



In packets 6/19/98

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

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Deputy City Manager

June 19, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached for your information a communication from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Susan Schlesinger, regarding an update on the cooperative efforts of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Initiative, Spaulding & Slye and the City's Community Development and Traffic, Parking & Transportation Departments to review and mitigate traffic impacts of the Polaroid project at 784 Memorial Drive.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

BETH RUBENSTEIN
Deputy Director for
Community Development

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Susan B. Schlesinger *SBS*
Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

RE: Polaroid/Spaulding & Slye
784 Memorial Drive
Project Status

DATE: June 18, 1998

This memorandum provides an update on the cooperative efforts of the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Initiative (CNI), Spaulding & Slye and the city's Community Development (CDD) and Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TP&T) Departments to review and mitigate traffic impacts of the Polaroid project at 784 Memorial Drive.

The City has been working with Spaulding & Slye and CNI on the scope and review of a traffic study for the 290,000 square foot project since July of 1997. A traffic study was prepared on behalf of Spaulding and Slye by Robert D. Vanasse & Associates in November of 1997, and a separate report was prepared by Stephen Kaiser on behalf of CNI. The City engaged Rizzo Associates to assist in the review of traffic studies prepared for this project. Rizzo's *Interim Report*, reviewing both of these studies, was forwarded to you on February 5, 1998 in a response to Council Order #74, dated February 2, 1997.

Since the February 5th correspondence several meetings attended by City staff, representatives from CNI, Stephen Kaiser, Spaulding & Slye, Vanasse Associates, and Rizzo Associates have been held to analyze and advance an effective mitigation program for both the project and Memorial Drive in general. Spaulding & Slye participated in 10 of 11 of these meetings either directly or represented by Vanasse Associates. The CNI was represented at all 11 of these meetings. Two of these meetings also included representatives of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC).

The main focus of these meetings was to develop and implement a series of improvements that will mitigate traffic impacts and minimize impacts on nearby residential streets. These measures include:

- Signal timing changes at the intersections of Memorial Drive/Western Avenue and Soldiers Field Road/Western Avenue,
- Relocation of existing curb cuts on Putnam Avenue and Pleasant Street,
- Exploration of the addition of a new traffic signal on Memorial Drive at Pleasant Street, and
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures.

Signal Timing Changes

It became apparent during the review of the traffic studies and based on field observations that the signals at the intersections of Memorial Drive/Western Avenue and Soldiers Field Road/Western Avenue were not operating efficiently and were causing queuing through the intersections during the p.m. peak hour. Additionally, it was observed that cars were diverting off of Memorial Drive and onto nearby residential streets to avoid the queue extending from the Western Avenue Bridge onto Memorial Drive. A proposal to address these problems through MDC signal timing changes was jointly developed by the group and submitted to the MDC on March 11, 1998. We believe the signal timing proposal will result in the following benefits:

- Reduced vehicular delays/queues on the Western Avenue Bridge
- Improved traffic flows on Memorial Drive, reducing cut-through trips on local residential streets
- Increased pedestrian crossing opportunities on Western Avenue
- Greater efficiency in the Memorial Drive (westbound) vehicle flows
- Improved pedestrian crossings at Soldiers Field Road

We have had two meetings with the MDC to discuss this proposal, and have submitted additional requested information to the MDC on May 22, 1998. This additional information included a detailed description of a monitoring program to be undertaken by Rizzo Associates with assistance from CNI. The monitoring program has been designed to measure traffic volumes, queues and overall intersection operations before and after the proposed timing changes have been implemented. On June 11th Rizzo completed the monitoring for the "before" conditions. We will continue to work with the MDC to make the signal timing changes as soon as possible. Monitoring of the "after" conditions will follow immediately after the timing changes have been implemented.

Relocation of Existing Curb Cuts

The project as originally proposed provided site access via two existing curb cuts: one on Pleasant Street and another on Putnam Avenue. A relocation of both the Pleasant Street and Putnam Avenue curb cuts was applied for by Spaulding & Slye on February 5th. Additionally, relocation of these curb cuts has been recommended by both the City and CNI.

The garage plans as currently approved and permitted provide automobile access from a single curb cut on Pleasant Street. Additionally, Spaulding & Slye requested a postponement of their curb cut application on March 31st due to neighborhood concerns raised over the timing of the abutter notification process, and ongoing negotiations with a potential tenant "who has different traffic patterns and generates lower peak volumes than the build out assumed ...".

