

COMMITTEE ON TRAFFIC/PUBLIC SAFETY

April 4, 2000

6:15 PM

Chairman Clancy called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Clancy, Sysyn, Vaillancourt, Pariseau, Hirschmann

Messrs: T. Lolicata, Alderman Levasseur, W. Kearney, Sgt. Winn,
F. Thomas, J. Taylor

Chairman Clancy addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Petition from residents of Stark Lane requesting the installation of "speed humps".

(Note: Public Works Director suggesting that no additional speed humps be installed until such time as a City Policy on Traffic Calming has been approved by the Board.)

Alderman Vaillancourt moved to approve the item. Alderman Pariseau duly seconded the motion for discussion.

Alderman Pariseau stated I read the Public Works Director's comments and this issue relative to traffic calming has been around for maybe five or six years and nothing has been done. I would make the motion that this item be sent to the Planning Department who is handling the traffic calming policies to make sure that we keep this item active because there are several streets within the City that could use some type of traffic calming and we have to come up with a policy or something other than closing streets. I would refer this to the Planning Department.

Chairman Clancy stated to my knowledge there are only two wards in the City that have the traffic calming. You have one yourself on Kenberma and Alderman Vaillancourt has one. How are they working?

Alderman Vaillancourt replied some people like it and some people don't.

Alderman Pariseau stated it is slowing up the traffic. The other issue relative to the closing of President Road that this Committee approved, thank God, and we are still working on that. As an example, on March 27 on a Monday afternoon between the hours of 1:30 PM and 1:45 PM, there were 55 cars that used President Road and 4 trucks and this is what is upsetting the neighborhood. I have been holding off the installation of the gate at the end and closing that street, but with the results of that survey conducted on March 27, I don't think we have any choice. In fact, one of the trucks pulled the wires off of a home and it cost her \$60 to have the wires put back. I don't want to just shelve this.

Alderman Hirschmann stated I sent this here, Chairman Clancy, so that we could work on it and get something done just as we have in the past. I supported Alderman Domaingue doing something in her ward and I supported Alderman Pariseau doing something in his ward for neighborhoods. What this is is just a small little neighborhood down along the riverbank and it is an old, small narrow road and the only problem they have is speed. What you have down there, especially during the elections, they have a radio station there and somebody wants to be on the air at 6 PM and they are flying through there at a good clip to get there on time to be on the radio. You have all of these news anchors and people and they are trying to play ball.

Chairman Clancy asked is Stark Lane an approved City street.

Alderman Hirschmann answered I don't know. It is paved.

Mr. Thomas stated the reason I responded to this petition the way I did is that I think if you just open the door to allow these unilaterally throughout the City it is going to turn into another situation like four-way stops did a few years ago. I support the notion of traffic calming in some neighborhoods, but I think it has to be done in a citywide policy. Granted Alderman Hirschmann may have gotten a lot of requests for speed humps, but I have gotten inquiries from almost every ward in the City. Ward 6, Ward 1 and again I think if we are going to do it we should have a policy. There may even need to be and I hate to say it, an appropriation because somebody has to build these things. I am not geared up right now to have a crew assigned full-time to build these. Once they are built and you go up to resurface the road again, you almost have to take them out and put them down again. There are long-term financial considerations also that have to be given to them. Again, I support the notion of traffic calming. I think that everybody should just step back a minute and define future costs, the cost of implementing it and a policy that can be utilized unilaterally with some restrictions. In the case of Pepperidge Drive, one of the reasons they were put in up there in addition to speed was there was a lot of through traffic. Again, I think there is a lot to weigh. The City has a place for traffic calming, but I just urge you

to go slow. Turning it over to the Planning Department is a good idea, but I suggest that some other departments get involved to develop a policy.

Alderman Vaillancourt stated I did read the petition and there seemed to be 15 households and I haven't been down on Stark Lane for awhile but I think there are a fair number of households there, maybe 40 or 50, so I am just wondering if the other 25 or whatever are opposed to this and you are going to find that the neighborhood is split like on Donahue. I am not sure it is the answer.

