

Traffic Safety Committee
January 14, 2019

Present were: Chair Rozek, Council Members Otis, Morgan Allain, Theberge, and Remillard (6:15 p.m.)

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, Mrs. Gemmiti, Police Chief Pete Morency, Assistant Chief Dan Buteau, Claire Stiles, and Housing Coordinator Northern Human Services Justin Lessard

Chair Rozek called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilor Otis moved to accept the minutes of the October 22, 2018 Traffic Safety Committee meeting; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried.

High School Traffic Issue

Chair Rozek stated that Mrs. Gemmiti's driveway is being blocked during the morning and afternoon entrance and exit from the high school. At a previous meeting, it was determined that there is a lack of signage. Mr. Grenier reported that he reviewed the existing conditions. He found one sign that is in the Willard Street teacher's parking lot and it is not visible from Willard Street. There are no pavement markings indicating "one way". Buses arrive at 2:17 p.m. for the afternoon pick up. Cars are not allowed to go around the bus and that influences traffic.

Suggestions to improve traffic included providing signage that would indicate "no u turn" from Carl Street. Barricades at Carl Street allowing only buses and residents through was suggested as was creating an additional lane along the access road to Madison Ave.

Chief Morency said that Mrs. Gemmiti has been dealing with this for a long time. He noted that any major changes would need the schools' input. Councilor Theberge said that picking up children at the lower parking lot was also proposed at a previous meeting. The bus stop drop off would be moved to be near the auto shop.

Chief Morency mentioned a lighted sign that indicates "no U turn" for the Gemmiti driveway. Mr. Wheeler reasoned that signs could be deployed in buckets to give the signage a try as an experiment starting at Carl Street. Mrs. Gemmiti stated that the situation is chaos for the entire time that pick up and drop off occurs. The post office is the only entity that goes around to Madison Ave. She suggested having the upper parking lot open so that visitors have a space to park. Councilor Otis advocated for trying the signs and revisiting the issue to see if it works.

Chair Rozek agreed that the signs should be tried without any barrier at Carl Street first. Mrs. Gemmiti asked where the "one way" starts and Chair Rozek noted that it starts where the street officially ends at the high school. Mr. Grenier affirmed that there would be a one way sign with arrow; relocating the existing "one way" sign out of the tree and a "no left turn" sign. As a long term fix, a separate lane could be created.

Councilor Otis moved to put up the signs up as recommended in Appendix C, weather permitting, to be adjusted by the City Engineer and to revisit the results at a later date; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded. So moved, the motion carried.

Appendix C:

- Install “begin one-way” signs on each side of Willard Street after #539 Willard Street
- Install “no U turn” signs on same post as “Begin One-Way”
- Remove existing “One Way” sign visible from teacher’s parking lot
- Install “One Way” sign with directional arrow plus “No Left Turn” sign
- Install “One Way” pavement marking with directional arrow near drop off area

These were not considered permanent changes but would be revisited so that an ordinance can be proposed when the signage is right. All voted in favor of the motion. Chief Morency confirmed that he has authority over temporary traffic control.

Request for Autistic Child Sign

Mr. Grenier stated that Public Works received the request for an Autistic Child sign through the work order system. Marble Street is a short street with only eight properties having frontage there. It is a stop street with a stop sign at each end. There should not be high speed traffic there.

Mr. Grenier reported that he did research on the effectiveness of warning signs. The MUTCD defines warning signs as one that calls attention to unexpected conditions and it warns that their use should be kept to a minimum. Maine DOT does not advise the use of the signs. These signs offer a false sense of security and once the sign is in place for a long time, it no longer attracts the attention of the passerby.

Chair Rozek reiterated that the signs don’t work. Councilor Morgan Allain commented that she knows the case and the child is apt to run into the road. She added that she appreciates the work done by Mr. Grenier. Councilor Remillard entered the meeting at this time, 6:15 p.m. Mr. Grenier added that such a warning sign does not convey a message of what the driver is supposed to do. Councilor Otis moved to deny the sign on Marble St; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded.

In discussion, Councilor Theberge noted that adding these signs could become a financial burden on municipalities. Chief Morency agreed with the decision and added that he is afraid that adding these signs puts out a false sense of security. It was suggested that the person requesting the sign be responsible for the cost of installing it. Councilor Remillard cautioned that the City has to first approve the signage. In the vote that followed, the motion carried.

Handicap Parking at 345 Willard St

Mr. Grenier explained that there is a property that is requesting an ADA accessible sign with pavement marking. Observing the property, he saw that most of the time, the space is available. There are times when there are school events where the space is taken. Mr. Grenier indicated that he came up with a draft set of criteria for reviewing these signs.

- It shall be the responsibility of the individual/party seeking on-street ADA parking accommodations to provide reasonable information and justification that such accommodations are required;
- Businesses, non-profit organizations, and other entities with available off-street parking areas will not be granted dedicated on-street ADA parking areas, unless special hardship circumstances can be documented and justified. Such instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Locations approved prior to implementation of this policy shall be grandfathered. The locations approved prior to implementation of this policy are as identified in Sec. 15-79 Parking Spaces Reserved for the Disabled per Chapter 15 – Traffic Ordinance. These approvals shall not set precedence for future approvals.
- On street ADA parking spaces for private residences will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Approvals may be subject to annual review to determine if the space is still required. If the space is deemed to not be necessary, Public Works reserves the right to remove the on-street ADA parking space as warranted
- Each request will be reviewed by the Traffic & Safety Committee to determine if an on-street ADA parking space is necessary and warranted. Items to be considered are (including but not limited to) zoning, existing traffic congestion, driveway/property hardship, etc.
- Should the Committee determine a space is warranted, the property owner will bear the cost of installation and maintenance of said approval including materials and labor. The Public Works Department will not be responsible for winter maintenance/snow removal outside of current practices (i.e. dedicated shoveling and/or snow removal, sand or salting). Property owner will bear the responsibility and expenses related to winter maintenance for dedicated parking space.

Chair Rozek asked that committee members review the information and meet again in two weeks to start with Item 4 and complete the agenda.

Other

Councilor Theberge reported that someone drove on the river from the Horne Street boat landing. He suggested putting a barrier there for safety. Chief Morency stated that the PD is aware and there is not a specific law that deals with driving on the river. There are other access points on the river, is it the intention of the Committee to barricade each one? Chair Rozek added that he preferred the committee receive a written request.

Adjournment

Councilor Remillard moved to adjourn; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the Traffic Safety Committee by motion.