

HAMDEN BOARD OF TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

Minutes of special meeting held September 16, 2014 in the Hamden Middle School Auditorium

Commissioners in attendance: Michael Iezzi, Chairman; Robert LaTorraca; Betty Murray;
Mitchell Strickland

Commissioners absent: Raeanne Curtis

Others in attendance: Tom Wydra, Chief of Police; John Cappiello, Deputy Chief of Police;
Tom Gerarde, Attorney; Sue Gruen, Town Attorney; Bob Brinton, Town
Engineer

Mr. Iezzi called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M. and the clerk took the roll. Mr. Iezzi said there is one item on the agenda this evening and that item is the approval of traffic control signals, signs, markings and any other safety devices upon highways under the jurisdiction of the Traffic Authority and strictly tonight for Wilmot and Woodin Streets. He said as he indicated at the last meeting he wanted to have this meeting this evening so that people can voice their concerns and give some input so that they can make a final decision on their job which is again, as he indicated last week, is to approve the signs, lines, stop signs or anything to do with Hamden. Mr. Iezzi said he'd like a continued relationship and will keep this on the agenda for one full year so that if there's any concerns or issues it'll automatically be on the agenda once a month to serve the people in that area.

Public comments on agenda items:

Mr. Holdwright, who is blind, stated that him and his wife live at 130 Wilmot Road and that part of his daily exercise is to get out and walk the neighborhood and his concern is that once this plan is put in place and the traffic starts to flow into Hamden from New Haven that the Wilmot Road in Hamden will be used as a cut through street for those that were waiting impatiently for the light at the corner of Woodin and Pine Rock and so he thinks it would be a good idea to put up some signage that indicates that there's a blind person in the neighborhood.

Ms. Diane Hoffman, also of Wilmot Road, stated she shares the same concerns as the gentleman who just spoke and believes these changes will affect the quality of life of everyone that currently lives on Wilmot and the surrounding streets. She said there are no sidewalks on Wilmot because the roads are currently safe enough for people to walk in the street and that will come to an end. Wilmot is a popular road for daycare providers to take walks with groups of their children and carriages and that will come to an end. Children that now safely ride their bikes and play basketball in the street will have to be

much more careful. Traffic congestion by the Helen Street school will increase making safe crossing more of a challenge. She doesn't see any benefits to her neighborhood in opening additional streets onto Woodin. Pedestrian and vehicle safety in the neighborhood should be far more important than shortening the time it takes to go shopping in Hamden which has been the main complaint of people who live in the New Haven housing. New Haven deliberately built the housing in the current location and they chose to deliberately keep the housing in that location knowing full well the shopping complaints of the residents and abutting problems with the location. She said she's sorry these problems exist, but solving these problems are the responsibility of New Haven and not Hamden. She said traffic calming has been a huge issue in Hamden for several years and all residents have been encouraged to analyze their neighborhoods and make recommendations to make their area safer for pedestrians and drivers. Everyone living in her neighborhood has the same rights to live in a safe environment as the rest of the Town of Hamden. Hamden is in the process of revising our plan of conservation and development. The Town of Hamden has asked for public input on what we'd like to see remain and change in Hamden The plan submitted by New Haven is the antithesis of what we should be considering for Southern Hamden going forward. She said she's asking everyone to imagine that this is where they live and they are counting on them to insure that the rights and needs of this neighborhood are recognized and respected, and reflected in your decisions. She said this is an opportunity to significantly effect the safety and livability of their area.

Michael Wilheimer(?) - 48 Twin Brook Road – Mr. Wilheimer asked why the survey was a general location survey as opposed to a property boundary survey, as he believes the property boundary survey is the more appropriate survey. He said for the Wilmot Road connection to Woodin in the plans right now there's no sidewalks on the Hamden side of the road going down and he would suggest that that be an improvement, and also there's a crosswalk going to the other Hamden side and that has a sidewalk however it's a very degraded asphalt sidewalk that is barely passable by foot traffic and New Haven's intent here was to allow people to be able to walk, take a bus or drive into Hamden's shopping district and he feels like that is not going to be replaced and he feels if we're going to have this large impact to the community those improvements should be made in that section. He said also that the houses on the plan have driveways that appear to exit onto Woodin Street and from the looks of the plans it looks like it causes a couple of those driveways to obscure drivers coming West on Woodin down the hill. Augustine Street which is going to be across from Belden, again there no sidewalks coming down from the hill so the whole walkable aspect of that will not be in place. He said in this whole plan there are two buses, the G & B buses and as he can see there are no plans to put bus parking, no indents and no markers for buses to stop at so he would suggest to have those in the plans. Also on the plans where they cut in from off of Belden there's a steep grade there which they're going to have to cut down the property quite a bit so that's gonna impact water flow into the stream there and into abutting properties so he hopes they look into that significantly since the bridges were built back in 1935-36 and they're severely degraded and the concrete needs replacement and he's sure they're undersized for the water body there and they do flood occasionally so that increase in water is going to increase flooding protection. He said he agrees with the 4 way stop sign on the plan, but it's on a bend so he thinks there should be a sign in place saying “stop sign ahead” both ways.

