

BOROUGH OF WEST READING

TRAFFIC COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

The Borough of West Reading Traffic Committee met on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall, with the following persons present: Chair Chris Lincoln, Mayor Valentin Rodriguez, Police Chief Stephen Powell, Borough Manager Rich Sichler, and Public Works Director Dean Murray.

Visitors: None

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Old Business

Restricted Parking on Grape Street (400 block)

In response to Mr. Rogers request to have the restriction removed on school days, and Council's subsequent discussion concerning the issue, Mr. Sichler reported that he had observed traffic on Grape Street from 7:45 – 8:15 a.m. and saw 33 vehicles turn onto that block to drop off their children at the school. He noted that the traffic did not back up to the area of the three parking spaces in question. In the afternoon, only 10 vehicles used the alley to pick up children, however the line did back up almost to the parking space location. It was also noted that the parking restrictions are from 7 to 9 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. on school days.

The Committee discussed the proposed change and noted their concern for the children who may be walking in the area. Also noted was the fact that the sidewalk in that area is very narrow and on trash/recycling days, the sidewalk is often blocked which forces pedestrians to walk on the asphalt.

Moved by Chief Powell and seconded by Mr. Sichler to recommend to Council that the existing parking restrictions be maintained for the three parking spaces on the 400 block of Grape Street. **Motion carried.**

Buttonwood Street Bridge Closure

A meeting was held this morning with PennDOT representatives, County representatives, etc. concerning the detours currently in place. There was much discussion about possible changes to help with the heavy traffic however no changes were recommended at this time.

Bike Race "The Reading 120"

Chief Powell stated that as of today, a permit has not been issued by PennDOT, however organizers are certain that everything will be resolved. He also indicated that the cyclists will be in the Borough at some point between 1315 and 1340. Streets will be shut down 15 to 20 minutes in advance of their arrival however the westbound lane of Penn Avenue will remain open up to N. 3rd Avenue which will allow two of the ramps from 422 to remain open.

Signal Head Repair

Mr. Sichler is still working with Telco to replace the signal back plates under their service maintenance contract.

ARLE Grant

Information has been received that any upgrades to crosswalk equipment on Penn Avenue will have to be ADA compliant which means the push buttons would have to be replaced with a long extension arm. The cost to make the changes would certainly be more than the \$36,000 awarded by the grant. The Borough does have three years to make a decision concerning the proposed conversion. It was suggested that more funds be requested under the grant, given the current situation with the detours. Mr. Lincoln will look into it further.

Permit Parking

Mr. Sichler looked at what other communities do with permit parking in situations where large businesses use up the available parking spaces. Two communities (Salem, Oregon and Bethlehem, PA) had the best policies which were very similar. The criteria requires that 75% of available parking must be occupied and of those occupied spaces, 25% must be vehicles from outside of the neighborhood. If this criteria is met, the residents can circulate a petition and the municipality will decide if the changes will be made.

Discussion ensued regarding the existing permit parking areas in West Reading and it was noted that these areas should be considered 'grandfathered'. As well, new parking permit stickers should be issued every two years to ensure that the existing permits are not being fraudulently used. They were last updated in 2014 therefore the next notification should be sent to permit parking tag holders in summer 2016. The Committee will review the documents from Salem and Bethlehem to determine what will work best for West Reading and prepare a draft for Council's consideration.

Parking Study

Chief Powell told the Committee that obtaining the trial unit is not going to be possible therefore he will be recommending that Council budget the funds (\$5000 - \$8000) to purchase the unit. Discussion ensued and he indicated that he would ask a representative from United Public Safety to attend the November meeting to further discuss the benefits of using the handheld unit to track parking in the Borough. It was also suggested that members of Council be encouraged to attend this meeting.

New Business

Camera Installation

The installation of the cameras on Penn Avenue will be delayed somewhat due to an issue with the traffic signal arms being used. PennDOT has a new policy that requires verification that the pole will be able to support the addition of the camera, which may require an engineering study however it hoped that Telco will be able to assist in this regard. The process is moving forward with the installation of equipment in Borough Hall. The delay may cause the work to be completed in the spring.

Signage at Delaney Circle

It has been recommended that additional signage be added on the approaches to Delaney Circle indicating that a traffic circle is ahead. Information concerning the signs, as well as PennDOT's requirements for placement of the signs was provided to Mr. Murray.

Adjournment

Moved by Mr. Sichler and seconded by Mr. Murray to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Administrative Assistant