

TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

December 19th, 2018

IN ATTENDANCE: Chair Elena Proakis Ellis, Alderman Bob Boisselle, Tom Rossi, Elizabeth Peart, Jeff Parenti, Chief Mike Lyle, Sgt. Jon Goc and Amy Heidebrecht – Clerk

Meeting opened at 5:33 PM

I. Continued Business:

1. Approve minutes from September 26, 2018

Tom Rossi makes a motion to approve minutes. Chief Lyle seconds. All in favor.
Minutes approved.

II. New Business:

1. Request by resident to add weekday restrictions on Richardson Road from Marvin Road to Renwick Road and Renwick Road to the city limit to prevent long-term commuter parking

Marlene Szabo from 2 Renwick Road speaks as the proponent for the agenda item. She says that a group of cars park on Renwick and Richardson Road to avoid paying for commuter parking down the hill. She says the road is narrow and it is dangerous. She explains that you cannot see when you get to the end of Richardson Road and try to take a right. Tom Rossi asks for more details regarding where exactly the cars are parking. Marlene explains that they mainly park in front of 2 and 8 Renwick Road, but they sometimes park on Richardson Road, too. Chair Proakis Ellis points out that the first segment from Marvin Road to the split is considered Richardson Road, not Renwick Road and that Google Maps does not show it correctly.

Jeff Parenti makes a motion to open public participation. Tom Rossi seconds.
Public participation opens at 5:40 PM.

Claire Reed from 115 Richardson Road says that parking in the area where it curves has the potential for a lot of accidents. She asks if it is possible to do Resident Only Parking in that area so that the residents can park in front of their houses. Chair Proakis Ellis explains that it is very difficult to enforce because the police department has no way of knowing the difference between a resident, contractor, relative or commuter. She adds that an example of what we have done in similar areas is 1 Hour Parking from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM, but it has to apply to all vehicles and the residents would be no exception. Claire follows up by asking if we could generate passes for residents. Chair Proakis Ellis responds that there are only two streets in Melrose that are resident only and it is not the preference of the Commission to do that.

Ron Tremonte from 8 Renwick Road says the Renwick/Richardson Road street sign has been knocked down twice by trucks and school buses and that tree limbs have been taken down due to the same issue. He adds that it is even more dangerous for those big buses and trucks to drive down the street when cars are parked there because they end up driving on the sidewalk in order to fit around the curve.

Jonathan Melvic from 117 Richardson Road says that it is difficult to determine who has the right of way in that area and mentions that it is under-signalized. He adds that when cars are parked on the street it makes it really hard to see cars coming around the bend. He adds that there are three cars that have consistently parked there over the past few months.

Tom Rossi makes a motion to close public participation. Jeff Parenti seconds. All in favor. Public participation closes at 5:46 PM.

Tom Rossi says that we have helped out other neighborhoods with commuter parking issues and says that we can do something similar here. Chair Proakis Ellis mentions that the city limit is six houses in from the Richardson and Renwick Road split. She adds that there is signage on Marvin Road, Ashland Street and Highland Avenue. She also adds that there is a combination of 1 Hour Parking from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM and 2 Hour Parking from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM in that area.

Chief Lyle asks how far down on Richardson Road we passed out notices regarding this meeting. He adds that he is wondering if we can extend the parking restrictions all the way to Ashland Street. Chair Proakis Ellis responds that we notified the entire neighborhood, but the wording of the agenda item was specific to Richardson Road from Marvin Road to Renwick Road and Renwick Road to the city limit. She is concerned that some residents might not have come to the meeting based on the specific language of the agenda item. She understands that if we add signs to this area, we might be pushing the problem

down the street, but if that becomes an issue we can add it to the agenda for a future meeting. Tom Rossi adds that there are only two houses on each side and asks if there have been any accidents. Sgt. Goc says that he is not aware of any accidents but there may have been some that were not reported.