Maria Negron – 20 Fawn Ridge Drive – Ms. Negron thinks the reasons the commission should deny New Haven's proposal is one, the traffic study is not correct and was done in the winter and only one section of Woodin Street was studied, it did not cover the whole perimeter of the area all the way up to Dixwell. Elliot Drive was deemed a two way street and it's a culdesac. She said there are 5 culdesacs and all of the City of New Haven's traffic studies were inconsistent. She expressed concern with the

fact that Hamden would approve a 4 way stop that she claims doesn't meet state standards. She also stated a survey done in 2012 showed the property was in Hamden and that the wetlands are less than 200 feet from the proposed road opening near the proposed stop signs. She said Tom Vocelli from the Towns wetlands did not receive an application for a wetland permit as of 9/12 and also mentioned a letter written to the DEP regarding this matter.

Joan Howell – 74 Furhman Road - Ms. Howell said she's lived at this address for 23 years and it's been a quiet, quaint little community and it's diverse and it's friendly. She said she loves her community and she would live for it to stay the way it is and the increase in traffic would change the dynamics in her neighborhood tremendously and it will be a throughway. She said Woodin Street was not designed to be an arterial street and there are no designs and no plans submitted by New Haven that Hamden's got on the table that is going to change that. She said also, to date, they've been told that New Haven hasn't put any permits in to the Inland Wetlands Commission and there's a brook that runs behind her house that is also going to be affected by all the construction and changes that they're proposing to make.

Christine Burton – 36 Thorpe Drive - Ms. Burton said she'd like to know if anyone actually sat down, took a breath and realized how much traffic is going to come on those two roads. She mentioned the surrounding university's and the scenarios of a football game or graduation and said as it is now she waits a good 5 to 6 minutes to get off her street. She mention Tom Vocelli wrote a letter to the New Haven Housing Authority in reference to filing an application (she read the letter aloud) and said as of today no permit requests have been received. She also brought up concern in the grade level and how high Ribicoff sits from Thorpe Drive or how high it sits from Woodin Street and the water flow during hard rainfalls. She also mentioned there were 3 surveys done. One was done in 2012 and one in 2013 and there is a discrepancy between the two as one says the Hamden Town line is further up and the other says it's New Haven and she wants to know how one can say it's New Haven and one can say it's Hamden. She also feels they used markers that weren't accurate.

Ms. Howell said she'd also like to know why the City of New Haven was allowed to put blacktop in that connects to Woodin Street and asked if they needed approval for it or even make a request.

Sherri Roberts said she had an opportunity to review the newest proposal that New Haven Housing Authority had in terms of the road opening which is Augustine Street & Woodin Street. She said they're proposing four stop signs that aren't even which means that people from different distances have to stop and try to see if they could view someone that's maybe 10 to 15 feet further down away from them so she doesn't see how this cannot be a safety concern. She said also on the proposed Augustine Street, there's another street that doesn't have a name that they're proposing to open up which is allegedly on their property so that means there's going to be more access to the same roads, not just Augustine. Shes also concerned with who is going to absorb the costs and would also like to point out that the only access point these people in the culdesacs have is Woodin Street so please consider that when approving these things.

Mike Gentile – 117 Mary Knoll Road – Mr. Gentile expressed his concern with not being able to see speeding cars coming down the hill when trying to get out to Woodin. He feels it's already dangerous and has two young drivers in the family he's concerned about. He said in the summer what they already have to do is turn the air conditioning and radio off, roll down the window and listen for the tires because that's how bad it is so he'd like that taken into consideration because this will make things much worse. He also expressed concern with the old bridges and said every time we get rain the storm drain fills up with water and cuts it down to one lane.

