

Traffic Commission Minutes
March 21st, 2024

When: Thursday March 21, 2024 at 5:30pm

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opYQtKuzJIY>

Attendance:

Traffic Commission members: Chair Jill Lathan, Councilor Naima Sait, Lena Webb, Lt. William Rymill, Assistant Chief Sean Tierney

Staff: Jackie Stagnari, Suzanne Rinfret, Anna Rebelo, Adrienne Pomeroy, Kate White, Justin Schreiber, Lauren Craik, Laura Accaputo

Meeting Ground Rules:

1. Listen to the other side
2. Focus on issues, not personalities
3. Avoid questioning motives
4. Be polite

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

The Chair asked the secretary to conduct a roll call vote for attendance.

Chair Jill Lathan – present
Councilor Naima Sait – present

Lena Webb – present
Lt. William Rymill – present
Assistant Chief Sean Tierney – present

Item #1 – Acceptance of the Minutes from the February 8, 2024 Traffic Commission Meeting.

Motion to approve made by Lena Webb, seconded by Lt. Rymill. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Item #2 – Request for an accessible parking space at the following locations:

- a) 12 Westwood Rd.
- b) 42 Oliver St.

Adrienne Pomeroy, ADA Coordinator, stated she reviewed the applications and supported approval of both spaces.

Motion to approve made by Assistant Chief Tierney, seconded by Councilor Sait. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Item #3 – Regarding Article XIV of the Traffic Regulations, request to update to the language to clarify the process of traffic calming petitions (see attached document).

- [Article XIV Traffic Calming Proposal for Traffic Commission](#)

Lauren Craik, Transportation Planner-Mobility, explained this item [proposed updates](#) to Article XIV, the neighborhood traffic management and calming program. The City's traffic calming program has really expanded in the last several years, and the goal of the proposed changes are to ensure that the regulations reflect the current process and residents have a clear picture of how traffic calming is prioritized and implemented across the city. She reviewed the changes proposed in each section, which can be found [here](#).

Councilor Sait asked about the one signature per household requirement. Suzanne Rinfret, Director of Parking, explained that the limit is one signature per household, if it's a multi-unit house, then they would be considered separate households, and the percentage requirement provides an avenue for smaller streets that may not have nine different households. Councilor Sait also asked about the timeline for streets being included in data collection and residents receiving a response about their petitions. Lauren explained the fall and spring data collection schedule and the communication process with residents. Lena Webb inquired where this information will be available. Lauren replied this information is currently public as part of the Traffic Regulations.

Motion to approve made by Councilor Sait, seconded by Lena Webb. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Item #4 – Informational Item: Discussion of 101-153 Special Permit conditions related to curb use in the Boynton Yards neighborhood.

Chair Lathan clarified that this is an informational item and there would be no motions or votes required tonight.

Justin Schreiber, Senior Transportation Planner-Mobility, stated the purpose of this discussion was to talk about the master plan for 101-153 South St and its relation to curb use changes in the Boynton Yards neighborhood, with the intention of bringing items to next month's meeting for a vote. He presented [these slides](#) outlining the master plan, special permit conditions, mobility management plan, and the bike network plan goals for this area.

Councilor Sait asked if any of the new buildings were residential, or all office space. Justin confirmed that it will be approximately 25% residential and the rest will be commercial (office and a bit of ground-floor retail). Assistant Chief Tierney inquired about the plan to reverse the direction of South St. Justin responded this is intended for the benefit of traffic flow as a result of traffic analysis of the neighborhood. Councilor Sait asked about the capacity of the buildings' parking garages and whether the Blue Bikes stations would be available to the public. Justin stated all buildings except one would have their own underground garage, the mobility management plan required that these garages be open to the public, and the Blue Bikes stations are paid for by the developer but owned by the City and available to the public as well. Lena Webb asked about the current number of parking spaces on South St, and if the removal of parking on South St is expected to push vehicles to look on the surrounding residential streets. Justin estimated a range of two to three dozen spaces, and that the goal is to have vehicles utilize the parking garages. Councilor Sait raised the idea of having discounted or free parking available in the garages overnight for residents.

Item #5 – Regarding the curb on the north side of Bow Street, nearest 71 Bow Street, 112 feet west of Bow Street Place to 72 feet west of Bow Street Place, request to convert two metered spaces to a 40-foot, 24/7 loading zone.

Kate White, Transportation Planner-Mobility, shared this request for a loading zone came from a new business, Hot Tomatoes. Mobility staff evaluated this request and identified the proposed location near 71 Bow St. to serve both Hot Tomatoes and other uses in the area. Councilor Sait asked why the proposal was for a 24/7 loading zone. Kate explained that staff have seen 24/7 loading zones be more effective, particularly in busy commercial areas such as Union Square. Lena Webb inquired how many parking spaces this would take. Kate replied that it is approximately 40 ft. or two parking spaces.

Motion to approve made by Assistant Chief Tierney, seconded by Lt. Rymill. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Item #6 – Informational Item: Elm Street Illegal Parking Discussion

Chair Lathan clarified that this is an informational item and there would be no motions or votes required tonight.

Kate White, Transportation Planner-Mobility, shared the purpose of this item was to discuss current regulations on Elm St. between Day St. and Grove St., describe specific illegal parking issues, and preview potential improvements and gather feedback. She presented [these slides](#), which include current curb regulations, photo examples of illegal parking activities, parking violation data, and video data collection.

Lt. Rymill shared that the Somerville Police Department also gets frequent calls for service in a couple of the locations mentioned, and SPD would be interested in discussing their ideas with Mobility. Chair Lathan asked if closing Elm St. to vehicular traffic and making it a pedestrian area had been considered. Kate said the idea has been included in the Davis Square Commercial Area Plan, but there is no specific project currently in the pipeline to do this. Chair Lathan and Lena Webb shared concerns that proposed short-term solutions would not eliminate the safety risks currently being seen. Kate acknowledged that these potential solutions would not totally solve the illegal parking issues but staff would like to test out solutions to improve the situation. Lena Webb asked about the off-street public lots in this area. Kate shared that part of the solution could be an educational campaign increasing awareness for these off-street options. Councilor Sait expressed support for short-term changes that would help change current behavior ahead of any longer-term, large-scale changes to the street. Kate shared the new loading zone signs the City has been piloting and discussed the images being used. Councilor Sait asked about the possibility of only allowing deliveries to happen at night. Kate shared that business owners often express the inability to control delivery times.

Item #7 – Request to convert two residential permit parking spaces on Fairfax St. (along the side of 357 Alewife Brook Parkway) to No Parking Any Time, to allow for a Green Stormwater Basin.

Gina Cortese, Project Manager-Engineering, explained that as part of upcoming sewer and stormwater improvements in this area, the Engineering Department is proposing to add a green stormwater infiltration basin on Fairfax St., which would necessitate the removal of two parking spaces.

Lena Webb expressed support for this item, and as a resident of an adjacent street has witnessed the flooding issues and the hazards it creates for the neighborhood. Assistant Chief Tierney inquired if parking will be allowed opposite the basin, and what the width for vehicles to pass through would be. He wanted to ensure that fire trucks would be able to pass through if a vehicle was parked opposite the basin. Chair Lathan expressed that DPW vehicles would also need to be able to pass for plowing operations. Gina shared that Jeff Barbieri from DPW was involved in the design process and offered feedback and said she would follow up with the Fire Department about running a test vehicle through the area with the proposed design to ensure they could fit.

Motion to approve made by Councilor Sait, seconded by Lt. Rymill. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Motion to adjourn made at 7:06pm.

Motion to adjourn made by Assistant Chief Tierney, seconded by Councilor Sait. A roll call vote was taken; Chair Lathan-yes, Councilor Sait-yes, Lena Webb-yes, Lt. Rymill-yes, Assistant Chief Tierney-yes. The motion carried 5-0-0.