

TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING**September 20, 2023 (In Person)**

IN ATTENDANCE: Chair Elena Proakis Ellis, Commissioner Krechmer, Commissioner Parenti, Commissioner Rossi, Councilor Eccles, Former Mayor Infurna, Sgt. Goc – Technical Advisor (voting designee for Chief Faller), Jennifer Rosa – Clerk

The meeting is called to order at 5:35 PM. Elena states that this is the commission's first in-person meeting since before covid. She explains the meeting process to those attendees that are here to speak on agenda items. She mentions that there is a sign-in sheet for attendees that should be signed prior to speaking.

Elena mentions that we may need to take Item #6 and #7 out of order tonight, due to other commitments this evening by attendees that would like to comment on these items.

I. Continued Business:**1. Approve December 2022 meeting minutes and June 2023 meeting minutes**

Elena states that the June 2023 meeting minutes were not distributed yet, however we are able to vote on the December 2022 minutes. Motion is made by Commissioner Rossi, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor, so the December 2022 minutes are approved.

2. Update on traffic counts on Ravine Rd (No vote anticipated)

Elena asks if anyone in attendance wishes to speak on this item and a few people indicate that they would like to. Elena states that we will provide our update first and then open public comment. Sgt Goc did send data that he felt was relevant to the commissioners. He obtained the data from Stoneham over a six-day period from August 11 – 17. It appeared that the volume in lane 1 was 90%. Speed was 0.7 % going over 25mph. He saw a peak volume on Monday of 165 vehicles, which was at 7 am. The 25 ft length trucks that drove on the street accounted for 31 during the week. The average speed was 19 mph for passenger cars and vans, 16 mph for trucks, 18 mph for motorcycles and buses were 15 mph.

Motion to open public comment is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor, so public comment is opened.

Susan Serra of Stoneham feels that due to the construction of the hospital, Ravine Rd can't handle it anymore. The trucks that come down the road are unbelievable. The road bangs and her house shakes. It has been ongoing for many years and it's not fair. Stoneham police have said that none of her ideas could be carried out. Philips Rd has a do not enter. She suggested a no left turn onto the Fellsway and they said no. Some residents have dealt with this for 35 years. There are two no trucks signs on Ravine Rd, however trucks still come down. The crosswalk at W. Wyoming is dangerous and cars just whip around.

The next resident, William Storella of 37 Ravine Rd in Stoneham, states that he walks every day and has almost gotten hit in the crosswalk several times. Traffic in the morning is extremely heavy and cars are beeping and attempting to pass. Trucks are regularly coming down the road, but he knows that the police cannot be there all the time.

Lisa Howitt of 260 W. Wyoming states that half of her house is on Ravine Rd. She has noticed that in the last four to five years, the number of cars speeding and the number of trucks has increased significantly. The trucks see the cars on W. Wyoming Ave and dart down Ravine Rd to avoid the light. Folks are afraid to cross to go to Conant Park because the trucks are going well above 25 mph. The curve in the road makes it difficult to get the speed and there are also jurisdiction issues due to it turning into Stoneham.

Sgt Goc explains that to obtain the traffic count/speed data, there is a black box that goes on a pole and it lasers across the road. It picks up every car that goes by and their speed. Over the six-day period there were 10,452 cars. Lisa asks if we could coordinate with Stoneham to do it together. Sgt Goc states that we could, but he doesn't feel there is a speeding issue because there were only six cars that went over 30 mph. Lisa asks if we can do it now during a busier time. Sgt Goc states that we can do it again and we will most likely see just the volume increase. Elena also states that the speed can be deceiving on a small road if someone is peeling off W. Wyoming. Lisa mentions that she is a realtor and sees the local Slow Streets signs and states that perhaps this could help as a short-term solution for Ravine Rd. She mentions Burrell at Lincoln St is a good example of this program. Elena states that they are the only ones who handed in the survey to participate. We distributed the survey to six streets. Elena states that we have added Ravine Rd to our traffic calming toolkit and we will give an update after we close discussion on this item.

Ann Sullivan of 35 Ravine Rd in Stoneham has lived here for 30 years and states that traffic has increased. She finds the trucks offensive and the dump trucks make the whole street shake. She wonders if it's possible to have a representative from both cities come together or get the state police involved.

Motion to close public comment is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Rossi. All are in favor, so public comment is closed.

