

**MINUTES OF THE COHOES TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING HELD
ON MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021 VIA THE ZOOM APPLICATION AT 4:00
PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Johnston
City Planner Joseph Seman-Graves
Fire Chief Joseph Fahd
Lieutenant John Shanahan

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Stephen Hennessey

ALSO PRESENT: Sharon Butler, Recording Secretary

CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 21, 2020 MEETING

Chairman Johnston asked if there were any comments, questions or concerns regarding the minutes as presented. As there were no questions, concerns or comments, Joseph Seman-Graves made a motion to approve the minutes. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

**CONSIDER THE REMOVAL OF A HANDICAP PARKING SIGN AT 8 NORTH
RESERVOIR STREET**

This request was submitted by Chairman Johnston. Chairman Johnston stated that this sign was originally approved for Barbara Gaudette. Mrs. Gaudette is now deceased. His recommendation was to remove the sign in accordance with Attachment "A" to the agenda.

Lieutenant John Shanahan made a motion to approve the request to remove the *Residential Handicap Parking* sign from 8 North Reservoir Street. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed.

**CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PREVIOUS DECISION TO MAKE
ORCHARD STREET ONE-WAY NORTH BETWEEN ERIE AND CHURCH STREETS
AND THE NEW PROPOSAL TO MAKE ORCHARD STREET ONE-WAY SOUTH AND
DEVLIN STREET ONE-WAY NORTH**

This request is a continuation of a request from Mayor Keeler to have open public discussion on our November decision to make Orchard Street one-way north between Erie and Church Streets. After our decision, the Mayor received complaints from residents of the area that they were not aware of the proposed agenda item and accordingly were not able to have any input into the ultimate decision.

At our December meeting, there was public input about making Orchard Street one-way south and making the adjacent parallel Devlin Street one-way north. The original

request was submitted by the Mayor because Orchard Street is only 22 feet wide which promotes residents to park their vehicles on the sidewalk so that they can safely park. Parking on the sidewalk is contrary to *Subsection 1202 of the NYS Motor Vehicle and Traffic Law* and Subsection 285-83.b of the *City Code*. The proposed change to one-way on both these streets and prohibiting parking on the west side of Orchard Street has been field evaluated by myself and Joe Seman-Graves and would make this area safer for motorists and would provide more legal parking for residents of the area.

Chairman Johnston opened the floor to public comment at 4:02 PM. There were no comments from the public. Since there were no further public comments, the Chairman closed the floor to public comments at 4:05 PM.

The following discussion was held among the members:

Joseph Seman-Graves; we sent out 75 mailings, I believe and we have no comments at this time. Just so everyone knows, there were mailings sent out after the initial meeting, there was mailings prior to the 2nd meeting, I did a public meeting up there with 6 members of the community. We also walked up there, both Paul and I separately and then sent out mailings again for this meeting.

Lt. Shanahan; we're you able to talk to people when you did the public meeting up there?

Joseph Seman-Graves; yea, it wasn't a planned public meeting, but I had one gentleman interested in talking, so I went up there and everyone just came out of their houses. The completely understand that the road is not wide enough. They're not complaining, they know they can't park on the sidewalks, that's not an issue, they were talking about other things that we could also look at that I am working on. One of them was, just the way the traffic was flowing, that it makes sense going north on Orchard and then leaving Devlin as it is. So Paul and I walked up there and it does makes sense to do it the way we're looking at right now. The biggest concern they have is parking. So there's on Orchard, there is that unimproved lot right there, that is city owned, pretty much right in this little corner right here (shown on screen).

Lt. Shanahan; Maiden Lane

Joseph Seman-Graves; yes, they wanted to see one of the trees removed and possibly paving it. I talked to Steve Hennessy about that. The tree kind of splits the property line so it's not our call 100% and it's also a very nice old growth tree, so we don't want to just rip it down. And if we did do that and paved, likely we'd get one of two more spots but it's not substantial. More so of what I'm looking at, is at the corner over here (on screen) there's a ton, well not a ton, there's maybe 6 garages that looks like there going to fall down. The owner of that, I tried to contact him, actually I can't get ahold of him, but his real estate agent said that they've had a few offers and he has not been responding. So there might be something going on there, I'm not sure, but that's an opportunity for a ton of parking if that's the route we wanted to take.

Lt. Shanahan; what, to see if the City could purchase that parcel?

Joseph Seman-Graves; yea, because we also have right behind it on old canal lock that we're trying to promote as part of a larger path, so just having somewhere to park in this area to enjoy the locks would be nice. So I'm looking into that, but the guy is just not

responding. Long story short, they understand that they can't park on the sidewalks and to accomplish that you have to make changes to the road.

