



City of Beacon

Parking and Traffic Safety Committee

Minutes

January 25, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.
1 Municipal Plaza, Beacon, NY 12508
Lower-Level Classroom

➤ Old Business

1. Intersections of Verplanck Ave. and Mattewan Rd & Main St and Route 52
2. Light at 9D and Main St.
3. Henry St. Double Yellow Lines

➤ New Business

1. School Crossing Recommendations
2. Schenck Avenue Traffic Safety Concern
3. West Main Street Signage
4. 9D and Beekman Street
5. Sargent Signage

In attendance: Lt. Walden, Michael Manzi, Chief Lucchesi, Matt Dubetsky, Jill Reynolds, and Carolyn Bennet-Glauda

Old Business

1. Intersections of Verplanck Ave. and Mattewan Rd & Main St. and Route 52

To the City Council: My wife and I frequently take walks throughout Beacon, often pushing a stroller. We've noticed several dangerous intersections, particularly Verplanck Ave and Mattewan Rd, Main St and Route 52, and the crossing on Route 52 between Ron's Ice Cream and Memorial Park. I strongly urge the Traffic Safety Committee to assess or reassess these intersections, especially with Beacon's population boom the last few years.

However, of all these intersections, I believe 9D and Route 52 (also known as Wolcott and Teller which is on the border of Wards 2 and 4) pose the greatest risk! The presence of a crosswalk here is astonishing given the evident danger. The owners of the brick house on the corner of Teller have informed me that their property was damaged on two occasions due to cars speeding around the corner. This emphasizes the potential harm to pedestrians. Furthermore, the eastbound traffic on 9D, obscured by a bend and slope, is a serious concern. While the plans to take the bend away and replace it with a T turn is a good idea, I believe developing a sidewalk in front of 925 Wolcott Ave to move the crossing over to provide greater visibility and time for both drivers and pedestrians.



I initiated a petition the other day addressing this public safety issue and later discovered plans to overhaul Route 52 and this intersection. Even if the bid for the entire project is high, I strongly recommend proceeding with the construction, prioritizing 9D and Route 52. Alternatively, consider making it a standalone project to expedite its completion. People's safety should not be compromised because of the larger project's complexities. While a traffic light might be the ideal solution for safety, even an amber flashing light and a reflective pedestrian sign would significantly enhance caution for speeding vehicles.

To the Traffic Safety Committee (forwarding the above): I wanted to share with you the email I sent to the City Council several weeks ago to make sure you see it and that it gets put onto the public record and perhaps discussed in the upcoming meeting which I will try to attend! The bottom line is the intersection of route 52 and 9D needs an amber flashing light ideally with an electronic radar mph display as well.

September 28, 2023: The Committee discussed that the City is awaiting traffic study data for Verplanck Ave. and expecting to receive such in the near future. The Committee also discussed that the City is awaiting a re-scoped Fishkill/Teller Avenues rehabilitation project design in the coming weeks and expects to put said project out to bid in early 2024. Said project is expected to involve the intersection of 9D and Teller, as well as sidewalks along portions of the stretch of Fishkill/Teller Avenues.

At the next Committee meeting, members will discuss whether the traffic light at the intersection of Main St. and Teller Ave. can be reprogrammed to include lead-pedestrian intervals, or not.

October 26, 2023: The Committee noted that there seems to be a box at the stoplight in question, which may indicate that the light is programmable. The Committee will continue discussion on the topic at the next meeting with the Highway Superintendent present to verify if such is the case, and whether or not it could be used for Lead-Pedestrian Interval timing.

November 16, 2023: The Highway Department Superintendent will speak with the City's engineering vendor to see if any measures can be taken in the meantime (including pricing of a new computer board), but noted that new traffic lights will be installed as part of the upcoming Fishkill/Teller Rehabilitation Project. The Committee suggested noticing updates for this and other projects on the City website.

January 25, 2024: The Committee agreed to trail this item pending further information on final Fishkill/Teller Rehabilitation Project Plans and Bid posting.

2. Light at 9D and Main Street (added at meeting)

During the meeting, a concern was raised that the light at 9D and Main Street is signaling right turns while also showing a crossing signal simultaneously.

November 16, 2023: The Committee noted that this is a NYS DOT light, but the Highway Superintendent agreed to reach out with the concern.

January 25, 2024: The City's Highway Superintendent did speak with DOT, who said that they would look into the concern. The Committee will check if it is still a issue prior to the next meeting.

3. Henry Street Double Yellow Lines (added at meeting)

During the meeting, a concern was raised regarding whether or not the double-yellow lines on Henry St. could be shifted to better balance lane widths?

November 16, 2023: The Highway Department will look into the issue further for the next meeting and measure how much space there is for the driving lane on the side with diagonal parking.

January 25, 2024: The Committee debated whether it was necessary to shift the double yellow line along Henry St. between Veterans and S. Chestnut, but the issue was not concluded. The Committee will keep an eye on the parking along the same stretch for the next meeting to see if it warrants any further action.

