

## TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

June 15, 2022

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Chair Elena Proakis Ellis, Councilor Eccles, Commissioner Peart, Commissioner Krechmer, Commissioner Parenti, Former Mayor Infurna, and Chief Mike Lyle

Meeting is called to order at 5:30PM. Elena states that at the end of the meeting the commission can discuss if the meetings can go back to in person starting with the September meeting, as a lot of the other boards have started in person again.

### I. Continued Business:

#### 1. Approve past meeting minutes

Elena states that we have three sets of minutes to approve from the October 28, 2021; November 9, 2021; and March 16, 2022. We have already approved the December minutes. Decision has been made to table this item to the next meeting to allow more time to review.

All are in favor, so this item is tabled to the September meeting.

Councilor Eccles states that it might be helpful to include the packet with the agenda on IQM2. Elena states that we have been hesitant to post due to personal information and neighborhood relationship concerns. We certainly can provide if requested. The meetings we can post though.

#### 2. Police Department request to modify Traffic Code Section 220-8, Schedule of Parking Fines, Item B.3(h) to read: "Parking so as to block or obstruct a crosswalk or within five feet of the outer limits of a crosswalk" or similar language (discussion will include consideration of 5, 10, 15, and 20-foot setbacks, based on discussion at March meeting)

Elena states that our interns did an analysis and provided a table which Elena shows on the screen. We looked at all areas within the city that have marked parking spaces and what distance was available. The interns looked at scenarios where the parking spaces were 18ft, 19ft, 20ft and 22ft and showed different scenarios based on parking 5 ft, 10 ft., 15 ft., and 20 ft. back from the crosswalk and what the impact would be.

Motion to open public comment by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer.

Councilor Williams appreciates this thorough analysis. He strongly supports this and would like the Traffic Commission (TC) to consider the 20 ft. setback because the safety approach should be more important than losing a few spaces. He mentions that cross walk daylighting is a concern that residents come to him about quite often and that some residents are frightened to cross the street where the cars are parked right up against the crosswalk.

Resident Finn McSweeney of 160 W. Wyoming speaks next on behalf of the Ped Bike Committee. He submitted a letter which states why they are in support of a 20 ft. setback and he reads it to the TC (refer to letter in packet)

Motion to close public comment made by Commissioner Krechmer, seconded by Former Mayor Infurna. All are in favor, so by unanimous consent public comment is closed.

Commissioner Krechmer states that it seems like if we reduce parking space sizes then we really don't lose any parking except on the stretch of Wyoming Ave where you give up one space no matter what we do. Is this a correct analysis?

Elena states that she is going to look at the map and confirm the information. She also reiterates that the purpose of this item is to allow the police to ticket and get something formal in the traffic code. She states that we have flexibility when we stripe parking spaces in that we can stripe them at different distances. If we voted for something different than 20ft. that doesn't mean that in the areas where we can fit 20 ft, we can't stripe it for that. It just means that the police are only able to ticket if they are within 10 ft. or so on.

Former Mayor Infurna asks if we need to vote 20 ft. for all crosswalks or can we vote individually? Elena responds that for the traffic code and enforcement it would get confusing, so it's best to vote on a number that everyone is comfortable with applying city wide. If we wanted to come back and change certain crosswalks to be 20 ft. and do a parking restriction on a certain street from 45ft to the intersection of here to there we can. We have done it before, so we can implement it the same way. Elena states it would be like when we add no parking from here to the corner and it is more than 20 ft. That may be a fairer way because we could provide notice to businesses that abut those exact locations. For tonight though her recommendation would be just to vote on what meets the needs of the Police Department (PD) to ticket.

Commissioner Parenti states that for safety reasons the distance should be 20 ft. He then asks if the business owners will have a say in what comes next. For example, if they are losing a parking space would they then be able to come to the TC meeting? Is there a means of appeals for business owners?

Elena states that the appeal would have to be on a specific location, however it becomes complicated if we approved 20 ft and then we have locations where we want to make exceptions. Elena would much rather approve a lower number and stripe for 20 ft where we can fit it.

