and mentally retarded is unable to easily negotiate the route from her front door to her driveway beside the house; the most direct route from the front door to the driveway is across the front lawn that is sloped and slippery in the winter. She requests a handicap parking space be designated in front of the two-family home in which she lives so she can walk her daughter directly to the car on a flat walkway.

In assessing the situation, Traffic Engineer Clint Schuckel noted that there are currently no parking restrictions on the street and he observed very few cars on the street or competition for parking in the area, in general. Other members of the Council concurred with this observation.

Chair Havens gave the petitioner a copy of the current handicapped parking policy on the street and described the criteria by which spaces are considered. Alderman Samuelson further noted that the Council's policy is not to restrict parking where none is needed. Since there were no obvious parking problems or competition for spaces on the street, it appeared that the space would be free for her use most of the time and she felt it was not appropriate to designate a space for handicapped use only. She noted the Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities and its staff could be of some assistance in considering other options for accommodation if needed.

The Council voted to deny the request.

#265-02(2) ALD. BRYSON on behalf of the abutters and neighbors of Auburn Street Auburndale requesting discussion and possible rescission or further amendment of Section 19-176, as amended, as it relates to AUBURN STREET sub-section (1)b, (No Parking south side, from Woodland Road westerly to Commonwealth Avenue). (Ward 4)

**ACTION:** APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0

**NOTE:** Judy Saxe, the resident representative reviewed the history of the restrictions on Auburn Street. At the present time no parking allowed on the south side of Auburn Street. She noted that this is difficult for residents at times and pointed out that there may be an opportunity to add some spaces where there is a widening of Evergreen Street at the intersection with Auburn. She and other neighbors expressed concerns that cars from the nearby gas station and the Norumbega canoe area might occupy new spaces in the neighborhood, yet all agreed it would be better to have more available spaces.

Traffic Engineer, Clint Schuckel stated that Auburn Street is 32 feet wide and parking is not allowed on one side to assure emergency access. He said that while it is not the City's policy to recommend parking for individual homes, there is room for 2-3 more parking spaces near the intersection of Evergreen and Auburn without obstructing visibility or creating a turning hazard.

Alderman Samuelson felt additional spaces should be established wherever possible, since parking on the street is very limited in the City. Aldermen Sangiolo and Harney spoke in support of the neighbors' request to fit in more parking where possible.

The Council voted (5-0) to rescind the "No Parking" restriction for approximately 50' on the south side of Auburn Street nearest Evergreen Street and in that area, to establish 2-3 parking spaces as can be safely be accommodated by the City Engineer that will be restricted to two-hour parking, Monday to Friday, from 8 am – 6 pm.

#390-02 JEFF GOLDMAN et al requesting speed/traffic control measures on HERRICK ROAD, Newton Centre. (Ward 6)

**ACTION:** **HELD 5-0**

**NOTE:** Resident, Jeff Goldman described Herrick Road as a narrow, windy road that includes residences and serves the campuses of the Andover Newton and the Hebrew College. He noted that as homes have been built and campus activities have increased, so has traffic volume, speed and

congestion. He was especially concerned about the potential for accidents and emergency access, which he said is compromised when parents park on the roadside to wait for their children at times. He suggested speed bumps, enforcement of a 15 mph speed limit, and one-way circulation up Herrick Circle and down Herrick Road and possibly road widening to address the problems.

Alderman Parker mentioned that the Special Permit for the development includes a rumble strip to slow traffic. He also noted that while speed humps are prohibited in the City, they are allowed on a private way and he would support their use. He also noted that Special Permit prohibits access onto Langley Road and would have to be changed to allow access there.

Traffic Engineer, Clint Schuckel said the rumble strip in the road has been ineffective. He did not believe the 15 mph speed limit was enforceable because it did not appear to have been approved by the State and that the State standard 30 mph applies. The street is 22 feet wide and most of its length is a private road; the public way begins at Chase Street. As such, he felt the Traffic Council had very limited authority to address these concerns.

Captain Sbordone explained that people generally travel the road within the 30 mph speed limit, but that it seems like they're going faster because of the road configuration, so more enforcement has limited effect.

