

**MINUTES OF THE COHOES TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING HELD
ON MONDAY JULY 24, 2023 IN THE COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS
OF COHOES CITY HALL AT 3:15 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Johnston
Fire Chief Joseph Fahd
Lieutenant John Shanahan
City Planner Joseph Seman-Graves

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Stephen Hennessey

ALSO PRESENT: Theresa Flatley, Recording Secretary
Jaime Powers, *J & D Automotive*

CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 26, 2023 MEETING

Chairman Johnston asked if there were any comments, questions or concerns regarding the minutes as published. The Chairman stated that on Page 3 of the minutes that "Masten Avenue" should have said "Simmons Avenue". As there were no other questions, concerns or comments, Chief Fahd made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Joseph Seman-Graves seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION SPEED HUMPS ON JOHNSTON AVENUE

This request was submitted by Matthew Coviello for the installation of speed humps or some other speed deterrent on Johnston Avenue at the north end of *Veteran's Memorial Park*. Mr. Coviello states that he feels that the speed has increased on Johnston Avenue and the increase in speed is a hazard to children and vehicles and that he and his partner's vehicles have been hit while parked.

Chairman Johnston stated that enforcement of the speed limit on city streets is under the jurisdiction of the *Police Department*. Additionally, the *New York State DOT Highway Design Manual* states that speed humps should only be used as a last resort where there is a significant accident history. The *Police Department* provided the accident history for the last two years. Only six (6) accidents occurred during that timeframe. A review of the *MV-104s* finds that the investigating officers found that two accidents were caused by driver error, one by icy pavement conditions and in three accidents the driver left the scene. None of the accidents were documented as speed related.

Additionally, the City's insurance carrier has stated in the past that the City must maintain any installed speed hump in accordance with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. This means they have to be constructed, signed and striped in accord with the *MUTCD*. Any damage to a vehicle from a speed hump that is properly constructed and maintained might be covered by the insurance carrier.

However, we live in the northeast, in the land of snow and ice and snowplows. Any damage to the speed hump as a result of the aforementioned elements would have to be immediately repaired for the insurance carrier to potentially cover any vehicle damage.

Additionally, there has always been concern from city officials about emergency vehicles having to slow to cross the speed hump and, accordingly, delay their response time to an emergency situation; especially a medical one.

The bottom line is that City administrations, both past and present, have chosen not to accept these consequences and liability and therefore have chosen not to install speed humps.

Based on the aforementioned information, the Chairman's recommendation was to deny this request for speed humps or any other speed deterrent on Johnston Avenue.

Chief Fahd made a motion to deny the request for speed humps and any other speed deterrent on Johnston Avenue. Joseph Seman-Graves seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion to deny the request passed unanimously.

**CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION OF SCHOOL ZONE OR SCHOOL BUS STOP
SIGNS ON SARGENT STREET**

This request was submitted by Stephanie Ford-Steffan of the *Capital District Beginnings* for the installation of either a *School Zone* or *School Bus Stop* sign on the north end of Sargent Street by the school's playground. Ms. Ford-Steffan states that very frequently cars are passing a stopped school bus with their red lights flashing and also that motorists beep aggressively when the bus is stopped and the lights are flashing.

Chairman Johnston stated that passing a stopped school bus is contrary to the *NYS MV & T Law*. Enforcement of the *NYS MV & T Law* is the jurisdiction of the *Police Department*.

Sargent Street is 23±' wide. A typical small bus is just under 8'. These dimensions do not leave much space for a car to pass a bus that is stopped in the middle of the street with its lights flashing.

Additionally, the Chairman also noted that there is an entrance to the building to the south which would be safer for both the bus and the children to use. Finally, there is only one sign approved by *MUTCD* for school bus stops and that one is for use where a stopped school bus is not visible to road users for an adequate distance. Adequate visibility of a bus on Sargent Street is not a problem.

Based on the aforementioned information, the Chairman's recommendation was to deny the request for any school bus signing on Sargent Street.

Lieutenant Shanahan made a motion to deny the request for either a *School Zone* or *School Bus Stop* sign on Sargent Street. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion to deny the request passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE REMOVAL OF A 15 MINUTE PARKING LIMITATION SIGN IN FRONT OF #93 ONTARIO STREET

This request was submitted by Chairman Johnston. Chairman Johnston stated that this sign was originally approved in 2006 at the request of the now closed *Island Video* and the adjacent liquor store.

Since these businesses have either closed or relocated, the Chairman saw no reason for the continued need for the 15 minute parking limitation sign. The Chairman's recommendation was to remove the sign.

Joseph Seman-Graves made a motion to approve the request to remove the *15 Minute Parking Limitation* sign in front of #93 Ontario Street. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION OF TURNING VEHICLES YIELD TO PEDESTRIAN SIGNS AT THE ONTARIO STREET AND DELAWARE AVENUE INTERSECTION

This request was submitted by Elizabeth Boudreau. Ms. Boudreau is requesting the installation of *Turning Vehicles Yield to Pedestrian* signs on Ontario Street and Delaware Avenue by the bike & pedestrian trail crossing. She states that she and her husband have "nearly been hit" by cars making turns.

