

**Town of University Park
Council Committee on Police, Traffic and Public Safety**

Thursday, November 15, 2018

Meeting notes

Committee Members present: David Brosch, Council Member, Ward 1; Joe Schultz, Council Member, Ward 2 and Committee Chair; Linda Verrill, Council Member, Ward 4; Martha Wells, Council Member, Ward 6; Roland Stephen, Council Member, Ward 7

Guests: Michael Wynnyk, Chief of Police; Len Carey, Mayor

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at University Park town hall.

The committee amended the posted agenda to add a public comment period as agenda item 2.

1. Traffic congestion in the 4300 block of Underwood

A three-year resident of the 4300 block of Underwood made an initial presentation on behalf of several residents of that block who were in attendance. Congestion caused by parents dropping off or picking up students at the school has been a persistent problem, in his view. It's compounded by teachers and staff parking on the street because the school lot is full. Vehicles routinely block driveways. There's a dangerous public safety situation. Residents have raised the issue with UPPD and others in the past, and the police have responded with stepped-up enforcement, but that's not a permanent solution. The situation has reached a tipping point. Proposed solution:

1. Establish a drop-off and pick-up zone on the school side of Underwood, in effect between 7 and 9 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m. Prohibit unattended vehicles in the zone during those times.
2. Establish permit-only parking on the other side of the street, with residents and teachers eligible for permits
3. Enforce ordinance prohibiting double parking to keep the middle of the street clear so that vehicles can travel down the street.

Four residents of that block of Underwood spoke in support of the proposal. All reported having been blocked in, unable to use their own cars for work or other personal business. All reported parents becoming angry and personally abusive when they've tried to keep them from blocking driveways or the street or asked a parent to move a car. All agreed that the problem has been getting worse. Several noted that the stop sign at the school's circular drive is ignored, and that vehicles drive the wrong way on the one-way section of Underwood. Approaching the school and the PTA in the past has not produced a satisfactory reaction, though the school should be involved in finding a solution to the problem.

A resident of the 4200 block of Underwood suggested a "redirect point" at Underwood and Beechwood, to force traffic to drive around it or drop kids off there, or a "choke point" on College Heights, or making Underwood pedestrian-only during school hours except for residents. A resident of the 4000 block of Van Buren who has had a child in UPES suggested that the problem is really that teachers are parking on Underwood, the entire area should be reserved for parents, and that the school should create a student safety patrol.

Discussion followed. One council member noted that the same discussion had happened two years ago; at that time the town opted for increased enforcement over changes to parking rules in that area, but that approach, in their view, has failed. Another council member noted that this is a community issue, the school is part of the community, and it's difficult to understand why they won't be responsive. But parking for teachers is a real concern. Another asked about the possibility of making use of the church parking lot across Queens Chapel. The chief of police agreed that congestion in that area has been a problem for years and summarized numerous contributing factors, among them: A teacher parking area behind the school was closed out of safety concerns; recently construction on Queens Chapel Rd. has closed off another drop-off area; parents tend to wait and watch children into the school; many also go into the school themselves in the morning, and state law now requires that each be signed in, a time-consuming process that creates significant demands on teachers and effectively keeps them from helping with the traffic situation; few parents/children walk to school.

Next steps on this matter: The committee will over its next few meetings identify and evaluate alternative permanent actions that could be taken in addition to stepped-up enforcement. The mayor and chief will talk to the school principle re teacher parking, and to the Word of God church re the possibility of using its parking area for overflow.

2. Public comment

Two residents of the 4000 block of Van Buren, speaking on behalf of all the residents of that block, presented concerns about speeding vehicles. Curvature and grade of the street are contributing factors, they believe, but in general the street invites speeding. There are a number of young children on the block, as well as two special-needs adults. They acknowledge that data collected by the town via the speed sign over the past three years doesn't show high prevailing speeds, but they doubt the accuracy of the speed sign data, and they are worried about outliers, school buses in particular. They emphasize that the block has no sidewalks, but they do not want sidewalks, they like the nature of the street. Two cars parked on the street have been rear-ended. In general, the neighbors want traffic-calming measures; specifically, they want speed humps. They also want the town to consider making the same block of Underwood two-way, so that people don't drive down Van Buren then make two rights to get on to Underwood to go home.

A resident of the 4200 block of Underwood asked why the town, and this committee in particular, are talking about sidewalk construction now. He noted that there has never been a pedestrian accident on his block of Underwood. He's done a pedestrian survey, which shows not very much foot traffic. He strongly suggests separating the question of building new sidewalks from other streets paving and repairs questions, and taking more measures to make residents aware of what the town may be considering re sidewalks, especially those whose properties front on any proposed new work.

A resident of the 6900 block of Wells Parkway concurred that the town's process re planning sidewalk improvements specifically has been opaque. She does not see the need for more sidewalks, and doubts that pedestrians would use them.

3. Work session on street repaving, major sidewalk and park path repairs, and possible new sidewalk and park path projects.

Because by this point of the agenda the meeting had already run past the scheduled ending time, the discussion was abbreviated. The committee agreed to take additional steps to inform town residents that this planning process is now underway.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM

Submitted by Joe Schultz, Chair