Chair Proakis Ellis reads comments from Commissioner Dan Krechmer. He noted that he did not see any cars parked in the area on a Wednesday at noon.

Tom Rossi makes a motion to make Renwick Road from Richardson Road to the city limits and Richardson Road from Marvin Road to Ashland Street 1 Hour Parking from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM Monday through Friday. Chief Lyle seconds. All in favor. Motion carries at 6:02 PM.

2. Petition request made by several residents of Whittier Street and Baxter Street to make that intersection a four-way stop (currently it is a two-way stop on Whittier Street)

Lisa Halloran from 27 Whittier Street speaks as the proponent to this agenda item. She points out that her house is two houses in from the Baxter Street intersection. She says that people use that area as a cut through because traffic gets backed up on West Wyoming Avenue. She says that in her sixteen years in that house she has seen many people drive right through the two-way stop, including one incident where a vehicle hit another vehicle and claimed that they did not see the stop sign. She continues to explain that there have been accidents in that area as well as many near misses. She invites members of the Traffic Commission and Melrose Police Department to sit in her driveway to witness the traffic violations. She adds that she has 25 to 30 additional signatures to her petition.

Chief Lyle makes a motion to open public participation. Jeff Parenti seconds. Public participation opens at 6:05 PM.

Martin Robichaud has been a resident of 49 Baxter Street for 45 years and he is also retired State Police Officer. He says that traffic has increased overall. He thinks that part of it is related to construction and cars being rerouted to residential areas and then realizing that it is a good way to avoid traffic. He adds that he is surprised that someone has not been killed in that intersection. He says that vehicles are speeding through the neighborhood and that the trees are big, so visibility is not as good.

Ed O'Connell is the Chairman Elect for the School Committee and resides at 27 Cleveland Street, which is a block away from the intersection being discussed. He has lived there for twenty years and he agrees with his neighbors. He

believes that the people that have the stop signs assume that it is a four-way stop intersection, so they do not really stop all the way.

Kevin Vautour from 36 Whittier Street has noticed that the increase of traffic seemed to coincide with when they made Cleveland Street a one way. He says that he used to park both cars in front of his house to help force people to stop. He adds that he now has a No Parking Here to Corner sign there so he cannot park in front of his house. He continues that there is a tree blocking the stop sign and he is concerned for the safety of the children in his neighborhood. He says that there is no warning that there is a stop coming up at Whittier Street.

Alexandra Majors from 61 Baxter Street is a mother of two young children and she agrees with everything her neighbors have said. She also brings up that there is a tree that blocks visibility of the stop sign.

Ellen Crocker from 60 Whittier Street also supports this petition.

Steve Johanson from 63 Sanford Street agrees that the tree affects the visibility of the stop sign. He says that it would be helpful to install an illuminated stop sign and/or add some sort of warning that an intersection is coming up.

Jeff Parenti makes a motion to close public participation. Alderman Boisselle seconds. Public participation closes at 6:18 PM.

Sgt. Goc says that there was one accident going back a full year and it was related to ice, not another car. He went back a couple more years and there was nothing reported to the Police Department. He says that there is an issue with the stop sign north bound. He mentions that reflective tape and additional signage warning that you are approaching an intersection might be helpful. He adds that on 37 Baxter Street between Baxter and Cleveland Street the average speed was 20 MPH and the 85th percentile speed was 23 MPH. He says that the data was taken on two different days during the morning and afternoon commute. The peak volume was 27 vehicles in an hour on a combined basis. There were 250 to 300 vehicles a day with the peak hour being on December 11th from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM and then again from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM the next morning.

Tom Rossi asks if we need to approve a Stop Ahead sign. Chair Proakis Ellis says we do not need to approve it because it is reinforcing what is already there. Lisa Halloran says there is already one in the vicinity of 23 Baxter Street.

