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Town of Belmont, MA Traffic Advisory Committee (T.A.C.)

Meeting Minutes, August 14, 2014

Members Present: Peter Curro, Joe Griffin, Dana Miller (Clerk), Linda Nickens (Chair), Matt Sullivan

Ex-Officio Members Present: Glenn Clancy (Town Engineer), Sargent Benjamin Mailhot (Belmont Police Department).

Also Present: Catherine Bowen, 67 Bartlett Avenue; Julie and Sterling Crockett, 232 Trapelo Road; Ardemis and Antranik Minassian, 11 Bartlett Avenue; Azra Nelson, 26-28 Vincent Avenue,.

Linda called the meeting to order at 7:20pm.

Minutes: The proceedings of the June 6, 2014 T.A.C. meeting will be posted as notes.

Update from the Belmont Police Department: Sargent Mailhot explained that \$1500 *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* grant runs through September 1, 2014. The Department is now applying for additional grants. Funding could total \$12,500 for four grants: Speeding and Aggressive Driving, Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, Distracted Driving, and Click It or Ticket.

Palfrey Square: Area residents presented a slide show and explained their concerns about traffic safety in their neighborhood.

Bartlett Avenue is congested and cars move at too high a speed. There is poor visibility turning left from Bartlett onto Trapelo Road. Bushes at the intersection limit the drivers' ability to see oncoming traffic. Cars park on the sidewalk/grass. With parking on both sides of the street, it would be difficult for emergency vehicles to access the street. In the past, the town has restricted parking on one side of the street.

Area residents need to manage tandem parking in their driveways and find it difficult to pull out onto the street because of the dense parking on the street. Neighborhood parking has become more difficult because a bus stop took 3-4 parking spaces.

While most business patrons need parking for between 10 and 75 minutes, business owners and commuters park all day. Residents believe

that commuters account for a large portion of the long-term parking and would like to restrict commuter parking.

Over half of the business patrons depart by making a U-turn. Linda observed that the ability to make a U-turn in Palfrey Square is important to drivers in that area.

Residents believe that the sharper corner planned at Bartlett might mitigate speeding problems and that making a U-turn might become more dangerous because of the planned removal of the island in the road.

Catherine Bowen is concerned about bicyclist safety. She explained that the parking on Harriet Street has an upside in that it narrows the road and prompts drivers to be more cautious in their approach than they would be if the road were wide enough to allow both bicyclists and automobiles to pass simultaneously.

In a discussion of possible remedies to the safety concerns, the Committee addressed sight lines for drivers, parking restrictions, the U-turn, and traffic speed.

Glenn explained the complication caused by the hedges at the intersection: these require constant monitoring and periodic pruning—and the town is ill equipped to manage this.

In response to resident interest, the Committee explained that the Town lacks the necessary resources to support a parking-permit plan. The Committee also explained that it is not possible to restrict parking for town resident commuters while allowing parking for area residents and business patrons.

Glenn explained that commuter parking that might be pushed out of Palfrey Square won't disappear, but will simply move down the street. Glenn suggested that Trapelo road might be better suited than Bartlett for commuter parking.

At the residents' request, the town will explore the possibility of some time-limited parking to accommodate business patrons. The town will also consider single-side-of-the-road parking. The residents were particularly concerned about parking for the dry cleaner.

Glenn will explore the possibility of restricted parking on Bartlett, near the intersection, with unrestricted parking further down the street. In response to Sargent Mailhot's suggestion, the town will consider

installing a stop sign on Harriet Avenue as it enters the intersection.

Catherine suggested that ticketing those parked illegally—especially in August and September when new students move in—might yield longer-term compliance with parking laws.

Linda recommended that the T.A.C. hold a hearing to which all neighborhood residents and business owners be invited to allow for a full discussion of Palfrey Square traffic problems and possible remedies to these problems.

Glenn explained that, if decisions were made at the September 11, 2014 T.A.C. hearing on Palfrey Square, then recommendations would be brought to the Board of Selectman in November and final decisions might not be implemented until the spring of 2015.

Old Business:

Dalton and Elm Street Intersection: Sargent Mailhot plans to conduct a repeat measure of the traffic at the intersection of Dalton and Elm Streets once schools open.

Belmont Center update: On September 8, Glenn will make a presentation to town meeting about the Belmont Center reconstruction plan. The town meeting will convene in November to vote on the project and its funding.

