

TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

March 17, 2021

IN ATTENDANCE: Chair Elena Proakis Ellis, Councilor Jack Eccles, Commissioner Rossi, Commissioner Peart, Commissioner Parenti, Chief Mike Lyle, Commissioner Krechmer, Former Mayor Gail Infurna, Sgt. Jon Goc – Technical Advisor, and Diane Ardizzoni – Clerk

I. Continued Business:

1. Approve minutes from December 16, 2020

Motion to approve minutes by Chief Lyle and seconded by Commissioner Parenti. Elena called the role, all in favor with the correction of “Councilor” Parenti being changed to “Commissioner Parenti.”

II. New Business

2. Request from business to change parking signs and regulations (which are not consistent with one another) on the southerly side of Sylvan Street between Derby Road and Main Street

Elena explains that the inconsistency is the signs posted are essentially consistent with the other commuter area signs because of the proximity to Oak Grove to prevent day long parking of commuters. Those signs are not in our Traffic Code so we need to vote to approve signage or, if we think it is okay to have no regulation there, which she believes the Credit Union is requesting, we can take no vote or vote and take down the signs that are inconsistent with the Traffic Code.

Jessica Palm, Facilities Manager, and Robert Cashman, President & CEO, from the Metro Credit Union request that the signs be removed from the opposite side of Sylvan Street adjacent to the Armory. Jessica explains that they have limited parking and members who try to park on that portion of the street either cannot due to the restricted hours of 6:00 am – 10:00 am, or they are often deterred by the signs in general. So they are asking that they be removed not only for the members but also for employees to free up spots in their lot. Mr. Cashman explains that they have been in this location for 10 years now and this has been a consistent problem. He states that sometimes employees need to park far away and this poses a safety risk of them walking in the evening back to their vehicles, etc. There was a Zoning Board meeting just last week for

the expansion of this building and the Credit Union withdrew their application because they could see that there weren't going to be enough votes to move forward on the project, and they are not able to expand on the space and therefore unable to obtain additional parking.

No motion to open public comment as no one from the public is present for this item. Chair Proakis Ellis confirms that residents were notified within this block of Sylvan Street.

Commissioner Parenti states that there is a proposal to create a set of bike lanes on Main Street and he is unsure if it is official or if this is a Public Works plan, but he wonders if it is, does it stretch down to this address and does it affect the parking in front of the building. Elena states that there is a similar situation on Main Street with what we have on Sylvan Street, which is that the existing signage on Main Street does not match the Traffic Code. Right now the Traffic Code states two-hour parking from 8:00 am – 9:00 pm on one stretch and the other is parking prohibited on that whole block of Main Street from the Credit Union up to Ledgewood Street. This item will most certainly come up when we are planning anything with regard to the bike lanes, but right now we do have an existing restriction that states no parking. Elena does believe that this has an impact on this decision as well.

Commissioner Peart states that the redevelopment project is something that she realized had been going through City review and she was looking through the files on the City website. There are a variety of typical site plan applications/documents, including a traffic study and that was the document that Diane forwarded to the Commission today prior to the meeting. She has not had a chance to fully read it and the proponent has acknowledged that there is no longer a related application. Commissioner Peart noted some good parking information was used in that study, because the traffic engineer stated that they did parking observations on Sylvan Street on a Friday and Saturday, but she couldn't find any summary of that information. She welcomes anyone to try and find something in there to help with tonight's discussion, but she does not think it is worth talking about what their recommendations were because it was for post-project conditions which are no longer applicable. What is unclear to her is what happens on Sylvan Street at 10:00 am. Parking is prohibited from 6:00 – 10:00 am. Is it utilized by residents, the Armory or anyone else?

Sergeant Goc states that the history of that area is to prevent the MBTA parking as well as across the street on the Pine Banks side. So after 10:00 am, it's customers using it. He states the issue here is there is no parking for employees who work in a business in Melrose in that area. There is no city lot near there for them to get Merchant permits

which are provided to other employees in the City. This area is similar to Green Street as it's a business that is outside of any City lot that we can help the employees park with stickers, which we do provide to most of the City in the Main Street district. On Green Street it is signed but the Police Department recognizes the lack of parking.

Chair Proakis Ellis stated she didn't really consider the Merchant parking program. but if we wanted to try that route we would have that area signed as three-hour or two-hour parking like the municipal parking lots with the merchant sign underneath, and if you have a merchant sticker you could leave your car there all day similar to the other municipal lots.

Sgt. Goc states that maybe we pull the signs for now and see where this goes depending on how many people are going to back and parking for Oak Grove. If commuters start to park there again all day, we would have to do something then.

