

**MEETING OF THE
CITY OF WOBURN
TRAFFIC COMMISSION
OCTOBER 20, 2016 – 4:00 P.M.
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Attending: Comm. Joanne Campbell, Comm. Tina Cassidy, Comm. Myles Collins - late, Comm. John Corey, Comm. Robert Ferullo, Comm. Keith Peary, Comm. Peter Socorelis, Comm. Lindsay Higgins.

Absent: Comm. John Duran.

Motion made and 2nd to waive the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and to accept with an amendment changing “by” to “but” in the first sentence under No. 2016-19, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent (Collins, Duran absent).

Comm. Collins arrived at the meeting.

No. 2016-17

Request for handicapped parking restriction at 44 Fowle Street. City Clerk Campbell stated that no information was received from the Woburn Handicapped and Disabled Citizens Commission on the matter. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be PLACED ON FILE, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

No. 2016-14

Request for traffic calming on Beacon Street at intersection with Sturgis Street. Comm. Campbell stated that Comm. Corey, Comm. Duran, Woburn Police Traffic Department Officer Dana Gately and she made a site visit to the location on September 19, 2016, and that this was a productive meeting. Comm. Corey stated that an area of concern are handicapped access on either side of the intersection, that the Engineering Department will do a preliminary design plan based on concerns expressed in the field, that the earliest this work could be completed would be the Spring 2017, that the Engineering Department will work on a plan over the winter, and that this matter could be continued to the December 2017 meeting by which time an additional plan could be prevented. Comm. Campbell stated that there are three or four houses at the intersection that have no off-street parking, that she was initially concerned that there would be a loss of parking to those residents, and that the preliminary design indicates that rather than losing parking additional parking will be created. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be LAID ON THE TABLE until the meeting of December 15, 2016, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

No. 2016-16

Resident traffic and through traffic only restrictions. Appearing was Woburn Police Officer Joseph Mantone and he stated that a list of affected streets was compiled from the Woburn Traffic Code, and that it was determined that there are many signs that have to be reviewed. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be LAID ON THE TABLE until later in the meeting, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

No. 2016-15

Traffic control signals at Montvale Avenue and Washington Street intersection. Comm. Corey stated that the city's traffic consultant VHB visited the site and monitored the timing, that the greatest number of complaints are in reference to traveling south on Washington Street and turning left easterly onto Montvale Avenue, that this is a fifteen second cycle, that this cycle length is appropriate at most times of the day, that occasionally one or two vehicles have to wait two light cycles, and that vehicles traveling in other directions wait through three or four light cycles. Comm. Ferullo stated that the priority of this intersection is draining traffic off Interstate Route 93, and that the traffic traveling westerly on Montvale Avenue cannot back up. Comm. Corey stated that the volume of traffic exceeds the capacity of the roadway, that additional lanes will be added which will add additional capacity, that the only way to fix this issue would be to add more lanes to the highway, that when the highway fails everything fails, that the traffic improvements will do what they are intended to do but when the highway fails there will still be traffic. Comm. Higgins stated that the City Council has taken steps to establish the roadway widening on Montvale Avenue. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be PLACED ON FILE, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

No. 2016-19

Discussion regarding Municipal Modernization Act effect on traffic regulations. A communication dated October 7, 2016 entitled "Municipal Modernization Act – Authority to Establish Speed Limits/Safety Zones" was received from City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette. Motion made and 2nd that the communication be received and made part of the record, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent). Comm. Higgins stated that the City Solicitor reviewed the changes to the law and described how the law will work. Comm. Corey stated that if traffic safety zones are established whenever one is requested this will create a mess, that there is excessive traffic during peak hours, that reduced speed limits will cause traffic jams everywhere, that reduced speed limits should be part of a citywide traffic plan, and that unless public safety officials believe that a particular area should have a reduced speed limit than any proposal should not move forward. Comm. Ferullo stated that the Traffic Commission should not create unreasonable expectations that lowering speed limits by 5 miles per hour will slow down traffic. Comm. Campbell stated that there are many side streets where residents believe that the traffic is moving too fast, that reducing the speed limits on those streets to 25 m.p.h. will give residents peace of mind, and that removing resident only signs will only generate more issues on side streets. Comm. Ferullo stated that if there are too many streets with a 25 m.p.h. speed restriction then enforcement will be difficult. Comm. Cassidy stated that she does not want to create a false sense of security, and that the traffic study needs additional funding. Comm. Ferullo stated that