Commissioner Parenti thinks that either way the business community should have some involvement. He mentions a current situation taking place in North Cambridge where business owners are suing the city due to the addition of bike lanes and losing parking. He feels that Melrose business owners should have the opportunity to speak on this issue. He comments also about execution of what we decide. If we are only doing this with paint, there are going to be

people that view this as a parking space whether it be uber or running into Turners for a minute to grab food. He states that the space will be used and will make the problem worse. He just would like the decisions to be thought through.

Elena states that this problem exists currently at CVS on Main Street where small cars will park in the area that is meant for daylighting because there is only paint.

Commissioner Krechmer states that to prevent smaller cars from parking in the spaces outside of CVS and Starbucks we could possibly put bike racks or something in the area. This should be part of the effort. He agrees that 20 ft should be our standard.

Former Mayor Infurna asks if both sides of the street will need to be repainted if we change it to 20 ft? Elena confirms that she is correct and is okay with re-striping. Elena does have some reservations about 20 ft. because it would take a significant effort to implement. While she thinks it is a good idea her concern is that we would have to black out all the current paint for all downtown and repaint. This would take some time. Her other thought is that the main goal with this item and the reason the police brought this forward was because right now someone could park right up to the edge of the crosswalk. The police cannot ticket because there is nothing in the code or ticket book that allows them to. We could spend a lot of time and table this until we let businesses owners know, however if we approve 10 ft. tonight, this will allow police to ticket immediately. If there are locations that we want to be 20 ft; we can easily vote again. She states that this item has been delayed three months to look at it in further detail. Elena states that she is leaning towards 10 ft because it gets something in the books for the PD and then we can go back and look at specific locations later.

Chief Lyle states that Cambridge does 15 ft. Commissioner Parenti states that the rules and regulations state 20 ft from a crosswalk. He agrees that the best approach would be to start at a lower number and then add a further distance where certain locations permit.

Former Mayor Infurna asks Chief Lyle if 10 ft. would help? Chief Lyle replies that anything is better than what they have now which is zero and it is dangerous. He asks Elena if this is something that could be done immediately?

Elena states that we could do 10 ft. immediately because we would only need to move a couple of spaces. The only place that 10ft. really impacts us is on Wyoming; we didn't include Franklin because there are bump outs in that area and it is not necessary.

Chief Lyle worries that if we only approve 10 ft. and people come at us stating that it should be 20ft then we are back here again. Councilor Eccles asks the Chief about the downtown area and how 10 ft. helps. Chief Lyle states that in some areas the crosswalk and parking spot are only a couple of feet apart and this will allow better sight lines.

Commissioner Krechmer states that shrinking those spaces would have other benefits of making it less of an incentive for the larger vehicles to use these spaces closest to the crosswalk. Chief Lyle also states that we can shrink those spaces and make them for compact vehicles only. Elena states that the space in front of CVS is 14.47 ft.

Former Mayor Infurna makes a motion to modify the traffic code to prohibit parking within 10 ft. of a crosswalk. She also mentions that she likes Commissioner Krechmer's idea of putting something in the small space at the crosswalk whether it be a pot of flowers to deter people from parking there. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Parenti.

Councilor Eccles states it seems like a lot of people would prefer 20 ft., however he is okay with 10 ft for now. He feels that we should explore this again especially at some intersections.

Elena states that she agrees and has some concerns about the notifying of the business owners. That can be part of a further evaluation.

Chief Lyle states that they will be ordering parking tickets soon and it would be nice to have something in place. Elena asks how the parking tickets would read? Chief Lyle states that he would look at how other communities have it written. Elena states that it would be good if the wording doesn't lock us in to 10 ft. in case it changes in the future.

Former Mayor Infurna states that maybe we can look at the budget for next year and set some money aside for restriping, as none of the roads mentioned are due to be repaved anytime soon.

Motion to approve is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. Elena calls the role, all are in favor, so the motion carries unanimously.

## **II. New Business:**

### **3. Reappoint the Chair**

Former Mayor Infurna states that according to the charter, the Superintendent of Public Works is always the chair, so this is just a reappointment that takes place every June.

Motion is made by Former Mayor Infurna to reappoint the chair, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. Elena calls the role; all are in favor, so the motion passes unanimously.

