

Board of Selectmen Minutes 06/24/2015

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Attachments:

[Community meetings.pdf](#)

Size: 1.4M Last Updated: 2015/9/29

[BETA power point.pdf](#)

Size: 13M Last Updated: 2015/8/17

[BETA traffic report.pdf](#)

Size: 6.5M Last Updated: 2015/6/5

Board of Selectmen	June 24, 2015
Regular Meeting	Al Merritt Media and Cultural Center

Present:	Philip Crawford, Chairman
	Thomas Terranova Jr., Selectman
	Christopher Barrett, Selectman

Chairman Crawford called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced that the meeting was being recorded for transmission via cable television. He led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Use of Town facilities

On the motion of Selectman Terranova, duly seconded by Selectman Barrett, the Board voted unanimously to approve the request of the Recreation Commission for use of the common on July 1, 2015 for a Horribles Parade from 4:45 to 5:45 p.m.

Discussion of BETA Engineering traffic study of Walnut Street area issues

Kenneth Petraglia and Justin Curewitz of BETA Engineering appeared before the Board to present the BETA report on traffic issues in the Walnut Street area. Also in attendance were Police Chief David Breen, Public Works Director Andrew Lafferty, Town Engineer Charles Richter, and Michael Karas of Mass Highway District 4 and David Greenberg, a consultant working with Mass Highway.

Mr. Petraglia and Mr. Curewitz reviewed the areas of study, which included Walnut Street and its intersections with the Market Street driveway, the Route 128/95 ramps, Salem Street, Bluejay Road, Sparhawk Drive and Gianna Drive. Origin-destination studies and a traffic signal analysis were conducted during the winter, as well as vehicle U-turns on Sparhawk Drive, Bluejay Road and Gianna Drive, intersection issues at Gianna Drive, and signage issues.

The origin-destination study found that traffic coming to the site was split almost even in thirds: one-third from Route 128 ramp and one-third each from Walnut Street southbound and northbound. The current signalization has five phases, which were reviewed by Mr. Petraglia and Mr. Curewitz. Mr. Petraglia said a number of alternatives were considered, with many discarded because they would not improve traffic flow and safety.

Two alternatives were deemed worth of analysis. The first would change the left turn exiting Market Street from a permitted left, which conflicts with traffic exiting the Route 128 ramp, to a permitted left followed by a protected left, which would be allowed when the traffic exiting the ramps are stopped. This change would degrade the Level of Service rating for several approaches at the intersection. The second alternative would make the Market Street left turn permitted only, which would degrade the Level of Service rating in the afternoon peak hour from a D to an F. BETA is not recommending either of these alternatives.

Traffic counts conducted for U-turns on side streets found two in the 7-9 a.m. timeframe and five during the 4-6 p.m. timeframe on Sparhawk Drive. No U-turns were observed at Bluejay Road and Gianna Drive during those time frames. Mr. Petraglia said he believes the signage banning U-turns has had a positive effect.

Four options were reviewed to deter drivers from making U-turns on Sparhawk Drive. The first would include lane delineators along Walnut Street at the entrance top Sparhawk Drive. This would restrict left turns out of Sparhawk Drive and would likely divert traffic to Bluejay Road. The second would install lane delineators on Sparhawk Drive for the 75 feet before the intersection with Walnut Street. This would interfere with residential driveways near the intersection and likely divert traffic to Bluejay Road. The third would narrow the entrance of Sparhawk Drive at its intersection with Walnut Street. This would restrict the turning radius required for U-turns and would not restrict access to driveways for residents, but could result in use of driveways by those seeking to make a three-point turn. The fourth option would install a raised median island on Sparhawk. This would restrict turns in and out of residential driveways and prevent U-turns and would divert drivers seeking to make U-turns and the residential corner property owners to Bluejay Road.

Mr. Petraglia said his recommendation would be not to make any of these changes, but prefers the first to the other three.

Mr. Petraglia said that the problem for motorists on Gianna Drive is that a big mound at restricts visibility when entering Walnut Street. The Town has installed a flashing light that alerts motorists on Walnut Street when a vehicle is waiting on Gianna Drive to enter the Walnut Street traffic. He said this light does not seem to slow drivers on Walnut Street. He observed speeds of 40 to 45 miles per hour on Walnut Street. Curvature of the roadway and a driveway opening near the intersection as complicate the issue.

