



Thomas F. Rocca
Chief of Police

CITY OF WATERTOWN

TRAFFIC COMMISSION



David Sampson
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Thomas F. Rocca, Chair
Ryan Nicholson, Provisional Fire Chief
Gregory St. Louis, Superintendent of Public Works
Steven Magoon, Community Development and Planning
Ms. Kelly Gallagher
Mr. Robert Airasian

May 3, 2023

April 26, 2023 Traffic Commission Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Thomas Rocca, Ryan Nicholson, Gregory St. Louis, Robert Airasian

Traffic Commission members addressed the following items:

Item 1 – Chief Nicholson made a motion to approve the March 29, 2023 Traffic Commission meeting minutes; Mr. St. Louis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 – The Commission received an informational presentation by Mr. Ted O'Hagan of Vanasse & Associates, Inc. on behalf of their client Atlantic/P3 Life Sciences Holdings III, LLC, regarding the proposed intersection improvements at Walnut Street at Cypress Street, associated with the proposed laboratory (life sciences), office/research and development building located at 85 Walnut Street.

Mr. O'Hagan explained that the two crosswalks on Walnut Street (at Lincoln Street and near the entrance of 85 Walnut Street) will be enhanced with bump-outs. The crosswalks will include high visibility markings, ADA compliant ramps, and detectible warning panels. The crosswalk nearest 85 Walnut Street will be equipped with a rectangular rapid flashing beacon. Due to the current parking regulations, there will be no loss of parking due to these crosswalk enhancements.

The intersection of Walnut Street at Cypress Street will be realigned to meet at a 90-degree angle. The redesign of the intersection will adhere to current engineering guidelines. The length of the crosswalk spanning Cypress Street will be reduced to 50 feet.

Mr. Bob MacKerron of 2-4 Cypress Street addressed the Commission and reported that he was not notified of the proposed changes to the Walnut Street/Cypress Street intersection, and only learned of it when he observed workers marking the pavement in front of his house. He believed that the proposed changes would create a burden – He felt that the current plan would make it difficult to exit his garage and he would lose his area that is used to hold snow in the winter. He felt that the design is too narrow and there was a lack of lighting in the area.

District B Councilor Lisa Feltner asked whether trees would be impacted by the roadway improvements. She also inquired whether there would be an opportunity for residents to use parking at 85 Walnut Street as an All Night Parking option.

Mr. O'Hagan reported that the trees would be protected and will remain in place. Mr. O'Hagan could not speak on behalf of the developer regarding All Night Parking.

Item 3 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Ted O'Hagan of Vanasse & Associates, Inc. on behalf of their client Atlantic/P3 Life Sciences Holdings III, LLC to:

- a. Restrict parking on the north side of Walnut Street from a point 50' east of Cypress Street to a point 50' west of Cypress Street.
- b. Restrict parking on the south side of Cypress Street from Walnut Street to a point 50 feet east of Walnut Street.

Mr. O'Hagan noted that the distances for parking restrictions were based on the need to have adequate room for emergency vehicle turning movements. The net loss for parking is approximately 60 feet. Mr. O'Hagan also noted that No Parking signs proposed for the crosswalk nearest 85 Walnut Street are only to reinforce existing restrictions.

Mr. St. Louis reported that he met with Mr. MacKerron regarding the issue of snow removal. The planned extended area at the corner of Cypress and Walnut Street calls for just grass space; if a tree is desired, Mr. MacKerron could use the City's work order system to request one.

Mr. Airasian asked about the process to notify residents; he noted that Mr. MacKerron finding out just a day prior to the Traffic Commission meeting is not ideal.

Watertown Assistant Director of Planning Mr. Gideon Schreiber reported that the 85 Walnut Street development project was approved just after COVID started. The off-site mitigation was approved during that time, but discussions started much earlier. Bicycle lanes were discussed, but it was determined that Walnut Street was too narrow for dedicated lanes. In terms notifying abutters of off-site work, it was Mr. Schreiber's opinion that it becomes a roadway project; notification would follow roadway project protocols.

Mr. St. Louis noted that perhaps in the future a wider notification area could be used for mitigation projects.