Trapelo Road: After the construction company's formal request to extend the project for a third year was rejected, the pace of the work picked up. The foundations for signals and drainage are still in progress.

Committee Elections: The T.A.C. will hold elections in October 2014

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Miller, Clerk



Traffic Advisory Committee

TOWN OF BELMONT

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Linda Nickens, Chair
Laurence Macdonald, Vice Chair
Dana Miller, Clerk

Committee Members

Peter Curro
Joseph Griffin
Donald Mercier
Tommasina Olson
Matt Sullivan

Date: July 31, 2014
To: Members – Traffic Advisory Committee
From: Linda Nickens, Chair
Subject: Agenda for Meeting on **Thursday, August 14, 2014 at 7:00 PM** in **Town Hall Conference Room 4**. If you cannot attend the meeting, please contact Linda via e-mail.

7:00 Call to Order
7:00 – 7:05 Meeting Notes (June 12, 2014)
7:05 – 7:20 Resident Concerns – Intersection of Harriett Avenue and Bartlett Avenue
7:20 – 7:35 Old Business

- BPD Updates on June Action Items
- Belmont Center Project Update
- Trapelo Road Project Update
- Other

7:35 – 7:40 New Business

- No Known Items

7:40 Adjourn

Cc: Board of Selectmen – Andy Rojas
David Kale, Town Administrator
Glenn R. Clancy, Town Engineer
Sgt Ben Mailhot, Belmont Police Department
Richard McLaughlin, Belmont Police Chief
Peter Castanino, Director, Department of Public Works
Karl Haglund, Planning Board

Clancy, Glenn

From: azra b.n. <azrabart@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 05, 2014 9:17 AM
To: Clancy, Glenn
Subject: Bartlett/Harriet Intersection Concerns

Hello Mr. Clancy,

recently I had a chance to talk to Julie Crockett and learn about plans for new intersection at the corner of Trapelo, Harriet, and Bartlett. I am happy to hear that there are plans to address traffic and make it nicer and safe for pedestrians. But, I would like to express concern that I have, and hope you will take it under consideration. This is from Vincent Ave resident of almost 8 years, who drives out and across to Slade St. on a daily basis and, multiple times on most days as well.

Bartlett is very narrow right from the corner of Vincent Ave to the intersection at Harriet Ave. Honestly I am very happy that there are no accidents since parked cars make for very poor visibility when driving or walking around that bend. Not to mention impacting width of driving surface as well. Cars park on the curve and both sides of Bartlett shrink it often to narrow single lane where cars turning on Bartlett Ave down and from Trapelo Rd. go at high speed without actually being able to anticipate this sudden narrowness of the road, or see cars coming to Bartlett/Harriet intersection from the opposite direction, and vice versa.

Many pedestrians coming off the bus like to cut across Bartlett right at that bend where many cars come on pretty fast. Both my husband and I experienced fast cars coming at us when trying to cross at that stretch, and decided years ago not to brave and cross Bartlett there anymore, but at the much lower point and right at Vincent Ave corner to avoid being hit by someone accidentally. It is really pretty dangerous intersection at current configuration.

Dry cleaner's van and people picking up clothes/dropping off mail, often stop in the middle of the lane there, without actually parking the car, and make obstruction to flow of traffic where cars try to force their way around so they can clear the Trapelo/Slade intersection. All in all, that whole corner/intersection is a mess for years and from all directions. No question that is very well used by cars, as well as pedestrians.

I often have to stop at Vincent and Bartlett corner and wait to turn onto Bartlett Ave and toward Harriet, because of the car coming down from Trapelo Rd needs to go by first. It is often too tight for two cars to drive at the same time on that narrow strip of Bartlett Ave. It amazes me still how many people park their cars so poorly that they not just stick out but take too much space on both sides of the road. In the winter it is even harder to drive through--Bartlett Ave at that particular stretch, and with parked cars and snow piles shrinks even more.

I am very concerned that if town designates new parking spots in front of Julie's house at the corner of Trapelo and Harriet, this stretch of Harriet will also become so narrow that people coming from Bartlett trying to turn onto Harriet will have to stop and wait on Bartlett for other cars on Harriet to clear first, to be able to turn and merge. And I can not even imagine the mess during the winter and with big snow piles everywhere with parked cars right at the traffic light.

