



## Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

### City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

#### Remote Participation:

Present: Councilors Auchincloss (Chair), Lipof, Downs, Ciccone, Malakie, Grossman and Markiewicz

Absent: Councilor Bowman

City Staff: Captain Paul Anastasia, Newton Police Department and Isaac Prizant, Traffic Engineer

#### **#186-20      Requesting new public auto license**

RAJIV KUMAR, 2323 Washington Street, #G3, Newton, MA 02462 requesting **one (1) new public auto license** for Om Sai Enterprises Inc.

**Action:      Public Safety & Transportation Approved 7-0**

**Note:**      Captain Anastasia and Rajiv Kumar joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Captain Anastasia stated that Mr. Kumar's vehicle was inspected on May 12, 2020, passing inspection by City Ordinance requirements.

Without discussion, Councilor Downs made a motion to approve this new public auto license request. Committee members agreed 7-0.

Chair Auchincloss stated that the City Council will be voting on this public auto request on May 18, 2020. If approved, the Council Order will be forwarded after the 20-day waiting period.

#### **#127-20      Appeal of Traffic Council Decision - Roosevelt Road at Theodore Road.**

JUNE WELZ 46 Roosevelt Road, Newton appealing the approval of Traffic Council petition TC87-19 on January 23, 2020 on removing the stop signs on Roosevelt Road, in both directions, and retaining the stop signs on Theodore Road, in both directions. (Ward 8)

**Action:      Public Safety & Transportation Appeal Denied 7-0**

**Note:** Isaac Prizant and Captain Anastasia joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Mr. Prizant provided Council members with a PowerPoint presentation, attached to this report. The PowerPoint included a location map, site photos, vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle volumes, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidance on multi-stop applications, Massachusetts amendment to stop signs, current regulation and optional action for consideration.

Mr. Prizant stated that the Traffic and Parking Regulations (TPR) currently includes stop signs on Roosevelt Road at Theodore Road, eastbound and westbound and Theodore Road at Roosevelt Road, northbound and southbound. It was necessary for the City to install stop signs once staff was notified that the stop signs are in the TPRs. When the stop signs were installed, elected officials and City staff received negative feedback. Due to the negative feedback, Mr. Prizant conducted a warrant study using the MUTCD guidelines.

In January 2020, prior to the pandemic data was collected during peak high school travel times. Data shows a much higher traffic volume on Roosevelt Road. The MUTCD provides guidance with warrants on when to install stop signs. Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F and H were not met. Criteria G was met due to difficult site lines - poor sight lines exiting Theodore Road northbound approach looking east (right). This approach is exiting a private way servicing one single family home driveway.

Mr. Prizant then stated that there have been zero reported crashes in the past three years. He then addressed the Massachusetts amendment to stop signs. He stated in part...“the purpose of the stop sign is to designate right-of-way to vehicles making conflicting movements. It is not intended, nor shall it be used for the control of speed, traffic calming or to forestall pedestrian, rear-end or turning movement accidents. To ensure uniformity in stop sign studies and recommendations, the warrants as provided in the 2009 MUTCD, Section 2B.05 will govern”.

At the January 23, 2020, Traffic Council meeting Committee members approved deleting the stop signs on Roosevelt Road at Theodore Road, eastbound and westbound directions as the MUTCD warrants were not met.

Chair Auchincloss opened the discussion to members of the public who were present. Residents express their concerns, questions and suggestions.

**Concerns:**

- The stop sign has helped with traffic and speed volumes.
- Drivers have the tendency to speed on Roosevelt Road even during this pandemic.
- A resident stated that the reported crash data is incorrect.
- Since the stop sign was installed, there has been zero observed crashes.
- The stop sign promotes overall safety to residents, pedestrians and drivers.

- Workers, residents and guests park on Roosevelt Road, it is unfair to shift parking to one side.

Questions:

- Why remove the stop sign, it has proven to be beneficial?
- If the stop sign is removed, what can or what will be done to address safety issues for pedestrians, students and vehicles?

Suggestions:

- A resident suggested removing stop signs including the one servicing the single family home driveway.
- Perhaps paint a double yellow center line on Roosevelt Road and shift parking to one side.
- Perhaps a new item can be docketed requesting road design changes.

Residents present agreed and stated that the stop sign should remain on Roosevelt Road at Theodore Road, eastbound and westbound directions.

Council members comments, questions and suggestions:

Comments:

- It may be unfortunate to some, once staff installed stop signs on Roosevelt Road, both directions to reflect the TPR book properly of stop sign locations.
- Enforcement and pavement markings would be beneficial.