Alderman Mansfield said that improvements to the road that were required by the Special Permit also make the road easier to use and promote speeding that makes the Chase/Herrick intersection dangerous. He expressed disappointment that the volume of traffic is greater than expected and that shuttle service and T usage had not occurred as promised.

Alderman Samuelson was alarmed at the public safety issues and felt they needed to be addressed. She suggested staggered hours of activities at the institutions to help reduce traffic and generally echoed the sentiments of others who are unhappy with the conditions.

Neighbors on Chase Street said the intersection at Chase Street and Herrick has become increasingly more dangerous because of cars speeding down Herrick and noted that sometimes, cars queue along the length of Chase Street for up to 30 minutes.

Traffic Council members felt the public safety issues mentioned should be addressed. However, due to the variety of issues, ongoing review, and uncertainty about the Traffic Council's jurisdiction, the Council requested more information before making a recommendation to the Board. Specifically, the Council asked the City Engineer to seek answers from the Law Department to the following questions: 1) Can the Council recommend speed bumps on a private way and, if so, who would be responsible for installing them? 2) Can the Council or another government body can mandate traffic circulation changes on the private way, such as a second access and stop signs? 3) Where do the private property lines fall relative to the street? 4) Can the City mandate and enforce a 15 mph speed limit on the private way? 5) How does this request interface with the Special Permit and ongoing review of the development? The Council voted to hold this item until such questions are answered.

#433-02 EVELYN F. MESERVE, Director of Security, Safety & Parking, NWH requesting No Right Turn on Red sign at the intersection of the north entrance to Newton Wellesley Hospital and Rt. 16 Washington Street. (Ward 4)

**ACTION:** **HELD UNTIL SEPTEMBER 2004 (5-0)**

**NOTE:** A letter was received from the petitioner asking the request be withdrawn. She indicated that hospital staff have been informed of the safety issue and asked to use caution at this intersection.

In its review of this item in January 2004, the Traffic Council noted potential conflicts between pedestrians and turning cars at this intersection that it wished to see addressed. Since that time, Alderman Samuelson spoke with hospital representatives who said the hospital sign near the intersection would be revised to improve visibility and reduce conflicts. Members of the Council agreed that this would help resolve concerns but wanted assurance it would happen. The members discussed the option of limiting right turns on red lights to address the problem if the hospital sign is not modified. The Council voted (5-0) to hold the item until September to verify sign changes are made.

#467-02 JEFFREY STANHOPE, 57 Heatherland Road, Newton Highlands, requesting four-way stop sign at the intersection of Upland Avenue and Heatherland Road. (Ward 8)

**ACTION:** **APPROVE AS AMENDED (3-2) (Schuckel, Samuelson opposed)**

**NOTE:** Gabriel Avram represented the neighborhood, which he described as a residential area served by Upland Street, which is long and wide. Since it has a slope, people often travel down towards Heatherland quickly. He

and his neighbors are concerned about the potential for accidents at this intersection and the safety of numerous children who cross there. He also felt Upland was used as a cut-through street from Dedham Street to Winchester and Needham Streets. He noted recent resurfacing made it easier to speed there and that at least one stop sign at the bottom of the Upland (northbound) would help.

Clint Schuckel said that the traffic volume is very low and doesn't meet the warrants for a stop sign (300/hour on Upland and 200/hour on Heatherland are warranted and each has about 1/3 the volume). He concurred that the street is especially wide compared to most Newton Streets and the slope encourages speeding. There is a stop sign on Heatherland (eastbound) and noted that Heatherland becomes one-way as it crosses over Upland, so a stop sign there is irrelevant.

Dave Koses passed out a map to Council members that identified the homes of school age children in the area. The site is about 4 blocks from Countryside School and within walking distance for many children. He felt that the City should encourage children to walk to school and the intersection needs to be safer. He felt that a stop sign at this location would improve pedestrian safety.

Alderman Samuelson felt there was too great a disparity in the traffic counts in each direction and that people would not take the stop signs seriously, leading to running of signs and accidents. She could not support stop signs on Upland and in general, that streets should be reconfigured to be more pedestrian friendly prior to repaving.

