

Traffic Commission Meeting
September 17, 2015

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

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

Staff: Laura Accaputo, Suzanne Rinfret, Terence Smith

Other: Lauren Clayton, Andy Bram, Bart Bussink, Joseph Lynch

Meeting was called to order at 6pm

Item #1 – Minutes from the July 16, 2015 and July 21, 2015 Traffic Commission Meeting accepted unanimously

Item #2 – Request for Handicapped Parking

a) 104 Fremont St

- Terence Smith stated the applicant owns the property and does not have a driveway, Traffic and Parking has no objection to approval of the request.

Motion to Approve made by Robert McWatters, seconded by Thomas Graney.

Motion passed: 4-0

b) 127 North St

- Terence Smith stated the applicant does not own the property and cannot use the driveway, Traffic and Parking has no objection to approval of the request. He also noted if approved the space will be located beside the property on Bailey St.

Motion to Approve made by Robert McWatters, seconded by Thomas Graney.

Motion passed: 4-0

c) 13 Rush St

- Terence Smith stated the applicant owns the property and has a driveway and Traffic and Parking does not support approval of the request.
- The Chair stated he had some questions about the application and would like to move the item to the end of the agenda and into Executive Session.

Motion to move this item to the end of the agenda made by Robert McWatters, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0

Item #3 – Request for Fire Lane

Tremont St, easterly side, for a distance of approximately 20ft opposite the housing complex at 211 Tremont St

- Andy Bram asked for a waiver of the 10 day appeal period.
- Terence Smith explained the requirement for legal advertising is 3 weeks.
- Mr. Bram explained they needed the certificate of occupancy before this time frame and cannot get it signed off until this restriction is effective. He also stated he has seen the commission waive this requirement in the past.

- The Chair stated he has never waived the advertising requirement.
- Thomas Graney suggested Mr. Bram take up the sign off of the COO with Chief Avery at the Fire Prevention Bureau.
- Mr. Bram asked how soon the signs are installed after the advertising period and Mr. Smith stated they are installed 48 to 72 hrs after the effective date.

Motion to Approve made by Thomas Graney, seconded by Lt. Polito. Motion passed: 4-0

Item #4 – Request to clarify the replacement rules for a 3 day Visitor Permit
3 day Visitor Permits that are lost or stolen can only be replaced with a 2 day Visitor Permit, applicable replacement fee applies.

- Suzanne Rinfret stated when this permit was initially adopted there were supposed to be rules regarding its replacement if lost or stolen. The rationale behind replacing with the two day permit was to prevent fraud and the over-saturation of streets. She explained since this policy was never officially written into the regulations this request was to clarify it and include it in the Traffic Commission Regulations.
- The Chair stated he believes it makes sense to replace the 3 day permit with a 3 day permit and wasn't clear on the rationale behind this policy.

Motion to Table this request made by the Chair, seconded by Robert McWatters. Motion passed: 4-0

Item #5 – Request for an increase to the fee for a replacement Visitor Permit from \$15 to \$25

- Suzanne Rinfret stated this request is in consideration of the upcoming increase to the fee for visitor permits. She explained that the replacement fees were always calculated as the original cost of the permit plus an additional \$5 and this request will keep the fee in line with the increase.

Motion to Approve made by Lt. Polito, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed 3-1 with Robert McWatters in opposition.

Item #6 – Request to switch the location of the existing loading zone with the existing 15 minute parking space at 1212 Broadway.

- Terence Smith explained there is an existing loading zone at 1214 Broadway but the business closed. The business at 1212 Broadway wants the loading zone moved to their location. Traffic and Parking has no objection to the request.

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

PRIOR/TABLED ITEMS

Item #7 – 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. Tabled in July 2015 pending review of accident data supplied by Lt. Polito (attached) and information and petition submitted by residents at the July meeting.