Chairman Clancy stated I will entertain the motion by Alderman Pariseau to send this to Planning.

Alderman Hirschmann asked do we want Highway to work with Planning.

Chairman Clancy answered sure. Highway and Planning can get together.

Mr. Thomas stated Traffic should be involved also.

Mr. Lolicata stated this has been going on since 1981. You have two reasons for these. One is speed and one is volume. On Stark Lane it appears to be speed the way they are talking and it seems to be WGIR. I think someone going down there from the Police and doing some enforcing will take care of a situation like that. The other issue is volume and cut throughs. President Road is a big one. The only thing I am going to caution you about is with these things you have to consider maintenance and liability. If some guy is doing 35 MPH or 40 MPH and hits that hump and there is a sign missing or he doesn't know it is there and he ends up in somebody's house and kills somebody, the City might be liable. You have to keep this in your head. There should be no obstructions in a road whatsoever and it should be very well defined and cautioned if you are going to do something. That is all I have to say.

Alderman Levasseur stated I have been down that road and to WGIR quite a few times and a friend of mine has a house right on the river and during the summer time there are a lot of kids down there. It is very, very narrow and I was down there once for Halloween and there must have been 200 kids down there. I agree that is a dangerous place down there.

Alderman Vaillancourt stated the problem is that there are situations similar to this all over the City. At the previous Committee, I referred to the fact that I was down on Pond Drive today regarding this land down there and they should have a speed bump down there from one of the cars I saw going up that little narrow curve going up a steep hill. If you start doing this, I think you are in big trouble.

Alderman Sysyn replied in my ward you are going to have the same problem. You have Rhode Island Avenue.

Chairman Clancy asked what do you want to do.

Alderman Hirschmann stated the neighborhood is writing petitions. In other wards they get gates put across the road.

Chairman Clancy replied they don't have a gate yet.

Alderman Hirschmann responded well we voted to do it.

Chairman Clancy stated why don't we just put up a sign saying "Caution, Children Playing, Speed 20 MPH, Strictly Enforced" and try that for now.

Alderman Hirschmann asked what is the speed limit on that road.

Chairman Clancy answered that is not even an accepted road.

Mr. Thomas stated it may not be officially accepted, but it does have public status due to the fact that it is plowed and maintained.

Alderman Hirschmann asked could you make it 15 MPH down there.

Mr. Lolicata answered we can use a Cautionary 20 MPH or 25 MPH or something along those lines. That can be done.

Chairman Clancy replied put down that it is strictly enforced.

Mr. Lolicata stated the signage will be there for you, but it has to be in increments of 10 miles.

Alderman Hirschmann asked can you get me two signs, one for each entry and we will refer this item to Planning, Highway and Traffic.

Mr. Lolicata answered there is a possibility that it could be a speed 20 MPH area, which the State allows to do on certain streets that are narrow, which we already have down on Pond Drive. That is less than 30' on that street and that is something that we can look into.

Sgt. Winn stated I have been down there. It is crowded and it is narrow.

Mr. Kearney stated I agree with the slow signs and speed limit signs strictly enforced. I think the State on one time frowned very much on humps or bumps in the road.

On motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Hirschmann, it was voted to refer the issue of speed humps to the Planning, Highway, and Traffic Departments to come up with a Citywide policy.

Chairman Clancy addressed Item 4 of the agenda:

Copy of a communication from Bruce Thomas, Engineering Management submitting an analysis to provide angled parking on the southside of Merrimack Street from Elm to Chestnut Streets.

Chairman Clancy stated I was told that the Police and the Fire Department might have some concerns of people backing out when they are coming down the street.

Alderman Pariseau moved to deny the item. Alderman Vaillancourt duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Hirschmann stated what we would like to do on Merrimack Street and on Lake Avenue, especially with the civic center coming, we want to optimize and maximize the amount of parking we can get in. On Lake Avenue, say where Don's Sporting Outlet is, we would like to do angled parking there across from the civic center. We would like to do this along the park. We want to put in more spaces and get more revenue for the Traffic Department. We are going to need all of these spaces within the next few years.