Mr. Iezzi said he'd like to take a quick opportunity to remind everyone here that we are here to act on certain items, so as far as the permits and the crossover, that is not something in their jurisdiction. He said what is in their jurisdiction is being able to put lines, crosswalks, signs, speed bumps, handicap permits, etc. is what their authority is. He said a lot of the things being brought up are not things they can act on. Ms. Howell said there are streets now getting petitions to request speed bumps because their streets are going to turn into cut throughs when that traffic starts coming down Woodin. Mr. Iezzi stated those are the things they can help with and he's going to keep Woodin Street on the agenda for the next 12 months. He said there is no need to write letters or do anything other than just come and speak your concerns because there's going to be changes made and what we have here to vote on this evening is a basic traffic plan that was done by an engineer. He said there will be tweeking and stuff as they go along and the best they can do for them is to be here and be able to resolve any problems that result from it and they will be dealt with. He said they can't do anything about the roads coming in but once that's done they can help with the best interest of the residents and the safety.

There was some discussion on the process of things going forth as far as approving such things without the roads being opened yet. It was stated this is the proper order.

Mike Colaiacovo – 7th District Councilman - Mr. Colaiacovo said the speakers tonight really it on all the points he wanted to bring up, however according to the documents he saw he just wants to reiterate about the stop signs and the sight lines which he said are below the standards for the sight line issues and also during the traffic study they didn't take into consideration people using it for a cut through and if this goes through we're going to have to do a lot of work on that corridor to make it safe for our residents.

Robert ? - Sandquist Circle – Wants to know how they can vote on or approve something that doesn't exist and if a permit hasn't been issued yet the plan isn't finalized so what are you really approving? He said he'd like to propose delaying this until such permits or plans are approved so that you know what you're dealing with. He said Hamden's committees are suppose to be solving problems in the Town of Hamden and it appears to him that this road is causing problems. And in his view these are New Havens problems being transferred to Hamden.

Scott Bishop – 90 Belden Road – Mr. Bishop doesn't think they should be deciding on these issues right now until the permits are issued. He expressed his concerns about the flooding. He said on August 31st we had a pretty hard rain storm and within a half an hour there's 3 feet of water in front of his house, completely covering the road, both sidewalks and into his driveway. He said the problem here is the water drains through the storm drains into Belden Brook which has risen to over 12 feet at times. He said another problem he has is that the bridge west of Belden Road he's been told by the bus company that the reason the bus doesn't go up that way is because that bridge won't handle the buses and the reasons they're proposing putting in these roads in for bus access and the bus company is saying they won't do it because the bridge won't handle that so does that mean we're going to have to replace that bridge and at what cost because we're already over 39 miles in this Town. He said we have enough taxes in this Town and he doesn't think we should be paying this when Hamden is not seeking any benefit from having these roads put in. He said we should think about funding our pension rather than spending money to satisfy New Haven's needs.

Ms. Hoffman expressed her concern as well with the order of process and suggested they take the vote off the table for now, but leave the Woodin Street issues on the agenda.

Attorney Gerarde stated they are here tonight to make decisions for the signs and markings at the intersection and those decisions will be incorporated into the permit. He said this is the proper order as you need a plan in place for the permit. Ms. Howell asked if the Towns Engineer looked at these plans and found them safe and Attorney Gerarde responded yes. Mr. Iezzi once again explained their responsibilities.

Mr. Burton asked if they can't stop these roads who can? Mr Gerarde said the Housing Authority could stop it if they didn't want to connect. Ms. Burton asked that no one in Hamden can stop it and Mr. Gerarde responded no. Mr. Burton asked who they would take their concerns to for wetland issues, etc. Mr. Gerarde said you can write to the wetlands about any issue, you can talk to any of the public bodies in New Haven. Mr. Burton asked what about in Hamden? Mr. Gerarde said in Hamden our impact and involvement is minimal, but you could write a letter to the Engineering Department, there's this body, he's not sure what's going to happen with Wetlands and if they have jurisdiction he's sure they will exercise it and deal with it.