Elena is hearing two interesting ideas, one being maybe we do the merchant parking on that stretch which is just along the Armory and not along a resident's private property, and the other is to just take the signs out which she suggests if we do take the signs out that we sign what is in the Traffic Code right now which is the first 70 feet off of Main Street is no parking. She images that was something to do with site lines and safety of having people be able to queue up at the stop sign there rather than being pushed out into the center of the road. Interestingly, that 70 feet it takes you the length of the Credit Unions parking lot where you are not allowed to park across the street per the current code, and then the remainder of the Sylvan on that side if we just took the signs down would be all legal parking, and we could just see what happens and then use the Merchant idea as fallback.

Mayor Infurna thinks that it is mostly customer parking that she sees while out walking. She is in favor of taking the signs down and seeing what happens. If there is a problem the Commission can come back to this. If you go the 70 feet she doesn't believe that there will be that many cars.

Elena mentions that there is an entrance to the Armory in the back corner but looking at the aerial and looking at how many cars could fit, Elena believes that at least 12 cars could fit along that stretch.

Commission Rossi is wondering if we are considering the same thing on both sides of the street, meaning in front of the two houses as well as alongside the Armory. Elena states that if the other side of the street has those same signs up right now, if so that is not in the code either.

Councilor Eccles believes that most of the streets in that area have some sort of restriction so folks cannot park and walk to Oak Grove. He believes that the southern part of Derby Road is also restricted. It strikes him as odd that we would leave one stretch as a free-for-all, and he does like the idea of having a two-hour limit.

Elena explains that the opposite side of the street is No Parking 6:00 am – 10:00 am except Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

Commissioner Peart states the restrictions would prevent people who might want to hop on a bus on Main Street from parking there and as you get further north from parking and going to Wyoming, it is a far walk to the Wyoming Commuter rail station. She is not against removing the parking signs at least along the southern curb and is uncertain that she is in favor of removing them from in front of the houses if it doesn't need to be.

Elena has the same concerns. First of all we didn't notify the folks that live on that stretch that we could potentially be removing any signs on that side of the street. So one option we would have would be to codify the signs with a vote tonight because the signs are there and typically a very uncontroversial item to vote on, but she not a fan of taking the signs out on the Sylvan side.

Commission Peart states that if we were to remove the signs she would really want to see employees park along Sylvan Street, not in the spaces in the lot. She would like those reserved for customers. Though not enforceable, it can be encouraged through employee policies and Mr. Cushman from Metro Credit Union states he could guarantee that.

Chief Lyle feels if we remove all those signs he believes that we will wind up in trouble in short order just from seeing all the commuter rails and the problems that existed at Sylvan Street prior to when the signage went up on those side streets. He is more in support something where we give them 1 hr/2hr parking 6:00 – 10:00 am so that the Police Department can still enforce it without hindering the employees from parking on the roadway. He feels commuters will begin to park there. Elena asks the Chief if he would be in favor of giving Merchant stickers to allow them to override those hours. Chief Lyle believes that it would cause an issue because as soon as we give Merchant stickers and the businesses on Franklin Street find out about it, that whole area will want that same. He does have compassion for these folks who are trying to run a business and there is no parking. He is more in support of a two-hour time limit parking so we can remove the commuters from parking there.

Commissioner Rossi mentions that we may consider if the employees are arriving at 8:00 am if we had a two-hour restriction between 6:00 am – 10:00 am then they could park and stay anyway for the day.

Councilor Eccles looked at street view and the signs on the surrounding streets and they all have 6:00 am – 10:00 am. He is not necessarily saying that the way it currently is how it needs to stay, but it seems weird to him that we would essentially create something different in that area, that we marked on purpose for that specific reason.

Elena thinks that it would be good to enforce the no parking for that first 70 feet. There is a reason why the Traffic Commission instituted that specifically for 70 feet and she suspects that it was in relation to allowing people to pull in and out of the bank without having cars in that last stretch. There is a No Parking Here to Corner sign present and would recommend that anything we do, that sign seems appropriate at that intersection.

Two-part motion by Chief Lyle to restrict parking, leaving signs as existing, No Parking 6:00 am – 10:00 am Monday – Friday, except Saturday, Sunday and Holidays on the northerly side of Sylvan Street from Main Street to Derby Road and the second part is on the southerly side, from within five feet of the gate entrance to the Armory to the current No Parking Here to Corner sign 70 feet from Main Street, make that two-hour parking, 6:00 am – 10:00 am Monday – Friday except Saturday, Sundays and Holidays.

Seconded by Commissioner Rossi. Elena called the role, all in favor. Motion carries.

