

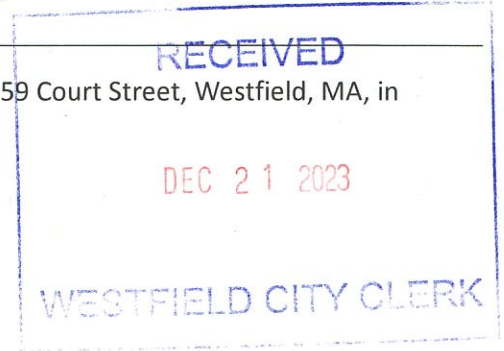
# MEETING OF WESTFIELD TRAFFIC COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

September 20, 2023

The Westfield Traffic Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Council Chambers at 5:30 pm.

**Roll Call:** Juanita Mejias – Absent  
Fran Cain – Absent  
Allison McMordie – Present  
Joseph Gadbois – Present  
Richard Clark – Present



Commissioner Clark asked for anyone recording the meeting to identify themselves, there were none.

**Approval and Release of Minutes Dated July 12, 2023:** Commissioner Gadbois made a motion to approve and release the minutes dated July 12, 2023. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. All in favor.

## **Open Participation:**

The Commissioners were addressed by Jonathan McHatton of 42 Arnold St. He requested the commission install a no turn on red sign for traffic turning from Franklin St to Elm St because drivers are not always paying attention to pedestrians in the crosswalk, and with the Rail Trail section opening he expects there will be more pedestrian traffic. He also requested a no turn on red sign for any signal that a multi-use path crosses from Westfield State to downtown Westfield.

The Commissioners were addressed by Don Podolski from New Horizons Bikes. He would like to suggest looking at the exit from Stop & Shop and on Free Street. In the past it was a no turn on red from Free Street and several years ago he requested a no turn on red at the Stop & Shop exit, but the Free Street sign was removed. He said it is difficult for bike riders to exit the Rail Trail at Stop & Shop and continue into downtown because they need to cross the street to continue in the bike lane.

The Commissioners were addressed by Nick Morganelli, 34 Prospect St, and a City Councilor. He thanked the Commissioners for their attentiveness to the traffic issues in Westfield. He let the Commission know that the stormwater project was approved in the City Council for the truck terminal for the car carriers that are going to come in on Lockhouse Road. The council put in a right turn only out of the business so they won't turn left down Lockhouse Road, and a preferred route for the Massachusetts Turnpike to try to send their drivers directly there for getting on and off the pike. He also mentioned that he gets a lot of complaints from residents from along North Road and in that area about the truck traffic. He asked if there is anything that can be done in regards to trucks coming out of the Berkshires and hill towns and coming down into Westfield.

The Commissioners were addressed by Bridget Matthews-Kane, 81 Court Street, and a City Councilor. She inquired about the optometrist's office at 52 Court Street for which an engineering study was done and determined that the traffic island could not be shortened. She said that she submitted through Council two other alternatives that she wanted the Traffic Commission to consider and does not believe they were discussed at the last meeting. She was hoping it would be on tonight's agenda but it is not, and she is trying to reopen the discussion. She is looking to have a two-way left-turn right-turn lane and a generic traffic island with no markings installed there. Commissioner Clark said they did discuss it and Commissioner McMordie agreed. They informed her that the study determined there is not enough room between the intersection with Washington Street, so the alternatives she mentioned were not discussed. She requested that the topic be put on the next agenda.

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## 1. Old Business

### A. Traffic Study on North Road – Truck Exclusion

Commissioner Clark said Commissioner Mejias had requested a traffic study be done for which they have the results. She also talked with MDOT which has the opinion that if they do any kind of exclusion on North Road, the truck traffic will be funneled to another street. Since trucks can't be kept from doing business on that road their recommendation is to not change anything nor to put an exclusion on it, but it is ultimately the City's call.

Courtney Danneker of 2 Pheasant Drive addressed the Commission. She stated that she and her husband had requested the traffic study in November. She reviewed the data but was not clear if the data was just for traffic traveling east. Commissioner Clark told her it was for both ways during the week of April 17<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>. She said that she works from home and has attended previous meetings to discuss how bad the traffic is. The study data confirms that because on just one day 91 trucks went past her house which is zoned rural residential. She asserted that the suitable alternative would be to push the traffic to Summit Lock Road which is just to the south as they can go north or south on Root Road to get to Summit Lock. Commissioner Clark said that he doesn't want her to think they don't want to do anything, but in his opinion, they need to find out where the bulk of the trucks are coming from.

