



Justin M. Hanrahan
Chief of Police

CITY OF WATERTOWN

TRAFFIC COMMISSION



David Sampson
Sergeant
Tel: 617-972-6547

Justin Hanrahan, Chair
Ryan Nicholson, Fire Chief
Gregory St. Louis, Superintendent of Public Works
Steven Magoon, Community Development and Planning
Tyler Glode, City Engineer
Ms. Kelly Gallagher
Mr. Robert Airasian

July 11, 2024

June 26, 2024 Traffic Commission Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Justin Hanrahan, Ryan Nicholson, Gregory St. Louis, Steven Magoon, Tyler Glode, Kelly Gallagher, Robert Airasian

Traffic Commission members addressed the following items:

Item 1 – Mr. Magoon made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 29, 2024 Commission meeting; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 – The Commission received an update from Sgt. David Sampson of the Watertown Police Department regarding parking restrictions on Highland Avenue from Lexington Street to #55 Highland Avenue. Sgt. Sampson reported that he and Mr. Glode assessed the south side of Highland Avenue closest to Lexington Street. It was determined that one legal space could be maintained in this area. The remaining roadway from a point opposite #55 Highland Avenue to Lexington Street could not accommodate on-street parking.

Chief Nicholson made a motion to restrict parking on the north side of Highland Avenue from Lexington Street to #55 Highland Avenue, restrict parking on the south Side of Highland Avenue from a point opposite #55 Highland Avenue to a point 43' west of Lexington Street, allow 2-hour parking from a point 43' west of Lexington Street to a point 20' west of Lexington Street, and restrict parking from a point 20' west of Lexington Street to Lexington Street; Mr. Glode seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 3 – The Commission continued its discussion regarding a request by Ms. Dawn Slaven to amend the City's meter hours of operation and rates. Ms. Slaven could not attend this meeting.

Mr. Magoon explained that the City conducted a parking study in Watertown and Coolidge Squares. The primary reason for meters in the library lot is to prevent the lot from becoming a commuter lot. The absence of meters would result in people parking there all day. There is an opportunity for people who find the fee an issue to find parking further from the library. Mr. Magoon does not suggest removing meters from the library at this time.

Sgt. Sampson explained that the City received a request to allow free 15 minute parking at a few meters. The chair of the library trustees added to the email chain indicating that they receive many similar requests.

Chief Nicholson asked if there was any consideration of a reduced rate for the library lot.

Meter rates are set to generate turnover. The parking study looked to set different rates at different area of demand to create that turnover. Not just used by the library. Creating a few short term spaces that may be free is something that could be discussed and considered. Wholesale removal would not be suggested.

Chief Hanrahan felt that it may make sense to have a couple of short-term parking spaces to allow people to drop off or pick up library materials.

Mr. Magoon was happy to take suggestions back to discuss internally with DPW and others and bring a recommendation to the Commission.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to deny a request to change the meters at this time but asked staff to consider some short-term parking spaces in the library lot; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 4 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Tara Conklin of Chapman Street to restrict parking on the south side of Warren Street prior to the intersection with Chapman Street.

Ms. Conklin reported that she and her family live on Chapman Street and have to cross Warren Street to attend daycare. Ms. Conklin spoke with Sgt. Sampson about possibly installing a crosswalk or stop signs in this area, but those options may not be feasible. Ms. Conklin and Sgt. Sampson then discussed restricting parking on the eastbound side of Warren Street prior to Chapman Street. The curve in the road makes it difficult to see oncoming vehicles.

Chief Hanrahan agreed with Ms. Conklin and asked about crash data at the intersection. The residential wall at the corner also makes it difficult to see oncoming traffic.

Sgt. Sampson reported that he reviewed the Department's records and noted three crashes in a three-year period. None of the crashes were a result of deficiencies of the intersection. Sgt. Sampson agreed that it is difficult to see oncoming Warren Street traffic when traveling north on Chapman Street.

Sgt. Sampson did not recommend a crosswalk in this area due to line of sight issues; he felt that neither pedestrians nor motorists would have time to react to one another. Sgt. Sampson also noted that the intersection would not meet the collision warrants for an all-way stop. Sgt. Sampson agreed that removing some parking on the south side of Warren Street would allow better sight distances; he met with Mr. Glode in the area and collectively they determined that restricting parking for a distance of 50' prior to the intersection with Chapman Street would be helpful. This would also preserve approximately three on-street parking spaces on Warren Street closer to the Cunniff School. Sgt. Sampson reported that Officer Parent of the Traffic Division spoke with the resident of 234 Warren Street where the proposed parking restriction would apply; the resident was not opposed to a restriction in this area.

