

May 10, 2004 Town Council Meeting Minutes
Cameron Avenue Item

With regard to item 5L, former Transportation Board Member Coalter Lathrop pointed out that the staff had recommended against re-striping Cameron Avenue in four reports. The staff had done this despite petitions, letters and emails from citizens supporting bike lanes on Cameron Avenue and despite the Bicycle and Pedestrian Board's and Transportation Board's endorsements of having bike lanes there, he said. Mr. Lathrop agreed with the staff's point that bicycle commuters might displace automobile parking, but said that it would not be hard for him to choose between those two if forced to do so. After quoting from the Town's Comprehensive Plan and its transportation goals, he asked Council members to take action and vote for Resolution A, Resolution B or Resolution C.

Transportation Board Chair Loren Hintz urged the Council to adopt Resolution B and to enact Ordinance B-1. Both boards had felt that on-street parking should be prohibited from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and that bike lanes should be striped at seven feet, he said. Mr. Hintz noted that this would still allow evening and weekend parking. Parking is also available in Town lots and Town buses are fare free, he pointed out. Mr. Hintz argued that striping bike lanes should make it obvious to cars that they are parking in bike lanes and should reduce the number of violations.

Nicholas Lurie, Vice Chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, but speaking as an individual, pointed out that North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) controls the majority of roads where bike lanes might be appropriate. He predicted that NCDOT would be less likely to put bike lanes on the roads they control if the Town does not put them on Cameron Avenue, which it controls. Mr. Lurie noted that UNC was the #1 destination for cyclists. He proposed as solution that includes a 45-foot right-of-way and allows enough space for full-time parking, five-foot bike lanes, and two travel lanes. That design had been used extensively throughout the United States, Mr. Lurie said, and it had been proven to work without increasing danger to cyclists.

Richard Goldberg endorsed Resolution B. He agreed with the staff that the Town's Police Department had done a good job of ticketing cars, but noted that cyclists still have to swerve out of the bike lane into traffic to get past those ticketed cars. He added that the Police Department generally stops ticketing in the morning before the 9:45 legal parking hour. Mr. Goldberg stated that this leads to carloads of students parked in the bike lanes doing their homework at 9:20 in the morning. He stated that limiting parking from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. would keep cars out of there all day and provide adequate use for bicyclists.

Mayor Foy asked Town Traffic Engineer Kumar Neppalli if he had considered the proposed striping plan that Mr. Lurie had distributed. Mr. Neppalli replied that it had been one of the options that the federal government had approved, but it was not the preferable option. He explained that he had called some of the cities that use the plan and they had reported no accident problem with that striping, but he was not sure the roads in those towns had the same characteristics as Cameron Avenue, such as being in a

university campus area, having parking concerns during the day, and being a major connector street during morning and evening peak hours.

Mr. Neppalli said that the Mr. Lurie had brought the plan to the Town's attention a couple of weeks ago. The staff had decided not to recommend it because it was a new standard for the community, he said. Mr. Neppalli pointed out that there had been 23 accidents on Cameron Avenue in 2003, between Merritt Mill Road and Pittsboro Street, and that only two of those involved bicycles. He argued that the existing striping allows a compromise that provides parking and wide outside lanes, which had proven to be successful in most communities, and on Cameron Avenue, for bike lanes.

Mayor Foy determined from Mr. Neppalli that Cameron Avenue was 45 feet wide.

Council Member Harrison verified that this did not include the curb and gutter.

Council Member Ward expressed the belief that most of the vehicles were single occupancy and that many of them had a fare free alternative. He said protecting those parking spaces was not a particularly great community resource. Council Member Ward suggested an alternate resolution that would direct the staff to re-stripe Cameron Avenue according to the diagram that Mr. Lurie had presented. He also proposed that parking be prohibited in areas where there is a center turn lane.

Council Member Verkerk asked if the information on ridership dropping by 50% had been based on Town studies. Mr. Lathrop replied that the Town's mobility report card in 2001, before fare free buses but after bike lanes had disappeared, had counted about 904 bike trips in a 12-hour day. The Town also had also done other 12-hour bike counts on Cameron Avenue in 1994 and 1996, he said, and the numbers were about 2,000 and 1,800 each day. Mr. Lathrop concluded that those data points showed more than a 50% drop without bike lanes.