The Chairman stated that this intersection originally had four (4) marked crosswalks. The two crosswalks on Delaware Avenue have not yet been restored after the recent mill and fill paving project.

In the e-mail attached to the agenda, Lieutenant Shanahan stated that the crosswalk across Ontario Street for the bike and pedestrian path is the busiest in the city. Also the speeds at the intersection are higher as vehicles enter and leave the city.

The *MUTCD* states that *Turning Vehicles Yield To Pedestrian* signs may be used in order to remind drivers who are making turns that they have to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalks in accord with the *NYS MV& T Law*.

Based on this, the Chairman's recommendation was to install *Turning Vehicles Yield to Pedestrian* signs on all four legs of the subject intersection in accord with Attachment "B" to the agenda.

Lieutenant Shanahan made a motion to approve the request to install *Turning Vehicles Yield To Pedestrian* signs on Delaware Avenue and Ontario Street in accord with

Attachment "B" to the agenda. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE APPROVAL OF ANNUAL RE-APPLICATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL HANDICAP PARKING SIGNS AT #123 CONGRESS STREET AND #27 LANCASTER STREET

These requests were submitted by Norma Price of #123 Congress Street and Michelle Wood of #27 Lancaster Street. Chairman Johnston stated that the City's *MIRA* policy requires the annual re-application of the applicants. He also stated that at last month's meeting, the *Commission* approved the removal of Ms. Price's and Ms. Wood's handicap parking signs for their failure to return their re-applications.

After the signs were physically removed, their re-applications were expeditiously returned to the secretary in her office. The re-applications are now in accord with the City's *MIRA* policy. The Chairman's recommendation was to approve the re-applications and re-install the handicap parking signs at #123 Congress Street and #27 Lancaster Street and in accord with Attachments "A" and "C" to the agenda.

Joseph Seman-Graves made a motion to approve the request for the annual approval of the two handicap re-applications and the re-installation of the handicap parking signs at #123 Congress Street and #27 Lancaster Street and in accordance with Attachments "A" and "C" to the agenda. Lieutenant Shanahan seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE REMOVAL OF A VARIOUS TRAFFIC SIGNS ON SARATOGA STREET IN FRONT OF, AT OR ADJACENT TO THE DRIVEWAYS FOR SARATOGA SITES

This request was submitted by Chairman Johnston. The Chairman stated that there are two (2) *No Parking Here to Corner* signs, three (3) *One-Way* signs and two (2) *Do Not Enter* signs on the west side of Saratoga Street and either in front of or at the entrance or exit driveways to *Saratoga Sites*. Additionally, there is a *Curve Warning* sign on the west side of Saratoga Street and just south of the *Norlite* driveway that was installed in 2009 to warn motorists of the parked vehicles in front of *Saratoga Sites* and of the need to navigate around them.

With *Saratoga Sites* closing on July 31st and the adjacent traffic signal turned off, these signs are no longer required. The Chairman's recommendation was to remove these signs after July 31st.

Chief Fahd made a motion to approve the request to remove the aforementioned signs on Saratoga Street in front of and adjacent to *Saratoga Sites* and after July 31st. Joseph Seman-Graves seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSIDER THE REMOVAL OF A CURB AND THE INSTALLATION OF NO PARKING SIGNS ON MAIN STREET SIGN IN FRONT OF J & D AUTOMOTIVE

AND

CONSIDER THE INSTALLATION OF NO PARKING SIGNS ON GEORGE STREET ON THE SIDE OF J & D AUTOMOTIVE

These requests were both submitted by Jaime Powers of *J & D Automotive* of 191 Main Street for the removal of curb and the installation of *No Parking* signs on Main Street in front of *J & D Automotive* and for the installation of *No Parking* signs on George Street adjacent to *J & D Automotive*.

Mr. Powers states that people park in front of the curbing on Main Street and block the driveways with their parked vehicles. Additionally, he states that people are constantly parking on George Street blocking his driveways and parking lot.

Chairman Johnston opened the floor to public comment at 3:24 PM.

Mr. Powers stated that there are contractors working on a building on the east side of Main Street and across from his business that are parking where the raised curb is on Main Street and blocking access to his building. He stated that in the 28 years that he has been in business the curb was never there. The contractors who park on the single space on Main Street and on his property on George Street refuse to move their vehicles when asked to. He feels that these areas should be posted for no parking.

Chairman Johnston asked Mr. Powers what has recently changed since he never had a problem previously. Mr. Powers stated that with the construction of the new apartment buildings on Main Street, parking has become more saturated in the neighborhood. Additionally, the construction of the building on the corner of Main and George Streets eliminated a parking lot that was used by the residents of the neighborhood.

