

Wed. 2/17/2021  
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Parking Advisory Committee  
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I am writing to object to the request of Loretta Mosca, owner of 26-28 Whittemore St. and landlord to tenants at that address, that Whittemore St. residents be exempted from the current, posted 4-hour parking restriction that applies to Whittemore St. Based on the letter that she sent to Whittemore St. residents, she is proposing this for the convenience of her tenants who, like many residents, have to suffer the inconvenience of tandem parking of multiple cars, and their need to swap cars for someone to get out.

I am also writing/speaking on behalf of 4 of my neighbors, who share my opposition to this request: Bill and Jane Lafferty, Ezra Gray, and Paula Minehan, of 16, 20 and 22 Whittemore St., respectively. Statements and opinions starting with “we”, rather than “I” are those we share.

We agree that that implementation, about 3 years ago, of a 4-hour time limit on Whittemore St. parking, has improved the quality of life for all of us. No longer is the entire street packed solid with cars from early morning until late at night. It is now possible for guests and tradespeople going to homes on Whittemore St. to find parking on Whittemore St., rather than having to park on Mass. Ave. or even further away. In short, all Whittemore St. residents are better off with this limit. We would like to see even more stringent enforcement of the 4-hour restriction than currently occurs.

A bit of background: Whittemore St. is narrow. Parking is restricted to one side only so that emergency vehicles can get through at all times. It dead-ends at the bike path. On both sides, businesses that front Mass. Ave. have their parking lots on Whittemore St. On the side of the street where parking is allowed, there are 7 houses, all but one of them two-families. All the two-families have one-lane driveways requiring tandem parking. In some cases, residents of a single unit have to coordinate their cars’ movements. In others, the unrelated members of the two units in a single structure must do so.

I counted. Driveways and fire hydrants limit legal parking on Whittemore St. to a maximum of 13 normal-sized cars (less if someone’s parking takes 2 spaces or if trucks are involved). Because it is right in Arlington Center, we have noted many types of drivers who parked for longer than 4 hours, sometimes all day, when that was allowed. These included owners and employees of nearby businesses; people who parked all day for free and took public transit to work from there; residents and guests of the adjacent Legacy apartment complex who were unwilling or unable to pay for parking on Legacy property; and people who drove themselves and their bicycles to the bike path and went on bike rides from there. Tradespeople and guests of Whittemore St. residents, who had the most compelling reason to park on Whittemore St., often had to park on Mass. Ave. or further away.

In short, parking on Whittemore St. is scarce.

Ms. Mosca’s letter acknowledges that the 4-hour parking restriction is “extremely useful for the residents of the street”, but “has become a burden to my tenants who live there and have a small tandem driveway like many of you do. They find themselves having to run out and move their cars or have been getting tickets.”

Ms. Mosca is entirely correct. All driveways on the parking side of the street are tandem parking. However, she fails to acknowledge the obvious, that the same restriction applies equally to all residents.

All residents who wish to swap cars would like to temporarily leave one car out on the street, so that the driver of the car on the inside can return, at which point the driver of the car nearest the street can again park in the driveway. However, we note that the 5 cars owned by Ms. Mosca's tenants, plus the additional cars owned by their numerous guests, take up an excessive share of the street's limited parking, leaving little for other residents to temporarily park their cars on the street. In short, the convenience that Ms. Mosca desires for her tenants deprives other residents of Whittemore St. of the same.

Ms. Mosca may complain that her tenants face an additional burden; their driveway is 3 cars deep, not 2, and thus car switching is a greater burden for them than for others. In doing so, Ms. Mosca describes as a curse what she and her tenants should consider a blessing - the additional driveway parking that her tenants have. Most residents' tandem parking allows for only 2 cars per unit, not 3. They cannot own a 3rd car unless they find another place in Arlington to park it overnight.

It is not our place to tell Ms. Mosca how many tenants can rent her property. However, we do insist that neither she nor her tenants be entitled to additional privileges at our expense. She should not expect, nor should the Parking Advisory Committee recommend, that her tenants be given additional parking privileges that deprive other residents of street parking.

Ms. Mosca may note that one side of her property, one with significant area, has limited parking. However, that is the result of an acrimonious legal battle she engaged in with one of her neighbors, and a resulting settlement. Again, the cost of that settlement should be borne by Ms. Mosca and her tenants not shared by other Whittemore St. residents.

Ms. Mosca may state that she is seeking this exemption not only for her tenants, but for all Whittemore St. residents. That is both unnecessary and problematic. It is unnecessary; other residents did not request it, and live within the confines of their available parking and the 4-hour restriction. It is problematic in that it does not specify how a Traffic Control Officer would distinguish between cars owned by Whittemore St. residents and cars owned by others. And, even if a resident street parking sticker (much like that available to Cambridge residents) was available, it is not clear whether other residents would want it, or whether (probably) it would come with the substantial fees associated with Arlington's overnight parking stickers.

I have looked at what I believe to be the Select Board's latest online version of "Parking Policies and Regulations." Overall, the regulations create narrow, limited exceptions to overnight parking rules, to be given only in situations that are exceptional and/or temporary, and even then, only on payment of a substantial fee.

Nowhere in these regulations do I see what Ms. Mosca requests, a way to permanently exempt all residents of Whittemore St. from its 4-hour parking restriction.

I do see, in section II(b), an "On Street Day Time Parking Permit (temporary)". However, it is explicitly both temporary and applicable only "on an individual basis".

I do see, in section II(c), an "On Street Day Time Parking Permit (permanent)". It requires reports from the Police and Fire Departments, a fee of \$160 for the first year, and is renewable yearly for \$75. Perhaps this is what Ms. Mosca is requesting. If so, then all the objections I/we have made previously apply. The fact that the property's longer driveway allows more tenants to own more cars than one finds in other residences on

the street should not require Whittemore St. or the town to give permanently cede any of the limited street parking that is available.

Ms. Mosca has made it clear that for her tenants, this is a matter of convenience, not necessity. Arlington's parking regulations make clear that exceptions to Arlington's parking regulations should be made only as a matter of necessity.

There is a final reason that the Parking Advisory Committee should recommend that the Select Board veto this request. Where possible, there must be consistency between rules for existing structures and for new construction.

Last year, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Arlington Redevelopment Authority gave permission for the owner of 402-404 Mass. Ave. to rebuild the structure there in a manner that would require tandem parking of 2 rows of 3 cars each. The ZBA and ARB did this over the objections of many, including myself, who argued that allowing such a parking scheme was both illegal -and- poor planning, as it would require unrelated residents of multiple units to regularly swap cars.

How can the ZBA and ARB allow such construction when the Parking Advisory Committee gives exceptional on-street parking privileges to people affected by it? Will the Parking Advisory Committee similarly give street parking relief to these and other future tenants of future projects when they too complain about the "inconvenience" of having to swap cars? After all, decisions made for one project set precedent for future projects. More generally, should limited parking function as a de facto limit on how many people can live in a unit, or will the desire of landlords to cram in tenants (likewise the desperation of tenants to make housing more affordable) once again result in more and more street parking in Arlington?

For the many reasons I/we have given, the Parking Advisory Committee should recommend to the Select Board that they not approve this request.

Sincerely,

Aram Hollman