Elena agrees that speed is not the issue, it is the trucks and cut through traffic. We will reach out to Stoneham and DCR to discuss. Ravine Rd is in the poor category for our roadway rankings, so we will be looking at utilities, and paving is a good time for us to look at reconfiguration. The entrance is wide at the Fellsway end. If it was narrower, it would be less appealing for drivers. Sgt Goc states that there is a walk through the Fells event in October that we can discuss this at. Commissioner Rossi thinks that Sgt. Goc's counts are low, and that 19 mph seems low. Elena mentions that we have funding for traffic studies and she has no issue if the commission wants to hire someone. Commissioner Parenti states that we can get more data but we are limited in our action as a commission. Elena states that Commissioner Rossi is correct that even if we gather the data, Stoneham should contribute too or possibly DCR, but ultimately the data might just lead us back to Engineering and the traffic calming toolkit program. Councilor Eccles says it is worth discussing what we want to get out of this. There is \$25K total in the budget to get traffic data annually, and obtaining turning movements would be interesting to find out as well. Elena will make contact and get it going.

Motion by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Councilor Eccles to do the traffic study. Elena calls the role. All are in favor, so it passes unanimously.

II. New Business:

1. City update on Traffic Calming Toolkit

Elena provided an update that traffic calming thus far has focused largely on the Slow Streets program that the city implemented during covid and it was through a shared streets grant. We are morphing that into our traffic calming toolkit. We hired a consultant called Neighborways and they have created a prioritization tool for us. It helps prioritize what streets need traffic calming. Every road gets a ranking and we have about 15 or 16 streets that have requested to be part of the program so far. We are piloting the first two streets this construction season. We submitted surveys to the streets that had the Slow Streets materials before and Burrell St is the only street that returned the survey. Lynde St and Woodland St are the streets that we have chosen to pilot with the toolkit. Woodland St has been before the traffic commission many times and is very anxious to have their cut through traffic addressed. At a neighborhood meeting the city purposed the installation of temporary speed humps. Woodland St is also scheduled to be paved. On Lynde St, when the DPW went to install the materials, our personnel were accosted by two neighbors that didn't want them there even though notices had been distributed. They had to pick up and leave and now we are following up with the residents on Lynde St to see how they would like to proceed. Elena states that our goal is to put forth projects that are popular, as we have limited funding. We pilot the program and if residents then do not want something, we will not move forward with it. Over the winter we will run everything through the toolkit to see what streets we will address in the spring.

Resident Lihlani Nelson of 76 Linden Rd states that her street didn't respond to the survey because it was difficult for her to obtain all the surveys from the neighbors. They do want cars to slow down however, so she will bring in the surveys next chance she has and would also like their street to remain on the list, which Elena confirms that it is.

Motion to take items #6 and #7 out of order is made by Commissioner Rossi, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor.

6. Resident request to all Bicycle Contra-Flow travel on Crystal St

7. Resident request to allow Bicycle Contra-Flow travel on Rowe Street from Porter St to East Emerson St

Lihlani Nelson of 76 Linden Rd speaks on behalf of the proponent Janine Venuti. These items come from a previous request to allow contraflow bike lanes on Derby Rd and Waverly Pl. That area did not meet the standards, thus did not get approved by the Traffic Commission. There are other streets however that could serve the same purpose. Crystal St is a one-way street, which is located over near the Middle School and High School. It only has parking on one side and seems to meet the guidelines. The idea would be to allow bicyclists to go the opposite direction. Rowe St is behind the hospital and is also a one way. Many cyclists are already doing this on Rowe St to avoid Main St. Rowe St doesn't have parking on both sides and parking won't need to be removed. Surrounding cities are already using contraflow bike lanes and we think this should be considered.

Commissioner Rossi asks about the photos that had been submitted with striped bike lanes. Lihlani states that was just to give ideas of how this idea could be achieved, not necessarily what we should or shouldn't do. She mentions that other options are signs that state "Do Not Enter Except Bicycles."

Finn McSweeney states that Janine did a lot of research and these streets are wide enough to allow for five feet of painted bike lanes. New developments have more people biking. Both proposed streets are low volume.

Motion to open public comment is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Rossi. All are in favor, so public comment is now open.

Steven Manwell of 121 Rowe St states this may sound like a rational idea however there are reasons why Rowe St behind the hospital is a one-way street. He mentions that it is quite a narrow street because of ambulances and trucks. There are 23 parking spaces that are used. The street will become narrowed by adding bike lanes and there is a lot of heavy traffic from the hospital.

Elena asks if anyone in attendance is from Crystal St and there is no one.

Joanna Manwell of 121 Rowe St has concerns because the trucks are large and it will cause a problem for the turns. She feels there is not room for everything to fit on the street. The parking spaces would have to be removed for the bike lanes to work, thus taking away from the hospital.

Alex Vandiver of 91 Crescent Ave states it is wide enough for everything to stay as is while allowing the bikes to ride contraflow.

Jay Cobau from the Bike to the Sea is very supportive of the bike lanes and states that if you add the lanes people will use them. He feels it will improve the community.

