



Justin M. Hanrahan
Chief of Police

CITY OF WATERTOWN

TRAFFIC COMMISSION



David Sampson
Sergeant
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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

September 25, 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 June 26, 2024 Commission meeting; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 –The Commission reviewed a request by Early Steps Principal Theresa McGuiness for the following:

- a) Winthrop Street at Mt. Auburn Street: Do Not Enter from 8:00 am – 1:30 pm When School is in Session, Except Residents and Busses.
- b) Hancock Street at Chauncey Street: Do Not Enter from 7:30 am – 3:30 pm When School is in Session (No Exceptions)

Watertown Public Schools Superintendent Deanne Galdston explained that the Early Steps program has staggered start times at 8:00am and 9:00am. The school also has staggered release times at 12:00pm, 1:00pm, and 2:00pm. The school relocated the 9:00am drop-off and 12:00pm and 1:00pm pick-ups to Concord Road. The school has been using a sawhorse with an attached Do Not Enter sign in the roadway at Winthrop at Mt. Auburn Street to reinforce the entry restrictions.

The Traffic Commission approved the schools traffic plan at other meetings, but the one remaining open item was the issue of access onto Winthrop Street. The school's concerns are from 7:50am-8:00am when most students are dropped off on Hancock Street.

When asked by Mr. Magoon about resident concerns that motorists leave their vehicles, block driveways, etc. Dr. Galdston noted that there are occasional offenders. During the last academic year, the biggest issues occurred between 8:00 – 8:10 am. The school is trying to curb these behaviors.

The relocation of the second drop-off and two pick-ups coupled with using an on-street sawhorse have worked very well for the school. Dr. Galdston reported to Ms. Gallagher that families were notified of the traffic pattern during school visits, and through the school's newsletter.

The school's request is to restrict entry into Winthrop Street from 8:00am-1:30pm except residents and buses. This will allow the most active drop-off and most active pick-up to occur on Hancock Street and Winthrop Street, while all other activity would occur on Concord Road.

Sgt. Sampson explained that the current signage and restrictions do not accurately reflect current approved drop-off and pick-up procedures. The proposed restriction would be clearer and more easily enforced.

Several Winthrop Street and Hancock Street residents including AnnMarie and Fred Cloonan, Maureen Foley, and Roza Mouchlian reported poor traffic conditions on the roadway, and numerous negative interactions with parents dropping off their children. The problems were eliminated at the beginning of the academic year due to a strong police presence, but conditions quickly deteriorated after officers stopped consistently enforcing the regulations. The residents asked the Commission to maintain the current established restrictions allowing only buses, staff, and residents to enter from 7:30am-3:30pm. Residents report being harassed and yelled at by parents.

Mr. Magoon acknowledged that motorists may ignore signage and asked whether a school staff member could be present at the entrance of Winthrop Street each day. Dr. Galdston reported that all Early Steps faculty are in classes at 8:00am; there are no additional staff to assign outside the building.

When asked by District A Councilor Nicole Gardner whether school resource officers could be present each day, Chief Hanrahan reported that the Department's SRO's are assigned to the Middle and High Schools.

District B Councilor Lisa Feltner reported that she has received questions about how the signage may affect cars lining up before and after drop-off and pick-up.

Hancock Street resident Mr. Jack Dargon reported that the Commission has to decide whether to allow parents into the area. If allowed, signage has to accommodate parents, residents, and the school. At this time, this is not occurring and there has to be consequences for motorists who violate the restrictions. Mr. Dargon echoed other resident requests to prohibit Hosmer School parents from using Winthrop Street by maintaining the current Do Not Enter restriction until 3:30pm.

Ms. Gallagher reported that the more that the School Department can do on this matter, the better. Mr. Airasian agreed that it is not realistic to have a constant police presence at this location; he asked the school to be more aggressive with communications to families and perhaps consider a third party to monitor Winthrop Street at Mt. Auburn Street.

Mr. Magoon felt that the issue was more of an enforcement issue, than an hour restriction issue. He felt that it was beneficial to relay the rules to the families, have a presence in the area, and be respectful to the neighbors.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict entry onto Winthrop Street at Mt. Auburn Street from 8:00 am – 1:30 pm When School is in Session, Except Residents and Busses, and restrict entry onto Hancock Street at Chauncey Street from 7:30 am – 3:30 pm When School is in Session with the a combination of school and police presence as much as possible and amend the signage to reflect these restrictions; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 3 – The Commission continued its discussion regarding a request by Mr. Kevin Higgins of Fairfield Street for the installation of raised tables on Dexter Avenue Mr. Higgins could not attend this meeting.