Questions:

- If the stop sign is removed because it does not meet the warrants, what can be done to address safety issues and road design?
- Where does Roosevelt Road fall on the traffic calming list?
- Has the Department Public Works seen a major funding decline in the proposed budget do to the pandemic?
- Is the data on zero reported crashes in three years correct?
- Is data available on traffic traveling direction?
- Were many bicyclists observed while collecting data?
- When where the stop signs installed on Roosevelt Road?

Suggestions:

- The stop signs on Roosevelt Road, both directions should be removed as they do not meet the MUTCD warrants.
- Perhaps remove the stop sign at the private driveway of the one single family home?

Mr. Prizant answered that the stop signs were installed in November or December of 2019. The curve in the road at Theodore and Roosevelt Roads is not ideal, it is a blind curve. It would be possible to conduct pavement markings, perhaps painting center lines although the minimum vehicle volumes are not met in the MUTCD warrants. At the curve, perhaps a bump out could

be painted, or the curve could be tightened to make an adjusted right turn. Pavement markings can be done almost independent of traffic process which is affordable and simple without using funding from the traffic calming budget.

Roosevelt Road was added to the list of traffic calming items. Data was collected on Roosevelt Road closer to Parker Street. Mr. Prizant answered that Roosevelt Road has not yet been evaluated on the traffic calming list. He then briefly explained the process and stated that the Department Public Works conducts an annual evaluation of streets in the City by collecting data, process, evaluation and prioritization. He then answered that he has not seen a major funding decline in the proposed budget for pavement markings.

Mr. Prizant stated that the data collected closer to Parker Street showed vehicles traveling 24 miles per hour of 84 percent of the vehicles. While collecting data in January, bicycles were not observed. Data proves that there is not a speeding issue. The data on zero reported crashes was collected from the Police Department. Because of the current data, Mr. Prizant stated that he does not think that Roosevelt Road will rank high on the traffic calming list. Pavement markings could be completed as an interim or permanent measure. Intersection reconstruction is not on the table at this time. Data is not available on traffic traveling direction.

Mr. Prizant provided Council members with a photo of a draft plan of a painted bump out on Brandeis Road and Roosevelt Road, attached to this report. He stated that this draft plan may be subject to change. Painting a bump out is reasonable and affordable.

Captain Anastasia stated that after the January 23, 2020 Traffic Council meeting, the Police Department placed a speed trailer on Roosevelt Road to notify drivers of their speed. Data collected proved that drivers were not speeding. In the future, a speed trailer will be utilized on Roosevelt Road towards Parker Street for a longer duration to collect additional data.

In closing, Chair Auchincloss stated that the stop signs do not meet the MUTCD warrants. Residents feel unsafe, but the stop signs have made them feel safer. Mr. Prizant and Captain Anastasia have provided options that may be effective including pavement markings and implementing the speed trailer after the pandemic.

After a lengthy discussion, Councilor Lipof made a motion to deny the appeal. Again, the suggestion was made to remove the stop sign at the private driveway of the one single family home. Mr. Prizant agreed and asked if this item could be approved as amended. Chair Auchincloss disagreed and stated that he would like to hear from that resident prior to removing a stop sign at their driveway. It was asked when pavement markings could be painted. Mr. Prizant answered by summers end and will have this discussion within the Department Public Works Department.

Without further discussion, Councilor Lipof made a motion to deny the appeal, upholding Traffic Council's decision to remove the stop signs on Roosevelt Road, in both directions. Council members agreed 7-0.

**Chair's Note:**

On May 13, 2020, Council members were provided with an email from Councilor Markiewicz regarding an update on improving public access to information regarding traffic calming, traffic concerns, etc.

Councilor Markiewicz said that he and Councilor Malakie met with Jason Sobel, Director of Transportation, Commissioner Jim McGonagle, Shawna Sullivan, Department Public Works and Joe Mulvey, IT Director on March 9, 2020 to discuss ways to improve public awareness of traffic calming and how to get more information about requesting help or reporting concerns. This meeting was taken in response to our committee's decision to make the provision of better information re: traffic calming, safety, etc.

The group discussed enhancing the website to provide better information focusing on making access more apparent or easier. There was agreement by Mr. Sobel that this could and should be improved. He noted that there are about 40-50 requests for traffic calming annually and that about half of them come through 311 requests. Mr. Mulvey joined in order to get an idea as to what needs we might eventually address.

At this point, while Mr. Sobel agreed to work on this and has begun some of the work, he has not yet been able to complete any significant work on it, this as the response to the pandemic has further impacted his and his staff's availability but will be addressed.

Councilor Markiewicz asked Committee members to forward their suggestions to him.

Council member suggestions.

**Suggestions:**

- Please provide a flow chart on the process moving forward.
- Please make the website easy to understand and traceable by allowing a person to provide an easy description of a problem, with the ability to request a solution, rather than the requirement of entering a specific problem.

At approximately 8:10 p.m., the Committee adjourned.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Jacob D. Auchincloss, Chair**