Former Mayor Infurna makes a motion to close public comment, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. All are in favor, so public comment is now closed. Elena states that we should discuss these two items together but take individual votes.

Former Mayor Infurna supports getting the cyclists off Main street. Her concern is on Rowe St where the hospital is because every second counts. She does however support Crystal St.

Commissioner Rossi asks Elena if we have the widths of the streets. Elena confirms that Crystal St is consistently 24-25 ft. wide and Rowe St is 23-24 ft. Commissioner Rossi states that on Rowe St the parking is on the left side which means that you would have to cross the bike lane to pull in and out of the parking lot. This is a safety concern. On Crystal St it is on the right side.

Commissioner Parenti asks what we can do as a commission, what is our authority? Elena states that we can stripe and add except bicycle signs. Councilor Eccles states that he has no issues with either location. Commissioner Krechmer states that Crystal St is great to push the kids off the Lynn Fells Parkway and it would be safer. Elena is in full support of Crystal St and this is a good opportunity to do the contraflow.

Commissioner Parenti wants to know what he is voting on. He is in favor on Crystal St but is not ready to vote Rowe St. He wants to look at all the streets in the city. Ped bike collaborated on lower Main St and when the votes were taking place it was very well vetted. He states that every square inch of pavement

should be used to its highest use. Elena agrees with Commissioner Parenti that the planning should be a bit more involved with the Ped Bike Committee and the neighborhoods involved, rather than getting these streets presented piecemeal. She states that we can vote no on Rowe St and come back to it later if it's part of a larger master plan.

Commissioner Rossi wants to know what other information we would want to get to vote on Rowe St as we want to make sure we do it the right way. Elena states that she feels that she has everything now, but to vote later we would want a more mapped out plan to see how it fits into the bigger picture.

Motion to approve the except bicycle regulation and striped bike lane on Crystal St for contraflow cycling is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. All are in favor, so it passes unanimously. Elena states that notices were distributed to the neighborhood prior to the meeting and we will likely follow up with them again to show them what it will look like.

Motion to approve contraflow cycling on Rowe St is made by Councilor Eccles, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. Former Mayor Infurna states that the hospital is looking to become a Trauma 3 and this will increase the traffic. She is not comfortable with this area when family members are rushing to the ER.

Elena calls the role. Commissioner Krechmer and Councilor Eccles are yes votes and all others vote no, so the motion does not pass.

2. Resident request to remove the No Turn on Red regulation from Main St northbound to Upham St eastbound.

Elena states that she put this on as a resident request and she did receive several calls about this item. She states that the sign was always in the traffic code, however it got taken down at some point and we decided to put it back up. A lot of folks feel that it is better to have the sign there for overall safety.

Motion to open public comment is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor, so public comment is open.

Resident Finn McSweeney states that is important for this sign to stay. The Ped Bike committee has been looking at this location and feels that is needed for this intersection. This area has high pedestrian traffic and cars will turn right on red even with pedestrians. The crosswalk at this intersection is extremely long and because there is a bike box at this location, turning on red should be prohibited.

Resident Lihlani Nelson feels that the signs should stay for pedestrian and bike safety.

Motion to close public comment is made by Commissioner Rossi, seconded by Councilor Eccles. All are in favor, so public comment is closed.

Commissioner Krechmer walks through this intersection frequently and he likes the sign there. If we don't have the sign, people will get hurt as the crosswalks at this intersection are long and it takes a bit of time to get across. Commissioner Rossi walks a lot and has problems with removing this sign. Time saving is small when compared with safety. Councilor Eccles doesn't think that removing it would speed things up at all and feels the sign should stay.

Motion to deny the removal is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. All are in favor, so the No Turn on Red regulation stays by unanimous consent.

3. Request to install two veteran-only parking locations in the parking lots behind Main St

Veteran Services director, Ro Trionfi-Mazzuchelli, states that Veteran parking spots are always requested. We currently have one behind City Hall. We get asked a lot for veteran signs and she has two signs that were donated to her. Having these signs is a nice way to show support. A few locations that were requested were in the big parking lot behind City Hall, on Main St, or in the big parking lot behind Shaw's. She states that more and more vets are coming in and we want to assist them. You need to have a Veteran Plate to park there and the sign for disabled vets also requires you to have a handicap plate or placard. Sgt Goc asks if she feels that there should be two behind Shaw's or two behind City Hall, because if this is where people are going, we want to accommodate them. She states that there were requests for Main St, but she knows that parking is already difficult there. She had asked the Council on Aging, but they stated that everyone is good about parking there. Elena feels that behind CVS and Shaw's would be a good spot and doesn't have a strong preference for location. Sgt Goc wants to make sure for ticketing purposes that vets know that they need to have a veteran plate. Commissioner Rossi thinks we need to keep in mind that we need more handicap spaces in public lots as well, so we should think about adding more in the future.