Mr. Curewitz said that BETA is proposing additional and improved signage at several locations. They include signs alerting drivers from several approaches that no trucks are allowed on Walnut Street south of Salem Street; "do not block intersection" signs on all approaches to the Salem Street and Walnut Street intersection, and changing the "right lane ends" sign on Walnut Street at Salem Street to a "left lane ends" sign, with a diagram sign that reinforces that message.

Overall, the BETA recommendations are maintain the existing signal timing and operation; installing a raised median island along the centerline of Sparhawk Drive for 50 feet, beginning at the intersection with Walnut Street, with consideration of delineators for a trial period; changes to signage as outlined above; increased police enforcement at the Walnut Street at Salem Street intersection. Mr. Petraglia said the Gianna Drive issue would require an engineering study and survey, and that the mound that blocks visibility is the largest problem.

Chairman Crawford allowed residents to ask questions and make statements.

Resident Anne Mitchell asked about the level of service rating system. Mr. Petraglia said that the level of service is based on the time of delay for traffic, and the letter grading system mimics the familiar school grading system of A being the best and F being the worst. Traffic engineers try to achieve a D or higher grade for peak periods; in some locations, such as downtown Manhattan, and E would be the highest grade one could hope for. Mr. Greenstein said delays of 60 seconds or more receive an F.

Resident Wallace McKenzie asked if the traffic counts were representative given their timing. Mr. Petraglia said they are factored for seasonality. Mr. McKenzie said that Vanasse Brustlin and Hangen (VHB), the traffic engineer for the Market Street project, said that the traffic improvements proposed would bring the level of service from an F to a C. The projected level of service results for full build-out of Market Street will result in a D grade in the morning and afternoon peaks on Salem Street at Walnut Street and an E in the afternoon peak the Route 128 North ramp at Walnut Street. He asked what the Board of Selectmen recommends for the various issues raised in the report.

Mr. Petraglia said a 40 percent increase in traffic was estimated for full-build out of Market Street. He said the only change from current grades would be the change from D to E on Walnut Street at the Route 128 North ramp in the afternoon peak, and the change from C to D on the Walnut Street at Salem Street intersection. Mr. McKenzie asked where the flaw in the VHB study was. Mr. Petraglia said VHB does good work, and that the prediction of level of service is not an exact science.

Resident Samir Shah said public safety should be the top priority. Chairman Crawford said the biggest issue is the left turn coming out of Market Street. Resident Nancy DeMarco asked how Sparhawk would be narrowed Resident Robert Casoli said he witnessed 18 vehicles making U-turns on Sparhawk between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. today. He said the sign barring U-turns is not visible enough and should be moved forward on a barrel. He said delineators would be struck by cars. He urged the Board to consider making Sparhawk a one-way street. He said the traffic counts and observations made by BETA were taken in December and did not reflect the times of peak U-turns.

Selectman Terranova said that he met with BETA representatives, Mr. Lafferty and former Town Administrator William Gustus and was told the traffic counts would take place in the summer. Mr. Petraglia said he was not told of this. Mr. Lafferty said that he did not recall an agreement to hold off until the summer, and said a discussion of the timing resulted in a conclusion that early- and mid-December would likely be a busy traffic period due to the holiday shopping season.

Resident Joseph DeMaina said that he disagreed with some of BETA's presentation, but emphasized that it comes down to enforcement, and that a dedicated traffic officer is needed. Resident David Basile suggested discontinuing a permitted right turn on red movement on Salem Street at Walnut Street. Mr. Petraglia said this issue was not looked at as part of the study. He agreed the right turn on red backs up traffic in the intersection.

Resident James Fox said that the Town removed test delineators on Sparhawk because of the blocked driveways. He agreed with narrowing Sparhawk and the need for a better placement of the No U-turn sign. He disagreed with some of the traffic signal measures reviewed by BETA. He said police presence is needed.