- Lt. Polito provided information on all accidents on Lowell St from Jan 2013 to current as requested at the last meeting. He summarized that no serious accidents occurred in this area and overall there weren't many accident reports filed.
- Robert McWatters stated he drove down the street and agrees with the petitioners that the sight lines are difficult due to the chicanes. He stated he knows this is a problem in locations throughout the city but believes the chicanes make it more difficult and therefore he is inclined to support this request.
- Thomas Graney stated there have been many accidents in the general area and the increase in traffic due to new developments in the area will only increase this number.
- The Chair stated in the past three years there was only one accident near this intersection and there is already a restriction against parking within 20ft of an intersection. He believes if this request is approved the Commission will be flooded with similar requests in other areas.
- Thomas Graney stated each request would have to be considered on an individual basis.

Motion to Approve made by Robert McWatters, seconded by Thomas Graney.

Motion passed: 4-0.

- The Chair stated he will vote for every request of this type going forward.
- Joe Lynch, resident, thanked the Traffic Commission for approving the request and noted emergency vehicles have had difficulty in this area.

Item #8 – Request for Handicapped Parking

15A Porter St – (approved for a 90 day trial period in May 2015)

- Robert McWatters stated he hasn't received any complaints regarding this space.
- Terence Smith stated Traffic and Parking has no objection to permanent approval.

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

Item #9 – Review of information provided by the SPD regarding bicycle violations (requested during discussion of alternatives to contra flow last month)

- Lt. Polito provided information on bicycle violations from Jan 2012 through July 2015 as requested at the last meeting. He stated all violations were issued under 85-11b and the exact violations aren't listed, however most of the violations were issued for running a red light, traveling in the wrong direction, or violations signs and/or signals.
- The Chair noted there weren't many violations written this year.
- Lt. Polito explained there was a big push for enforcement in 2014 and it was a department wide effort, at this time there aren't as many officers issuing these citations.
- Lauren Clayton distributed a handout with pictures showing how contra flow is being dealt with in other cities as well as Somerville. He stated the term contra flow is something most people do not understand and it should be called riding the wrong way. He asked that bicyclists not be given the privilege of breaking traffic laws by allowing contra flow.

- Lt. Polito stated he is not aware of any law where the Federal Government allows bikes to be treated differently than regular motorists as was pointed out by someone at a prior meeting. He stated in Somerville bicyclists are treated the same as motorists and any change should be reviewed by the City Attorney.
- Terence Smith stated it should be studied on a case by case basis and cited a recent request on Newton St in which Traffic and Parking is not opposed to as it is a minor residential street.

Motion to place on file made Robert McWatters, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #2 – Request for Handicapped Parking

c) 13 Rush St

A motion was made by Robert McWatters to go into Executive Session at 6:22pm, seconded by the Chair. A roll call vote was taken: James Polito answered yes; Thomas Graney answered yes; Robert McWatters answered yes; Stan Koty answered yes. Motion passed: 4-0. The September 17, 2015 Traffic Commission Meeting went into Executive Session at 6:22pm.

A motion was made by Robert McWatters to end the Executive Session at 6:28pm, seconded by the Chair. A roll call vote was taken: James Polito answered yes; Thomas Graney answered yes; Robert McWatters answered yes; Stan Koty answered yes. Motion passed: 4-0. The Executive Session of the September 17, 2015 Traffic Commission Meeting ended at 6:28pm.

Motion to Deny a handicapped parking space at 13 Rush St made by Lt. Polito, seconded by Thomas Graney. Motion passed: 4-0.

Robert McWatters made a motion to remove Item #4 from the table, seconded by the Chair. Motion passed: 4-0.

Item #4 – Request to clarify the replacement rules for a 3 day Visitor Permit
3 day Visitor Permits that are lost or stolen can only be replaced with a 2 day Visitor Permit, applicable replacement fee applies.

- Upon clarification from Suzanne Rinfret, the Commission agreed to take this item off the table and call for a vote.

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

Motion to Adjourn the September 17, 2015 Traffic Commission Meeting at 6:35pm made by Robert McWatters, seconded by Lt. Polito. Motion passed: 4-0.