### **4. City request to modify approval for EV-only parking spaces to specify that cars must be charging while parked there.**

Elena states that we had one letter of support that was included in the TC packet as well as a lot of conversation between city departments. She states that people feel that there are a lot of EVs parking in the spaces and not charging. Martha Grover and others working on the EV stations would like it to specify that you are only allowed to park there while charging. There were some

other comments about having time limits, however we don't need to vote on that because time limits already apply. The question is do we want to say, "only while charging."

Former Mayor Infurna states that if people are just parking there while not charging, then it would make sense to add the verbiage to the signs.

There is no need to open public comment on this item as no one present wishes to speak.

Councilor Eccles comments that these chargers typically charge a high amount of money when you are there for a long time.

Elena states that it only costs a couple of dollars to charge your car, but when the charger is still plugged in and not drawing electricity you are charged a surcharge fee of \$5. Martha Grover at a previous meeting had stated that the surcharge is typically higher than it costs to charge your car. It's a strong deterrent for leaving the charger plugged in. Once you remove the charger, there is no charge. The question is should you then be required to move your car? Elena gives an example of someone at a baseball game parked on Tremont that would have to move their car once they are done charging under this new rule. Elena is not sure if she agrees with this. She states that the area that was of real concern was in the Kimball Court (Dill's Court) parking lot behind CVS. We can approve it for one location or all the locations, but one way or another, time limits apply. This way the police can feel more comfortable ticketing if someone is staying there all day.

Councilor Eccles asks Elena if she knows what the utilization of the EV charging stations is. He states that he sees them being used when he drives by.

Elena states that from Martha's comments from past meetings, people typically charge for about two hours before moving on. She mentions that people have stated that these pole mounted chargers are not very fast in comparison with some other charging stations. In terms of what stations are being used the most, Elena states that the one on Green St was getting a little less usage and the Franklin St one wasn't in yet at the time Martha presented.

Former Mayor Infurna asks Elena if she feels that we should just discuss the one behind Shaw's or possibly others that are frequently used? Also, maybe the one behind Memorial Hall where employees come in and plug in for the day, or does it make sense to discuss all the ones that are in parking lots, Cedar Park, Mt. Hood, City Hall, and Dill's Court.

Elena states that she doesn't have a very strong opinion on this; however, she feels that posting that the time limits apply is important. She doesn't really know what the habits are at charging stations since she doesn't own an EV. Elena looks through the packet and states that the person who had complained about this item earlier was complaining about a parking lot specifically.

Councilor Eccles states that these were purposely put into high traffic areas, so that people can park while doing errands, going to a game, or heading downtown. He agrees with Elena though

that he doesn't feel that we should make someone move their car once they are done charging, but also doesn't feel super strongly about it. He is fine doing it with the ones downtown since people already have to move their cars after three hours anyway.

Elena asks Chief Lyle if it is more of a problem at certain spots than others? Chief Lyle responds that Dill's Court seems to be the most recognized one but can't really speak to others. He knows that the one located on East Foster next to the Commons is used quite frequently and sometimes there are cars parked there for hours. Chief Lyle confirms with Elena that we only have one complaint and states the parking people let it go because it's hard to tell if its charging.

Former Mayor Infurna asks about Kathryn Armata, the city treasurer, writing in on this topic and wants to know if she's getting a lot of people coming in with tickets.

Elena states that she is just weighing in to be sure that if someone gets ticketed that it was clearly posted and they aren't getting challenged, as she manages the parking clerk. Elena's suggestion was to add that time limits apply and start ticketing for the time limits and see if that solves the problem. Kathryn's department thought that we should put it on the TC agenda and state that you had to be charging.

Commissioner Parenti states that he is in support of this item and gives an example of a convenience store with limited parking that you generally would set a 30-minute parking limit. You want multiple patrons to be able to visit, so the owner sets time limits. With this item, we have several charging stations and as gas prices continue to go up and more people get EVs, people are going to want to charge their cars. He feels that it is reasonable that when he is done charging his vehicle, he moves on so the next person can charge. If we don't do this then we are going to continue to have these complaints come in. It leaves us with two options, adding more EV stations or we can increase the turnover by setting time limits. He thinks that this item is reasonable and would support the petition for all the spaces citywide that we have today and in the future.