Sgt. Sampson summarized that in May of 2024, Mr. Higgins brought his concerns to the Commission. At that time, the Commission wanted to review Dexter Ave speed feedback data – The request was continued to the September 2024 meeting. Sgt. Sampson provided two reports containing speed and volume data. The first report was Dexter Ave northbound (towards Mt. Auburn Street). The report captured dates from May 29, 2024 to June 30, 2024. High speeds were prevalent. 1 car in the 60's but there was no way to

determine whether this was a vehicle or interference that caused this speed. The report for Dexter Ave southbound revealed that the overall results were slightly higher, but volumes were lower.

Mr. St. Louis reported that the overall numbers provided in the report do not warrant speed humps on Dexter Avenue. A project of this scope would be extremely costly; a funding request would need to be submitted for this project. At this time, there is no capital appropriation for an additional long street project. Residents could work with their councilors to submit a funding request. The City recently an MVP grant to construct bump-outs on Dexter Avenue at Cypress Street. This would add a traffic calming measure to the street.

Mr. Magoon noted that Dexter Ave is a straight road and more high speeds may be present; there may be other traffic calming measure available.

Mr. Glode reported that more data is needed. Typically, the 50th and 85th percentile speeds are used to determine whether corrections are needed. In this case, both percentiles fall below the 30 mph speed limit. There are plans to install bump-outs at the intersection of Dexter Avenue and Cypress Street that will help slow traffic.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to deny the request for the installation of raised tables on Dexter Avenue; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion to deny passed unanimously.

Item 4 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Ida Toro of Westminster Avenue to restrict one parking space in front of 36 Westminster Ave to Handicap Parking Only.

Ms. Toro reported that there is room for two public spaces in front of her house; her residence is directly across the street from the entrance to the temporary high school building. Ms. Toro has a valid HP placard and is having difficulty carrying items from her driveway to her entrance. It is a shorter walking distance from the street to her front door. Ms. Toro was recently hospitalized and requires people to visit her for assistance. Reserving an HP Only space would allow Ms. Toro to park on the street and allow her visitors to park in the driveway.

Mr. Glode reported that, if approved, a parking space would be marked out so that the back of Ms. Toro's vehicle would align with her front walkway.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict one parking space in front of 36 Westminster Ave to Handicap Parking Only with an arrow on the signage pointing to the right; Mr. St. Louis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 5 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Diane Lando of George Street to restrict one parking space in front of 21 George Street to Handicap Only Parking.

Ms. Lando reported that she recently began caring for her elderly parents who both have handicap placards. Ms. Lando reported that there are on-street parking issues caused by the lack of parking for the Lowell School and the sidewalks are in poor condition. Ms. Lando's parents have a difficult time finding space on the street or walking to the driveway.

Mr. St. Louis reported that George Street is scheduled to undergo full-depth reconstruction. New sidewalks are included in the scope of the project.

Ms. Gallagher reminded Ms. Lando that if approved, the parking space would be for any person with a handicap placard or registration plate.

Due to the scheduled construction, the Commission felt a temporary HP Only space may be appropriate.

Mr. Airasian made a motion to restrict one parking space in front of 21 George Street to Handicap Only Parking for a period of 12 months; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NOTE: Due to a scheduling conflict Chief Hanrahan left the Traffic Commission meeting. Mr. Airasian agreed to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Item 6 – The Commission reviewed a request by Otis Street residents Ms. Laura Pabo and Ms. Maya Townsend to restrict parking on Otis Street to one-side only.

Sgt. Sampson assessed the area and found that except for a very small section of the roadway adjacent to 183 Mt. Auburn St, the roadway width is 24' or slightly wider. The roadway in the small section is approx. 23' 9" wide.

There is a parking restriction on the east side of Otis Street, 30 feet each side of the 183 Mt. Auburn Street parking lot. This was done to accommodate trash removal. There is legal parking along the side of the 183 Mt. Auburn St. building. After the on-street parking spaces, there is the front lot for 183 Mt. Auburn St, then any car parked beyond the parking lot would be too close to the intersection.

If the Commission was not inclined to restrict parking to one-side, a possible compromise is to restrict parking on the east of Otis St from a point 59' south of Mt. Auburn Street to Mt. Auburn Street. This eliminates the possibility of two vehicles parking across from one another in the narrow area, and still allows a couple of cars to park alongside the 183 Mt. Auburn Street building.

Mr. Magoon noted that the 24' wide roadways are a traffic calming tool. Removing parking would likely cause the roadway to be less safe. Mr. Magoon was in favor of restricting parking, but not removing it.

District B Councilor Lisa Feltner reported that she was not advocating either way on this issue. She understands the traditional parking on both sides of the street and also regularly receives requests to slow traffic. She reported that there is a lot of congestion in this area, but vehicle speeds would increase with one-side only parking. She noted that there is no consensus on this street or in general about one-side only parking. Generally, Councilor Feltner was concerned about one-side only parking potentially taking away access to the front of homes for people who require HP Only parking.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict parking on the east side of Otis Street from a point 59' south of Mt. Auburn Street to Mt. Auburn Street; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NOTE: Due to a scheduling conflict Mr. St. Louis left the Traffic Commission meeting. This was Mr. St. Louis' final Traffic Commission meeting; he was thanked for his service to the City and the Traffic Commission.