Capt. Sbordone and Candace Havens concurred that generally warrants should be met, but felt the safety of the children was an overriding concern and that a stop sign, though not typically used as a traffic calming device, would have the affect of at least slowing traffic and improving the situation.

The Council voted to approve the addition of stop signs on Upland Street. Alderman Samuelson and Clint Schuckel voted to deny the request.

#489-02 CAROLYN GOLDMAN, 15 Woodlawn Drive, Chestnut Hill, requesting a stop sign at the intersection of RESERVOIR DRIVE and WOODLAWN DRIVE. (Ward 6)

**ACTION:** **APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0**

**NOTE:** Carolyn Goldman explained to the Council that the street branches into a "Y" so it's impossible to tell which street has the right of way at the

intersection. Reservoir Drive slopes down towards the intersection and cars pick up speed on that stretch of the road. Mt. Alvernia School is at the top of the hill and adds traffic. She feels one street should have a stop sign so accidents don't occur.

Clint Schuckel noted that traffic counts were low, but the warrants that requires clear identification of right of way and good visibility can be met. There was no crash history at this site. He recommended a stop sign on Reservoir Drive, since the cars seem to go faster on that street.

Alderman Baker supported the applicant's request and asked that striping or other special markers be used to draw attention to a new stop sign, if installed. Clint Schuckel confirmed that a line and lettering on the street would help people to become aware of it.

The Council voted 5-0 to approve the request for a stop sign on Reservoir Drive at Woodlawn Drive.

#200-03

CHARLOTTE CHEN, 5 Clarendon Street, Newton requesting 3-hour parking restriction from 9 am to 4 pm (Fire risk in front of 28 Clarendon due to liquid oxygen stored inside. (Ward 2)

**ACTION:**

**APPROVED AS AMENDED (5-0)**

**NOTE:**

Charlotte Chen indicated that the individual with the liquid oxygen no longer lives 28 Clarendon Street, but that the neighbors felt other problems on the street merited consideration. She said commuters and sometimes parents of children at Cabot School park on the street. Cars parked nearest the corner obscure visibility and narrows the road at the turn, which may limit emergency access. Since the street is narrow, cars parked opposite one another have little space between them. She showed the Council pictures taken when there was snow that further narrowed the road.

Clint Schuckel stated that the street is 24 feet wide and too narrow to safely allow parking on both sides when cars parked across from each other. He recommended no parking be allowed on the east side where utility poles are already available for signing and noted that additional signs can be installed to keep cars from parking near corners to assure good access for fire trucks there. He read two letters from neighbors; one letter requested keeping the intersections cleared and not restricting the entire street. The other letter expressed the view that the problem is caused by residents who have too many cars and no parking should be allowed on one side to protect emergency access at all times.

Several neighbors spoke about a variety of problems on the street such as garbage trucks that could not pass through and honked their horns to get people to move the cars; however commuter cars could not be moved. Another neighbor noted that the street has a mix of two-family and single-family residences and the number of cars fluctuates. When several tenants with cars live in a building, they may park on the street to avoid juggling of cars in the driveways. Some felt that if no parking was allowed on one side, that there would be no place on the opposite side for neighbors' use because non-neighbors would use it. One neighbor urged the Council to consider alternative parking for the commuters so that they're not pushed from one street to the next. Another noted that the situation is not pedestrian friendly and would like to see that improved.

The Chair took a straw poll of the neighbors and the majority favored have time-limited restricted parking opposite a "No Parking" zone, however there was no consensus among the Council or neighbors as to what sort of restriction would be best.

On behalf of Alderman Linsky who was unable to attend, the Chair mentioned that he supported the least restrictive approach to addressing the problem. Alderman Albright agreed with this approach.

The Council felt that public safety for emergency access was paramount and that a "No Parking" zone should be established on one side. If this was an incomplete solution to the problem the Council urged the neighbors to return for further consideration. The Council voted (5-0) to approve a "No Parking" zone on the east side of the street.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens,  
Traffic Council Chair