

TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

October 22, 2019

IN ATTENDANCE: Chair Elena Proakis Ellis, Councilor Bob Boisselle, Jeff Parenti, Chief Mike Lyle, John Vetere, Elizabeth Peart, Dan Krechmer, Thomas Rossi, Sgt. Jon Goc - Advisor, and Diane Ardizzoni – Clerk

Meeting opened at 5:35 PM

I. New Business:

1. Resident request to repeal the current overnight parking restriction in the City of Melrose and/or amend the existing law so that the prohibition does not apply to vehicles registered to an address within the City of Melrose.

Commission Chair Proakis Ellis reads the agenda item.

Jeff Parenti expresses that he is surprised that the Traffic Commission will be the committee to make this ruling/decision on behalf of everyone in the City and is uncomfortable with the process as the committee is appointed by the Mayor and not part of an elected committee or executive committee. He would like to do his due diligence and hear from the folks of the City, City Council and the Mayor of their opinion. He does not feel he has enough information to make the decision. In his opinion, this should not be the only forum for this to be decided. In summary, he doesn't feel a decision should be made tonight.

Elena Proakis Ellis reads letters from City officials, which include the Major, Fire Chief Collina and Interim Director of Public Works Rick Stinson.

John Vetere opens public participation and Mike Lyle seconds the motion. All are in favor.

Peter Mortimer, City Councilor, is strongly against lifting this ban. He states that he is around Melrose as a City Councilor and has heard that most people do not want this ban lifted. He states Melrose has been noted as one of the best places to live and feels the ban is a reason for this. He lists many reasons why keeping the ban in place is good for the City. He notes that having strange cars parked all day and night increases the risk for increased crime. This would be a giant step in making Melrose more urban. The ordinance from 1976 is the prime reason why Melrose is one of the greatest places to live. Trash pick-up would be an issue and the workers would have a more difficult time. Shoveling out spots, placing cones and chairs could open the door for neighbors having disputes over said spots, and snow removal by the City would be impacted greatly, not to mention it doesn't make the City a very green City. He states that there seem to be more cars in Melrose, and if the ban is lifted there will be even more cars. There has been an increase in people riding their bicycles and this could potentially lead to more bicycle accidents. When people bought their houses they were aware that there was no overnight parking. They knew the rules and still decided to buy here. The majority of folks that jockey cars around are still in favor of keeping cars off the street. It would be unfair to the people who chose to buy a home in Melrose because of the ban to lift it.

Shawn McMaster, City Councilor, states he is opposed to lifting the ban in Ward 5. He explains that the apartment buildings on Washington and Pleasant Streets already are seeing excessive cars. Public safety is the major problem; trying to turn a fire truck on a regular day is near impossible, never mind at night with cars on streets. We cannot afford a delay in response time for all medical emergencies.

Monica Mederios, City Councilor, mentions she is glad there is a discussion; however, she is in favor of keeping the ban. She states that she is out and about in her role as City Councilor and what she is hearing about the most is the frustration over congestion. A lot of effort is being made to change our carbon footprint and reduce the number of cars. This affects our environment. There are some renters here tonight and she invites them to stay involved and participate. She suggests the City could be more proactive in letting people know that there is a ban. She hopes we can continue to have the discussion but wants to maintain the ban.

Many residents spoke and stated their reasons for **not** wanting to see the overnight ban lifted, and these include the following:

- Safety of emergency vehicles being able to navigate the streets
- Police have a clearer picture of vehicles that belong or do not belong
- Fear that non-residents will park for numerous days in a row
- Don't want to see Melrose become an urban community
- Prevent homes being used as Airbnbs
- Looking to reduce the number of cars and lower our carbon footprint

The reasons residents **would like** to see the ban lifted are as follows:

- Renters in the City may only have the option to have one car on the property they rent
- We, as a community, should embrace change
- Allowing cars to park will reduce the speed of traffic
- Reduce the financial burden for those who need to pay for additional parking spots to accommodate multiple vehicles per household

Below is the list of residents who spoke for and against lifting the ban, in the order in which they spoke ("for" means they do not want the overnight parking ban, and "against" means they want to keep the ban in place):

<u>Name</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>
Peter Mortimer		☒
Shawn McMaster		☒
Bob Driscoll		☒
Elle Rupert	☒	
Ted Cummings		☒
Michelle Maher		☒
Paul Crowley		☒
James Scott	☒	
Daniel Fusco		☒
Meghan Walsh		☒
Karen Alley		☒
Ronald Alley, Jr.	☒	

<u>Name</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>
Marty Cassavoy		☒
Janine Venuti		☒
Elaine LeGendre		☒
Rachel Kelly		☒
James Hughes		☒
Monica Medeiros		☒
Rebecca Fuentes	☒	
Finn McSweeney		☒
Dan McCarthy		☒
Brian Sullivan		☒
Howard Aborn		☒
Jim O’Laughlin		☒
Michael Cowels	☒	
Sandra Cunningham		☒
Michael Conboy		☒

John Vetere moves to close public participation, Dan Krechmer seconds. All are in favor.