Spaulding & Slye has not provided the City with a time-frame for resubmittal of their curb cut relocation application. The City has requested that Spaulding & Slye reactivate their request to relocate both curb cuts and have their traffic engineer work with the City and CNI's traffic engineers to review possible restrictions, such as right-turn only out of Pleasant Street, among others.

Addition of a New Traffic Signal

Traffic trip assignments and distributions outlined in the Vanasse and Associates traffic study depend, in part, on the ability of vehicles to gain access to and from the site via the intersection of Pleasant Street and Memorial Drive. Congestion of Memorial Drive through this intersection during peak hours will reduce the attractiveness and availability of this intersection, especially for left turning vehicles onto Memorial Drive from Pleasant Street. Vehicles exiting the site will likely choose Florence Street and/or Putnam Avenue. Additionally, vehicles wishing to turn right onto Memorial Drive may find it more attractive to use Putnam Avenue to Western Avenue. A signal proposed for this location would stop traffic on Memorial Drive thereby creating the necessary gaps to allow traffic out of Pleasant Street and reduce diversions to neighborhood streets.

On behalf of Spaulding & Slye, Vanasse and Associates prepared a signal warrant analysis on April 8th as a first step in evaluating the appropriateness of a signal at this location. The warrant analysis concludes that no warrants are met under existing conditions, and 1 to 3 warrants are met with the addition of traffic from the proposed development. The number of warrants met depends on the percentage of future site related traffic that is assumed to go through this intersection. Rizzo Associates has reviewed these impacts and supports the proposal to locate a traffic signal at this intersection. Some of the benefits of a traffic signal at this location include:

- Neighborhood protection from traffic generated by the build out of 784 Memorial Drive,
- Safer operations for vehicles entering and exiting Pleasant Street from Memorial Drive, and
- Safer operations for pedestrians at Pleasant Street/Putnam Avenue.

The City has had initial discussions with MDC on the potential of adding a new signal along Memorial Drive. We will continue to work with CNI and Spaulding & Slye on a formal proposal to the MDC.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The original traffic study prepared by Vanasse Associates contained few programs that would effectively reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle trips to and from the site. In response to the Vanasse report the City prepared *Proposed Transportation Demand Management Measures for 784 Memorial Drive*; a final version of this report was forwarded to Spaulding & Slye for their review and consideration in January. The City's proposal detailed a series of measures that would facilitate the reduction of single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) trips to and from the site. The proposal further requested a commitment from Spaulding & Slye to achieve a minimum alternative mode share of at least 20% for all employees at the site.

Spaulding & Slye responded to the City's proposal in March with a program which was a significant enhancement of their original proposal. Upon review the City suggested further strengthening of their TDM program in a letter of April 15. Additionally, the City discussed the proposed TDM elements with representatives of CNI. Another letter went to Spaulding & Slye on June 3 as a follow up to this meeting requesting incorporation of additional elements to strengthen Spaulding & Slye's TDM plan. CNI has also submitted a separate letter to Spaulding & Slye outlining their comments and suggestions. Spaulding & Slye has been requested to respond to these communications upon their review of the latest letters submitted by the City and CNI. Upon agreement with the City on their TDM measures, Spaulding & Slye has agreed to sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining their TDM program commitments.

Next Steps

The City has been meeting with the traffic engineers representing all parties on a bi-weekly basis and meeting with a larger group approximately monthly. Continued coordination of all of the elements discussed above is recommended as necessary through the summer with the goal of achieving the following:

- Implementation of the signal timing changes to the Western Avenue/Memorial Drive intersection,
- Review and reactivation of the curb cut relocation application,
- Submittal to MDC of a joint City and Spaulding & Slye proposal for a traffic signal at Memorial Drive and Pleasant Street, and
- Commitment by Spaulding & Slye to an effective TDM program.

I will continue to keep you informed as this project moves forward.

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Update on the cooperative efforts of
the Cambridgeport Neighborhood Initiative,
Spaulding & Slye and the City's Community
Development and Traffic, Parking &
Transportation Departments to review
and mitigate traffic impacts of the
Polaroid Project at 784 Memorial Drive.