Alderman Levasseur stated it is my ward. I think the people want the extra 15 or 20 parking spaces for \$15,000. That is the cheapest way you can get 20 parking spots I have ever seen. Plus when these people are all gone the Fire and Police can get down that street even quicker because you are opening it up for them. That is what we are doing on Central Street.

Chairman Clancy replied that street isn't as busy as Merrimack Street. It doesn't have the Police and Fire utilizing that street. That is my contention. Did you check with anybody about that?

Alderman Levasseur stated I talked to Mr. Lolicata and he doesn't want angled parking no matter what.

Chairman Clancy asked did you talk to Police or Fire.

Alderman Hirschmann stated we are going to be applying for a lot more angled parking spaces.

Alderman Vaillancourt stated regarding the letter from Bruce Thomas on the second page it says the park was constructed with Federal funds. Has anybody checked how much Federal funds and if this is a problem?

Mr. Lolicata replied that is right. There is a lot involved with this. I just want to bring up a few issues here. I am not against angled parking, but after reading this and talking with the Fire Department, you are going to be down to a minimum, I believe, of a 10' lane coming and going. Secondly, you have fire apparatus that goes down there because it is a main artery and if they stop there they need at least 14'. Now I am not trying to knock this. We are talking about putting angled parking on Chestnut Street once they clean up Kalivas Park and we are going to do Willow Street with angled parking and pick up 100+ spaces. These things are being looked at for the next two years. Any time you talk angled parking, you have to take a look at it and see what is involved. These are dangerous. Parallel parking is still the safest. The only reason I am saying that in this particular case is because it is a main thoroughfare for your ambulance and your Fire Department. The Fire Department told me yes they can get away with it but they don't care for the 10' lane. That is very minimal. That is all I can say. When they stop, they need 14'. The traveling lane is very minimal and when the cars are parked there and you have a run going on, I wish you would take that into consideration.

Alderman Levasseur asked it is only 13' 6" on the lane.

Mr. Thomas answered the lane is 20' wide. It has 8' parking on one side and 45 degree 19' on the other side.

Alderman Levasseur stated the firemen come down Elm Street and that is all head on parking. What is the difference between that and the others? Is there a lot more space to get in and out of there?

Alderman Hirschmann asked how many spaces are we picking up on this.

Alderman Levasseur answered 20 and as far as the Federal funds go, the people who own that park spent \$50,000 on a study for down on Canal Street. I don't think they are going to be too bummed out about giving us 20' into their park to get another 20 spaces. That is what they are looking to do down in the Millyard.

Alderman Hirschmann asked is there another way to do this like take the parking off of the other side.

Chairman Clancy answered you can do that, but you are going to have a 3' sidewalk.

Alderman Hirschmann stated that would pick you up 8' so the lane would be 28'.

Alderman Sysyn stated you would lose the spaces on the other side of the street.

Alderman Hirschmann asked couldn't we take out the parallel and put all angled spaces.

Mr. Lolicata answered you wouldn't gain anything. You would lose all the parking on the other side.

Mr. Thomas stated could I suggest that we request a written response from the Police and Fire Department on this issue and if you give us a little bit more time we can look at it and talk to them. It seems to work on Central Street. I agree that Central Street is not the main feed for the Police and Fire Station, but maybe there are some alternatives that we can come up with. I would recommend tabling it until the next meeting.

On motion of Alderman Hirschmann duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to table the item.

Chairman Clancy addressed Item 5 of the agenda:

Communication from Richard Davis on behalf of The Downtown Farmers' Market seeking authorization for the closure of streets, a no parking ban, reinstallation of banners on lighting fixtures in and around the Hartnett Lot and erection of the barn in the southwest corner of the Hartnett Lot as outlined herein.

On motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to approve this item under the direct supervision of Police, Fire, Highway, Traffic, and City Clerk.

