

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

Tuesday, October 19, 2004

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

Aldermen Present: Albright, Baker, Linsky, Vance

#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). "NO LEFT TURN/RIGHT TURN ONLY" 60-DAY TRAIL APPROVED ON JUNE 24, 2004: AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2004

ACTION:

NOTE:

DISCONTINUE TRIAL (3-1-1); APPROVE AS AMENDED (5-0)

Ald. Linsky said neighbors felt the trial has created other problems, such as more traffic on adjacent streets, especially Madison. Many people disregard the signs and turn left anyway. Neighbors present requested the trial be discontinued so old turning movements could resume. Ald. Linsky relayed a letter from Newtonville Ave proponent Marilyn Benetov, who also wished the trial be ended, but suggested the median island be extended to preclude left turns.

Clint Schuckel indicated the original request was from Newtonville Avenue residents who sought relief from parking and traffic problems on their street. A trial "Right Turn Only" from Newtonville onto Walnut Street was initiated by the Traffic Council in June to address this issue; that trial took place in August and September. He noted the difficulties at this intersection are caused in part, because Newtonville Ave and Austin Street are not aligned and the lanes on Washington converge near the intersection. Trucks have no loading zone and parked cars often block views. Observations by City staff and residents suggest between 30-60% noncompliance. Since July, 141 citations were issued; 1 accident occurred in the last 4 years. He recommended the trial be ended.

Candace Havens felt the traffic coming into Newtonville Ave should be shared among same-sized streets and wanted to know if that had occurred since the trial before determining whether to alter turning movements at this corner. David Koses supported maintaining the turn restriction and possibly extending the island to preclude left turns. He stated that a "right turn only" restriction would enhance pedestrian safety and walkability in the Newtonville Village Center.

The Traffic Council voted (3-1-1) to discontinue the trial (Havens abstained, Koses voted no). The Traffic Council also voted (5-0) to recommend that a "No Stopping/No standing zone be established on Newtonville Ave between Walnut and Bowers Streets to improve visibility at the corner.

#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 in conflict with eastbound traffic on Ward Street (Ward 7).

ACTION:

APPROVE (4-1)

NOTE:

Clint Schuckel noted that the trial began in August due to road work on the street during the summer and to assess the impacts while the schools are in session. He said the wide radius encourages speeding. Traffic counts were not met for a stop sign, but he added that the crossing guard at that corner felt the stop sign had improved safety at the corner.

Residents urged the council to consider safety of all aspects of the street by addressing speeding, visibility, pedestrian safety on streets and sidewalks.

Alderman Samuelson urged that redesign of the corner be considered as a long-term solution and asked the Traffic Engineer to so note the next time the street is repaved. Ald. Baker and Vance both supported the sign in this location.

The Traffic Council voted (4-0-1) to recommend approval of the sign (Schuckel abstained since he voted against the initial trial and felt it unsafe to remove the stop sign now that drivers/pedestrians had gotten accustomed to it.

#539-03 DEBRA SIMKIN, 138 Forest Avenue requesting parking restrictions on FOREST AVENUE between Highland Street and Greylock Road to discourage commuter (student) parking (Ward 2).

ACTION:

APPROVE AS AMENDED (3-2)

NOTE:

Debra Simkin requested restrictions to provide emergency access and create a safer condition for residents that are at times, adversely affected by all-day parking by Newton North students. Other neighbors agreed that they have difficulty getting in and out of their driveways and that the situation had worsened since restrictions were instituted on nearby streets.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 25 feet wide and unrestricted. There were not many cars in the neighborhood when he visited and no problems were obvious. However, he acknowledged that the Traffic Council has witnessed such problems worsen as the school year continues.

The Traffic Council voted (3-2) to recommend two-hour parking on both sides of Forest Avenue from Highland Street to Otis from 7am - 1pm on school days. (Norcross and Koses voted against)

#540-03 REVAN MILES 63 Hartford Street requesting no parking all days on one side of HARTFORD STREET (Ward 6).

ACTION: APPROVE AS AMENDED (5-0)

NOTE: Revan Miles described the street as very narrow, especially when parked with SUVs. She, other neighbors and the Newton Highlands Area Council representative, agreed that the village needs parking. However, they have witnessed problems with access and expressed a willingness to reconsider parking allocations in the area to assure emergency access. One neighbor suggested parking large cars on one side and smaller ones on the other side in order to maintain the maximum number of parking spaces.

Clint Schuckel indicated the street is 24 feet wide and cannot support parking on both sides; a minimum 10' wide opening is needed for through traffic. The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend no parking on the west side of Hartford and two-hour parking, Monday - Friday on the east side where one-hour parking is currently allowed (between no parking zones at corners).