Liz Peart says that 600 cars a day with a peak of 27 vehicles in one hour is very low. She explains that there are warrants that need to be reached in order to install a four-way stop intersection. Lisa Halloran asks why Baxter Street at

Cutter Street has a two-way stop. Jeff Parenti explains that there are a lot of intersections that are local streets where they have to decide which street gets the stop sign. He says that a lot of times the decision is made to alternate the grid. Adding more stop signs that people are not going to respect gives them a false sense of security. He agrees with Liz that we should stick with the warrants and leave the intersection as-is with the two stop signs.

Tom Rossi says that the sign is obscured by the tree so maybe we can look into trimming it. He adds that we could also look at the location of the stop ahead sign to see if it needs to be moved.

Chief Lyle says that the petition has approximately 25 residents in support of this agenda item. He adds that these residents know the area best and we should consider what the neighborhood wants.

Alderman Boisselle makes a motion to add a four-way stop. Chief Lyle seconds.

Sgt Goc says that every stop sign has a neighborhood in favor of the stop sign request. Chair Proakis Ellis adds that sometimes there are people who are against it because it causes a back up of cars in front of their house. She adds that she is in support of adding reflective tape and trying to make the stop sign more visible.

Lisa Halloran asks for some clarification as to why they are not in support of the four-way stop. Chair Proakis Ellis explains that the warrants are created because some studies have shown that putting a stop sign where it does not meet the warrants can be more dangerous than not having the stop sign.

Tom Rossi says we should try to make the existing stop sign more visible before adding additional signage. He adds that there are a lot of four way stop signs that are up in Melrose that do not meet the warrants that were installed before the Traffic Commission was created.

A member of the public asks if the stop sign can be moved to be in front of the tree. Jeff Parenti says that you can leave the stop line and move in the stop sign.

Chair Proakis Ellis goes over the motion that is on the floor. Alderman Boisselle made a motion to approve the four-way stop and Chief Lyle seconded. A vote is taken and all other Commissioners are opposed. The motion is denied at 6:45 PM.

3. City request to make the west side of Vinton Street from West Emerson to North Cedar Park “No Parking Anytime”

Sgt. Goc speaks as the proponent for this item. He says curbs were installed on Vinton Street from West Emerson Street to North Cedar Park and when people park against the curb it creates congestion. He further explains that the Farmer’s Market creates parking issues and the Police Department receives a lot of complaints. He adds that he has spoken to the Farmer’s Market and they understand the issue and they are in support of this item.

Chair Proakis Ellis reads a letter in support of this item from Scott Arnold from 3 South Cedar Park.

Jeff Parenti makes a motion to approve “No Parking Anytime” on the west side of Vinton Street from West Emerson Street to North Cedar Park. Liz Peart seconds. All are in favor. Motion carries at 6:51 PM.

4. Request to add a crosswalk across Lebanon Street between Grove Street and Park Street

Ryan Williams speaks as one of the proponents for this agenda item (see attached letter). He is in favor of the crosswalks. He believes that we should add as many crosswalks as possible, as frequently as possible, where people already walk. He adds that regardless of what the Traffic Commission decides tonight, pedestrians will still cross in these areas because they are the most direct routes to their destinations.

Tom Rossi asks if adding a crosswalk where the sight lines are not ideal gives the pedestrian a false sense of security. Ryan Williams responds that no crosswalk should give a pedestrian a false sense of security because you are more likely to get hit by a car in a crosswalk than you are in any other point of the street. He explains that this is pulled from the Melrose data from the past two years. He continues that the sight lines should be based on the target speed of the road in an effort to reduce speeds on the road. Regarding the sight lines, if you are talking about the difference of 500 feet versus fifty feet, then it is clear that fifty feet is not enough for vehicles to safely stop. He says that Malvern Street is a difference of 350 feet versus 450 feet, and we are already under the threshold for a reasonable driver driving at the target speed. He does not necessarily think an additional 100, 200 or 300 feet is going to make it safer. He adds that he does not believe that if he sees someone 1,000 feet ahead of him compared to 500 feet ahead of him that it makes him twice as safe either. He says that he drives 20 to 25 MPH and could stop on a dime. He continues that adding the crosswalk provides a signal to drivers to slow down and stop. He uses the 25 MPH signs as

an example. He explains that not everyone is driving 25 MPH, but the signs send out a signal to drivers to slow down.