Motion is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Councilor Eccles to approve and to use Elena's discretion for placement. Elena calls the role and all are in favor, so the signs will be added.

4. Resident request for a four-way stop at the intersection of Pearl St and Damon Ave

David Goldman of 57 Damon Ave would like a four-way stop at the intersection of Pearl St and Damon Ave. Every intersection along the way is a four way stop and cars speed on that short stretch. There are a lot of kids in the area and kids walk to school so it makes sense. He has lived there for three years and feels that it is an accident waiting to happen. Commissioner Rossi asks the resident if he is aware of any accidents at this intersection. He states that in the short time he has lived there he has not seen any crashes, however others in the neighborhood agree that cars speed through. There is no one else at the meeting to discuss this item, so public comment does not need to be opened.

Elena asks Sgt Goc if he has crash data for this area. He states that he has data going back to 2018 and there is nothing concerning. He does understand the concern for this area and states that Chief Faller was in favor of this. Commissioner Parenti states that there was one accident in February 2018 according to the state data. Elena drove the area and stated that it is an odd area with some intersections having four-way stops and others that don't. She did feel that this was worth coming to the Traffic Commission to be discussed. The resident states that speeding is really the most concerning. Elena states that we typically won't put a stop sign up as traffic calming. Former Mayor Infurna suggests a speed feedback sign in the area. Elena agrees that we could put up the speed feedback sign, as it is a school zone. Commissioner Rossi states that people start ignoring the signs and that is why they aren't used for traffic calming. Elena states that we don't need a vote to add the speed feedback sign and we can add it to the list of locations. We do not have a timeframe, but we may have funding. The resident asks if the police can patrol the area and Sgt Goc states that we can put the trailer out there.

Motion to deny is made by Former Mayor Infurna, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. Elena calls the role and all are in favor.

Former Mayor Infurna needs to leave the meeting at this time.

3. Resident request to re-install a crosswalk in front of the Cefalo Memorial Complex at 245 West Wyoming Ave

Elena states that we confirmed that there was a crosswalk at this location and at one point in time the road was repaved. Since there were no curb ramps there, the crosswalk was not reinstalled. Elena states that she is fully in support of this as it was already there. It connects two bus stops on a major road. It may help people slow down. Commissioner Krechmer states that it should really be there due to the volume of speed and traffic. Elena states that if the crosswalk gets approved, we can add it to RRFB list pending funding. Commissioner Rossi states that W. Wyoming does not have enough crosswalks and there should be more due to the bus route. Elena states that the letter that was submitted along with the petition really speaks for itself as to why it should be there.

Motion to approve made by Councilor Eccles, seconded by Commissioner Rossi.

One of the residents asked about a timeline for installation and Elena states that it would most likely be spring. Commissioner Parenti suggests that we may want to daylight that area. Elena states that we could put hash marks.

Councilor Eccles withdraws his motion. Commissioner Parenti makes a motion to reinstall a crosswalk at 245 W. Wyoming and to restrict parking 40 ft. west of the driveway at 245 W. Wyoming, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. Elena calls the role and all are in favor.

8. Resident request to add a new crosswalk in the vicinity of 181-182 Washington St

The proponent for this item is not here, but Elena states that this item was requested due to the number of children that walk on Washington St and the lack of sidewalks in the area.

Motion to open public comment is made by Commissioner Rossi, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor, so public comment is opened.

One resident that lives in the area states that he does not feel it is a good location due to the lack of sidewalks and cars speeding.

Motion to close public comment is made by Councilor Eccles, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor.

Elena states that there is a lack of crosswalks on Washington St, however there are no sidewalks. Commissioner Rossi does not feel the sight lines are good, as there is a curve in the road and he is also concerned that there are no sidewalks, so no entrances. He would prefer to see a crosswalk up towards Crescent Ave, but again speed and sight lines are an issue. Sgt Goc states that it is a dangerous area but agrees the sightline in this spot is not good. Commissioner Parenti states that there is a crosswalk at Aaron St, but there are several limitations on this stretch. Elena suggests that if we want to revisit this at another meeting, we can look for other locations on Washington St, but this location is not a good spot. Elena also mentions that we distributed notices in the area and no one responded.

Motion to deny is made by Councilor Eccles, seconded by Commissioner Parenti. All are in favor, so the motion is denied.

Motion to adjourn is made by Commissioner Rossi, seconded by Commissioner Krechmer. All are in favor.

The meeting is adjourned at 8:20 PM.