If Harriet becomes single lane for cars turning in three different directions and if similar traffic light pattern is kept (with merging traffic having very short green light, no right turn on red), traffic will back up on Harriet as well as on Bartlett. I am not sure of any benefit with current proposal.

At least now at the traffic light to Trapelo there is a wider area with two informal lanes--one for cars to turn toward Cushing Sq. and one to cross onto Slade or toward Waverly Sq. that helps traffic to clear out quickly. Police cars use this area often to park on the side while checking for speed on Trapelo Rd. as well.

As soon as Julie told me that town is planing more parking spots, I felt need to express my concerns. If all cars need to sit and wait for traffic light in a single lane there, and all with turns in different directions with "no turn on red" sign, this intersection will become sure candidate for a daily gridlock and stress.

Also, pedestrians trying to cross Harriet will not be as visible if there will be parked cars there. Most pedestrian do not wait for the walk sign- it takes too long to wait to get one.

I would urge you to consider leaving this particular stretch of Harriet Ave as wide as possible. I experience on a daily basis what allowing parking on both sides did to Bartlett Ave at that particular narrow area, and know that our neighborhood would really be interested in avoiding sitting at the intersection of Bartlett and Harriett through multiple traffic lights just to get out onto Trapelo or to Slade. Not to mention safety of pedestrians. There must be better way to do this.

Many thanks, and I hope you will seriously consider possible issues with current design and flow of traffic. I do think that extra parking would be mistake, as nice as it sounds.

Best, Azra Nelson
26-28 Vincent Ave
Belmont MA

Clancy, Glenn

From: Kate Bowen <katebowen2010@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, August 11, 2014 2:20 PM
To: Clancy, Glenn
Subject: [Belmont MA] Harriet-Bartlett; Traffic Comm Mtg; Support Design

gclancy,

Someone has sent you a message using your anonymous contact form on the Belmont MA site.

If you don't want to receive such e-mails, you can change your settings at <http://www.belmont-ma.gov/users/gclancy>.

Message:

Dear Glenn,

I am sharing with you the views I have shared with Julie Crockett, who lives at the Corner of Harriet and Trapelo Road.

In short, I support the designs that are in place.

Julie,

Do you have zoning board approved plans from the time when your driveway was paved? It appears from the plan that you provided that your driveway may be the type of driveway where the owners just paved over the yard and used it as a driveway without it being legally approved. There is another similar such driveway on Bartlett Ave. It, like yours, is very difficult for pedestrians to navigate because the cars don't 'respect' the sidewalk space and often park into it. The owners paved their yard and use it as a driveway, but it is not a legal space (50-52 Bartlett Ave). Consequently, through use, they see it as their right though they know it is not actually their rightful property. It is problematic, not only for pedestrians but it also takes away a valuable street parking spot, to the extent that several motorists have been wrongfully ticketed.

Their plans look very good to me with respect to lane narrowing and widened sidewalks. The spot where Bartlett meets Harriet has been a very dangerous place - impossible to cross at the top of Bartlett if you are walking down Harriet, so I welcome those improvements. The fact that a car would have to wait to turn onto Harriet from Bartlett, is simply added insurance that the approaching cars there will slow down, which is much needed.

Road narrowing has proven to be very effective in traffic calming. Contrary to what some might think, the narrowing of lanes actually slows traffic making it safer for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. The cars

on Harriet come very rapidly down from Belmont Street, note with limited visibility due to curves & hill. This narrowing would appear to improve the approach from Harriet to Trapelo, which would make it much safer to turn from Bartlett, left, onto Harriet.

If you walk up Harriet, you will find that cars near Belmont Street park on the sidewalk for fear of getting swiped by these fast-movers, from what I can tell.

Having parking near the adjacent businesses would be beneficial to those businesses and it appears time limited. I can also see that the parking spots located on Harriet approaching Trapelo would help to ensure that motorists are NOT turning right on red. Currently, it is very, very tempting to turn illegally.

I think what they are proposing is similar to areas in Cushing Square. If you go towards town on Common Street from Trapelo, the first right has several spots down the residential road marked with various time or parking restrictions. From my experience, those spots, though some would consider too far to walk, are invaluable to me personally frequenting some of the businesses in Cushing Square.

Best,
Kate

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Message sent by: Kate Bowen (katebowen2010@yahoo.com)

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