Chairman Clancy advised that the Traffic Department has submitted an agenda, which needs to be addressed as follows:

STOP SIGNS:

On Red Coat Lane at Shaw Street, NWC (emergency act)

Alderman Wihby

On Varney Street at Rochelle Ave., SWC
Alderman Cashin

PARKING 1 HOUR (8AM-6PM):

On Wilson St., east side, from Harvard St. to a point 50 feet north

On Wilson St., east side, from a point 100 feet north of Harvard St. to Prescott St.

On Wilson St., east side, from Prescott St. to a point 60 feet north

Alderman Shea

On Laval St., west side, from Bremer St. to Kelley St.

Alderman Hirschmann

RESCIND PARKING 1 HOUR (8AM-6PM):

On Wilson St., east side, from Harvard St. to a point 60 feet north of Prescott St.

On Wilson St., east side, from Somerville northback St. to a point 50 feet south of
Harvard St.

Alderman Shea

PARKING FOR POLICE VEHICLES ONLY:

On Wilson St., east side, from a point 50 feet north of Harvard St. to a point 50
feet northerly

Alderman Shea

NO PARKING DURING SCHOOL HOURS:

On Merrimack Street, north side, from Union Street to a point 170 feet westerly
Police Dept.

RESCIND PARKING ½ HOUR DURING SCHOOL HOURS:

On Merrimack Street, north side, from Union Street to a point 170 feet westerly
Police Dept.

NO PARKING ANYTIME:

On Maple Street, east side, from Lake Ave. to Litchfield Lane

Alderman Clancy

On Gabrielle St., north side, from South Willow Street to a point 140 feet easterly

Alderman Vaillancourt

RESCIND FLASHING BEACON:

Cilley Road and Cypress St.

Alderman Shea

SOMERVILLE FIRE HOUSE PROJECT

NO PARKING:

On Hall St., west side, from Somerville St. to a point 140 feet southerly

On Hall St., east side, from Somerville St. to a point 140 feet southerly

On Hall St., west side, from Somerville St. to a point 65 feet northerly.

On Hall St., east side, from Somerville St. to a point 65 feet northerly

On Somerville St., south side, from Hall St. to a point 115 feet westerly

On Somerville St., north side, from Hall St. to a point 115 feet westerly

On Somerville St., south side, from Hall St. to a point 60 feet easterly

On Somerville St., north side, from Hall St. to a point 190 feet easterly

Alderman Shea

On motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to accept the traffic agenda.

DISCUSSION:

RIGHT TURN ONLY:

On Bow St. at Brown Ave.

Alderman Pariseau

Alderman Vaillancourt asked Alderman Pariseau if he wanted that.

Alderman Pariseau answered yes. To just give you a little history, this intersection has been identified going back into the late 1970's as one of the most dangerous in the City. To help alleviate some of the problems, Crescent Road was extended through the cemetery onto Brown Avenue. It helped the problem somewhat, but when people come out from Bow Street onto Brown Avenue and want to take a left, you have the traffic backed up heading south. A constituent called and brought this proposal to my attention to see if it would fly. It makes sense.

Alderman Vaillancourt asked if somebody lives there and they want to get to the inner City and they can only take a right, how are they going to get back around.

Alderman Hirschmann stated I wouldn't want to live there if I could only take a right turn.

Chairman Clancy replied they would probably get on the highway.

Alderman Vaillancourt asked you are going to make them get on the highway.

Alderman Pariseau stated I don't follow you.

Alderman Vaillancourt stated if someone lives down in that area and they are coming up and they can only take a right, all you can do after you take your right is either get onto the Highway or go under the interpass.

Alderman Pariseau replied they could go out Crescent Road to go downtown. They can take it from the hollow. Bow Street runs into Crescent. Crescent runs north to south and comes around through the cemetery to Brown Avenue.

Alderman Vaillancourt asked you are not going to anger those people are you.

Alderman Pariseau answered I don't believe so. We have not discussed this with those people.

Mr. Lolicata stated I have gone down there three times and I almost got clipped. It is bad.

Chairman Clancy asked do you want to try it.

Mr. Lolicata answered I would recommend a time limit. Right turn only 7AM-7PM. Those are the peak hours.