Steven Danneker addressed the Commission noting that he has followed some tractor trailers that would make a left turn to North Road, head down towards Brickyard Rd and then continue through Wyben. He agreed with Nick Morganelli that they are just trying to avoid Route 20, and probably the left on North/10-202 because it's difficult to get out of there. Commissioner Clark said he knows there is a light planned for there at some point which will make it easier. He said he would talk with Commissioner Mejias to figure out where the trucks are coming from. Courtney Danneker requested a truck exclusion be put in place and to figure out where the trucks are coming from later. Commissioner Clark told her that trucks cannot be barred from the road so to remediate the truck traffic they need to figure out where the bulk of it is coming from and how to control it. Now that they have the study with times of heavy truck traffic, he could go there to watch the traffic himself.

Nick Morganelli asked if where the trucks are coming from is important why isn't it included in a traffic study.

John Keilch of 354 Root Road addressed the Commission. He claimed that the 91 trucks are coming from A. Duie Pyle, and unmarked trucks with no marking on the tractor or the trailer from railroad distribution. The car carriers are going to either 415 or 405 North Road. He called Duie Pyle and complained, and now the trucks don't go up Root Road from his farm. Instead, they take a right and go up North Road. He said the tractor trailers should be on the truck route. At the approach to Cumberland Farms there is no sign telling them where the truck route is as there is on Union and Pochassic streets. His suggestion would be to have no thru trucking. He also complained about the speed of the traffic and asked about police coverage. He was told the police department is currently short-staffed. Commissioner Clark told him he would discuss it with Commissioner Mejias to try to

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come up with a solution. Mr. Keilch asked if a flashing light could be placed at the North Road/Root Road intersection and Commissioner Clark said he will make a suggestive note.

## B. School Street – Pedestrian only road from Elm Street to Central Street

Krista Wood from Dazzlers Hair Design, 1 Main St, addressed the Commission. She is concerned about parking downtown and is hoping the closing off of School Street would be beneficial to her business by forcing people into designated parking areas and allowing them to see that walking around downtown is not as far as they thought. When she first opened the business customers would park at the rotary and when that was first taken out it was a big problem. Anything they can do to get more parking readily available to people and change perception would be wonderful.

Jake Matthews, co-owner of Honey Hair & Beauty at 20 School Street, addressed the Commission. He said the biggest thing about turning School Street into a walkway is the safety issue, as the traffic tends to speed, including the police using it as a thruway. It would good for businesses to be able to utilize outside areas.

Alec Bussey, property owner on School Street, addressed the Commission. He thinks the closing would be a good economic impact for the businesses, will help with parking and will be safer for vendors and customers. It may also be an opportunity for vendors without a brick-and-mortar space to do pop-up areas, or add more events.

Bridget Matthews-Kane told the Commission that people either love or hate the idea. She has been told directly by three businesses that they are in favor and one that is not, and has also heard from others that some businesses on Elm Street are not enthusiastic about it. She thinks a one or two month trial period with a total closure would be a good idea. Commissioner McMordie brought up the issue of people not learning the new traffic pattern for a short time period. Commissioner Clark added that he has done quite a bit of homework and found the same love it or hate it results. He said they have three or four letters against it and that The Good Table is not in favor along with the police department and the whole front building on Elm Street, including Two Rivers Burrito. Commissioner Gadbois said that the problem with a trial period is if you have a small business and people can't get to where they need to go, they will go somewhere else and may not come back. Jake Matthews expressed that people in the area will need to be educated about it to understand all of School Street is not closing and the parking lot will still be accessible by going around. Commissioner Clark mentioned one fear is that people will zip through the back parking lot to get around.

Nick Morganelli brought up abutter's notice for a project, and as an advocate for small businesses he thinks every business in that area should get an abutter's notice to let them know this is a possibility to let everyone have a say. Nothing should be done that is a detriment to any business.

Commissioner Clark mentioned the fact the Commission is missing two members at the meeting, and wanting to do more research on stances of the project, he feels the subject should be tabled for the next meeting. He has done an informal poll with most of the businesses and there were more yeas than nays, but if the nays are willing to do a trial maybe it would be a win-win.

