

Traffic Commission Meeting
May 16, 2013

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

Meeting was called to order @ 6pm

Attendance: Stan Koty, Thomas Graney, James Polito

Staff: Laura Accaputo, Suzanne Rinfret, Terence Smith, Matthew Dias

Other: Alderman Gewirtz, Lauren Clayton, Costa Chitouras, Peter Clemons, Jeffrey Morrow, Don Mackenzie, Michael Chiu, Alex Epstein

Item #1 – Minutes from April 18, 2013 Traffic Commission Meeting accepted unanimously.

Item #2 – Request for Traffic Calming on Kidder Ave

- Gewirtz stated this has been a concern for two residents for the past year and that a site review with city officials resulted in positive changes. Asked the chair to recognize resident
- Clemons submitted comments for the record. He also stated Kidder Av is a bypass route when College Av is backed up. Most side streets are one way, and a 30mph speed limit is excessive. He requested more SPD enforcement of the turn restrictions from College Av, a crosswalk at PowderhouseTer, slower speed limit, and truck restrictions.
- Clayton stated that if the delay from Davis Square is reduced it will help Kidder congestion. Further, that narrowness and topography of Kidder are not conducive to the speeding described previously. He recommended the traffic commission take no further action.
- Polito stated the SPD Traffic Division recently enhanced turn prohibition enforcement, which resulted in warnings. He noted average vehicular speeds, in all studies conducted, was never more than 20mph.
- Koty stated reducing the speed limit is petitioned through MassDOT and a labor-intensive process.
- Gewirtz requested an explanation of the MassDOT process.
- Smith explained a speed and engineering study must be conducted and sent to MassDOT for approval.
- Gewirtz requested the City conduct the study and refer to MassDOT.
- Polito committed to conducting speed study observations.
- Clemons reiterated his request for stop signs on Kidder Av at Powderhouse Terrace.
- Smith explained stop signs are regulated by MUTCD and cannot be installed at this location.
- Chiu stated he was skeptical of enforcement efforts yet, appreciated efforts undertaken thus far, yet stated a speed study is necessary.
- Koty asked the Traffic Engineer complete the study and report back in 90 days.
- Smith stated that T&P will forward the info to Mass DOT when available.

A motion to Table for 90 days was made by Koty, 2nd Graney, unanimous.

Item #3 – Request for Renewal of Handicapped Parking:

- 17 Russell Rd

Motion to Approve made by Polito, 2nd Graney, unanimous.

Item #4 – Request for Fire Lanes:

- 33 Lexington Av (5 ft)
- 38 Lexington Av (20 ft)
- 39 Lexington Av (5 ft)

Graney made a motion to Table pending further review, 2nd Polito, unanimous.

Item #5 – Request to consider extending the 48 hour parking rule beyond 48 hours
Information distributed regarding “Cold Starts”

- Gewirtz stated receiving several complaints about inconsistent enforcement, environmental and quality of life concerns.
- Chitouras stated time restrictions were intended for inoperable vehicles and forcing vehicles to move every 48hrs was not intended when the provision was created.
- Morrow was concerned about arbitrary enforcement.
- Mackenzie stated many people only use vehicles on weekends and concerned it is enforced unevenly and not environmentally friendly. He stated 80-90% of emissions come from “cold starts”.
- Dias stated this issue has come up in the past and the city attempts to enforce the violation by way of warnings first. He also noted several justifications; the restriction is tied to public works street occupancy permitting, public safety concerns after snow emergencies, eliminating abandoned vehicles, and the notion that the public right of way is a shared space for everyone. He also stated that he, too, gets complaints, yet they are from some wanting more and some wanting less enforcement of the 48 hour rule. He agreed there are valid concerns and requested time to review and come back to the commission with suggestions and/or improvements.

A motion to Table until the next meeting was made by Graney, 2nd Koty, unanimous.