John Vetere makes a motion to deny lifting the ban. Tom Rossi seconds.

Elena Proakis Ellis mentions the vast majority of letters received are in opposition to lifting the ban and highlights some items of note in the letters that were not already noted during public comment. The City heard from one resident that her neighbors next door created an Airbnb. Councilor Lipper-Garabedian has suggested that we take more time to understand the problem, and Councilor Zwerko is against changing the ban but thinks this should be an on-going discussion regardless of the decision of the TC. There were some occasional comments here tonight as far as the overnight guest parking, and there is a need for a better-communicated and standardized protocol so people understand that it is allowed and that there is a process for them.

Chair Proakis Ellis had a meeting with Chief Collina who stated that Melrose is the 16th densest community in the Commonwealth. She looked up other communities that have overnight parking bans, which included Brookline, Belmont and Arlington.

Arlington’s parking ban is from 1:00 – 7:00 am. There is a formal procedure for requesting overnight parking before 10 pm that night, for only one night and one car, with a limit of 14 requests per calendar year. Requests are not allowed during snow.

Brookline has a ban that you can’t park for more than one hour between 1-6 am. Formalized overnight guest parking passes can be purchased for designated spots in select parking lots. Parking on-street overnight is prohibited, even with the guest pass. A guest pass is from 11 pm to 8:00 am.

Belmont, which is 18th on list of dense municipalities, also has an overnight parking ban. It is in effect from 1:00-7:00 am. In term of exceptions, they are at the discretion of the police department and are permitted if there is a death in the family or an emergency. They provide instructions on how to call and to call every night if you need an exception.

Elizabeth Peart thanks all who gave their input and came at the last minute to make their statements. She appreciates everyone’s input. She kept a tally and she came up with 21 supporting the ban and five

opposed, plus a few that weren't truly one way or the other on the spectrum. She googled the process in Melrose on how to park overnight in Melrose and couldn't find a clear explanation.

John Vetere states as a community, we need a solution. We need to better address how we handle and show transparency at the parking clerk office about the rules and regulations that are not always clearly defined.

Dan Krechmer agrees with John's point that the whole overnight permit system is not great and moving forward that it could possibly be automated where you could register your address, license plate, etc., similar to what Elena Proakis Ellis read for Belmont. Elena points out that other communities do have an automated system in place. He also agrees with Jeff Parenti's statement because he heard a lot of emotion in the public's opinions. He suggests thinking about it longer and sending it to another body or commission.

Tom Rossi agrees that we should address overnight parking. He notes it is not on the agenda to discuss changing the permit process. He suggests this should be an agenda item for the next meeting. The Commission should gather more information to be sure what the official policy is. We don't need to put off the vote on the ban and create a bigger issue. We did get input from city officials, public works, the Fire Department, and the public, and we have enough information to vote tonight. He states there is definitely an increase in traffic, and lifting the ban will increase the traffic and bring more cars into the City. What he thinks was not heard tonight is that if the ban is lifted in certain areas, it will make it harder for residents to be able to park in front of their own homes, as vehicles can and will be parked there for extended periods of time. The Traffic Commission often has agenda items to hear complaints about parking issues as it is now, and he feels we will now be inundated and not able to make decisions during other TC meetings if there are multiple exceptions.

Chief Lyle appreciates all the participation from the residents. He also supports Chief Collina and feels removing this ban is going to create a public safety issue. Chief Lyle lives on a private way and sees it on his own street that he has 4-5 cars constantly on his street and finds it difficult at times to pull out of his driveway. At the church on Upham Street, he sees mirrors hit off of cars. The Police Department has made many accommodations for hospice, etc. The Traffic Code states 8:00 am and needs to be changed to 6 am for removal of cars with overnight permits. An online portal with the MPD and instruction to call between 6:00 -10:00 pm for exceptions/guest passes would be helpful. He cannot support the lifting to the ban.

Elena Proakis Ellis states that Melrose has made significant strides in walkability, bikeability, and encouraging dependence on public transportation and fears any change to the ban would encourage more cars.

A motion was made to deny the request to lift and/or amend the overnight parking ban. John Vetere seconds. All were in favor of denying the request to lift the ban (7 in favor, 0 opposed).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm