

Waban Area Council

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Special Community Meeting on Beethoven and Allen Ave. Traffic Calming

Thursday, March 8, 2018

6:30pm-7:30pm

Waban Library Center

Meeting Notes

City Officials Attending:

- Officer Dawn Fleming, Newton Police Traffic Bureau
- Steve Simoglou, Newton Traffic Engineer
- Jason Sobel, Newton's Interim Director of Transportation Operations
- John Rice, Ward 5 City Councilor

John Rice introduced the meeting and the city officials present.

Jason Sobel: Both Beethoven and Allen were evaluated last Fall along with many other roads. They have developed a comprehensive program based on travel speed, volume, crash data, and where schools are located. Both Allen and Beethoven made top ten list for good candidates for traffic calming. They are currently still formulating options for good traffic calming treatments. Both are 25mph zones, with 85th percentile speeds of 36mph. Pretty high speed for the roadways. Width and topography are contributing factors. 115 Allen Ave and 130 Beethoven Ave. is where speeds were measured in for a period of 48 hours. Allen Ave. was measured in September and Beethoven in October. Purpose of this meeting is to hear from the community.

Typical traffic calmings: signs, speed tables, raised crosswalks, dynamic speed feedback signs.

Discussion of speed limit. One resident said sign on Allen said 30mph. Jason explained that the citywide speed limit was recently changed to 25mph unless otherwise posted.

Officer Dawn Fleming gave an account of accident data on the roads for the past few years, including parked cars struck, accidents exiting onto Beacon, collisions with trees.

Officer Fleming explained that she has heard that local driving schools use Allen and Beethoven to teach 3-point turns because of their width. The width of the streets make them a good cut through from Woodward to Beacon.

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Resident Comments:

The rises on both roads lead to speeding. Suggestion to put stop signs near the rises. Officer Fleming is pushing for traffic calming there to make it safer for kids and pedestrians. She pushed for a crosswalk on opposite side of park on Allen Ave., city said because there was no cutout they couldn't do it at that time.

A resident asked question about the crosswalks and commented that cars do not see the crosswalks on Beacon without a light.

Julia Golden (103 Beethoven) – Traffic calming is necessary because speeding occurs 24/7. It is at its worst when school is not in session. Suggests bumpouts. Coming from Woodward and crossing Beethoven is treacherous. The rise is a problem. Multiple reminders are needed to get people's attention. People park in front of houses and block driveway. Triple parking occurs. Cars are turning around and going over sidewalk and going the wrong way because the triple parking is blocking the road.

Bob Jampol (17 Upland) – Danger of speed is made worse by snow because some people don't clear sidewalks and pedestrians end up in road.

Judy Armstrong (Vaughn Ave.) – Advocates making the streets one way all day. U-turns at Puritan and Beethoven are a problem. There should be more no parking zones. Cars park very close to intersections. Teachers are parking on Allen and Beethoven all day long because of insufficient parking. Makes those roads too narrow. Not a fan of bumpouts as they are difficult to see in evening. Recommends more signage, one way 24/7 and flashing lights.

Patrick Maher (81 Winslow Rd.) – Cars parked on Beethoven turn it into a one-way street. They park on northbound side of Beethoven very close to intersections and it blocks view of cars if you are exiting Puritan. There is also nighttime traffic – school activities in evening and weekend activities contribute to the dangerous conditions.

Allen Noguee (48 Kingston Rd.) – the expansion of school population by 50% has barely begun yet. School Committee member Steve Siegel responded that there were 320 students before expansion, now there are 412, it has design capacity for 495. Allen Noguee added that he has experienced cars coming wrong way during school hours

Ernie Kreeger (10 Vaughn Ave.) – Surprised that they did not bump in the blue zone when they built the new school. City Councilor John Rice explained that there were a number of meetings and there was significant community opposition to cutting in the blue zone and making the street wider because of concerns about speed. City had the money to do it (500K). City officials have said that they are still willing to spend that money to improve Zervas traffic configuration.

Robert Pettipaw (150 Beethoven) – Does not agree with making Beethoven one-way. It could work on Allen, but Beethoven doesn't have enough cross streets. 3 places on B that are dangerous – 1. The top of the hill, once you crest the hill people speed, 2. From Woodward to Beacon, Puritan Rd. If you are going up that it is blind, if there is a vehicle parked on the even

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side, you have to pull out into the middle of the road to see. His wife had an accident there when someone pulled out on her. 3. Beethoven swerves to the left after the hill and you can't see ahead and when you get there cars are parked on the street and trees block your view.

Judy Gordon (203 Beethoven) – Many of the problems have existed for a long time. Extensive signage and better enforcement would be helpful. Consider what happens in winter and would discourage bump outs and speed bumps because they can make driving more difficult in winter conditions with snow in the road.

Rebecca Cohen (1370 Beacon -- corner of Allen and Beacon) – From her home she can view accidents happening at that intersection. One change since new Zervas opened-- traffic heading east on Beacon now gets backed up farther west than Allen and Ferncroft which blocks access to Allen Ave. from Beacon. Traffic on Beacon heading east is too fast – 35 mph speed limit, people go in excess 45. They do that when there is a backup of cars heading west trying to turn onto Allen. That's what causes accidents at that corner. Doesn't think making Allen narrower would be helpful. Would like speed limit on Beacon be reduced. Hope that flashing school sign would be placed west of Allen Ave so that as people head east they slow down, but she's been told that's not legal because it has to be certain distance from school zone. Speed on Beacon has to come down to address to accidents on Beacon. Or something else has to happen to allow cars turning left onto Allen from Beacon to proceed.

City Councilor John Rice – What about the large X “no block the box” painting that has happened elsewhere in Newton (Lowell/Homer and Comm Ave.). Could we put that at Beacon and Allen? Jason Sobel– it's possible.

Meryll Miller (16 Allen Ave.)—Thinks one cause of accidents is it is hard to see around cars when you are turning. On 3 out of the 4 corners at Beacon and Allen/Ferncroft there are bushes that are high and are hard to see around. Officer Fleming – do a 311 on city website and inspectional services will come out and look at it. Meryll - When people are coming from Ferncroft and crossing over beacon onto Allen they are flooring it – would love to see the signage be early on in the block on Allen so that they can see the speed limit right away.

Nelson Lipshutz (24 Radcliff) – There are three distinct issues: speed, visibility, and congestion. Mirrors could help with visibility. Speed bumps help with speed.

Neil Gladstone – Upper Allen Ave. The street is very wide. Only speedbumps or bumpout will help with that so please consider those options.

John Rice – Fuller Rd. did a bunch of bumpouts. LaSalle college table crosswalks have been effective. Traffic police and public safety will take these suggestions and come up with some proposals and another meeting

Jen Martin (86 Allen Ave.) – Speed on Beacon people go so fast because intersection is so wide. Encourage cars to go slowly and turn into their own lane. Every time there is an accident there are three crosswalks involved. We need a crosswalk by the bus stops and the fields in order to protect pedestrians crossing. Middle school bus-stop has 40 kids and they all have to cross

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without a crosswalk.

Sallee Lipshutz- What about a grass median on Allen? John Rice – it has never been evaluated.

Alex Techet (152 Allen Ave.) – From Beacon heading west cars cut the corner onto Allen making it difficult coming out of Allen Ave. She has been passed on Allen Ave. as she is going the speed limit (by cars heading in the same direction). There are no yellow lines on the road, no marks showing the center of the road. Agrees that the bus stop has so many kids there needs to be a safe crosswalk there. Cars heading down Allen toward Woodward are flying and it is dangerous for pedestrians crossing aqueduct. That it is a great place for a bumpout. Suggests flashing crosswalk signs. She sees speeding at midnight on Beethoven.

Chris Pitts, WAC – asked for show of hands if the main concern on Allen Ave is speed and distance to cross, and on Beethoven is congestion, speed and blind spots. Most hands went up.

Officer Fleming stated she has gotten good feedback on the HAWK light in Waban Center.

Yehoram Yosubash, 184 Beethoven (up the hill) – Perhaps limit big trucks entering those streets. Aqueduct is a dangerous area to cross. If the street were more winding with a flashing light that would help. Has seen many near misses. Maybe we should do one way only on Beethoven from Puritan to Beacon. He sees people doing u-turns at Zervas drop off.

Pat Maher – If you make it one way the problem is that the Puritan neighborhood has 100 houses that use Puritan to get out to Beacon. You will add traffic to the Beacon/Allen/Beethoven loop if you make it one way all the time. John Rice confirmed that during the Zervas build discussion the traffic council determined it would make too many households take the big loop if they made Beethoven one-way all day.

Louis Long (236 Allen Avenue) – years ago there was a bad accident with teenagers, car going so fast that the car became airborne and struck a transformer. At that time city said they couldn't do anything like speed bumps or cut-ins because Allen Ave is emergency route. What has changed? Jason Sobel responded that in the past the fire department has raised concerns with speed tables and bumpouts, but over the past 15 years the speed tables and bumpout designs have gotten much better and can be used on emergency routes.

Bob Jaffe (206 Beethoven) – Against bumpouts on Beethoven. Traffic congestion and negotiating Beethoven is very challenging. Bumpouts would make it more difficult. Table top crosswalks may work.

Karen Siller (31 Beethoven) – in past 10% of students took the bus, what percent now? Jen Martin (Zervas PTO) – not sure of percentage but they have had to add a second bus in the afternoon. There are lots of kids on the bus. 60 kids taking afternoon bus. Steve Seigel reports that principal says the pickup and dropoff is much better.

Alicia Bowman (head of Newton Safe routes to school program) – we have to slow cars down to make crosswalks safer. Make the crosswalks narrow enough. Have to fix the speed on the whole length of the road in order to make it safe.

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Suggestion that the Zervas school do something to discourage parents from U-turns.

Comment that on Evelyn Rd at the 4 way stop there has been a police car there regularly and that has worked well.

Additional Comments Received by the Waban Area Council by e-mail:

Roger Klein (63 Beethoven) – please do not add traffic humps or bumps to Beethoven. They penalize the law-abiding as much as violators. The way to calm traffic is to fix roads and improve intersections around the city so that drivers do not feel traffic-stressed.

Naomi Gurt Lind and Bill Lind (Beethoven Ave.) -- we have both observed cars driving way too fast down our street (Beethoven Avenue). Indeed, several years ago, our son had a scary experience when a speeding car came too close to him and he had to jump the curb on his bike in order to avoid being hit. We are grateful you are looking at this issue.

One idea that a neighbor has suggested, and which sounds practical to us, is to put a stop sign at the top of the hill at the intersection of Beethoven Puritan. We don't love speed bumps, but perhaps one is necessary near the crosswalk to Richardson field.

Kristin and Ben Jonash (130 Beethoven Ave.) -- deeply concerned about the speeding on Beethoven, specially across from Richardson (where we live). It seems to me that people go slowly around the curve near Zervas but after that, it's a straight away and they fly. There are little kids everywhere (both mine, playing in our front lawn and kids at Richardson field playing at the park!). I've yelled at countless cars driving by and am horrified by the negligence with which people are driving. I would really like to see speed bumps put in or at the very least, a couple of raised crosswalks. Please let me know what else I can do to help alleviate this issue. I am truly scared!

Karen Schoener (115 Winslow Rd.) --

1. The intersection of Puritan and Beethoven is dangerous, especially when cars park close to the corner of Puritan and Beethoven (on either side of the street on Beethoven).
 - Parked cars on Beethoven make it impossible to safely make a left/right turn from Puritan onto Beethoven - due to poor visibility.
 - It is not possible to see cars approaching on Beethoven.
 - I've personally experienced a number of close calls, where I almost was in an accident due to an oncoming car that was tough to see (and often due to an oncoming car that was speeding).
2. Beethoven is a narrow road. When cars are parked on both sides of Beethoven, there is often not enough road left for 2 cars to pass each other on Beethoven. Given the blind spots that exist on Beethoven (due to hills, curves in the road), I feel that it is very unsafe to allow for cars to park on both sides of Beethoven.

There were many good suggestions in the March 8 meeting. However, I'd like to add a few suggestions:

1. Please consider installing stop signs on Beethoven at the intersection of Puritan Rd.
2. Please consider only allowing parking on 1 side of the street for the entire length of

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Beethoven.

- Today, parking is restricted to only 1 side of the street during certain times (mainly during little league games at Richardson field I believe). During those times, parking is restricted only for parts of Beethoven.
- However, Richardson field is so popular that during games cars park the length of Beethoven (and also overflows onto Puritan and Winslow).
- At any rate, my observation is that that Beethoven is too narrow to accommodate cars parked on both sides of the road - at any time.
 - Beethoven is a narrow road - 24 feet wide.
 - On average, I've read that cars are 5.5 feet wide.
 - Assuming that you allow for 0.5 feet for the distance from the curb to a parked car, 2 parked cars on each side of Beethoven will consume: $(0.5 \text{ feet}) + (5.5 \text{ feet}) + (0.5 \text{ feet}) + (5.5 \text{ feet}) = 12 \text{ feet}$ for the parked cars.
 - This allows for a remaining 12 feet of road for 2 cars to pass.
 - This amount of space (12 feet) is tight for 2 cars to pass under the best of circumstances.
 - But when you factor in the fact that it's common for cars to park farther away from the curb than 0.5 feet, Beethoven can effectively become a 1 way street due to cars parked on both sides of the street. All it takes is for 1 car to park too far away from the curb (or a car to be wider than the average of 5.5 feet), and a section of Beethoven suddenly becomes an (unmarked) one way road. This can lead to dangerous driving conditions.
- 3. At a minimum, please consider allocating 20 feet of 'no parking' on Beethoven at the intersection of Puritan - on both sides of Beethoven.
 - a. That intersection is a very dangerous spot to allow for cars to park on Beethoven. The parked cars lead to a dangerous lack of visibility.
 - b.

Finally, I'd like to reiterate that I believe Beethoven is too narrow to allow for parked cars on both sides of the street at any time.