New Business

1. School Crossing Recommendations

The following recommendations were submitted for consideration by the Committee:

- 1) Add pedestrian crossing signage at South Ave. and Main St. near Bank Sq.

January 25, 2024: The Committee noted that it is almost impossible to put signage here that would be useful, as there is not sufficient room for drivers to see additional signage with enough time. The Committee feels that the crossing guard posted to this location is sufficient for school crossings. Further, the Committee raised a concern of adding too many signs causing 'sign blindness,' and wishes to be selective about where they are needed most and will be most effective.

- 2) Add pedestrian crossing signage on 9D, north of Main St., where the crossing guard is posted.

January 25, 2024: The Committee discussed and found that this is not needed as there is already a traffic light and crossing guard at this location.

- 3) Add 15 mph signage ahead of Sargent Ave. & 9D. as large trucks and construction vehicles don't have adequate time to slow down.

January 25, 2024: The Committee noted that there is crossing signage approaching from this direction on Coffey Avenue.

- 4) Add pedestrian crossing signage at F/T & 9D

January 25, 2024: The Committee declined to recommend this, as the City and School don't want to encourage crossing at this intersection, as opposed to the crossing at the entrance driveway to Sargent, near the Elks' Club, where there are already flashing yellow crossing signs.

- 5) Add 15 mph signage ahead of Sargent school from the north, drivers don't know currently

January 25, 2024: The Committee noted that there is crossing signage approaching from this direction near the Elks' Club.

These items will be removed from the agenda going forward.

2) Schenck Avenue Traffic Safety Concern

The following was received via email:

I am writing this to express concern about traffic and safety concerns on Schenck Ave. Traffic is not able to drive through in either direction when cars are parked on both sides of the street forcing people to back out onto Main Street to execute a U-turn. This happens numerous times every day.

There are many close calls.

Please consider making one side of the street no parking or Schenck Ave. a one-way street.

January 25, 2024: The Committee discussed that there is already no parking on one-side of that street, and that the current issues are from temporary adjacent construction. The Committee believes that there is sufficient room for two-way traffic otherwise. The Police Department will continue enforcing traffic violations along the stretch at-issue, and the Committee will revisit after construction is complete, if needed.

3) West Main Street Signage

The following was received via email:

I would like to suggest that the “do not enter” sign at the base of West Main Street by the train station parking lot be removed. Drivers being unable to make a left turn out of the parking lot creates a huge bottleneck in front of the train station that is unsafe for both drivers and pedestrians. The ability to turn out of the parking lot and onto West Main Street will alleviate the unnecessary and unsafe congestion that accumulates on Railroad Dr.

Thank you for reading this, and all the best.

January 25, 2024: The Committee noted that the resident concerned about this issue will need to reach out to the MTA, as this is their signage, and which is designed to encourage efficient flow of traffic through the lots.

4) 9D and Beekman Street

TO: Beacon City Council, Beacon Planning Board, Beacon Traffic and Safety Committee

RE: 45 Beekman Development Proposal

Development at 45 Beekman

Per the 12-12-2023 Planning Board meeting, I would like to address the proposal put forth by the Beekman Arts Center LLC. There is one area of impact that supersedes all others, congestion and traffic. At this time, I would only like to put forth comments and questions related to congestion and traffic (although I have other concerns with the proposal).

CONGESTION AND TRAFFIC IMPACTS

The board stated in the December meeting that the Beekman/9D intersection is “the worst in Beacon”, “must be solved”, and “cannot be made worse by development.”

I fully agree. The intersection is a long-standing issue, independent of any development discussion. More specifically: there is no police presence, and a multitude of traffic violations occur every day. They have, for some reason, been deemed acceptable (or those that can address the situation choose not to). The violations include but are not limited to:

- Running red lights
- Blocking the intersection
- Speeding
- Bypassing traffic by taking side streets (while speeding)
- Illegally using High Street as a bypass (left turn from Beekman)

Serious and broad safety issues exist now and should be dealt with before any development is considered at 45 Beekman.

It is misguided to allow a development to dictate or even recommend a traffic pattern solution as their interests and motivations are not those of the people of Beacon first. They (the group submitting plans for development) are attempting to solve a congestion problem so that their development can proceed.

A dedicated group of professionals that have experience in complex traffic management should be retained to determine a clear and long-term solution. At this stage, we are seeing random suggestions by both the developer and the planning board. These suggestions are being made without serious consideration and/or study of the actual impacts. (You will note that in the 600-page proposal submitted by the Beekman Arts Center LLC, 500 pages are dedicated to a traffic study and nowhere does it show the various violations that occur each day. Even at its length, it is an incomplete picture of the day-to-day issues facing the intersection.)

