

TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

June 16, 2021

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

I. Continued Business:

1. Approve minutes from March 17, 2021

Motion to approve minutes by Commissioner Tom Rossi seconded by Chief Lyle.

All in favor, minutes approved.

II. New Business

2. **Request from resident that the turn from Green Street northbound onto Lynn Fells Parkway eastbound to be restricted to No Turn on Red.**

Elena reads the request from the resident.

Motion to open public comment by Mayor Infurna, seconded by Councilor Eccles, all in favor.

Resident Van Caldwell who lives at 85 Green Street says that he believes he may have heard the proposal incorrectly. He was under the impression that cars could turn from Lynn Fells Parkway heading toward Saugus and trying to take a left onto Green Street.

Resident Ryan Williams of 88 Malvern Street has been in touch with the proponent Garrett Nelson who is unable to attend and wanted to extend his apology for missing the meeting.

Motion to close public comment by Mayor Infurna, seconded by Dan Krechmer, all in favor.

Commissioner Krechmer was surprised that there is no right turn at the other location at that intersection and right turn on red is allowed. When he went to the location he saw kids walking to school, on bikes through that intersection and he feels it is a no-brainer to restrict that turn. Elena checked the Traffic Code which does not have a no turn on red from that approach and it's possible that this dates back to the traffic signal that is now owned by the City and used to be owned by the DCR, and the Lynn Fells Parkway is still owned by the DCR and that is why it isn't in our Traffic Code. Any restrictions onto the Parkway itself would have to be DCR's decision.

Chief Lyle would like to comment that going southbound on Green Street there is a delay for an arrow to take a left onto the Parkway and is concerned that there may be a long line of traffic backing up, and he is worried about people taking chances and it won't be as safe as it is. He suggests that the perhaps the DCR can adjust the timing on the southbound side.

Motion to by Dan Krechmer seconded by Tom Rossi for recommendation to install a No Turn on Red sign on Green Street northbound. All are in favor except Commissioner Parenti, who sustains from voting.

Motion by Tom Rossi for No Turn on Red from Green Street southbound onto the Lynn Fells Parkway, seconded by Councilor Eccles. All are favor except Commissioner Parenti, who sustains from voting.

Both motions passed – No Turn on Red in both directions. City staff will look into adjusting the timing of the lights.

3. Request by resident to add stop sign on Maple Terrace at intersection with Swains Pond Avenue.

Since no one is here to talk on this item, no need to open public comment.

Elena reads the letter sent to the Traffic Commission.

The Commission discusses this item and all agree that at this intersection, especially with the construction of the new development, it makes sense to have a stop sign.

Mayor Infurna would like to mention that the intersection is overgrown and would like the City to cut it back to make it a more defined intersection. Commissioner Krechmer

also points out that he agrees and has witnessed construction vehicles just pulling out of that intersection.

Motion by Chief Lyle seconded by Councilor Eccles for a stop sign to be installed on Maple Terrace at the intersection of Swains Pond Avenue. All are in favor, motion passes.

4. Request by City Councilor Jen Grigoraitis requested by resident for stop signs at Waverly Ave. and E. Foster Street.

Elena reads the letter submitted by Councilor Grigoraitis.

Since no one is here to talk on this item, no need to open public comment.

Chief Lyle states that in four years there have been four crashes on Waverly Avenue from Upham to Laurel streets. He states that most accidents occur at Waverly and Upham Street. The traffic counts show anywhere from 1,500 – 3,000 cars per day going southbound. He states speeding is not the problem there. The Commissioners discuss that the intersection would not meet the warrants for a four-way stop sign.

Motion made by Commissioner Rossi to deny the four-way stop signs at Waverly and E. Foster Streets, seconded by Commissioner Peart. All are in favor, motion passes to deny stop signs.

5. Request by resident for speed bumps on the eastbound lane of Franklin between Garden and Vinton to slow down drivers.

Elena explains why this was allowed on tonight's agenda even though technically this is not a regulatory vote. However, there have been requests in the past for further information on this intersection and we now have that data. We have assessed traffic signals and other potential long term mediation.

Motion to open public comment made by Gail Infurna seconded by Chief Lyle, all are in favor.