# MEETING OF WESTFIELD TRAFFIC COMMISSION

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---

Jonathan McHatton of 42 Arnold St said he is a resident and customer of the neighborhood, and he strongly supports closing School Street even on a trial balance. He would be more likely to visit businesses if the street were closed for the safety issues previously mentioned and also because business owners need to understand that not every customer arrives by car. People such as himself walk to businesses and a trial period would help open their perspective because their worst fear about it may not materialize.

Commissioner McMordie said it was mentioned that the police are not in favor, but does not feel that should be taken into consideration when making this decision.

## 2. New Business

- A. Accurate update of truck route signage on North Road and Southampton Road.


John Keilch asked if he will get a response to his request at the next meeting to which Commissioner Clark replied in the affirmative.

- B. Question concerning designated trucking direction in the area of 415 North Road. Trucks traveling west after entering North Road from 415 North Road and at 405 North Road.

Per Commissioner Clark this was addressed previously. Courtney Danneker asked where this item came from; John Keilch responded that it was from him.

Steven Danneker said since that area at Root Road and North is zoned industrial it does seem like a good alternative for trucks to turn there. When they approved the area for Casella to continue business, it was under the impression that Casella would continue to use the same practices as far as traffic control. It was really good when they had the agreement that they would turn left and down Root Road. He reiterated that they would really like to get that truck exclusion.

- C. Bicycle signage on Root Road, North Road, Cabot Road, Michael Drive, Russell Road, and Montgomery Road.

John Keilch asked for bicycle signage, of which he provided a photo . Commissioner Clark asked him if the route had not been established yet and Mr. Keilch responded that this is the natural route that people are using now. Bicyclists are coming down Brickyard Road from Southampton, down Root Road, and then take a right on either Michael Drive or Cabot, and then continue down to the bicycle trail at the river. Commissioner Clark said he thinks they are waiting because there is a route that is going to be developed, and looked for confirmation from Don Podolski. Mr. Podolski confirmed that at some point it will, but no one knows when. He said the idea of utilizing the May Use Full Lane sign is a great idea for many roads in Westfield, such as Montgomery Road and Root Road, as well as on the south side such as Tannery Road, Shaker Road, and City View Boulevard. In addition, when North Elm Street was redone, the city put shared lane sharrows on the pavement and erected Share the Road signs. According to the manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the only sign to be used with a shared lane marking on the road is the {May Use Full Lane} sign. The warning signs for Share the Road do not belong on North Elm Street, so in addition with the May Use Full Lane signs used in the city, he would like the Share the Road signs on North Elm replaced with the correct regulatory signs.

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Commissioner McMordie commented that while signs are good, people don't pay attention to them. Mr. Keilch argued that is when enforcement comes in, but Commissioner McMordie reminded him of the staffing shortage at the police station. Commissioner McMordie recommended if they put the May Use Full Lane signs up, to have sharrows put down on the pavement as well.

Don Podolski said Share the Road signs have been used for years, with confusion by both riders and drivers because the signs don't say to share the lane, they say share the road. The May Use Full Lane sign is very clear that a rider may use the full lane and does not have to be sidelined.

Steven and Courtney Danneker questioned the rationality of putting bicycle signs on Root Road and North Road when they just discussed how many trucks travel on those roads. She does not think it's a good idea to put bicycle signs there yet until they get the truck traffic under control.

- D. Agricultural Tractor sign for 354 Root Road, 348 Root Road, and 104 Root Road.

John Keilch said the farmers in the area would like the signs due to amount of traffic near the farms.

- E. Dangerous intersection warning signage at North and Root Road.

John Keilch said it is the flashing sign he requested earlier. Commissioner Clark said they no longer call them dangerous intersections.

- F. City Ordinance for Fail to Obey Signs and Signals.

Commissioner Clark said he was unaware what this was regarding so he will table the issue.

Next regular meeting scheduled for Wednesday, December 20, 2023 at 5:30 pm.

At 6:40 pm Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner McMordie seconded that motion. All in favor.

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Juanita Mejias, Chair

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Fran Cain, Commissioner

  
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Richard Clark, Commissioner

  
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Joseph Gadbois, Commissioner

  
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Allison McMordie, Commissioner

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 12/20/2023