Motion is made by Commissioner Parenti to designate all EV charging spaces shall be used while the EV is charging only, seconded by Councilor Eccles. Elena calls the role, all are in favor, so the motion passes unanimously.

- 5. In accordance with a plan prepared by AECOM and MADOT under a Safe Routes to School grant, City request to install "No Parking Anytime" signs at the following locations on West Wyoming Avenue in the vicinity of the Lincoln School:**
  - a. Westbound: Just east of the crosswalk at the entrance to the school and east of the mid-block crosswalk between the school and Cottage Street**
  - b. Eastbound: Just east of the mid-block crosswalk between the school and Cottage Street and in the drop-off area in front of the school**

Elena states that she is presenting this item on Vonnie Reis' behalf. Elena explains that this is essentially just daylighting crosswalks. The plans were included in the TC packet. The city received \$6,000 for a Signs and Lines Grant from the MassDOT Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. It is not infrastructure, paving, or RRFBs, it is just signage and line painting. It is based on the SRTS's liaison's arrival and dismissal observations during site visits at the Lincoln School. Councilor MacMaster was one of the proponents for this grant application and agrees with the proposed changes. Elena states that some items the TC does not need to vote on, such as the pavement markings that say school or school zone and the standard crosswalk signs (diagram S1-1 and W16-7pL), and also the arrow underneath and a student drop off only sign. The no parking anytime signs (R7-1) would be along the whole area of where students get dropped off on both the North and South sides of the street.

Former Mayor Infurna states that there currently is no parking on the south side of the street. Elena confirms that technically the south side does not allow parking, so having the no parking signs here is a moot point. On the agenda, the north and south side are listed separately, however Elena does not feel that we need to vote on the south side. On the north side, the desire is to daylight the crosswalks and not just have no parking signs, but also no stopping or standing signs. During drop off people just stop wherever, so Elena suggests that the signs say no parking, stopping, or standing. Elena states that she mentioned to Vonnie that we may not need to approve anything on the crosswalks if we approve the crosswalk setback item on the agenda tonight. We would need to vote however, if we wanted to go farther than the 10 ft. Elena shows the aerial view and states that there is currently no signage on the north side of West Wyoming Ave.

Motion is made by Former Mayor Infurna to open public comment, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. All are in favor, so public comment is opened by unanimous consent.

Resident Finn McSweeney states that as a parent of a Lincoln school child he recommends the 20 ft. crosswalk setback. He states that in the previous discussion we acknowledged that 20 ft. is the safest distance and does not feel that it is an acceptable outcome to have people parking 10 ft. from crosswalks in a busy school area. He states that Councilor MacMaster did a survey of parents and found that most of the kids attending the Lincoln School either walk or bike. He encourages the Commission to have a 20 ft. setback as this is the busiest street in Melrose.

Former Mayor Infurna agrees with Finn McSweeney as she is familiar with this area. She states that at times during school hours, you just don't know what is going to come out between the cars. For that reason, she supports using the 20 ft. setback along those crosswalks on W. Wyoming.

Elena confirms that there are no more virtual hands raised. Former Mayor Infurna makes a motion to close public comment, seconded by Commissioner Peart. All are in favor, so public comment is closed.

Elena shares her screen and shows the two crosswalks, one at the playground and the other one at the school parking lot. She mentions that there are no marked parking spaces, so whatever we decide, we would just put the sign in that location. For the crosswalk near the playground there is a driveway, so no one should be parking from within 25 ft. Because of that, we can put a sign here with no vote. On the side of the street where the playground is, parking is already restricted, so we can put a no stopping or standing sign anywhere we decide. Elena then asks if the no stopping/standing sign is a different regulation.

Commissioner Parenti confirms that it is a different regulation and that we should be careful. He states that no stopping is the strictest regulation, it means that you cannot drop off and cannot bring a car to a stop in that zone. If there is no parking then you imply that you can pull over, drop someone off and then leave. He would recommend no standing. Commissioner Parenti also asks for more clarification on this item because when he looks at the plan, it appears to him that we are restricting parking for the entire street. The plan can be corrected, but just wants to understand it. Is this to just daylight crosswalks, because then we just need to pick the locations.

