

**The League Panel Discussion on Snow and Traffic**  
**February 28, 2018**

Panelists: Vicki Danberg, Ward 6 Councilor-at-Large; Chief MacDonald, Newton Police Department; Shane Mark, Director of Streets

Moderator/Host: Marcia Johnson

What are rules on parking ban? was \$5 a night, now up to \$25 a night; Nov 15-April 15 can't park on city streets longer than 1 hr from 2 am to 6 am; additional limit when Chief of Police calls a snow emergency; DPW monitors weather events (hours, timing, develop plan), calls among police, fire, DPW, parks and rec—decide if need to institute a parking ban for a snow emergency. Affected by time of day, day of week, other factors. [Example: storm right before Christmas—balance between clearing streets and impact on businesses and residents.] DPW makes a recommendation to Chief, which is his authority.

Forecasts have been great—make weather easier and easier to predict, can pick a time to start a snow emergency—pinpoint many hours in advance. Close communication among many departments.

Rationale for parking ban was that wanted cars off the streets at night; given more accurate weather forecasts that are provided, is it still needed? Intent is to make it easier for DPW so they can do a better job. Police Dept philosophy used to be to ticket as many cars as city as could the first few weeks of ban so that it would be easier later in the season. Disproportionate amount of tickets given in certain parts of city—access to parking, narrow streets, proximity to colleges. Would get calls in advance from residents asking for consideration about events, construction, etc. Have to balance that with complaints (neighbor issues sometimes cause this). If no snow in the forecast for a while, might ease off on residents. Parking ban is well-advertised.

In the case of snow, open snow command center with customer service reps, someone from police dispatch, detail officers; as snow plow operators are out, they will call in issues with cars on streets, get radio to detail officers; they try to figure out whose car it is and if it can be moved without ticketing; otherwise ticket and tow. Maybe about 12-13 cars, some very predictable areas/streets. Try to plow curb-to-curb—open up catch basins, need a place to store snow. Sometimes doesn't call snow emergency if it snows, since have a parking ban. Have 17 events this year, but only 2 snow emergencies so far this winter.

What is rationale for winter parking ban from police department's perspective? If City Council did away with it, wouldn't have a problem with it. Sometimes police presence for parking ban is helpful in deterring and fighting crime.

What is rationale for winter parking ban from DPW's perspective? Parking ban does no good unless there is a 'snow and ice control operation'. BUT...when snow and ice control, need cars off the street and need to ticket and tow—can put police in position of having to enforce situation.

Discussion: Advantage of ban is that it is predictable and people need to have a place to put their car. Counter is that if have law on the books, need to have a good reason. Otherwise some are disadvantaged if adding to expense of living here. Had some zoning repercussions—i.e. not rent to students who might have a larger number of people in an apartment (and therefore more cars). Safety issues can be created—having to back out of parking space onto a busy street. If no parking ban, not a lot of people would have a parking plan.

When law went on books, many residents didn't have more than 1 car. Now, still narrow streets...but what if can't get an emergency vehicle down a street. Need to ticket and tow...

Local businesses—employees park on neighborhood streets, if working when plows are out, don't move cars. Near villages, tend to get cars.

City does allow (for free or \$25 a year) parking overnight (except in snow emergency) in public lots. Overnight parking permit on street?—no provision where can pay for street parking. Need a permit to park on street?

Sidewalk snow clearing: Around 1991, Mayor Mann instituted a requirement that all residents shovel their sidewalks—economy was such that the city couldn't afford to clear sidewalks itself. Recently did look into what would cost to clear them (80 miles plowed now, 400 miles in city)—about \$1.7 million. Gave 24 hours which was a problem for kids walking to school, those near villages, etc. Repealed in 1992. LWVN has always wanted a requirement to clear sidewalks. More than 20 years later, took it up and made progress since then. Now have (as of December 19, 2017) an ordinance that made the trial permanent—required to clear, 3 ft width minimum (compromise from 4 ft), 30 hours after snow stops, applies to building or lot with paved sidewalk and handicapped access ramps, not for businesses. Mayor can grant waiver of hardship.

Enforcement: was passed without fine provision in 2017 since couldn't go before Finance Committee by the end of the year. Fine is supposed to be taken up in 2018...docketed item for Finance, does not have a dollar amount. Vicki will allow the finance committee to choose the amount. Looking at local communities, range seems to be \$25 to \$50, up to \$100 and \$200 (or \$350 in Belmont). Needs simple majority (not 16 votes) to pass. What is the right amount?

Commercial/Institutional properties and a building that contains 5 or more units: required to clear entire sidewalk in front of building within 12 hours; \$100/\$200/\$300 depending on # of offenses.

How do you enforce an ordinance/fine? Police approach businesses and usually get response; respond to calls for residences—7 complaints so far this year. Respond to complaints so far rather than police specifically for shoveled sidewalks. Chief position: not in favor of enforcing fines for residences. Mayor position: if law is on the books, will find a way to enforce it.

Discussion: Brookline sends out '12-page' document with info on trash, recycling, snow removal requirements, etc. every year.

City could remind people to clear their sidewalks when they use the reverse-311 calls about snow emergencies, etc. Needham used an efficient process during a water ban—recorded addresses and then used mail to contact (with letter or ticket?) Public safety issue—dangerous to walk on streets.

Anyone to call about shoveling house? Roadblocks in way of creating lists—can't public names of children. Need someone to organize the list—issues of liability. Senior Center—work with children's groups in school/community associations to match up students and seniors.

Discussion on fines landed on warning for 1<sup>st</sup> offense (notified by mail), then \$100 for second offense and higher for 3<sup>rd</sup> offense. Will get notice from Vicki when discussion on fines is happening.