where there are areas that can be tied to a safety zones then those should be targeted, and that the Traffic Commission must be realistic in changing speed limits in response to random constituent telephone calls. Comm. Higgins stated that she wants to take more time to take a broader view of the issue, and that safety zones such as high traffic areas like outside city hall or where elderly residents reside may be suitable. Comm. Campbell stated that this does give the city an opportunity to improve traffic safety, that she is happy that the statute was adopted, and that the law offers the community another tool in improving traffic safety. Comm. Corey stated that if a particular area can be identified as a safety zone then this is logical but that all of the streets are public ways and people can travel down those public ways. Comm. Higgins stated that the law is in effect now. Comm. Campbell stated that the Traffic Commission should accept the sections and look into its application in the city. Comm. Corey stated that such action is premature. Comm. Cassidy stated that if the section is accepted then people can start petitioning for changes, that the Traffic Commission should review where those changes would be appropriate and then decide whether to adopt the change. Comm. Ferullo stated that Traffic Safety Officer Mooney would serve on a committee to review the legislation. Comm. Campbell stated that she is willing to serve on such a committee as well. Comm. Corey stated that the Engineering Department can review to see which areas might be suitable for changes. Comm. Higgins stated that this issue concerns safety zones and thickly settled area. Comm. Corey stated that with zoning of 100 feet of frontage in all areas of the city then all of these areas are thickly settled, and that he can provide additional information concerning this matter be the next meeting. Comm. Campbell stated that the Traffic Commission should not rush into changes but the matter does deserve additional review. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be LAID ON THE TABLE to the Traffic Commission meeting on January 19, 2017, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent). Motion made and 2nd that the Chair appoint a committee to review Section 193 and Section 194 from the Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016 An Act Modernizing Municipal Finance and Government relative to safety zones and thickly settled area speed restrictions, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

2016-20

Request to review road design at intersection of Salem Street and Cedar Street. Comm. Ferullo stated that the new intersection eliminated the traffic slip lane which allowed a right turn, that now when Salem Street backs up vehicles are not able to proceed up Cedar Street, that sometimes traffic is backed up to the cemetery, that vehicles traveling to Washington Street at times pass around the vehicles waiting to turn and drive in the wrong direction, and that the new intersection is under the jurisdiction of and was approved by MassDOT. Comm. Corey stated that the Benchmark approval process suggested a change to the traffic pattern, that the traffic slip lane helped vehicles traveling easterly but there were a number of vehicle accidents for vehicles traveling westerly on Salem Street, that this change was an improvement for traffic safety, that drivers as still growing accustomed to the change, that the roadway in the entire triangle is under MassDOT jurisdiction, and that vehicles will likely find other alternatives if the back-up continues. Comm. Ferullo stated that when the highways back up drivers use Woburn's side streets to get through the area. Comm. Campbell stated that a lot of thought went into the intersection improvements, that traffic is an issue but the city is a popular and prosperous location and along with that comes traffic. Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be PLACED ON FILE, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

No. 2016-16

Resident traffic and through traffic only restrictions. Motion made and 2nd to take the matter from the table, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent). Motion made and 2nd that the MATTER be CONTINUED to the meeting of November 17, 2016, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

Motion made and 2nd that the meeting recess until 5:00 p.m., 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

Chair Higgins called the meeting back to order at 5:00 p.m.

No. 2016-13

Public hearing on the request for no through traffic restriction on Maura Drive. Motion made and 2nd that the public hearing be opened, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent. Chair Higgins stated that two communications dated October 11, 2016 and October 20, 2016 were received from Constance Otradovec, 12 Maura Drive in opposition to the proposed restriction on through traffic, and that a petitioner with signature from nineteen of twenty households on Maura Drive in opposition to the proposed change was attached to the communications. Motion made and 2nd that the documents be received and made part of the record. City Clerk Campbell read the two letters into the record. A communication dated October 7, 2016 was received from Eugene Foley, 18 Maura Drive in opposition to the proposed restriction. Comm. Higgins read the letter into the record. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None. Motion made and 2nd that the public hearing be closed, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent). PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED. Motion made and 2nd that the proposed no through traffic restriction on Maura Drive be DENIED based on the input from residents of the street, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent).

Motion made and 2nd to adjourn, 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (Duran absent). Meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

William C. Campbell, City Clerk
and Clerk of Traffic Commission