The Planning Board and the Beekman Arts Center comments include:

- Suggesting an additional stoplight
 - It is fully unclear how this would slow or alleviate traffic. It would create gaps *for* the Development but not for anyone else. It would encourage more illegal use of High Street as a bypass.
- Suggesting a round about

- How would anyone walking navigate a roundabout?
- Suggesting changing the light timing
 - Again, this is for car movement not people movement. This would negatively impact the residents in Beacon that cross the street including school children at the bus stop. It is also specious to assume that mere light timing changes will solve this problem. It would likely add a new, different problem to the mix.
- Suggesting an additional right hand turn lane.
 - Adding a dedicated right hand turn lane (9D south at Beekman) would be a serious safety issue as cars would not slow or stop to make the turn, endangering anyone crossing the street on foot. Additionally, it would cause an already short light to be difficult to navigate on foot without running.

All of these suggestions have the same fatal flaw, they are about moving cars and not about moving people. These intersections are heavily walked and 9D is often crossed at both Beekman and Tomkins Avenue. These suggestions have little to do with them. The pedestrians and school bus stops are not being considered. Again, the suggestions are being floated without the agnostic perspective and expertise of traffic management professionals. Even if the matter were solely about moving vehicles, the suggestions above do not make matters any better. A long-term viable solution should come from those that have successfully dealt with similar situations.

Furthermore, the train traffic is by and large NOT Beacon residents. The traffic going North, East, and West are individuals leaving Beacon. Anyone that lives in Beacon knows better than to take Beekman to get home when they can travel south of the station and loop around to their destination. The Planning Board should first be considering the residents of Beacon and not the traffic leaving Beacon. The role of the Planning Board is not to make life better for the Developer or the commuter, the role is to make life better for the people of Beacon.

Again, **I do not feel that any development should be considered without a full assessment and long-term traffic plan to mitigate the immediate safety and congestion issues at Beekman and 9D.** Only then should development be considered as it will only cause additional stress in the problematic area. When a solution has been determined, the Planning Board should seriously consider the other aspects of the proposal that need significant clarification. (Environmental, Resource Demands, Wildlife, Affordability, Height and Visual impacts, Setbacks, Parking, Aesthetic Concerns “In-Keeping”, etc.)

(To add a finer point on my perspective, I commuted into New York City for 15 years and in all of that time, I crossed the road at Beekman and 9D twice every week day. I was hit by a car once and nearly hit more times than I can count. I have a unique perspective on that particular intersection and living a block away makes my interest all the more great.)

January 25, 2024: The Committee noted the following points after reviewing the above letter:

- It is not illegal to use High Street, which is a public road.
- The Committee does not recommend doing adding a stoplight along Beekman, which would risk backing up traffic further during peak train arrivals.
- The lights along 9D are DOT-owned, but the Highway Superintendent will reach out to see if the light timing at Verplanck can be better calibrated.
- The Committee was not sure that a right hand turn lane would be necessary, but did note that it should not be created by removing the left hand turn lane, which helps to prevent traffic backing up.

Overall, the Committee found it difficult to make any specific recommendations or to weight potential solutions without having the data regarding traffic and pedestrian patterns being considered by the Planning Board. Before the next meeting, the City will gather Planning Board reports for the project at-issue, and from when Edgewater was approved (traffic study follow-up).

5) Sargent Signage

The following letter was received:

I was wondering, could you please add three new flashing yellow pedestrian crossing signs near Sargent Elementary School so that people like me can safely go to school and that cars know that kids are crossing the street. I like how Wolcott Avenue near the new townhouses and Beacon Street have those flashing yellow pedestrian crossing signs so that if people or kids are small, then cars will know that they are there. I am a kid that goes to school at Sargent and I don't know if cars can see me or not! I am quite tiny and cars may not see me. So it would be a great favor if you could add those lights. Could I have them at the intersections of Wolcott Avenue at Sargent Avenue and the driveway of Sargent Elementary, and also the intersection of Sargent Avenue and Sycamore Drive please? This last intersection also needs a painted crosswalk. Please add it, it will cool me off because I feel scared when I cross the street. I am scared that I will get hit by a car.

Thank you for considering it. Thank you for taking your time to read this important letter!

January 25, 2024: The Committee discussed the three suggestions above:

- The Committee noted that there are already flashing yellow signs installed at the driveway entrance to Sargent School, near the Elks' Club. These were installed in September of 2023.
- The Committee declined to recommend adding similar signage at Wolcott and Teller, as both the City and School District wish to encourage crossing at the driveway entrance crossing. The Committee also noted that few students actually do cross at this location and they found the crossing guard at that site to be sufficient.
- The Committee declined to recommend adding similar signage at Sycamore and Sargent, as there are no existing sidewalks at either end of the intersection for a crosswalk to connect to. Further, without a crosswalk, they would not recommend installing signage for crossing. They also noted that the speed limit along this stretch is 15 mph during school hours, but that students should look both ways and cross carefully.

Overall, the Committee was very impressed by and thankful to the student who submitted the above suggestions.

Next meeting: February 22, 2024