Item #6 – Request from Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee (SBAC) to allow bicycles use of streets during restricted periods when Do Not Enter Regulations are in effect at the following locations:

- ❖ Cherry St from Summer St
 - ❖ Concord Av from Beacon St
 - ❖ Sartwell Av from Cedar St to Cherry St
 - ❖ Lincoln St from Broadway
 - ❖ Myrtle St from Washington St
 - ❖ Tufts St from Washington St to Cross St
 - ❖ Greenville St from McGrath Highway Southbound
 - ❖ Prospect Hill Av from McGrath Highway Southbound
 - ❖ Raymond Av from Curtis St
-
- Clayton stated most streets are near schools and the intent of the restriction was to allow local traffic only; and bikes should not be treated differently. He urged the commission to vote against this request.
 - Smith stated it is a good idea in general but would like additional time for review.
 - Polito recommended that the City Attorney look into it as bicycles are cited the same as motorists and making an exception for them may not be lawful.

- A motion to Table pending further review was made by Graney, 2nd Polito, unanimous.

Item #7 – Request from SBAC for the following changes to Article XIII “Bicycle Regulations” of the Traffic Regulations for consistency with State Regulations:

- **Strike last sentence of Section 13-4:** "The operator of a bicycle shall yield to pedestrians in all traffic situations."
 - This statement conflicts with Section 12-5: "Every pedestrian crossing a roadway at any point other than within a marked crosswalk shall yield the right of way to all vehicles upon the roadway."
- **Strike first sentence of Section 13-7:** "Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 13-6, bicyclists shall yield the right-of-way to motorists making a right turn maneuver in a bicycle lane."
 - This statement conflicts with MGL ch.90 s.14, which states, "No person operating a vehicle that overtakes and passes a bicyclist proceeding in the same direction shall make a right turn at an intersection or driveway unless the turn can be made at a safe distance from the bicyclist at a speed that is reasonable and proper. It shall not be a defense for a motorist causing an accident with a bicycle that the bicycle was to the right of vehicular traffic."
- **Strike second sentence of Section 13-7:** "Except when overtaking a slower bicyclist or to make a left turn maneuver, or to avoid a hazard, bicyclists shall stay within marked bicycle lanes."
 - This statement conflicts with MGL ch.85 s.11B, which states, "Every person operating a bicycle upon a way, as defined in section one of chapter ninety, shall have the right to use all public ways in the Commonwealth."

Motion to Approve made by Polito, 2nd Koty, unanimous.

Item #8 – Prior Business:

a) Request for Handicapped Parking 34 Linden St.

- Smith stated that the City’s Disability Coordinator asked the property’s management company to move the handicapped spaces in their lot closer to the entrance of the building and that Alderman Heuston was going to contact them as well. He stated that Alderman Heuston requested the commission to approve an on-street space temporarily until the issue could be resolved with the property owner.
- A motion to Approve for up to 90 days was made by Polito, 2nd Koty, unanimous.

b) Left turn restriction onto Mead St from Cameron Av, 7am-9am and 4pm-6pm, except abutters (2nd 90 day trial period).

- Motion to Approve (permanently) made by Polito, 2nd Koty, unanimous.

c) Request to amend Article V Section 5-1 “General Prohibitions”, Article X Section 10-5 “General Towing Prohibitions”, and Article XI Section 11-2 “Penalties” with the following addition: Establish a Restriction and Fine for vehicles parking/obstructing bicycle lanes for \$50.00.

- Smith stated that vehicles parking in bicycle lanes obstruct bicyclists and that T&P supports the request.

- Lauren Clayton stated that it was vague and should be amended to “subject to complaint by bicyclists” he also asked if the city would be liable for not plowing or maintaining the bike lanes.
- Smith stated that the City Solicitor saw no problem with the request, and that it would also likely need approval by the BOA.
- A motion to Approve was made by Polito, 2nd Graney, unanimous.

Meeting was adjourned @ 7:10pm