Lt. Shanahan; the only input I have pertaining this is issue was the gentleman that lives adjacent to those garages on Orchard, on the west side directly right next to it, he would prefer that the one way go north on Orchard and then leaving Devlin Street as it was. That was my only feedback I had on that due to the way the traffic flows off N. Mohawk onto Church and things like that. That was the only feedback I got from a resident up there pertaining to that. I don't know if leaving Devlin Street as it is, is a possibility, you know where it's both 2 ways and I know it gets crowded right where it elbow by the park to get on to N. Mohawk Street. I understand that's a tough spot right there. That was the only input from somebody that actually lives up there, they would prefer having it one way north not south on Orchard.

Chairperson Johnston; the downside of having Orchard Street one way north, when Joe and I were out there, we kind of picked up on it, is that any delivery vehicles especially a truck going into Church Street, with Orchard Street being one way north, are going to have to back out of there as there is no way to turn around unless they go up to the end and try to navigate that.

Lt. Shanahan; I get that because you're making it one way right up until Church not Maiden Lane is that correct?

Chairperson Johnston; correct

Joseph Seman-Graves; another thing to consider too, not even that, the members of the public that I met with, they did all 6 of them, but they all did prefer the current, what's showing in front of you. So we original had north, one way north on Orchard, they preferred it the other way and it had to do specifically with how they were currently parking on the street. I know that Paul's diagram made it so there is a larger spot to enter this parking lot, but as it is right now, there's a little pole and entrance way and if you're coming this way, they just said the turn, it's navigable but if you're in a larger vehicle it's almost impossible to make that turn. So is it worth eliminating 2 spots over here (on screen) just to be able to get into that, if we're not making any other improvements right now?

Lt. Shanahan; Joe are they going to be able to park on both sides of the street either way, if it's one way or are they going to make it parking on one side?

Chairperson Johnston; on Orchard Street we would eliminate parking on the west side.

Lt. Shanahan; so if it was, Paul, wouldn't it be more feasible if it were to be one way north, actually one way south, like it's proposed right now, that you'd be able to park on the left side because most of the residences are on the west side so that means their cars would be closer to their houses and it would be less of a travel across the street with groceries and things like that. And not be able to park on the east side, do you see where I'm coming from?

Chairperson Johnston; yes

Lt. Shanahan; I don't believe there's any residences on that east side that are actually on Orchard Street, it's just back yards to Devlin Street. Where there are residences on the west side, so if you park on the west side then their cars are closer to their homes. That's my only opinion on that.

Chairperson Johnston; I like that idea. I don't know how we didn't pick up on that when we were walking out there Joe.

Joseph Seman-Graves; I'm not against that, they do have a driveway, I don't think you'd reduce spots, there's just one major driveway that I think would reduce a couple of spots but that would be the same regardless because we're proposing to take a couple of spots away to make the entrance to the parking lot bigger.

Lt. Shanahan; do you think it would be.....

Joseph Seman-Graves; one more time John you cut out

Lt. Shanahan; I'm just wondering if it's feasible to let the residents know up there, that we're contemplating letting them park on the west side and not the east side if you make Orchard Street one way south, before we make a decision on that, what are your thoughts:

Joseph Seman-Graves; to be honest, we sent out 3 mailings and I've had 2 people call in so far. I think they just and, this is my opinion, I think they just want to know what is happening and it not just be implemented. I think we need to pick the best route, one comment I had after the first meeting which they weren't aware of, I get that and then last time we just had one who responded. I'm hesitant to say let's put it off again with so little feedback. I don't want to keep dragging it on.

Lt. Shanahan; ok, then if we can switch to parking on the west side, I'm all for that then and not the east side of Orchard.

Chairperson Johnston; I got no problems with changing it. I mean in a couple of our walks out there, there are a couple of vehicles that park on the easterly side, whether they live on Orchard or parking out in the back and they live on Devlin, I don't know.

Joseph Seman-Graves; I'm fine with just parking on the east side.

Chairperson Johnston; the one thing, there's quite a few driveways on the west side, so we can't be blocking the driveways, so I guess what'd I'd like to verify that we're not eliminating a lot of parking. On the east side we do have kind of the parking lot that is there, but how much other on street parking, to the south of the parking lot is there?

Lt. Shanahan; I believe there are at least 2 driveways on that west side that I know for a fact, just thinking of the area off the top of my head, when I pulled my google maps and looked at it, I think there's definitely 2 driveways there, and there's no driveways on the east side, Joe you're right about that.

Chairperson Johnston; there's a couple of them, if I'm not mistaken, garages though that exit out on to Orchard Street on the east side.

Lt. Shanahan; yea and there's that one alley way to the very southern end of that, it's a city alley. My thought is getting groceries out of the car on the east side you have to walk them across the street, I don't know what the residents would like pertaining to that.