Ms. Gallagher reported that she travels in this area frequently, and agreed with the parking restriction.

Chief Nicholson inquired and was informed that parking would likely continue to be an issue during school drop-off and pick-up, but day to day a restriction should remove some of the challenges at the intersection.

Chief Hanrahan also supported the restriction.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to restrict parking on the south side of Warren Street from a point 50' west of Chapman Street, to Chapman Street; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 5 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Stephen Rosenthal, Property Manager of Charles River Towers at 131/151 Coolidge Avenue for the installation of Do Not Block Driveway signage or road striping at the exit of Charles River Towers. Mr. Rosenthal reported that the new traffic signals at the intersection of Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street are working fine, however during the morning and evening the new No Right on Red restriction onto Grove Street Extension is causing vehicles to back up in front of the 151 Coolidge Avenue driveway. Mr. Rosenthal requested signage or striping to restrict motorists from blocking the driveway.

Sgt. Sampson reported that if approximately four vehicles are queued at this location, the fourth vehicle would likely block the driveway.

Mr. Magoon reported that the Commission does not typically approve these types of requests. Mr. Magoon was concerned that even with signage, there is a likelihood that motorists will not abide by the restriction. Mr. Magoon was hesitant to start a precedence for these types of requests and did not feel like it would be an effective measure.

Mr. Glode reported that the DPW would not stripe the roadway for this type of request; if a sign were approved as a unique condition, Mr. Glode agreed that the measure would likely be ineffective. Chief Nicholson agreed as well.

Mr. Airasian felt that the vehicle queues likely happened when the intersection was under an all-way stop control. Mr. Airasian also did not want to create a precedence for these situations.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to deny the request for striping or signage at the 151 Coolidge Avenue driveway; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Vitaly Evdokimov, manager of MY SALON located at 150 Arsenal Street to restrict two parking spaces in front of the business to Handicap Only Parking. Mr. Evdokimov reported that many of the Salon's patrons have limited mobility; on-street parking is difficult to find, and the walk from the parking garage to the Salon is a long distance. The elevator to assist patrons to the main street level is currently not working. The only entrance to the business is on Arsenal Street. Mr. Evdokimov suggested to placing one HP only space on each side of the street – perhaps the one across the street could be used by patrons of Toyota of Watertown.

Sgt. Sampson agreed that the walking distance and sidewalk grade from the parking garage to the business could be difficult for people with mobility issues.

Mr. Airasian noted that there was no easy way for people with mobility issues to get to the business and would support an HP only space in front of the entrance. Mr. Airasian supported an HP Only space, but did not feel two reserved spaces would be necessary.

Mr. Magoon did not recommend an HP space across the street from the business. He supported an HP Only space but asked Mr. Glode whether sidewalk improvements would be necessary to accommodate HP parking.

Mr. Glode reported that in order to traverse to the business, a motorist would have to traverse the vehicular way; this would not make the space accessible for ADA purposes. Also, the location is very close to a new shared use path and makes it difficult to install ADA access in close proximity to the business. Mr. Glode was in favor of installing HP parking in the area, but not necessarily immediately in front of the business. Mr. Glode would have to look at parking options in proximity to the area crosswalks.

Mr. Airasian made a motion to have Mr. Glode study the area to determine whether an HP Only parking space could be installed; Mr. Magoon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 7 – The Commission reviewed a request by Shanta Puchtler of Palfrey Street for traffic safety improvements on Palfrey Street. Mr. Puchtler reported that over the past 2-3 years, he has noticed a significant increase in traffic volume and traffic related noise. He felt that traffic was changing the overall feel of the neighborhood. Mr. Puchtler was concerned that the City's increase in development will push more traffic onto the local roadways and change the local quiet roadways into traffic-oriented roadways. He mentioned a number of possible solutions (restricting travel to one-way, additional signage, crosswalks, more monitoring, speed humps) and asked the Traffic Commission to think broadly and explore ways to calm traffic in the City's neighborhoods and find ways to reduce traffic from being pushed onto smaller streets.

Ms. Maureen Foley of Winthrop Street addressed the Commission and believed that the narrowing of the major roadways has caused vehicles to travel at lower speeds but it has also caused people to find alternate routes.