Resident Richard Mazzola said traffic counts and observations should be done in each season. He agreed that safety is the most important issue. Resident Mark McDonough said that observation of U-turns should have taken place between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and after 6 p.m. due to shopping and truck delivery traffic patterns. Mr. Petraglia said off-peak periods were observed in addition to commuter peak hours.

A Wakefield resident said she hopes Lynnfield is not trying to send truck traffic through Wakefield. Mr. Curewitz said signage on the highway is under the jurisdiction of the state. Mr. Petraglia said the signage relating to trucks on the highway is intended to have trucks avoid taking Exit 43 and discovering later that there is a truck ban on the southern portion of Walnut Street.

Resident Katy Shea said that the data sample size may not be large enough. She agreed that changes to Sparhawk Drive may push drivers wishing to make U-turns elsewhere. She asked whether traffic on Walnut Street would decrease if Market Street used Exit 42 in its promotional material. Mr., Petraglia said that was likely.

Resident Kristen White said that Hidden Valley Road may see more U-turns if changes are made at Sparhawk Drive. She said motor vehicle accidents on Salem Street and Route 128 create gridlock. She said a police officer is needed to ensure optimal traffic flow. Residents Nancy Williams and Linda Carmichael complained of speeding traffic entering Walnut Street from the Route 128 ramps. Ms. Williams said with the additional tax revenue from Market Street, the Town should have a dedicated traffic officer. Ms. Williams and resident Stephanie Hines said traffic should be surveyed in other seasons.

In response to a question about responsibility for clearing debris from a traffic accident, Chief Breen said that police ask the town operator to clear the debris. If police are notified of debris in the state highway layout, they notify Mass Highway.

Mr. Karas of Mass Highway said that a pedestrian sign could be placed at the crosswalk near the off ramps. He said a stop sign could be installed at the end of the ramp, but he said any change like this could slow traffic throughout the intersection.

Chief Breen suggested squaring off the ramp from Route 128 onto Walnut Street to slow traffic exiting the ramp. He said MassHighway has been very responsive and that the speed limit signs were posted two weeks ago. He said police will be monitoring the area with radar.

Resident Linda Gauvreau complained of speeding on Merrow Road and traffic issues on Main Street. A resident urged more aggressive enforcement and signage, including an overhead sign on Route 128 warning truckers of the ban on a portion of Walnut Street.

Resident Robert Casoli said the local police will confirm problems with trucks violating the ban on Walnut Street and the U-turns taken on Sparhawk Drive. He said that the mouth to Sparhawk Drive should be left wide to allow police to pull over truck violators. He suggested making the street one way, but allowed this may just push the problem of U-turns elsewhere. He urged the Board to come up with solutions to these problems.

Mr. Richter said that two years ago the Town put barrels at the end of Sparhawk to simulate a traffic island. Residents had difficulty entering and exiting their driveways, so they were removed. The Town then offered several options.

Resident Muriel Cecere said she and resident Edward South have attended many meetings on the issues relating to Mansfield Road and Gianna Drive. She said the Town created the traffic issues when it allowed a developer to create Gianna Drive and terminated Mansfield Road before the intersection with Walnut Street. Solutions such as traffic signals at the Gianna Drive intersection were discussed.

Mr. South said the left turn from Gianna Drive onto Walnut Street is very dangerous. He said that residents have been advised that a traffic signal is not possible because the volume of traffic does not support it under federal guidelines. He said the Town installed a warning device to alert motorists on Walnut Street that a car is attempting to exit Gianna Drive. He asked whether it would be preferable to have the warning for Gianna Drive instead.

Chairman Crawford agreed drivers do not slow down on Walnut Street even with the warning. Mr. Petraglia said the intersection does not meet the national requirements for a traffic signal. He said a design study is needed, but the biggest problem is the mound blocking the sightline. Chairman Crawford asked about the removal of the mound. Mr. Lafferty said most of the mound is on private property and that the Town may have to acquire the property to make the necessary change. He said the Town regularly trims back vegetation.

Mr. Petraglia said he would not rely on a warning signal if he were existing Gianna onto Walnut, as a detector can fail. Mr. Richter said a traffic consultant years ago warned against use of a similar warning system.