#321-04 ALD. JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT, LINSKY requesting the following implementation of any/all of the following traffic calming measures for MILL STREET (Ward 2):

(A) Applying to the state to reduce the speed limit, westerly end near Walnut Street from 30 mph to 25 mph, which is the speed limit on the remainder of the street;

(B) Applying to the State for a Truck Exclusion

(C) Installation of stop signs at up to three locations and location of a raised crosswalk at one or two as well (possible intersections are Cedar/Blake, Morton/Whitney, Upland/Bulloughs).

ACTION: APPROVE AS AMENDED (4-0-1)

NOTE: Clint Schuckel reviewed the history of this item. In previous review by the Traffic Council, requests for stop signs was denied. (See docket #347-00). He reported that the street is 3/4 mile long and 24 feet wide. About 150 cars per hour travel down the street. Of the side streets, Cedar has the highest volume.

However, the warrants for stop signs are not met. Over the past 4 years, 275 tickets have been issued, mostly for speeding. Remedies for speeding are limited by ordinance, since speed bumps are not allowed in the City. He did not feel the State would support a reduced speed limit; with 85th percentile speeds of 40 mph on this street, a 25 mph limit might be perceived as artificially low and ignored. He did not feel the State would consider this a candidate for a truck exclusion because it usually requires at least 5-8% of vehicles to be trucks; currently only about 2% are trucks. He thought the most likely alternative truck route is Commonwealth Ave., in the event an exclusion is requested. He mentioned that double yellow lines can alter driving behavior and felt that there was no mandate for them on Mill; there are about 2200 cars per day traveling the street and yellow lines are usually considered appropriate at around 4000 cars per day.

The neighbors stated that Mill is a cut-through and speeding threatens public safety. They stressed the pedestrian nature of the neighborhood, slippery roads in the winter, blind curves in the road, wide open areas where speed accelerates. They all agreed that traffic must slow down for the sake of drivers and pedestrians. They felt existing signs and other remedies have not helped the situation.

Candace Havens presented some information about raised crosswalks and speed humps from Institute of Traffic Engineering survey data. She noted raised crosswalks have less impact on vehicles, create safe areas for pedestrians, slow down traffic, reduce the volume of traffic, and reduce collisions. Overall, she felt they best addressed the problems of this street and recommended that two be installed on the street. She also suggested that a definition be added to the code book that distinguishes them from speed bumps and allows them where appropriate. She added that Police, Fire, and Public Safety and Transportation should be consulted on the concept and design.

Ald. Linksy echoed the concerns about speed and traffic. Ald. Albright noted she had experienced sliding on the ice there in the winter and suggested a part of the street become one-way to discourage its use as a cut-through. Ald. Samuelson pointed out that if the yellow lines are eliminated and parking removed from one side of the street, cars could park on the other side and this would have a traffic calming effect. Sgt. Norcross wanted to review the information about raised crosswalks before recommending them.

A Traffic Council motion to prohibit parking on one side of the street

(where hydrants are located) failed (0-5). The Traffic Council voted (4-0-1) to recommend a minimum of two raised crosswalks at locations and of a design to be selected by the Traffic Engineer (Norcross abstained).

#367-04 PETER MOORADIAN, 190 Chapel Street requesting handicapped parking space in front of 190 CHAPEL STREET (Ward 1).

ACTION: APPROVE (5-0)

NOTE: The request is for a handicap space in front of a two-family residence with a single driveway. The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities reviewed this request with the aid of our newly adopted handicap parking policy for residences and recommended approval.

The Traffic Council felt the conditions warranted such a space, given the site constraints and voted (5-0) to approve the request.

#410-04 DAVID KOSES, Newton Transportation Planning Coordinator requesting the following:

- (1) Conversion of eleven long-term meters to three-hour meters in the Elm Street Municipal lot, West Newton;
- (2) Creation of an accessible parking space on Washington Street near the Newton District Court, West Newton;
- (3) Addition of metered parking west of R.J. Crowley's on Washington Street, West Newton

ACTION: APPROVE AS AMENDED (5-0)

NOTE: The Traffic Council discussed general parking demands in the area and agreed that there is a need for additional long- and short-term parking and that the short-term should be closest to shops for customers and the long-term spaces farther away but within walking distance of the village for employees and commuters. As such, they felt the change of eleven 12-hour meters to 3-hour meters near the courthouse and the addition of up to 22 new long-term spaces along Washington Street would help the situation. They felt a handicap space near the corner of Elm and Washington would help visitors access the courts as well as village shops. A metered space would be added just east of the fire hydrant near the courthouse, so there would be no net loss in short-term metered parking available to the general public at this location. They also discussed eliminating police parking spaces in front of the courthouse that now block through traffic.

The Traffic Council voted (5-0) to approve the request; metered parking west of RJ Crowley's shall include as many spaces as the Traffic Engineer is able to safely design into the space.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chairperson