Councilor John Tramontozzi, 794 Franklin Street, states that there are times when he is sitting out on his front porch and he can see the traffic pattern and speed is an issue. He also hears this from many, many residents. He thanks the Chief for the radar trailer that sits across from his home. He has driven up and down the street and noticed that going

into Stoneham, Stoneham has a safety zone speed limit sign for 25 mph and he is glad to see it, but in the other direction, and starting at Stoneham Center up to the High School, they have posted 25 mph speed limit and then as you continue further on Franklin Street, in the area of Pine Street, they have a 30 mph speed limit sign, and then at the Weiss Farm area there is a 35 mph zone. So when drivers reach the border of Melrose, they are already going 35 mph plus. He was hoping that we could speak to the Town Administrator in Stoneham and would appreciate what we would be requesting would be for the removal of their signs that say 30 and 35 mph. He states this would be consistent with what we are trying to accomplish. Chief Lyle will reach out to the Chief of Police in Stoneham to discuss. Councilor Tramontozzi believes that we definitely need some traffic calming measures, and he is not going to suggest what, but he would like to see some measures to calm traffic. He states the City Council just approved significant investments into Parks and one in particular is Volunteer Park on Warren Street for an inclusive park that is going to attract additional families coming to the park from all directions including coming down Franklin Street, crossing from Woodland and Botolph Streets. We have the crosswalk at Woodland and at Vinton Street and we had an accident that knocked the crosswalk light down at Vinton. We know there are issues with Franklin Street; we know there are accidents which have resulted in injury and death. He knows it is a tough area but we have got to do something. He thanks the Commission for listening to his complaints.

Maureen Bidgood, 751 Franklin Street, states that she is against the notion of placing speed bumps anywhere on Franklin Street. She doesn't think she is overstating it when she says that Franklin Street is a major access in and out of the City. She states ambulances, daily route for 16 wheeler tractor trailers delivering goods to businesses, buses to transport students and athletes to the middle and high school complex, and when there are heavy civil projects in town all the materials, supplies, port-a-potties, etc., all come on trucks down Franklin Street. Because of its daily use as a main commuter route, plows and sanders are used heavily during winter storms, and she fails to see the logic in placing a speed bump on such a roadway. Secondly, her concern is the noise. She has lived on Franklin Street since 1996 and she can count on one hand the number of times she has opened her front windows due to the traffic noise, and lives with it, but adding the banging of numerous vehicles hitting a speed bump at any speed would be jarring and very intrusive noise throughout the neighborhood 24 hours a day. She agrees that traffic calming through more law enforcement would be a much better solution.

Jeff Winey, 916 Franklin Street and has lived there for approximately 27 years. During that time he has seen traffic pick up significantly, mostly by cars and trucks driving at speeds far above the speed limit. He lives fairly close to the Melrose/Stoneham border, and jokingly calls it the starting line of the Indianapolis 500. Over the years he has witnessed numerous accidents on Franklin Street involving a neighbor's front porch getting taken out, a speeding car flipping over in front of his house, a speeding taxi cab skidding onto his property, and if not for the sturdy hedges he would have taken out his front porch or worse. He loves his community but hates Franklin Street. He states he does his best to never walk along Franklin Street, stating Melrose Street is far safer and always instructed his kids to avoid walking Franklin Street when possible. He jokes that when mowing his grass in his little front yard, he constantly wonders if some speeding car is going to jump to curb and take him out. He is hoping something/anything must be done to reduce the speed of cars and trucks barreling down Franklin Street. He is in support of traffic calming efforts in the Melrose Highlands. He is hoping Melrose can be creative in finding ways to reduce speeding and unsafe driving.

Ryan Williams, 88 Malvern Street, states that Franklin Street has a speeding problem. He believes that speed bumps are a crazy idea for a lot of reasons. He states there is an entire tool kit of traffic calming solutions available. He states that we don't need to wait, we could try something simple, something using traffic cones, rubber implements that are bolted into the street, and these can be done right away pending budget. He spends a lot of time at an establishment on Franklin Street and is always fearful crossing that intersection that someone is going to be coming from Stoneham after seeing the 35 mph zone coming down the hill and not paying attention through that intersection. He encourages the City to put their heads together and come up with something right away.

Motion to close public comment by Jeff Parenti seconded by Liz Peart. All are in favor.

Elena explains that in the packet you will find letters received by the Traffic Commission supporting traffic calming in this area. She goes through each letter and highlights residents' concerns and does not have any letters not supporting traffic calming measures.

The Commission had a lengthy discussion. Elena states the crash history is fairly substantial, and there was a 12-month period where there were 10 crashes. The radar trailer from MPD is helping. Chief Lyle says he can reach out to Stoneham about removing 30 and 35 MPH signs in Stoneham on Franklin. The Commission discusses

Volunteer park becoming inclusive on Warren St., talking to Medford about Lawrence and Winthrop Street speed tables, and possibly taking a holistic approach to entire corridor. Do we want to look at crashes along rest of the corridor? Solar glare is an issue. Speed tables, chevron signs, solar speed feedback signs, reflectors in yellow lines, and raised intersections/crosswalks were all discussed as options to consider.

A motion was made by Jeff Parenti, seconded by Tom Rossi to table until a future meeting so that a traffic study can be performed by Stantec and the Commission can have data so they can look at possible calming measures. All are in favor; motion to table passes.

6. Request from City to evaluate parking restrictions on Echo Street, especially as they relate to school arrival and dismissal times, in light of new sidewalk work.

Elena talks about the project the City is working on in this area. As you come down Echo Street towards the Hoover School, there is a sidewalk on the left and there is no sidewalk on the right. The parents park on the left and unload the kids on the sidewalk on the left and as they round the corner, they cross in the crosswalk in front of the school. The principal is the one who is acting as the crossing guard currently. We are adding sidewalk on the right on Echo Street and at the neighborhood meeting for the Complete Streets project, a resident said once there are sidewalks on the right, it might make more sense to have the parents park on the right hand side and off load the kids on the new sidewalk, so that they no longer have to cross at the crosswalk from the opposite side in front of the school. Elena thought it was a good idea and placed it on the agenda for tonight.

Motion to open public comment by Gail Infurna, seconded by Tom Rossi, all are in favor.

George McCarthy from 62 Echo Street states the he is happy to see the new sidewalks. He thinks putting the traffic on the other side leading up to the school does make sense, but his concern is that people will still park in front of his house even if it was not allowed, and also he himself would like to park there. He feels because there are a lot of driveway openings and therefore less parking on the opposite side from his house, he thinks keeping the parking as it is along that stretch of the school access road would be best. He does acknowledge that some school parents do not adhere to the parking now, but most do. He would prefer that the parking stay on the left side in front of his house but supports what you feel is best.

Ryan Williams of 88 Malvern Street wanted to share that he sent in some pictures that show the traffic at the intersection of Whitman Avenue and Glendower. These photos show over the past couple of months a few houses that have been under construction, and if cars/construction vehicles are parked in front of 70-72 Whitman, this intersection is seized. He is afraid that emergency vehicles are in no way able to get by. He is very happy that the sidewalks have been installed as when the cars/construction vehicles are there, the kids are safe up on the sidewalk. His second concern is that Park Street has a 20 mph everything else is signed at 25 mph. This is a school zone and he mentions that Winthrop Street has both No Parking and School Zone signs all around it. He thinks the City should investigate making a few of the roads school zone speed limit roads to provide more signage to notify drivers they're entering a school zone.

Motion to close public comment by Tom Rossi, seconded by Gail Infurna; all are in favor.

Elena has done research in the past regarding School Zones, and you have to be contiguous with the parcel that the school is on. We got special support from the MassDOT for the signs on Upham Street that relate to the Winthrop School, but by today's standards, that would not be allowed and there is a certain number of feet before you reach the property, and the zone is only to be on the street that is contiguous with the school parcel. Elena also noted that the proposed parking change is for only the cars coming down the hill on Echo Street after passing Beacon Street, but not after turning the corner onto the school access drive. Therefore, there would be no changes to the parking in front of Mr. McCarthy's house. If, in the future, the school decided that they wanted to further modify that parking strategy in the immediate vicinity of the school, a future item could be brought to the Commission for consideration after school starts. For now, this item only applies to Echo Street between Beacon and the bend.

A motion was made by Chief Lyle to restrict parking and to flip flop the signs as proposed on Echo Street between Beacon and the bend. The motion was seconded by Councilor Eccles; all are in favor, motion passes.

Meeting adjourned @ 7:54 pm