Selectman Terranova said he was told by local and state officials that the traffic volume is too low for a traffic signal. He said traffic lights placed on Lowell Street near a church in West Peabody would seem to have the same issue. Mr. Karas said the City of Peabody put the traffic signal there after a fatality took place. He said the Town could put up a signal without state funds, but the signal would not be legal.

Mr. South said that the Town could be held liable for an accident at the intersection of Walnut Street and Gianna Drive because it relied on a faulty traffic study when implementing the solution.

Ms. Cecere said that Mansfield Road was steep and residents had sought a solution to that problem; when the developer of Gianna Drive proposed creating the new intersection on Gianna at Walnut, residents were assured the sight lines would be improved. The developer also put in new water lines, which were needed.

Chairman Crawford said that the Board will make the issue a priority. He said if there were an easy solution, it would have been implemented.

Ms. Shea asked at what point traffic congestion becomes so bad that people stop coming to Market Street. Mr. Petraglia said this depends on several factors. Ms. Shea said the original traffic study for Market Street was based on the use of two entrances. She said the Town should ask Wakefield to

entertain lifting the ban on advertising Exit 42. Mr. DeMaina said that ban was the result of a Board of Appeals decision in Wakefield that allowed the placement of a sign at the entrance to the Market Street site from Audubon Road. He said Market Street could take the sign down and ignore this condition.

A Wakefield resident said that Wakefield was told by the developer that Exit 42 would be used only for overflow and delivery access. She spoke of several traffic issues in Wakefield, and said Exit 42 has a large amount of traffic already.

Chief Breen said that traffic enforcement actions have increased from 565 in 2013 to 838 in 2014 and 1,031 in 2015 over the same time period. He said this shows officers are active. He said traffic enforcement is needed not only in the area under discussion but elsewhere in Town. He noted an officer has been added through transfer and will begin his work in Lynnfield in late July. The Town has also requested a civil service list for patrolman and is authorized to make additional hires. He said the officer who works as the school resource officer will be available for traffic duty when school is out in June. He said he is working with Mass Highway on the curb cuts for cruisers on Walnut Street.

Selectman Barrett said enforcement is key and he would like to see a full-time traffic enforcement officer. In response to questions from Selectman Terranova, Chief Breen said that the officer split between school resource and traffic duties would be available for traffic during summers and school vacations. He said traffic enforcement is also done by regular shift officers.

Selectman Terranova said that with the additional revenue from Market Street, he would favor finding the resources to hire a traffic officer, with that officer to work on the Walnut and Salem area until this area is under control. He made a motion to the effect.

Chairman Crawford said that two new officers were being added, one from the civil service list and the recently hired transfer officer. He said the Board agreed to try the split school resource and traffic officer for one year. He noted that the Board has authorized hiring two additional officers, neither of which is working yet.

Chief Breen said that response to requests for transfers have not been as great as in the past due to changes implemented in nearby departments. He said hiring from the civil service list would require paying an officer for six months of academy training, and then local training, before that officer is available to fill a shift.

Selectman Terranova said that of the four new officers, two replaced retirees. Chairman Crawford recommended taking an additional officer through the transfer route in order to out an officer on the streets sooner. Mr. DeMaina said that two officers on the day shift are not enough, according to Chief Breen.

Mr. Boudreau said the police chief does not have the budgetary authority to add an officer. He suggested that the Town could see if there would be sufficient additional revenue to add to the Police Department budget at the fall town meeting if the Board wishes to add an officer. Selectman Terranova said that the chief could use the existing budget to pay for the additional officer through October and seek additional funds at town meeting. He said he is sure the voters will be more than happy to appropriate additional funds for this purpose. Chairman Crawford and Selectman Barrett said they agreed, but did not want to act without town meeting approval.

Chairman Crawford said the additional officers from the civil service list would not be available for shifts for another year. He suggested that the Board authorize the chief to take an additional transfer and hire one officer from the civil service list instead. Chief Breen said he would post the transfer opportunity but said there may not be a large response. The last time the Town sought a transfer candidate, three applied. He said he would not have hire two of the candidates. He agreed that a transfer will have an immediate impact.

