

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TRAFFIC BOARD

In the matter of the petition of
Sondra Scheir, et al

Case No. 69-2
Decision

The within petition objects to that portion of regulation 68-42 promulgated by the Traffic Director of the City of Cambridge (effective date December 2, 1968) which eliminated parking on the North side of Shepard Street from Massachusetts Avenue to Garden Street.

Having complied with the provisions of Chapter 455, (Acts and Resolves of 1961) Section 3, this petition was duly filed by fifty or more voters of the City of Cambridge, and a hearing was scheduled by the Traffic Board for January 9, 1969. Notice of this hearing was published in the Cambridge Chronicle January 2 and January 9. Since there appeared to be some doubt that the petitioners had received adequate notice of this hearing date, the hearing was rescheduled for January 23. Notice was again published in the Cambridge Chronicle January 16, and postcard notices were mailed to the petitioners.

A hearing was held before the Traffic Board pursuant to this notice in the City Council chambers at 4 PM, Thursday, January 23. Traffic Board members Ottaviano and Atkinson conducted the hearing and Secretary J. Kelleher kept a record of the proceedings.

The petitioners were represented by Sondra Scheir of 8 Shepard Street, Cambridge, who eloquently stated the reasons for objection on the part of

the petitioners to the elimination of parking on the North side of this street. Several other residents of the street spoke for the petition. City Councilors Ackermann and Mahoney also spoke briefly in favor of the petition.

Traffic Director R. E. Rudolph explained the reasoning behind the regulation and defended the desirability of leaving it in force. Fire Chief William Cremins spoke briefly in favor of the regulation. Commissioner of Public Works Ralph Dunphy wished to be recorded in favor of the regulation.

The principal arguments advanced by the petitioners against the regulation are briefly summarized as follows: 1) Shepard Street is a relatively short street of a predominately residential nature and has been one-way for a long time with parking allowed on both sides; 2) Elimination of 58 parking spaces on the North side of this street was done without adequate study and without consultation of the residents on the street; 3) With approximately 150 houses or apartment units on the street (73 apartment units in three buildings) and very few off-street parking spaces available, this reduction in parking spaces on the street creates a real parking problem; 4) Widening of the travel lane invites more traffic and the traffic moves faster thus creating safety hazards on the street, including added danger to children going to and from Peabody School; 5) Not being able to park at or near the entrances to houses causes inconveniences in unloading bundles and adds danger when walking from cars to houses at night.

The principal arguments advanced in favor of the regulation

eliminating parking on the North side of this street are briefly summarized as follows: 1) The density of the population in Cambridge and the large number of automobiles in its small area create many problems, and the street system must be used as efficiently as possible to handle flow of traffic, both local and through; 2) The Wendell-Shepard Streets combination is the only through street between Kirkland Street and Porter Square carrying traffic from Oxford Street to Garden Street in a Westerly direction; 3) Shepard Street is an emergency artery and must be kept open at all times; 4) Cambridge has the second highest auto accident rate of any city or town in the state, and efforts are aimed at reducing this accident rate. Generally speaking, parking on only one side of a one-way street makes the street much safer; 5) With two-side parking on this street, the Public Works Department has had great difficulty in cleaning the street in the summer and in removing snow from the street in the winter; 6) The Fire Department has had difficulty on several occasions getting fire apparatus into this street, particularly during the winter months; 7) The experience in the past in trying to keep this street open at all times with parking on both sides has been very poor; at best the passage in the winter months has been slow and hazardous, and on many occasions impossible.

Mr. Rudolph stated the reason he did not poll the residents on Shepard Street before making this change in regulation was that he felt he had no alternatives to offer the residents for making a choice, as had been the case in some other proposed changes. Here he felt he could not reverse the one-way

direction or make it two-way. The only choice seemed to be to remove parking from one side, and the North side appeared to be the logical side for elimination of parking.

Mr. Rudolph did state he felt when traffic signals are installed at Massachusetts Avenue and Garden Street, it will likely make it more attractive for cars coming through the underpass on Broadway to go out Garden Street rather than out Massachusetts Avenue through Shepard Street to Garden Street as some now apparently do. He expected these lights to be in operation this year. Mr. Rudolph suggested that if the Shepard Street residents desired, he would be willing to change the regulation to allow parking on the North side of Shepard Street at all times except 8 AM to 6 PM Monday through Saturday.