Alderman Pariseau stated that does work at the intersection of Brown Avenue and Queen City Avenue.

Alderman Hirschmann stated so you can't turn left. You are making it unlawful for them to turn left?

Mr. Lolicata replied they could go up to Crescent Road.

Alderman Vaillancourt asked 7AM-7PM or 6AM-6PM.

Mr. Lolicata answered the peak hours are anywhere from 7AM-7PM. That is what I would suggest.

Alderman Pariseau replied that is fine.

On motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to approve this item with a time limit from 7AM-7PM.

Mr. Lolicata stated before you go to the next item, I have another item to add to the traffic agenda. No Parking on Thorpe Street, north side, from a point 55 feet west of Hill Street to a point 60 feet westerly.

On motion of Alderman Hirschmann, duly seconded by Alderman Pariseau, it was voted to approve this item.

Chairman Clancy stated while we are on that, I have one myself. Lowell Street, you are going to take two parking spaces across from the Black Brimmer from 6PM for motorcycles. The motorcycles have no place to park. They are asking if they can have it from 6 PM on from May 1 until October 1. Two parking spaces.

Alderman Hirschmann asked do they pay the same rate.

Chairman Clancy answered yes.

Alderman Vaillancourt stated they are not paying any parking then.

Alderman Hirschmann asked did you check with Gamache Properties there. That is right in front of his building.

Chairman Clancy answered I know it is but the Black Brimmer asked me to do this.

Alderman Hirschmann asked are we going to start doing this all over the City in front of bar rooms and stuff.

Chairman Clancy answered no. If you don't want it, you don't have to vote for it.

Alderman Hirschmann asked where do they park now.

Chairman Clancy answered if there is no place to park, they park on the sidewalk.

Alderman Hirschmann asked why wouldn't they park in a metered spot.

Chairman Clancy answered there is no room around there.

Alderman Pariseau asked this is still going to be metered.

Chairman Clancy answered yes.

Alderman Hirschmann stated but it is special just for them.

Alderman Sysyn stated it is after 6 PM.

Alderman Hirschmann asked is there a big need for this.

Alderman Levasseur answered there are a lot of motorcycles at night in the summer. More than one will park in a spot.

Alderman Hirschmann asked could you get like six motorcycles in a spot. Put more meters in and get more money.

Alderman Sysyn answered they don't pay at night anyway.

Alderman Hirschmann asked then why are we doing this.

On motion of Alderman Vaillancourt, duly seconded by Alderman Pariseau, it was voted to approve the request.

DISCUSSION:

Relative to the possibility of increasing Parking Permit/Lease fees in Municipal Parking Lots and Garages

Alderman Hirschmann moved the item for discussion. Alderman Pariseau duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Hirschmann stated one of my colleagues, I think it was Alderman Levasseur, liked the idea of increasing the rates seeing as they haven't been increased in a long time. He had an idea that the premium spaces on the ground level should be say \$60 and then you go up a level and they are \$45 and then you go up a third level and they are a little cheaper, maybe \$40 so the premium spaces we would be getting premium dollar.

Chairman Clancy asked when was the last time these fees went up.

Mr. Lolicata answered 1988. I want to bring my information forth so that you can come up with what you think is right. At the next meeting, if this goes through with your consensus, I will bring in the facts and figures. Denise and I have been working on this. I am not going to bring it in if you are not going to go along with it.

Alderman Pariseau asked do you favor it.

Mr. Lolicata answered I favor this. It has been 12 years. I only want to go up on the leases on parking garages and parking lots. Now the lots are \$30/month. The Millyard is a special deal at \$25/month. I want it all combined to \$40/month, including the Millyard and I want the garages from \$45 to \$50/month.

Chairman Clancy stated you are only going to increase the garages \$5, but the Millyard is going to go up \$15.

Mr. Lolicata answered yes. I want to combine the parking lots and the Millyard and make them the same price. All of the parking lots will be \$40/month. They are \$30/month right now and the Millyard is \$25/month. It should be the same throughout the whole City.