Mr. MacKerron felt that notification for this project was inadequate and unacceptable. He felt that neighbors struggle with parking and it would be nice to get a definitive answer from the 85 Walnut Street developers whether the property could be used for All Night Parking.

Mr. Airasian noted that the Commission is tasked with voting on the parking regulations. Due to the turning movements, it appears the restrictions are necessary. He felt that abutter notification could have been better in this instance.

In terms of impact to the area, Mr. O'Hagan noted that the goal was to implement a plan with the least impact to residents. In terms of exiting the driveway of 2-4 Cypress Street, turning movements were calculated; these calculations are typically conservative. The proposed new grass area will be at grade level and sloped toward the roadway.

Mr. St. Louis noted that none of the discussion focused on potential negative impacts of the proposed parking regulations. He was open to providing better access to the 2-4 Cypress Street garage. There is currently 33.9 feet of driveway open; this is being widened.

Mr. Airasian made a motion to restrict parking on the north side of Walnut Street from a point 50' east of Cypress Street to a point 50' west of Cypress Street, and restrict parking on the south side of Cypress Street from Walnut Street to a point 50 feet east of Walnut Street with the caveat that Mr. MacKerron speak with the Department of Public Works and VAI; Mr. St. Louis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 4 – The Commission received an informational presentation by Superintendent of Public Works Gregory St. Louis regarding the City’s Morse Street reconstruction project, which includes a new crosswalk at 35-37 Morse Street.

Mr. St. Louis reported that Morse Street is part of the City’s Long Streets and Ways projects and will include concrete walks, ADA accessibility, planting strips, a 50-foot wide roadway with curbing, a raised table at Union Street, a raised crosswalk at 35-37 Morse Street, and two additional isolated stop signs for roadways approaching Morse Street. The addition of curbing will give the roadway a more narrow feel and will help with traffic calming.

Item 5 – The Commission reviewed a request by Sgt. Sampson of the Watertown Police Department to add the following isolated stop signs to Schedule IV of the Traffic Rules and Orders.

- a. Union Street for southbound traffic at Morse Street
- b. Jewett Street for northbound traffic at Morse Street
- c. North Park Street for northbound traffic at Morse Street
- d. South Park Street for northbound traffic at Morse Street

Sgt. Sampson reported that the first two isolated stops currently exist and simply need to be added to Schedule IV of the Traffic Rules and Orders. As a result of the Morse Street improvement project, new isolated stops are proposed for North Park Street for northbound traffic at Morse Street, and South Park Street for northbound traffic at Morse Street.

Chief Nicholson made a motion to add the four isolated stops to Schedule IV of the Traffic Rules and Orders; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6 – The Commission reviewed a request by Request by Sgt. Sampson of the Watertown Police Department to add the following items to the Traffic Rules and orders:

- a. Article I: Definition of Bus
- b. Article I: Definition of Bus Lane
- c. Article VII, Section 29: Travel Prohibited in Bus Lanes by Vehicles Other Than Buses
- d. Schedule XI: Bus Lane Locations

Sgt. Sampson explained that a few years ago, in collaboration with the MBTA and the City of Cambridge bus only lanes were added to portions of Mt. Auburn Street. At that time, bus lane accommodations were addressed through the use of parking regulations. It was Sgt. Sampson’s opinion that it would be more effective to include proper bus related definitions, regulations, and locations to the Traffic Rules and Orders. Sgt. Sampson provided proposed language to the Commission prior to the meeting and explained that the language was reviewed by the City’s legal representatives. Sgt. Sampson reported that another request for a Bus Only lane will likely come before the Traffic Commission in May or June as part of the off-site improvements associated with the 66 Galen Street project.

Mr. St. Louis reported that the current bus lanes allow use by bicycles; this is a safer means of travel for cyclists.

Mr. Airasian made a motion to accept the bus related definitions, bus lane regulations, and bus lane locations; Mr. St. Louis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

District B Councilor Lisa Feltner thanked the Department of Public Works for moving forward with the Morse Street project; she reported that many people are excited about it.

Mr. St. Louis 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