Chairman Johnston stated that he feels that the business has two 30 foot wide driveways on Main Street and two 30 foot wide driveways on George Street and questioned if these driveways are being blocked by vehicles; Mr. Powers stated that they were being blocked "at times". Chairman Johnston stated that vehicles blocking the driveway are an enforcement issue. Lieutenant Shanahan concurred.

Mr. Powers also stated that vehicles are parking up to the corner of Main Street and are impeding the sight distance to oncoming vehicles. Chairman Johnston stated that sight distance at this intersection is better than most other city streets but will investigate further the perceived issue.

Chief Fahd asked Mr. Powers if he thought the parking issue would be resolved when the contractors complete their renovation project and leave the area. Mr. Powers felt that with all the additional vehicles in the area from the apartments that the problem

would not be eliminated. Adjacent residents are parking adjacent to the building during non working hours as they try to utilize any perceived available parking space.

Chief Fahd stated that if there were no parking signs installed on George Street then no vehicles could park there including his.

Chairman Johnston stated that city right of way on George Street is 50 feet or 25 feet each side of the centerline of George Street. Theoretically, that leaves only 4 to 6 feet off the north edge of the building that is private property.

Mr. Powers stated that the north street side of the building area is used for vehicles that are towed in and for parts deliveries that are made to the entrance door on that side. All of his customers park in front of the building.

Chairman Johnston asked why deliveries could not be made via other entrances to the building. Mr. Powers stated that during the winter he did not want to lose heat from within the building just so that parts could be delivered He stated that's why the door was installed on the north side so that deliveries could be made via that door.

Chairman Johnston stated that he has seen delivery step vans parked adjacent to the north side making deliveries and that there was still adequate room to park a vehicle on George Street. He stated that there is currently 10 ± feet from the building to the perceived curb line of George Street. This is more than the standard 8 feet parking space and should be adequate room for deliveries to be made in addition to vehicles being parked on George Street.

Lieutenant Shanahan stated that he felt that part of the parking concern is that there is no curb installed on the north sides and motorists do not know where the edge of the street is as it would be with installed curb and encroach onto the property.

Mr. Powers stated that he thought there was no curb on George Street because the original entrance to the garage was from George Street.

Mr. Powers stated that the curb on Main Street is right in line with his two garage doors in the front and that any large vehicles requiring service have to jockey around any parked vehicle on Main Street.

Chairman Johnston stated that parking in this neighborhood was saturated and this request is counterproductive in that it is seeking to eliminate three (3) additional on street parking spaces.

Lieutenant Shanahan questioned if *DPW* could install curb along George Street to differentiate the on street parking limits. Chairman Johnston felt that they would not since both streets have recently been paved but ultimately that is Commissioner Hennessey's decision.

Lieutenant Shanahan felt that the best solution might be to remove the curb on Main Street and install curbing on George Street; this should appease the affected parties as some parking spaces would be salvaged.

Mr. Powers felt that installing curb in this area would narrow the street similar to the section of George Street west of Congress Street. Chairman Johnston felt that that would not be a reason to install the curb however.

The Chairman stated that he felt that hatched pavement markings would be a better solution. He stated that pavement markings alone, designating a no parking zone, also require no parking prohibition signs. Lieutenant Shanahan questioned who would install the pavement markings. Chairman Johnston felt that Commissioner Hennessey would not install them. There were questions whether *No Parking* could be painted within the hatched area. Because it is a public street the pavement markings could not be installed without the no parking signs.

There was discussion regarding being able to plow snow along the north side of the building. Chairman Johnston stated that there is 10± feet in width along the north side and that width should be plow able. Mr. Powers felt that plowing would be difficult.

Lieutenant Shanahan questioned how often deliveries are made to the north side of the building. Mr. Powers stated that they were made "all day long" and that most deliveries were made by cars except for the *Snap-On* van.

Joseph Seman-Graves questioned if no parking during business hours only was acceptable. Chairman Johnston stated that any no parking signs will potentially be in the way of snow plowing that Mr. Powers was concerned with.

Mr. Powers felt that any no parking signs could be installed on the existing *Stop* sign and at the rear property line of his building. He also stated that tractor-trailers make the turn onto George and from George Street despite the street having a no trucks prohibition. He stated that his business sign has been knocked down four times.

There was discussion about the city parking lot on Main Street south of the building and its use.

Chairman Johnston closed the floor to public comment at 3:51 PM.

Chairman Johnston's recommendation was to table these issues for further discussion with Commissioner Hennessey about the curb removal and installation and the potential to utilize the southern city parking lot.

Chief Fahd made a motion to table these requests for further study. Lieutenant Shanahan seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion to table the requests passed unanimously.

Since there was no further business on the agenda, Chairman Johnston stated that the next meeting of the *Traffic Commission* would be on August 28, 2023 at 3 PM.

Chairman Johnston made a motion to adjourn. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:53 PM.