Item 7 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Paula Navarro on behalf of other Quimby Street residents to restrict parking on Quimby Street to one-side only.

Sgt. Sampson spoke with Ms. Navarro by phone. During the conversation, it was learned that specific concerns were the parking and traffic congestion on Quimby Street at Nichols Avenue, and the difficulty exiting Quimby Street onto Nichols Avenue. Sgt. Sampson assessed the area with Mr. St. Louis and Mr. Glode. Due to the poor lines of sight, restricting parking on both sides of Quimby Street from Nichols Ave to a point 36' south of Nichols Ave may improve conditions.

Mr. Glode agreed with Sgt. Sampson.

Mr. Magoon noted that the apartment building at 94 Nichols Ave is built abutting the corner and could be an issue.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict parking on both sides of Quimby Street, 36' south of Nichols Avenue; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 8 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Lori Shapiro of Edward Road for the following:

- a. The installation of multiple speed humps on Edward Road
- b. Additional signage on Waltham Street at Edward Road to indicate that Edward Road is a one-way street
- c. Pedestrian light signals for the crosswalk on Main Street at Edward Road

Due to injuries sustained during a collision, Ms. Shapiro attended the meeting remotely. Ms. Shapiro voiced her concerns via speakerphone. Ms. Shapiro reported that she has lived on Edward Road since 2018 and there are continual and increasing speeding problems on the street. Ms. Shapiro also felt that the 30mph speed limit was too fast for the roadway and the street is a through-way for trucks. Ms. Shapiro reported that she observes many motorists turning around in driveways and traveling against the one-way restriction. She reported that there are numerous young families who live on the street. In terms of the crosswalk on Main Street at Edward Road, she felt that motorists do not respect the crosswalk and current signage. Ms. Shapiro felt that the situation needs to be addressed particularly with a bus stop adjacent to the crosswalk.

When asked by Ms. Shapiro about waiting for a private developer to make improvements when there have already been complaints, Mr. Magoon explained that the developer of 148 Waltham Street agreed to install traffic calming measures to off-set their anticipated impacts to the neighborhoods. At the time of this meeting, the developer has not moved forward on this project, and it was unknown whether the project would proceed. The benefit of the developer completing these traffic calming measures is that if the City conducted the roadway improvements, it would require a significant amount of funding.

When asked by Ms. Shapiro about a possible timetable for roadway improvements and the use of the 85th percentile, Mr. Glode explained that the City works within the MassDOT standards and a number of factors are considered. Based on the 50th and 85th percentiles and collision history presented to the Commission, Edward Road is not a high priority. Speed humps could be considered through the City's Capital Improvement Plan, but a project such as this could be quite costly. If the City approved this type of project it would also include curb replacement, needed repairs, and utility work. A number of streets are looked at each year and there is a list of roads to be improved each year. The list of roads is established for the next 3-4 years. The Department works within their budget and attempts to provide traffic calming across the City. The review process takes time; preliminary review could start now. Provided Edward Road falls within the spectrum of needing repairs they would work towards solutions.

In terms of the Main Street crosswalk, Mr. Glode reported that the DPW has been looking at this area for restriping and proper safety measures. Due to other projects, etc. this area will likely be worked on in 2025. Mr. Glode reported that rectangular rapid flashing beacons could be considered for this crosswalk, and the equipment may already be included in the contract.

Mr. Magoon reported that when signage or other measures are considered, the City must comply with the Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. If there is a collision and the City was found to be out of compliance with this manual, the City could be responsible for damages.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to have the City Engineer continue to evaluate for additional traffic calming measures on Edward Road; Mr. Glode seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 9 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Kevin Mahoney of Belmont to relocate the Handicap Only parking space from Elton Avenue adjacent to the US Post Office, to the front of the Post Office building at 589 Mount Auburn Street.

Sgt. Sampson spoke with Mr. Mahoney who reported that he is disabled and requires the use of the HP parking space near the post office at 589 Mt. Auburn Street. Mr. Mahoney finds the current location of the HP space on Elton Avenue difficult and requested the space be moved to the front of the post office building.

Mr. Airasian noted that the Mt. Auburn Street project is underway and this will impact the front of the post office building.

Mr. Magoon supported the request if the current location was problematic and a more level location could be found.

Ms. Gallagher agreed with Mr. Magoon but noted that the current construction could be problematic.

Mr. Glode reported that drainage work associated with the Mount Auburn Street Project is expected to begin soon. Sidewalk work may commence in Spring, 2025. Overall, when the project is completed, the area will be fully ADA and MassDOT compliant. Mr. Glode did not recommend moving the HP sign at this time.