Elena reviews the no parking signs that are in front of 71 and 73 W. Wyoming. Elena questions that maybe the intention is to have no parking from the driveway to the crosswalk?

Commissioner Parenti states that the right way to daylight is to have a no parking left arrow on one side and a no parking right arrow on the other side. That way it is clear where the end of the no parking zone is and the beginning of where the no standing is. There would be one on both sides of the crosswalk.

Elena states that we would be restricting parking entirely in front of 71-73 W. Wyoming Ave. She also mentions that we hand delivered notices to this whole block.

Former Mayor Infurna refers to Main St and the bike lanes and that they all have driveways. She states that it is a real safety issue around these crosswalks. It is roughly 26 ft. to the crosswalk, so we would need a no parking sign in front of 71 W. Wyoming and all around the crosswalk on both sides to eliminate parking. Heading to the other crosswalk at 85 W. Wyoming, you can't park 5 ft. from the driveway, so we can put a sign there without a vote. We can also put a no stopping sign from whatever footage we decide. On the playground side we can go 20 ft. as well, but it's a little tricky to say no standing in the location just before you pull into the drop-off area.

Elena asks Commissioner Parenti about the behavior of the people pulling into the drop off area. Commissioner Parenti states that it works reasonably well. They do pick up and pull forward, but it will be nice to have the sign posted.

Elena asks Commissioner Parenti if we need a no stopping sign leading up to the crosswalk, so that people queuing up stop farther back. He states that he doesn't think so, because if a parent stopped upstream of the cross walk, then somebody behind would pass and that would be dangerous. He states that as Finn McSweeney mentioned the drop off activity is relatively light, so the drop area is used but not heavily. There are roughly 25 cars parked on the northbound side which we are discussing tonight to restrict a little for safety reasons, so those cars will have less

capacity, but will find another way. Elena states that because of the restrictions, cars on the north side of the street would just pull up a little further.

Commissioner Parenti states that we are talking about five or six cars that may need to pull down a side street. The important thing is that we daylight the crosswalks and, in his own experience, even with the crossing guard it can be uncomfortable.

Elena states that we do not need to vote anything on the south side. We would need to vote no parking from 71– 73 W. Wyoming and no stopping. Also, no stopping from 5 ft. from 85 W. Wyoming Ave to whatever we vote on the other side of the crosswalk.

Chief Lyle asks if the school department is aware that this is up tonight? Elena confirms that they are and that the school department has been heavily involved with the whole project. Former Mayor Infurna suggests to Elena that we let the school know to inform parents of the new parking regulations that get approved tonight.

Commissioner Krechmer also moves that we place no stopping signs on either side of the two crosswalks on W. Wyoming both to the east and the west of Lincoln School, a minimum of 20ft.

Motion is made by Commissioner Krechmer, seconded by Councilor Eccles. Elena calls the role, all are in favor, so the motion passes by unanimous consent. Elena states that she will inform Vonnie tomorrow and move forward with the appropriate signage.

Elena states that the way the Signs and Lines grants work, we may end up with the signs that we had on the plans, the no parking anytime, so we will modify those to no parking or standing signs. Commissioner Parenti asks Elena who installs the signs and she confirms that the city does. He then informs Elena that signs should be posted at a minimum of 7 ft. above the sidewalk to keep sight lines open. Elena also states that because MassDOT has their sign standards, we had to order the signs as they specified. They are bigger than what we have now, so we are going to put them up and then we can swap them out at some point if need be.

Former Mayor Infurna asks Elena if we have ever had requests for the blinking yellow lights? Elena confirms that we have and she asks if we could possibly swap them out for those. Elena confirms that the grant will not pay for those, but we do plan to put one there (near Cottage). It is on the high priority list. She states that we are supposed to get some money from free cash assuming the City Council approves it.

The next meeting is discussed to determine whether it should be in person or not. The majority feel that it should go back to in person if there is still the remote option for residents.

Motion to adjourn is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Peart. All are in favor, so the meeting is adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:15 PM.