Subsequent to the hearing the Board requested several additional studies to be made relative to traffic counts, parking spaces available on the street (on-street and off-street), license plate listings of cars parked on the street both during the day hours and at night, and has reviewed changes in the population of the street during the past few years.

Several observations appear obvious to the Board: 1) Shepard Street is an essential street both for local circulation and as an emergency artery; 2) Finding parking spaces on Shepard Street is a difficult problem (as it is in many other areas of Cambridge). This problem is compounded on Shepard Street as approximately half of the residential units on the street are listed at only four street numbers (four apartment buildings). It also appears that

some apartment units have several residents per unit, and possibly more than one car per unit. The present Zoning Ordinance attempts to alleviate this parking problem for new buildings by forcing the builder to provide off-street parking spaces to satisfy at least minimum parking needs.

Owners of older existing apartment buildings must eventually find some parking spaces for their tenants in open-air lots or garages (either privately or publicly owned) or the problem will continue to grow worse. The Board does not feel the solution to this problem is to use the City streets for private parking garages at the expense of the use of the streets for other essential public purposes. The problem on Shepard Street seems to be further compounded by many parkers, both day and night, who are not residents of the street. For example, there are a lot of out-of-state cars parked on the street, and apparently a different set of cars parked during the day as compared with those parked at night. 3) The experience of the past attested to by statements of the Traffic Director, Commissioner of Public Works, the Chief of the Fire Department, and by personal observation of members of the Board has shown that it has not been possible to keep this street open for essential uses with parking allowed on both sides. 4) The regulation under consideration prohibits parking on the North side, and by count this eliminated a potential of approximately thirty spaces between Massachusetts Avenue and Walker Street, or 45 spaces from Massachusetts Avenue to Garden Street. It should be noted that the entire North side of Shepard Street between Walker Street and Garden Street is in front of Radcliffe College property and Radcliffe College has not entered an

objection to the regulation. The regulation does not prohibit stopping to load and unload passengers or to make deliveries. It appears to the Board that in many ways the regulation will make the entrances of homes and apartments more accessible than has been the case in the past as it should now be possible to stop directly by the curb in front of the entrance to a house or apartment (or at least directly across the street from the entrance) without blocking the travel lane as has so often been the case in the past. 5) Shepard Street has changed in character over the years such that now a majority of the residents appear to be short-term residents. For example, less than half of those signing the petition were listed in the 1966 police listing; in fact less than half of these petitioners were listed in the 1968 City Directory.

After taking all factors into consideration the Board does not find sufficient justification to override the reasons for promulgation of that portion of Regulation 68-42 pertaining to Shepard Street, and therefore does not order that this regulation be voided.

CAMBRIDGE TRAFFIC BOARD

by Harold W. Atkinson

Joseph J. Ottaviano

February 4, 1969

Mr
Lynn

The City Council of Cambridge
Cambridge City Hall
Cambridge, Mass

February 16, 1969

Dear Sirs:

The Parent Teachers Association of the Russell School is aware of the problem concerning the playing fields around the future Tobin School. We are equally aware that the fields adjacent to the school are not part of school property. But we feel that the fields should be designed and programed in a manner consistent with school use, the Tobin community use, and other needs in that order. We realize the lack of recreation areas in the city and also the desires and fears of the neighborhood. We are committed to the concept of community schools and therefore feel that it is unfortunate that no elected or appointed bodies were consulted before the present plans were formulated. Nevertheless we are sure that an appropriate plan for design and use can be made.

Sincerely yours,

D. L. Burgess

President, Russell School P.T.A.

5.40



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
MASSACHUSETTS
TRAFFIC BOARD

February 5, 1969

Paul F. Healy
Acting City Clerk
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Re: Shepard Street
Case No. 69-2
Decision

Dear Sir:

Attached you will find the result of a Traffic Board Hearing held on January 23, 1969 in the matter of the petition of Sondra Scheir, et al.

Sincerely yours,

John J. Kelliher
Secretary
TRAFFIC BOARD

encl

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Communication from the Traffic Board
relative to hearing held on the petition
of Sondra Scheir et al regarding parking
on Shepard Street

February 10, 1969

2/10/1969
- Filed -

Copies to all COUNCILLORS