Mr. Magoon noted that moving at this time may not be ideal due to the upcoming construction.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to deny the request to relocate the Handicap Only parking space from Elton Avenue adjacent to the US Post Office, to the front of the building at 589 Mount Auburn Street; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 10 – The Commission reviewed a request by District A Councilor Nicole Gardner to consider a Right on Red restriction on Grove Street Extension northbound at Coolidge Avenue.

Mr. Hal Shear of 199 Coolidge Avenue thanked the City and Commission for the improvements made to the area. The final concern by residents is that there is no right turn on red restriction from Grove Street Extension onto Coolidge Avenue. He reported that people are crossing at this location and are exposed to cars turning right.

Mr. Magoon read a note from District A Councilor Nicole Gardner. Councilor Gardner supported the request for a No Right Turn on Red restriction due to the presence of sun glare at different times of the day during the year, the presence of more bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the area, and the presence of many elderly residents.

Mr. Glode reported that the restriction was not initially installed because it was the most efficient layout for operations. This was agreed upon by the Department of Conservation and Recreation as part of the Greenough Boulevard portion of the project. Mr. Glode was not opposed to adding a No Turn on Red restriction at this location.

Mr. Magoon also noted that the capacity of the intersection was considered during design. Mr. Magoon was also agreeable to restricting the turn and determining if the restriction has any negative impact on the intersection operations.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to approve a Right on Red restriction on Grove Street Extension northbound at Coolidge Avenue; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 11 – The Commission reviewed a request by City Engineer Tyler Glode for the installation of isolated Stops on George Street at Channing Road and on George Street at Orchard Street.

Sgt. Sampson reported that George Street is part of the City’s 2024 Road Program. The plans include isolated Stop signs on George Street at Orchard Street and at Channing Road. The Stop sign on George Street at Orchard Street has been in place for a long time; the Stop sign at Channing Road is new. Sgt. Sampson requested to have both signs added to Schedule IV of the Traffic Rules and Orders.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to install isolated Stops on George Street at Channing Road and on George Street at Orchard Street; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 12 – The Commission reviewed the experimental all-way stop on School Street at Maplewood Street.

Area residents Mr. Manuel Gardea and Ms. Kathryn Madden both spoke in favor of the all-way stop. Both have noticed improvements in the area and felt that the all-way stop has improved safety.

Sgt. Sampson reported that Traffic Commission approved a 60-day experimental regulation of an all-way stop on School Street at Maplewood Street in May, 2024. The signage was installed on August 13, 2024. Officers spent time in the area reinforcing the new Stops and educating motorists. As of Tuesday afternoon September 24, 2024 no collisions were reported at this location.

Mr. Magoon reported that vehicles seem to move smoothly through the intersection.

Mr. Airasian noted that the placement of the Stop sign for School Street southbound traffic seems to be obstructed by a tree. The sign is visible as motorists near the intersection, but the sign cannot be seen from a distance.

Mr. Glode reported that he has not received any negative feedback about the all-way stop.

Chief Nicholson received feedback that vehicles are moving slowly through the area, but there is no significant queuing at the intersection.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to make permanent the all-way stop on School Street at Maplewood Street; Mr. Glode seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 13 – The Commission reviewed a request by DPW Superintendent Mr. St. Louis for the installation of an All-Way stop on Highland Avenue at Copeland Street.

Mr. Glode reported that improvements were made to Highland Avenue as part of the long streets and connectors project. Speed reduction measures were implemented however, a speed hump could not be installed at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Copeland Street. The intersection was analyzed to determine whether an all-way stop was warranted. It was determined that there is a need to control vehicle and pedestrian conflicts at this intersection due to the Cunniff School in the immediate area and a high pedestrian volume. A temporary all-way stop has been in place and has been beneficial.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to make the all-way stop on Highland Avenue at Copeland Street permanent; Chief Nicholson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 14 – The Commission reviewed a request by Sgt. Sampson of the Watertown Police Department to remove the Handicap Only parking space at 18 Jewett Street from the Traffic Rules and Orders.

Sgt. Sampson reported that the original request for the HP Only parking space was before the Commission in October, 2022. On August 8, 2024 the family contacted the City's Constituent Services Department and reported that the sign was no longer needed. The sign has been removed by the DPW; Sgt. Sampson is asked permission to remove the reserved space from the Traffic Rules and Orders.

Ms. Gallagher made a motion to remove the Handicap Only parking space at 18 Jewett Street from the Traffic Rules and Orders; Mr. Magoon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 15 – The Commission held nominations for a new Traffic Commission Chair. Mr. Magoon nominated Mr. Airasian to be Chair; Chief Nicholson seconded the nomination. The nomination passed unanimously.

New Business

No new business was brought to Commission.

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

Meeting adjourned.

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