

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

Thursday, June 24, 2004

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

Aldermen Present: Ald. Baker, Harney, Johnson, Lennon, Linsky, Mansfield, Sangiolo, Vance

#437-02 JUDITH BRICKMAN, 3 Glenwood Avenue requesting two-hour parking restriction on GLENWOOD AVENUE. (Ward 6)

ACTION: **APPROVE AS AMENDED (3-2)**

NOTE: This item was last heard in January 2004. At that time, no parking problem was obvious. Residents felt this was due to cold weather, so the item was held for warmer weather.

Clint Schuckel indicated that more cars are now visible nearest Parker Street than in January, but congestion on other parts of the street is not a problem. He noted there are 2-hour parking restrictions on the opposite side of Parker Street from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dave Koses expressed concern that cars parked across from one another may impair emergency access. He also felt if neighborhoods within a specified distance of commuter stops permitted commuter parking, the load would be shared and would lessen the impacts on any one neighborhood.

Neighbors nearest Parker Street favored restrictions whereas those farther away from Parker did not. A petition was submitted by 18 residents who opposed 2-hour parking on their part of the street and generally support parking on one side. Several noted that visibility at the corner is often blocked by parked cars near the intersection at Parker and it is sometimes difficult and dangerous to back out of driveways near the corner. The problems occur at various times of the day; the neighbors feel most are commuters who park for work in the day and to Red Sox games in the afternoons and evenings.

The Traffic Council felt a restriction was needed near Parker and deliberated over how far to restrict the street, noting it is difficult to predict whether traffic will be pushed farther down the street and whether to pre-empt this by extending the new restriction beyond the trouble spot.

The Council voted (3-2) to restrict parking to two hours from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on both sides of Ridge Street between Parker Street and the intersection at Glenwood. Council members Havens and Koses voted against the motion because cars could still park across from one another and narrow emergency access.

#292-03

ALD. LENNON requesting two-hour parking, including Saturday/Sunday/Holidays on LENGLEN ROAD, east side, from a point 200 feet northerly from Washington Street to Crafts Street. Also, amend existing provision in Section 19-176, Lenglen Road, to include Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. (Ward 1)

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (5-0)

NOTE:

This item was brought before the Council in March and held pending conclusion of neighborhood discussions about parking matters. Clint Schuckel explained that the L-shaped street is a private way between Crafts and a bend in the road; it is a public way from the bend to Washington Street. Offices, residences and a church border the street. Whole Foods' employees park alongside the street nearest the offices and the noise and congestion bothers the neighbors, though their employer provides them with free parking nearby. The Fire Department is concerned fire trucks won't be able to maneuver in the street if cars are parked to the corner at Crafts and Lenglen or the inside corner when obstructed by parked cars. They also need to access a fire hydrant in front of the condos and sprinkler heads at the intersection at Crafts. At present, there is a two-hour restriction on the southerly side of the street on both the public and private ways. On the northerly side of the street, the private way is unrestricted and the public way has a "No Parking" restriction. Property owners on the north side of the private way indicated a willingness to restrict parking adjacent to their property to two hours.

The Council voted (5-0) to create a 2-hour parking zone on both sides of the private way from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day. The Council voted (5-0) to restrict parking to two hours on the public way from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (currently no times are listed). It was noted that the City Engineer may restrict parking within 20 feet of the corners to assure an adequate turning radius for fire engines.

349-03

DONNA WHITHAM, 295 Central Street, Auburndale, requesting that Section 19-176 re: *Central Street* be amended by changing the existing parking prohibition, which restricts parking from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the south side from Woodland Road to Fern Street, to allow parking in front of the Whitham residence. (Ward 4)

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-1)

NOTE:

This petition was held in April, pending completion of the application and notification of neighbors. Clint Schuckel said the existing restrictions

were likely put into place to protect the neighborhood from commuter traffic, since it is near the Auburndale T stop; the petitioner agreed. In previous discussion, the Council expressed concern about lifting a restriction in front of a single house. After speaking with her neighbors, Ms. Whitham revised her request to include all three residences on the westerly side of Central Street between Woodland Road and Fern Street.

Dave Koses felt it inappropriate to rescind restrictions on any portion of the street. He also felt that the stretch where there are no homes could accommodate commuter parking. He stressed a need to balance neighborhood needs while encouraging people to take public transit. Ald. Samuelson and Candace Havens agreed, but preferred metering of the spaces in front of the non-residential area to allow commuters, but not draw them away from free spaces nearer the T stop. Ald. Sangiolo and Ald. Baker questioned whether all affected property owners were contacted and about the appropriateness of recommending new changes in the context of this request. Rosalie Myers said some property owners that would be affected by proposed metering had not been notified and the Chair did not support further changes without soliciting input from all affected parties. The Council agreed metering around T stops should be looked at in a broader context at another time.

Dave Koses made a motion to rescind the restriction on the westerly side of Central from Woodland to Fern, but withdrew the motion after further discussion.

The Council voted (4-1) to amend Section 19-176 to rescind existing restrictions in front of residences numbered 295-305 on the west side of Central Avenue; restrictions in front of undeveloped Mass Pike property will remain unchanged. Dave Koses voted against the motion.

379-03

ALD. JOHNSON AND LINSKY requesting discussion (with possible ordinance change) regarding parking issues Monday through Saturday on NEWTONVILLE AVENUE between Walnut Street and Harvard Street, Newtonville (Ward 2).