Council Member Harrison said that the two bike accidents on Cameron Avenue in 2003 had been two too many. A 2001 report card had shown that Cameron Avenue had the highest number of riders in Chapel Hill, he said. Council Member Harrison stated that the Council should start thinking of Cameron Avenue as a street that will eventually have no non-resident cars. They should see it as one that is as important as a transit route into the campus, and as a bicycle access, that letting people park there for free is a poor use of the resource, he said. Council Member Harrison expressed support for Council Member Ward's motion, noting that Madison Wisconsin is another university town that had followed a similar plan. Council Member Harrison noted his concern about people parking on other neighborhood streets instead of Cameron Avenue.

Mayor Foy wondered what people who live on Cameron Avenue think about removing parking.

Council Member Harrison commented that allowing residents to park would make sense, but Mayor Foy replied that the Town would have the same problem then.

Council Member Hill explained that he had never been able to park on the section of Cameron Avenue where he lived. He said that Cameron Avenue was clearly just a parking lot for students going on campus, and that prohibiting it would drive it into the neighboring streets. Council Member Hill said that Mr. Lurie's proposal, on its face, seems to answer everyone's needs, but it would reduce ticket revenue, and it would create a situation where people will park there who could park elsewhere. He recommended that the Town just get rid of parking altogether, since residents do not park on the street anyway.

WHERE IS VERKERK'S MOTION???

Council Member Ward pointed out that he had already moved Mr. Lurie's plan, but had not received a second. Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos stated that the motion that had been seconded would be the motion on the floor unless Council Member Verkerk wished to withdraw it.

Council Member Verkerk did not agree to withdraw her motion, but Mayor Foy pointed out that Council Member Ward could move to substitute his motion for hers.

COUNCIL MEMBER WARD MOVED TO SUBSTITUTE HIS MOTION TO HAVE THE TOWN STRIPE CAMERON AVENUE AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PETITION BY MR. LURIE, AND THAT PARKING BE ELIMINATED IN AREAS WHERE THERE IS NEED FOR A LEFT OR RIGHT TURN LANE. COUNCIL MEMBER HARRISON SECONDED.

Council Member Greene clarified that this would mean going from having parking on one side in the morning and the other side in the afternoon to allowing parking on both sides all the time with the addition of two bike lanes. It would mean adding more parking on Cameron Avenue, she said.

Mayor Foy noted that it would narrow the travel lanes as well.

Mayor pro tem Wiggins stated that she would be anxious driving on Cameron Avenue with the proposed new layout. She would rather not have to deal with cars on Cameron Avenue at all if the Town is going to make a change, she said. Mayor pro tem Wiggins expressed a preference for Resolution B and said that she would not vote for the substitute motion.

Council Member Kleinschmidt expressed concern about leaving Cameron Avenue as it is. The lanes are extraordinarily wide and people drive too fast, he said. Council Member Kleinschmidt spoke in favor of the substitute motion, proposing that the order that the lines would place on the street would lead to slower traffic.

Mayor Foy said that he would support the motion if Council Member Ward would be willing to send it back to the Transportation Board and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board for comments and to Mr. Neppalli for details.

Council Member Ward agreed, emphasizing that he respected Mr. Neppalli's opinion and would like to know how the two boards feel about it.

Council Member Ward also asked for feedback on adding paid parking to Cameron Avenue.

Mayor Foy commented that the Town might also want to know how to monitor parking without meters. Mr. Horton offered to bring it back both ways.

Council Member Harrison accepted the modified motion. He expressed a preference for painted lines, noting that some of the other materials used could be dangerous. Mayor Foy stressed that the Council was asking the boards for help refining this. Council Member Kleinschmidt verified that a similar plan was already being implemented on Barbee Chapel Road.

COUNCIL MEMBER WARD MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HARRISON, TO SUBSTITUTE HIS MOTION FOR THAT MOVED BY COUNCIL MEMBER VERKERK. THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0).

COUNCIL MEMBER WARD MOVED, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HARRISON, TO DIRECT THE STAFF TO RE-STRIPE CAMERON AVENUE AS SUGGESTED BY MATERIALS SUBMITTED BY NICHOLS LURIE, AND THAT IN AREAS WHERE RIGHT OR LEFT TURN LANES REQUIRED THAT THREE LANES BE PROVIDED AND MARKING BE REMOVED, AS AMENDED BY MAYOR FOY TO REFER BACK TO THE TRANSPORTATION BOARD AND BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN BOARD AND TO THE TOWN'S TRAFFIC ENGINEER AND TO CONSIDER PARKING METERS AS WELL AS OTHER MEANS OF MONITORING. THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY (9-0).