Tom Rossi makes a motion to open public participation. Chief Lyle seconds. Public participation is opened at 7:12 PM.

Alderman Lipper-Garabedian speaks in favor of this agenda item reading a letter she sent previously to the Commission (see attached). She also provides comments from a friend asking for accident data and follow up on data for this area. She continues to read that having this data may have helped find solutions that might have been able to help avoid accidents like the teenager who was just struck by a car recently.

Hope Tompkins, a resident of 73 Malvern Street, says she was not notified of this meeting. She is in favor of the agenda item.

Alice Golub from 15 Howard Street commends the Traffic Commission for the work done in her area (Clifford/Elm/Howard Streets). She says that speeding is the big issue in Melrose and asks the Police Department enforce the speed limit. She says that people will change their patterns if it affects them directly.

Jeff Parenti makes a motion to close public participation. Alderman Boisselle seconds. Public participation closes at 7:22 PM.

Chair Proakis Ellis reads several emails from residents (see attached).

Tom Rossi asks if adding crosswalks falls under the Traffic Commission's purview. Chair Proakis Ellis adds that it is the opinion of the City Solicitor that adding crosswalks falls under our responsibility. She adds that adding rapid flashing beacons or signage to reinforce a crosswalk that already exists does not require voting from Traffic Commission, as it does not make any regulatory change.

Chair Proakis Ellis says that the area of Lebanon Street is on the shortlist for TIP Funding and the sidewalks are a year-three item for Complete Streets. She says that long term she would love for us to add two crosswalks to this area. She is more in favor for one to be added to Appleton Street because Malvern Street could use the Grove Street crosswalk, which is very close. She would also consider adding one to Beech Avenue if we thought that people would use that instead of crossing at Malvern Street. She reviews the sight line measurements that were sent out previously to the Traffic Commission.

Jeff Parenti says that he thinks Malvern Street is a good place for a crosswalk because there is a demand for it. He adds that he would be in support of three crosswalks, one at Malvern Street, one at Beech Avenue and one at Appleton Street.

Chair Proakis Ellis goes over some information from the national table for motor vehicle stopping sight distances. She says that at a nine percent grade at 35 MPH, just to look at the worst case scenario, we would need 287 feet of sight distance. The Commission reviews the sight distances taken at each location.

Alderman Lipper-Garabedian adds that the Malvern Street location will not help a lot of the residents that are walking to the Hoover Elementary School. She says that the Appleton Street location would be more helpful for those families.

Chief Lyle says that there is a fence on the northeast corner of Lebanon Street and Malvern Street that could be causing some sight line issues. He says that the Malvern Street intersection has a lot of issues and is wondering if one of our traffic engineer consultants could take a look at that area.

Jeff Parenti says that in the past 15 years there were 37 crashes on Malvern Street at Lebanon Street and that 14 people were injured. He adds that not everything gets reported and we do not have 2018 data yet.

Chief Lyle asks how much approximately each crosswalk costs. Chair Proakis Ellis responds that if there are already ramps we can paint the lines with our crew; if curb ramps do not exist it is approximately \$7000 per crosswalk.

Chair Proakis Ellis says that she is comfortable with adding a crosswalk at Appleton Street, but that she does not have the same comfort level with the Malvern Street location.

Chief Lyle says that he is in support of both Appleton Street and Beech Avenue.

Tom Rossi makes a motion to approve crosswalks across Lebanon Street at Beech Avenue and in the vicinity of Appleton Street pending funding. Chief Lyle seconds. All are in favor. Motion carries at 8:06 PM.

Chief Lyle makes a motion to adjourn. Alderman Boisselle seconds. All are in favor. Meeting adjourns at 8:07 PM.