Mr. DeMaina asked if the Board would be willing to commit to bringing the request for funding for an additional police officer to town meeting. He said that the chief has already acknowledged he could use a dedicated traffic officer, and that the split officer will not have enough time to spend on traffic. He asked all three selectmen if they would support funding for an additional patrolman position at the fall town meeting; all three said they would.

Resident David Basile noted there had not been a second to Selectman Terranova's motion. He said he believes that the Board is reaching a consensus on bringing the request to town meeting, and asked Selectman Terranova to withdraw his motion to allow for a new motion to bring the request for additional funds for a traffic officer to be brought to town meeting. Chairman Crawford said he agreed. Selectman Terranova said it would be a year before officers hired from the civil service list would be available to fill shifts.

Mr. Basile asked if the chief could continue the selection process without waiting for the fall town meeting vote. Chief Breen said if the officer is approved at town meeting, he could bring someone in very quickly. He said that if the officer were to be hired from the civil service list, the officer would likely not be available for shifts until January of 2017.

Chairman Crawford said he would support putting the request before town meeting, and Selectman Terranova and Selectman Barrett also said they would support the measure. Selectman Barrett said there are other problem traffic areas in Town.

Selectman Terranova amended his motion to authorize one additional officer to be added through transfer, with that position reverting to hiring through the civil service list if no officer is hired after three months, with a second officer to be hired from the civil service list to be placed in the

September police academy. Chief Breen said that the candidate must have time to sign, prepare for a physical agility test, and go through psychological and medical checks. Mr. Casoli asked about traffic fines. Chief Breen said half of the money collected goes to the state, and half to the Town. He said a bylaw change to increase fines could be brought to town meeting. He said if a motorist is cited under a local bylaw, the Town retains the fine. Mr. DeMaina said that the Town could put an officer through truck enforcement training and asked how much revenue the Town could capture through greater enforcement.

Selectman Terranova further amended his motion to authorize the chief to seek one additional officer through the transfer process and the second from the civil service list, instead of two from the civil service list. That motion was seconded by Selectman Barrett and approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Boudreau said that of the eight candidates referred by civil service, only three candidates signed in, one failed to return the packet provided by the police, and a second turned in his packet late and incomplete. He said he will move forward on amending the bylaws as discussed.

Mr. Karas said Mass Highway is reviewing the dedicated left turn from Market Street onto Walnut Street. He explained the process for changing the signals. He said it would increase the delay at the intersection to enhance safety. Selectman Terranova suggested placing a rumble strip off the Route 128 South exit. Mr. Karas said they are effective but noisy for the neighbors.

Mr. DeMaina suggested changes to the striping to better channelize traffic through the intersection. Mr. Karas said this striping likely reflects a template that allows room for trucks to turn. Mr. Lafferty said that he would coordinate with Mass Highway on striping issues. Selectman Terranova suggested a "traffic basket" striping design that would discourage motorists from blocking the intersection. Chief Breen said such striping helps with people who obey signage. He said the striping often fades quickly, but can be a cost-effective solution. Selectman Terranova said he heard from a resident of Hidden Valley Road that such a solution was working well at an East Boston intersection. Mr. Karas said the guidance striping could be done. He said the curb cuts for police cruisers would likely be in within one or two months.

Chief Breen recounted a crash at the site that resulted in a police cruiser being totaled when a driver coming off the Route 128 ramp ran through a red light.

Resident Richard Mazzola said the Board should look at all possible solutions that would enhance safety. Mr. DeMaina suggested "do not block intersection" signage which would list the applicable fine. A resident said that Walnut Street morning traffic backup is exacerbated by a traffic light issue in Saugus. Chairman Crawford said that the Town could discuss the matter with Saugus officials. Chief Breen said that the lack of a right-turn-only lane entering Market Street from Walnut Street causes traffic backups; Chairman Crawford said he did not understand why such a lane was not part of the design. Mr. Karas said that there may have been insufficient state-owned land at the site for that provision.

Chairman Crawford thanked all those who participated in the discussion for attending.

On the motion of Selectman Terranova, duly seconded by Selectman Barrett, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:23 p.m.