ACTION : **APPROVE TRIAL (4-1)**

NOTE:

Ald. Johnson and Linky introduced this item, noting several problems along Newtonville Avenue, especially at the intersection with Walnut such as people double-parking near the intersection, in crosswalks and too close to the corner. In the winter when there is snow, the road is narrow and if cars park on both side, cars must weave to get through, posing problems for emergency access and difficulty exiting driveways.. Resident Marilyn Benetov said people who live on Newtonville Avenue have difficulty leaving the street on the adjacent intersections at Walnut Street, Centre Street, Cabot Street and Harvard Avenue.

Council members discussed concerns about enforcement of existing regulations, the lack of loading zones on Walnut Street and the need to keep corners clear of stopping or parking. Some felt that restricting turning movements and eliminating parking within 20 feet of the intersection of Walnut and Newtonville Avenue could help the situation. Clint Shuckel felt he should gather more information about traffic volumes and island design before making recommendations. He further noted that the existing metered parking space nearest the intersection is within 20 feet of the intersection and could be removed to help visibility at the corner.

The Council voted (4-1) to authorize a 60-day trial for right-turns only from Newtonville Avenue traveling westbound at Walnut Street. Clint Schuckel voted against the motion, citing concerns about how to safely direct people and enforce temporary signing. Candace Havens noted the Police Department could halt the trial at any time if it caused a safety hazard.

#430-03

ALD. LIPSITT & BAKER requesting stop signs eastbound on Ward Street at Hammond Street/Woodchester Road/Ward Street intersection. Northbound traffic on Hammond Street frequently is in conflict with eastbound traffic on Ward Street. (Ward 7)

ACTION:

APPROVE 60-DAY TRIAL (3-2)

NOTE:

Ald. Baker indicated the intersection is dangerous, especially for pedestrians, because there is a crosswalk where two busy streets converge. There is a stop sign on Hammond, which may cause some confusion and/or expectation that all directions have stop signs when they don't.

Clint Schuckel indicated that state warrants for a stop sign there are not met, but that the volume of traffic on the adjacent streets is about even. The configuration of streets is unusual in that Ward becomes a one-way street at Hammond. He pointed out that when there is a disparity between volumes, people often disregard stop signs because they seldom encounter cross traffic and this creates another sort of hazard. He indicated there is a crossing guard in the morning and afternoon at the crosswalk on school days. He recommended reconfiguring the intersection by squaring the corners so cars must slow down turning right from Ward onto Hammond. He added that the MWRA will be working on a street project on the one-way section of Ward this summer and this will temporarily alter traffic flow.

The Traffic Council felt that cars which move quickly down Ward (eastbound) should be slowed. They discussed the hazards of a crosswalk without a stop sign and the risk of that through traffic onto Ward will not

stop at a stop sign where they are accustomed to passing through the intersection. They considered a variety of solutions including painting preferred traffic lanes on the pavement, use of barrels, and resident funding of improvements. While recognizing stop signs generally are not considered the best means for slowing traffic, they did not feel there were effective measures that could be implemented.

The Council voted (3-2) for a 60-day trial of a stop sign on Ward going eastbound at Hammond beginning in September, with review of results-to-date to return to the Traffic Council in October 2004 (Schuckel and Norcross voted against the trial).

#431-03

ALD. LIPSITT & BAKER requesting stop sign(s) at Mandalay Road and Woodchester Road. (Ward 7)

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-1)

NOTE:

Ald. Baker said cars speed through this neighborhood where many young children walk to Ward School. He asked that one or more signs be installed at this intersection to make it safer. Local parents Marc Laredo and Terry Yoffie agreed and said many other parents want the route to school to be safer for their children. Ms. Yoffie noted Woodchester is often used as a cut-through. Ald. Vance concurred and cited similar circumstances in which the addition of stop signs was a benefit.

Clint Schuckel presented traffic volumes and concluded that State warrants for stop signs at this intersection were not met. Traffic Council members agreed that use of stop signs on Woodchester would not produce good results because the volumes of traffic are much greater than on Ward and people would be encouraged to cruise through them. However, they saw Ward Street as a logical place to stop for cross traffic.

After lengthy discussion, the Council voted (4-1) to approve a stop sign on Mandalay at Woodchester (Schuckel voted against the motion since warrants are not met).

#432-03

ALD. LENNON requesting a four-way stop at the intersection of Clinton Street and Hawthorn Street. (Ward 1)

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (3-2)

NOTE:

Ald. Lennon said cars, particularly vehicles from the City yard, speed down the street and drivers on Hawthorne expect them to stop at the corner, though it is not a designated four-way stop. He requests that a four-way stop be mandated to assure public safety.

Clint Schuckel said the existing stop signs on Hawthorne Street are not in the list of approved signs in the City codes and needed to be properly

authorized if they are to remain. He noted that State warrants are not met here.

Sgt. Norcross pointed out that many cars park along Clinton Street and thought it would be difficult for cars to speed there.

While the Traffic Council did not see justification for a four-way stop, some felt a two-way stop on the Clinton Street instead of Hawthorne might effectively solve the problem described; Hawthorne is a relatively short street where people could not gather speed and a stop sign on Clinton would change the traffic pattern then. The Traffic Council voted (3-2) to move the stop signs from Hawthorne and place them on Clinton Street at that intersection with an additional small sign indicating that the intersection is a two-way stop (Schuckel and Norcross voted against for reasons stated previously).

The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chairperson