Mr. Glode estimated that the road was reconstructed approximately 8-10 years ago. In approximately 5 years, the City may revisit Palfrey Street from a complete streets perspective. There are grant opportunities that may allow the City to create some test areas and get more data from the street. Once more data is collected, measures could be considered for the roadway. The significant gradient of the roadway makes it difficult to install traffic calming measures.

Mr. Airasian spoke of the parked vehicles on Palfrey Street. On one hand, the parked vehicles along with poor lines of sight make the situation difficult, but removing parking could increase overall vehicle speeds.

Ms. Gallagher noted that removing on-street parking could open up more speeding. Ms. Gallagher supports gathering more data and making decisions based on that data.

Chief Hanrahan informed Mr. Puchtler that more enforcement would be conducted on Palfrey Street.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to have more engineering analysis conducted to determine what traffic calming measures may be feasible; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 8 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Heather Carroll of Bromfield Street for the installation of a No Parking Here to Corner sign on the west side of Evans Street 20 feet north of Waltham Street.

Ms. Carroll could not attend the meeting. Sgt. Sampson reported that Ms. Carroll often sees vehicles parked in this area; this causes issues for motorists attempting to safely enter and exit Evans Street. This location is adjacent to the side of Gigi's Restaurant at 129 Waltham Street. Many patrons and food delivery service personnel likely park there to briefly visit the restaurant. The current Stop sign is posted on a utility pole because the stop line is behind the pole. An independent post with a Stop sign at the stop line would likely not be able to be seen by motorists. Sgt. Sampson noted that a sign could be placed 20' from the crosswalk and still maintain a public on-street parking space near the establishment.

Mr. Magoon believed that parking too close to the crosswalk is a problem. The parked vehicles likely block visibility. Mr. Magoon supported a sign considering that this is a high frequency business.

Mr. Glode reported that he was concerned with the Stop sign visibility at this location. It appears that the sign has been struck many times, and the utility pole is leaning. The DPW will reach out to the utility

companies to possibly repair and relocate the pole to allow for a new Stop sign and post; this will take a significant amount of time to address. Mr. Glode supported the No Parking sign, 20' from the crosswalk.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to install a No Parking Here to Corner sign on the west side of Evans Street 20 feet north of the crosswalk at Waltham Street; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 9 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Evan Wilcox of Hawthorne Street for an all-way stop at the intersection of Fayette Street at Pearl Street. Mr. Wilcox reported that it is difficult to exit Pearl Street onto Fayette Street; vehicles travel at high rates of speed on Fayette Street, and the vegetation on the corners forces motorists to travel into the intersection to see oncoming vehicles. Mr. Wilcox requested an all-way stop for this intersection.

Sgt. Sampson reported that a 2-year review of the police department's records revealed 4 crashes at the intersection. When Sgt. Sampson and Mr. Lessard from the Department of Public Works assessed the area, it was discovered that at some point the Stop sign on Pearl Street at Fayette Street was knocked over; it was temporarily replaced onto a utility pole. The sign is now back in its proper location.

Mr. Glode will ask the City's Tree Warden to inspect the area to ensure that any City owned vegetation is not encroaching on the area. If the vegetation is on private property, Mr. Glode will contact the Zoning Office.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to deny the request for an all-way stop at the intersection of Fayette Street at Pearl Street due to the intersection not meeting the warrants; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 10 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Sandra Clarey Senior Project Manager for Bowman for curbside modifications and parking relocation related to the MBTA bus stop accessibility and safety improvements on Main Street at Whites Avenue. Ms. Angela Saunders for Bowman made the presentation. Ms. Saunders reported that the MBTA is a client of Bowman's; the MBTA is working to make all of their stops compliant and accessible. The project proposes a realignment of Main Street at Whites Avenue and will include bump-outs. The bump-outs will improve safety and allow buses to pull into the stops properly. With the relocation of the bus stops, one metered space will be eliminated.

Mr. Glode reported that the Engineering Department, DPW and Planning Department have been working with the MBTA on this project. It is now at a stage where it can proceed.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to approve the bump-outs and crosswalks as requested; Mr. Glode seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Ms. Ann Marie Cloonan of Winthrop Street addressed the Commission regarding ongoing requests for reinforcements of the closure to Winthrop Street during school hours to only teachers, residents and buses.

Mr. Magoon noted that where this has been brought to the Commission in the past, and other persons or entities may have an opinion on the matter; the matter should not be discussed as new business. If there is going to be any action on this issue, it should be addressed at the next meeting.

Chief Hanrahan noted that if there is a remedy being formulated, it can be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Sgt. David Sampson
Assistant to the Traffic Commission