Alderman Pariseau stated it is still a bargain.

Mr. Lolicata stated if they can afford from \$8/square foot to \$17/square foot right now, I am sure that after 12 years they can afford a few more dollars to park down there. Somebody has to pay for this.

Chairman Clancy stated let's keep it all standardized.

Mr. Lolicata answered that is what I am trying to do.

Chairman Clancy stated so the parking garages are going to go from \$45/month to \$50/month on the first floor.

Mr. Lolicata replied the whole garage.

Alderman Levasseur stated let me explain something. I have been talking to a couple of people about this. The third floor of these garages never gets rented. People don't want to go up there. If you make the third floor cheaper, more secretaries and people that don't have a lot of money will use the third floor.

Alderman Sysyn stated when I get in in the morning, the whole third floor is full.

Alderman Levasseur replied not in all of the garages. If you make it less on the third floor, more on the second floor and premium on the second floor, those who want to park on the first floor will pay a premium price and we will get these people off the street. A lot of the secretaries at Bell Atlantic, they are only making \$300 or \$350 a week. At the Center of New Hampshire, their third floor isn't being used. If we stagger it, that third floor will be rented it.

Alderman Sysyn stated part of the third floor parking in the garage I use doesn't open up until 9:30 AM because we keep it open for the shoppers downtown. We don't park there. When I get in at 8 AM in the morning sometimes that third floor is full except for those spots. It says no parking here and it is tied off.

Alderman Hirschmann replied that garage is unique because the third floor is like ground floor.

Mr. Lolicata stated for years, the early bird special didn't go over with these people. Right now, your garages are over 80% leased. The rest are dailies and there aren't many. I would like to have personal control over this by ordinance and I would like as many as I can without breaking any laws but I can't do that. Also, I don't want to go with different prices for each tier.

Chairman Clancy asked who is going to supervise it.

Alderman Levasseur answered you can put stickers on windows. You could have different colors.

Mr. Kearney asked would short term parking on the first floor be advisable. A lot of people who park all day, I assume, park on the first floor and your downtown shoppers don't like to go up on the top floor.

Chairman Clancy stated I think the reason for the garages was to get the people who work downtown to park in them and leave the meters open for people who shop.

Alderman Sysyn asked wasn't the one at the Plaza built for the Plaza.

Mr. Taylor stated first of all, I agree with Mr. Lolicata that we need to look at these rates. The time to look at them is when the demand is high and the supply is low. On the other hand, I think you have to be careful that you don't go too far and kill the goose that laid the golden egg. One of the things that is a problem is the Millyard. We have issues down there dealing with the parking situation. There is a shortage. On the other hand, we have just started to get the Millyard going and I don't want to see the jump go so high that you discourage people. There is a happy medium and I think we need to sit back and take a look at this and not jump to conclusions and do something just because it is the thing to do. It needs some study and I am the first guy that is going to recommend that we take a look at this because I do think that we need to look at raising these rates. It is a political football and I recognize that.

Chairman Clancy stated as far as the garages, going up \$5/month is fine. I think everybody is in agreement with that.

Mr. Taylor replied as long as we make it clear that these rates are influx. This is interim and we have to look at this and we may need to do it again at another time. Let's take, for example, the cost of a parking garage. If you take \$12,000 to \$14,000 per space to construct a parking garage today, which is roughly the cost, that translates to about \$120/month per space to operate that garage. We are charging \$45. That means that the taxpayers are subsidizing the balance. Now I am not suggesting that the taxpayers shouldn't subsidize some portion of that. I guess the question is what portion of that should the taxpayers be subsidizing and what is reasonable.

Chairman Clancy stated I think a \$5 increase for the parking garages is reasonable. As far as the parking lots, let's study that.

Mr. Lolicata stated we can come up with a second scenario for the Millyard. I have different facts and figures for you, but before I come in and present it, I just want a consensus. We can bring this information in at the next meeting with my recommendation.

On motion of Alderman Hirschmann, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to table the item.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion of Alderman Hirschmann, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee