

Traffic Commission Meeting
July 16, 2015

Meeting was held at the Tufts Administrative Building, 167 Holland Street, 2nd floor

Attendance: Stan Koty, James Polito, Thomas Graney, Robert McWatters

Staff: Laura Accaputo, Suzanne Rinfret, Terence Smith

Other: Lauren Clayton, Alderman Neidergang, Kara Peters, Joe Lynch, Jerry Cronin, Jen Molina, Mark Chase

Meeting was called to order at 6pm by the Chair

Item #1 – Minutes from the June 18, 2015 Traffic Commission Meeting accepted unanimously

Item #2 – Proposal of “Spring Hill Neighborway Pilot”

- Jen Molina of OSPCD stated they were sponsoring Mark Chase to speak on this item and since he was not there yet asked it be moved to the end of the agenda.

Alderman McWatters made a motion to suspend the rules and move this item to the end of the agenda, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #3 – Request for Handicapped Parking

59A Gorham St

44 Vernon St

- Terence Smith stated Traffic and Parking had no objection to the request for either location.

Lt. Polito made a motion to Approve (both), seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #4 – Request for interim amendments to Article XIV

- Suzanne Rinfret stated OSPCD is working on a mobility plan and this is an interim amendment to make the process easier for constituents.
- Robert McWatters stated this is a step in the right direction as the past rules were cumbersome and this will make it easier for residents to come before the Traffic Commission with their issues.
- Alderman Neidergang agreed and supports this request.

Alderman McWatters made a motion to Approve, seconded by Lt. Polito. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #5 – Request to eliminate one parking space on the west side of Lowell St, south of Wilton St, for a distance of 20' from the existing fire lane.

- Terence Smith stated Traffic and Parking doesn't support this request as the intersection is typical of many intersections and the sight lines are adequate. He stated there would be no significant increase in sight lines with the elimination of this space. He also noted that Traffic and Parking conducted a review and found that no cars were parking on the existing hash-marks.

- Alderman Neidergang stated he was in favor of the request and that even a marginal increase in safety would be worth the loss of one parking space. He stated it is tough to make the turn onto Lowell St and this intersection has a special circumstance because of the chicane.
- Adam Peters, resident, stated Wilton St is the primary thoroughfare to Lowell St and when taking this left hand turn it is hard to see oncoming traffic, causing cars to unsafely proceed onto Lowell St. He provided a petition with signatures of other residents that support this request.
- Joe Lynch stated Lowell St is a work in progress and the problem with Wilton St is an unintended consequence of the chicane as it shifted parking which allows cars to travel closer to the corner. He stated it is especially difficult when an SUV is parked in this spot. He noted he is thankful to the Traffic Commission, Traffic and Parking, and Transportation for everything they have done so far. He believes any enhancement to safety is worth giving up a parking space for, especially since all of the residents on that side of Lowell St, except one, have driveways.
- Thomas Graney requested the SPD provide accident data for this area.

Thomas Graney made a motion to Table this request to allow time for review of the information provided along with the requested accident data, seconded by Lt. Polito. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #6 – Discussion on Alternatives to Contra Flow

- Lauren Clayton, resident, stated he believes contra flow is dangerous and he is especially concerned in the areas of Willow, Cedar, and Summer Streets because you can't always see the bikes. He stated contra flow means going the wrong way and is illegal and bikes can use sidewalks despite the notion that they can't. He believes the city should put up signs that say "Ride with Traffic" and "Wrong Way w/ a bicycle symbol" and that contra flow should be stopped in parked car lanes to the right of unshared narrow bike lanes. He stated bicyclists shouldn't feel entitled to drive the wrong way just because they are in a bike lane and requested that the Commission eliminate any city sanctioned implementation of contra flow and all other bike behaviors that violate laws which apply to all other vehicles.
- Lt. Polito stated all bicycles are subject to the same rules of the road as drivers under MGL C 85 S 11B and that the SPD has been giving written warnings to educate the bicyclists.
- Alderman McWatters asked if the SPD kept stats on the warnings issued and if they could be provided to the Traffic Commission and Lt. Polito replied yes and he will provide the information to the Commission.
- Alex Epstein spoke on behalf of the Bike Committee and as an Engineer. He stated the Commonwealth of Massachusetts follows the MUTCD and that contra flow is permitted by Federal Traffic Regulations as of 2009 provided a formal lane has been established. He stated Chapter 2A, S 6, Para 13 of the MUTCD allows local jurisdictions to provide word based language for traffic restrictions. He also noted that he asked the City of Cambridge if they have had any accidents

- relative to their bike lanes and was told none have been reported in any of their four bike lanes. He submitted two documents from the MUTCD for the record.
- The Chair suggested the item be tabled for further review and noted more details and discussion are needed. He asked Terence Smith and Lt. Polito to work with OSPCD and look into forming a committee to look at this as a whole.
 - Terence Smith stated there is a proposal for contra flow on the lower portion of Newton St and that Traffic and Parking reviews each request on a case by case basis and has concerns on higher volume streets.
 - Alderman McWatters asked if this will be looked at as part of the mobility study and Jennifer Molina replied this is a priority and the team will look at it.

LATE ITEM

Item #7 - Request to move the existing loading zone spaces in the union square lot to the first adjacent space on the west side and the move the second space to the first adjacent space east of the lot.

- The Chair stated this is to put an electronic charging station and if approved should have a stipulation that the Traffic Engineer review the area for a location that includes two spaces side by side.

Robert McWatters made a motion to Approve as stipulated by the Chair, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #2 – Proposal of “Spring Hill Neighborway Pilot”

- Jen Molina of OSPCD stated they were sponsoring Mark Chase to speak on this item and since he was not there yet asked it be moved to the end of the agenda.
- Mark Chase stated this concept takes quiet streets and transforms them with paint and planters to allow kids to play and increase neighborhood interaction. He stated this will connect to schools, parks, and squares on low traffic streets and will not impact access or parking. He stated it will increase a driver’s field of vision while decreasing speeds. They propose to use paint and stencils designed by neighbors, and small planters to create narrow entry to one way streets. The planters will be removed in the winter. He also discussed the idea of using designs in the crosswalks (such as soccer balls) in between the required white lines. The last page of the handout showed connectivity between Davis Sq and four parks. He also noted the idea has a good amount of support and has been well received by residents.
- Alderman McWatters stated conceptually this is a good idea that is low cost. He stated since most of the complaints he receives are about traffic he believes this is a step in the right direction.
- Lauren Clayton asked if businesses would be allowed to buy advertising and Mr. Chase stated that would be up to the city but he would be against that as this is for residential neighborhoods.

Lt. Polito made a motion to Approve, seconded by Robert McWatters. Motion passed: 4-0.

Thomas Graney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:40pm, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.