3. Request by Mayor Brodeur for a stop sign at the end of Everett Street at the intersection of Crescent Avenue, behind the Lincoln School

Commissioner Parenti has recused himself from this item.

Kia Parenti is the proponent for this item. She is a student at the Lincoln School and she tells the Commission why she would like the stop sign there. She explains that Crescent Avenue is a hill and she has almost gotten hit by a car four times riding her bike. She states that when cars come down the hill they don't usually have time to stop and the cars coming the other direction don't see them coming down. She would like to see the stop sign for people coming out of Everett Street.

Commissioner Rossi asks if she notices if the cars stop first or do they roll through the Intersection. She states that the car did stop but it took them a second to see her and a second for her to see them and was hard to stop for her as she was going down the hill. She states that she sees car coming out of Everett because there is no stop sign there.

Motion to open public comment by Commissioner Rossi and seconded by Councilor

Eccles. Elena called the role, all in favor.

Kevin Erb wholeheartedly supports this and thinks that there should actually be 2 stop signs. He agrees that when coming down the hill of Crescent there are two massive trees. There are two types of people that go down that street, the people who live there and go slowly because there are children there, and the people using it as a cut through. Coming down that hill onto Everett Street there is legal parking on Crescent Ave. on that side, so to go around the car and go onto Everett Street, if there is a car parked there, is going to be a head on crash. He states there is a crosswalk there and two massive trees and when you come down that hill you cannot see that crosswalk. He encourages this stop sign and consideration of putting one on Crescent Street as well.

Motion made by Commissioner Peart to close public comment, seconded by Commissioner Rossi. Elena called the role, all in favor.

Mayor Infurna took a ride by today and agrees that the tree does obstruct the view with the crosswalk there and her thought would be for the two stop signs. She is definitely in support the stop sign at the end of Everett Street.

Elena mentions that since we did not notify that neighborhood of a stop sign on Crescent that we would need to provide notification if we wanted to consider that at the next meeting.

Commissioner Peart mentions that the Commission has discussed these types of T-intersections before where it is implied to the driver on the side street that they should be stopping, meaning the traffic on Everett Street should be stopping. But she can absolutely see the need to reinforce that with an actual stop sign at the end of Everett Street to reinforce that behavior. She would say that even though it is not on the agenda for tonight, that she is likely not to support a stop sign on Crescent given what the likely traffic volumes that are out there.

Sgt. Goc states he agrees that area has been congested for years and every fall the Police Department receives plenty of phone calls about that back area of the school which used to be secure and no longer is.

Chief Lyle is in support of the stop sign but the bigger problem is that the gate to that parking lot has been broken for over two years. He has put a request in to have it repaired and will again put in another request as parents should be dropping kids off on Wyoming Avenue, and since the gate has been broken they are using this area as well.

Motion by former Mayor Infurna to approve a stop sign for the end of Everett Street going into Crescent, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. Elena called the role, all are in favor, motion passes unanimously.

4. Request by Ward Councilor Cory Thomas to add a crosswalk from the end of Penney Road's new sidewalk, across Swains Pond Avenue, to the sidewalk that runs along Swains Pond Avenue toward Lebanon Street

Councilor Thomas mentions that there has been a lot of development on Penney, Dexter and Swains Pond and the side roads so as this area develops, the infrastructure needs to develop as well. The road and sidewalk are great additions to the area and the Ward but now it seems to make sense to add this crosswalk as well as the new crosswalk the DPW already has in its plan across Dexter towards Penney. He feels this will help make the pedestrians safer as well as the cyclists, and it will link the people who live on Penney, Dexter and Swains Pond to the sidewalk that leads past Maple Grove and Worth Street, out to Lebanon Street at the Malden line.

Elena mentions that the crosswalk was already approved previously at Penney at the end of Dexter, and so this would just be the final link to get the people over to the sidewalk on Swains Pond Avenue towards Lebanon Street. Elena has herself taken a look as well as sent out a couple of the City's engineers to take a closer look at it. There are a few different options of exactly how we could put it in but we meet site line requirements. We have a stop sign on Penney, a stop sign on Swains Pond coming from the Grove/Beech direction, and really good site lines coming down from the Lebanon directions, so there are options.

Commissioner Krechmer believes that the DPW and Engineering can pick an exact location as he drives through that area all the time and has made the observation that in last year, a lot of people have discovered the conservation areas down there and a lot more people are living there and walking around. He feels this would be a great addition to the City.

Chief Lyle makes a motion that we make a move to install this crosswalk, seconded by Commissioner Rossi. Elena called the role, all are in favor.

Meeting adjourned.