Bob Brinton, Town Engineer – Mr. Brinton said he sent a Memorandum to the commission summarizing the application, plans and traffic study. He said the initial plans presented didn't contain all the information and there were concerns that both intersections were slightly offset and were concerned with cars conflicting with one another so they asked the applicant to submit evidence that it wouldn't be a problem and they did. He said he asked them to submit plans that are going to show all the signs and pavement markings which they did. He said the current plans there's sidewalk developments in New Haven that would just come out to Woodin Street and the sidewalks such as is in Hamden is all North side so everyone will be crossing in an unmarked crosswalk particularly at the intersection of Wilmot across from Elliot which is down a steep hill so they recommended that the best thing to do there if you're going to have people crossing is to put in a marked crosswalk and crosswalk signs and they added those to the plans.

Chief Wydra stated to Mr. Brinton that the crosswalk on Wilmot and Woodin appears to show the installation of ADA compliant ramps and asked if he could confirm that. Mr. Brinton responded yes, that's what it appears to be showing. Chief Wydra said in talking about the line of sight, that plays a roll in your consideration for the excavation? Mr. Brinton said it would for everyone involved in traffic safety including the commission. Chief Wydra said you had review of this proposal, speaking specifically about Wilmot Road, New Haven, you have determined adequate sight lines exist in the proposal? Mr. Brinton said by asking the applicants Engineer to supply it, yes.

Dave Esposito – 44 Belden Road - Mr. Esposito expressed is concern with buses coming up and down the hill and kids crossing. He also expressed concern with the shortage of stopping distance at the stop signs. He said how do you stop doing 40 mph at a 4 way stop sign if you don't have 300 feet. He also expressed his concerns with flooding issues.

Ms. Burton asked if the roads aren't approved and opened and you already approved the stop signs do the signs still go up? Mr. Iezzi said as he's indicated before, regardless of the outcome, we are still here to make sure that the proper road and signs, lines, bumps and whatever are done.

After some discussion on sidewalks Mr. Iezzi asked the Chief for his recommendation on this plan. Chief Wydra said first he wants to say that he's had multiple conversations with Mayor Jackson about the sidewalks and they both favor the installation of a fully connected sidewalk system on Woodin Street. He said the potential connection of Wilmot Road, New Haven to Woodin Street, is but the trigger to other possibilities and with other potential connections will come discussion on installing a

fully connecting sidewalk system and he would favor that regardless of this project or not.

Chief Wydra stated he has had the opportunity to absorb most of this information. He said it was a lot to take in and a lot that has been submitted by Tighe & Bond, the professional engineering consulting firm that put together a lot of this information, as well as reading Mr. Brinton's report. He said line of sight is a huge consideration when it comes to roadway safety and stop sign vs no stop sign, traffic light vs no traffic light in some instances. He said he is not in any position to refute any information provided in these professionally submitted reports and so it is his recommendation that if an excavation permit is ultimately issued that the following action be approved by the Traffic Authority this evening.

Chief Wydra will reference the plan as the Woodin Street housing layout & signage plan submitted to the Engineering Dept. on August 29, 2014. It includes the installation of pedestrian warning signs on Woodin Street at the intersection with Elliot Drive and the proposed intersection of Wilmot Road, the installation of stop sign and stop are on Wilmot Road, painted crosswalks on Wilmot Road and on Woodin Street on the west side of the intersection. He also recommends, outside of this, that a culdesac sign be installed on Elliot Drive so that on the approach from Wilmot Road, if it is connected, people will instantaneously see that it's not a through road and not use it as a turn around location. He also recommends that signage be installed on Woodin Street on both sides of the intersection that identifies at the intersection ahead as a 4 way intersection, again if the excavation permit is approved, connecting Wilmot Road to Woodin Street. He said furthermore, that those intersection ahead signs be positioned on opposite sides of the intersection at locations determined by the Traffic Dept. after a field review so that we can position these signs in optimal locations.

Mr. Iezzi requested a motion on the Chief's recommendations. Mr. Strickland moved a motion to approve the traffic control signals, signs, markings and any other safety devices upon highways under the jurisdiction of the Traffic Authority for Wilmot/Woodin Street. Seconded by Mr. LaTorraca and approved unanimously.

Mr. Iezzi said for everyone to start sending their needs in now for them to address on the regular agenda. He then requested a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. LaTorraca, seconded by Mr. Strickland and the meeting adjourned at 7:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Acting Clerk