Chairperson Johnston; that's what they've been doing all along.

Lt. Shanahan; yeah, but facing, north, most of them face north now. So their driver side door is technically closer to their homes so to speak. I don't know if that little tid bit will upset everybody.

Joseph Seman-Graves; do you think there's more opportunity on the east side for parking? And I'll say that with the exception of those dilapidated garages were not there and you could park in front of them, they'd have ample room.

Lt. Shanahan; there's definitely 2 driveways on that west side, you're right Joe. So there would be more ample parking on the east side, that's correct, but I'm just looking at the convenience for the people that live there.

Joseph Seman-Graves; I mean should we just do this base on pretty much numbers wherever there's more parking or leaning that way? I agree about the convenience, but then you have the people that have the houses on the back side like you said, where they're entering the rear of their house, they might live on Devlin.

Lt. Shanahan; I get that. Now say we pass this, it doesn't mean that this isn't subject to change, it's not a set thing, set for 20 years. If something doesn't flow right we can make changes is that correct?

Chairperson Johnston; correct, Where are we leaning as far as parking? Allow parking on the west?

Lt. Shanahan; I think Joe is against that, you wanted to maintain parking on the east side is that right Joe?

Chairperson Johnston; I think without going back in my notes at the moment, I think when this first started I did measure up how much parking was available and subtracted out the driveways on the west side and I'm pretty sure I did come up with more parking available on the east side.

Lt. Shanahan; I definitely see that, I understand that.

Joseph Seman-Graves; and the main concern with me is, the people I talked to definitely understand that they can't park on sidewalks and the street isn't big enough, but parking is their main concern so if we choose something even though it might be more convenient for some people, that reduces parking further I can see a lot of push back. And something else to keep in mind, right at that corner of Maiden Lane there's a few developments happening; one not new, but a renovated 3 unit and you have the Krug's who uses the back parking lot now, that they're actually using behind Devlin, it's a 4 unit. So you have 7 units additional to what there currently coming online soon. I'm hesitant to reduce any parking further.

Lt. Shanahan; I'm ready to vote on that then.

Chairperson Johnston; Joe, when we met that one person out there, in his car and he was concerned about opening the passenger door into traffic and once we explained it to him that on a one way street one door or the other is going to be opening into traffic, then he understood and didn't really care after that.

Joseph Seman-Graves; yea, I think everyone is just going to throw their initial thoughts at you and then if you have reason, you can give it to them, and if you don't then why are you making the choice? I mean we walked it, it seems to make sense to me and I've been up there a couple of time now, I have no issues with it as it currently stands.

Chairperson Johnston; this situation is kind of like Lancaster and Congress, there so narrow you made one one way and we made the other one the other way.

Joseph Seman-Graves; I mean I find if we make this and you're ok this definitely isn't working, is it because of the one way pattern or is it the parking situation? Then you address the parking. This doesn't have to be all end all, it's just a living thing just like anything else.

Chairman Johnston stated that after reviewing all the options and concerns, it appears that the best option is to make Orchard Street one-way south and to make Devlin Street one-way north. His recommendation was to rescind Regulation 36-2020 that approved making Orchard Street one-way north and to now make Orchard Street one-way south between Church Street and Erie Streets and to make Devlin Street one-way north

between Erie Street and North Mohawk Street in accord with Attachments “B” and “C” to the agenda.

Joseph Seman-Graves made a motion to approve the request to make Orchard Street one-way south and Devlin Street one-way north in accordance with Attachments “B” and “C” to the agenda. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed.

CONSIDER INSTALLING NO PARKING SIGNS ON THE SOUTH OF JOHNSTON AVENUE ADJACENT TO THE DRIVEWAY FOR VETERENS MEMORIAL PARK

This request was submitted by Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Radliff. Mr. Radliff states that vehicles are constantly parking across the throat of the driveway to *Veterans Memorial Park* on Johnston Avenue, ignoring the *MV & T Law*, and preventing ingress or egress to or from the park for routine maintenance vehicles. Chairman Johnston stated that numerous inspections of the driveway reveal that there are always two vehicles blocking the driveway. The Chairman’s recommendation was to install *No Parking* signs on the south side of Johnston Avenue in accordance with Attachment D to the agenda.

Lieutenant John Shanahan made a motion to approve the request to install *No Parking* signs on Johnston Avenue in accordance with Attachment “D” to the agenda. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Since there was no further business on the agenda, Chairman Johnston stated that because of the President’s Day holiday, the next meeting of the *Traffic Commission* would be on February 22, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

Chairman Johnston made a motion to adjourn. Chief Fahd seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:21PM.