

## BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. E(2)

### AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: March 4, 2003

**TITLE: Roberson Place Traffic Calming and Parking**

<b>DEPARTMENT: PLANNING</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEARING: YES</b> <b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>ATTACHMENTS:</b> <b>A. Ordinance Amending Town Code</b> <b>B. Ordinance Amending Town Code</b> <b>C. Petition and Signatures</b> <b>D. Map</b> <b>E. TAB Recommendation</b>	<b>FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:</b> <b>Dale McKeel, 918-7329</b>

#### PURPOSE

The Town of Carrboro's Residential Traffic Management Plan provides an opportunity for residents to petition for traffic calming and parking regulations on neighborhood streets. The Roberson Place Homeowner's Association has petitioned the Town for several changes within the neighborhood. In review of this matter, Town staff has noted an inconsistency with statutory parking provisions. The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen approve two ordinances amending the Town Code to establish new parking regulations.

#### INFORMATION

In June 2002 the Roberson Place Homeowners Association (HOA) prepared a petition under the Town's Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP) requesting several changes to traffic rules and parking in the Roberson Place neighborhood (Attachment C). The petition specifically requested the following:

##### Traffic Requests

1. Make a three-way stop at the intersection of Sweet Bay Place and Wannamaker Place.
2. Place additional Speed Limit Signs on the upper portion of Sweet Bay Place.
3. Lower the speed limit on the streets in Roberson Place to 20 mph.
4. Make other improvements that town staff recommends to lower speed in the neighborhood.

##### Parking Requests

1. Allow on-street parking on the west side of Purple Leaf Place.
2. Allow on-street parking on the lower portion of Sweet Bay Place and Red Sunset Place.

Please note that the HOA had initially planned to request that a speed hump be placed on Sweet Bay Place. However, the Board of Aldermen instructed staff on May 21, 2002 not to accept petitions for traffic calming devices until the RTMP is revised and/or funding for traffic calming devices is available. When this information was relayed to the HOA, this request was removed from the petition.

The HOA had also originally proposed that the access at the south end of Purple Leaf Place (adjacent to the Rogers-Triem property) be limited to emergency vehicles. However, this request was removed from the petition after Town staff informed the HOA that the current access control was a condition of the Conditional Use Permit for Roberson Place and could not be changed via an RTMP petition.

## ANALYSIS OF REQUESTS

The Town's Fire, Planning, Police, and Public Works Departments have worked closely with the HOA to evaluate the requests. The following is a summary of the changes requested by the neighborhood association and analysis by Town staff:

### Traffic Requests

1. Make a three-way stop at the intersection of Sweet Bay Place and Wannamaker Place. Based on a review of traffic engineering criteria, a review of traffic crash data provided by the Carrboro Police Department, and consultation with the Town Engineer, Town staff does not support creating a three-way stop at this intersection. A three-way stop is not warranted based on traffic engineering criteria. The primary reference for the criteria is the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Research has found that multi-way stops are not effective at controlling speeds in residential neighborhoods. Among the reasons stated in this research are the following: (1) Stop compliance is poor at unwarranted multi-way stop signs. This is based on the drivers feeling that the signs have no traffic control purpose. There is little reason to yield the right-of-way because there are usually no vehicles on the minor street; (2) Before-After studies show multi-way stop signs do not reduce speeds on residential streets; (3) Unwarranted multi-way stops lead to increased speed some distance from intersections. The studies hypothesize that motorists are making up the time they lost at the "unnecessary" stop sign; (4) Multi-way stop signs have high operating costs based on vehicle operating costs, vehicular travel times, fuel consumption, and increased vehicle emissions.

Please note that the Public Works department has placed signs indicating that parking is not allowed within 25 feet of the intersection of curb lines, as specified in N.C. General Statutes 20-162. This will help to ensure visibility for motorists approaching the intersection. Please note that this is a statutory requirement, that our ordinance currently conflicts with it, and that a Town Code amendment is needed and has been prepared (Attachment B).

2. Place additional Speed Limit Signs on the upper portion of Sweet Bay Place. The Public Works Department has indicated that they believe additional speed limit signs can be placed on Sweet Bay Place. The placement of speed limit signs will be coordinated with the placement of parking signs. Note that the HOA and town staff have commented on the preponderance of signs already in the neighborhood. Town staff is discussing ways to convey the necessary information as unobtrusively as possible.
3. Lower the speed limits on the streets in Roberson Place to 20 mph. Based on a review of traffic engineering criteria and consultation with the Town Engineer, there does not appear to be

justification for reducing the speed limit to 20 mph from 25 mph. The primary reference for the engineering standards is the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). In addition, studies by the Federal Highway Administration and others have found that posting lower speed limits does not decrease motorist's speeds.

The 20-mph speed limit has traditionally been reserved in Carrboro for streets in the downtown. However, there are 20-mph speed limits on both Oak Avenue and Poplar Avenue, but these are **due to** narrow streets close to downtown that lack sidewalks.

Town staff measured traffic speeds on Sweet Bay Place in April 2002. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed on some portions of Sweet Bay Place was 29 to 30 mph. The “85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed” is that speed at or below which 85 percent of the vehicles were moving. For instance, if the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is 30 mph, then 85 percent of the vehicles were going 30 mph or lower, while 15 percent of the vehicles were going faster than 30 mph.

Town staff recommends not making a change to the speed limit at this time. While the speeds on Sweet Bay Place are a concern, it is unlikely that lowering the speed limit will reduce driving speeds. It should also be noted that many of the speeding vehicles are driven by residents of the neighborhood itself, and the HOA can consider efforts to encourage residents to slow down.

4. Make other improvements that town staff recommends to lower speed in the neighborhood. As stated above, the HOA should consider efforts to encourage residents to slow down. In addition, it is anticipated that additional on-street parking will have a traffic-calming effect on Sweet Bay Place (see below). Town staff will monitor speeds after on-street parking is introduced and make additional recommendations.

#### Parking Requests

1. Purple Leaf Place and Red Sunset Place. The HOA requested that on-street parking be allowed on these streets. However, the state fire code indicates that a 20-foot-wide fire access lane is needed on public streets. Purple Leaf Place and Red Sunset Place are not wide enough to accommodate on-street parking and allow for a fire access lane (both streets are 20 feet from curbface to curbface). Therefore, town staff recommends that on-street parking not be allowed on Purple Leaf Place and Red Sunset Place.
2. Lower Portion of Sweet Bay Place. The HOA also requested that on-street parking be allowed on one side of the portion of Sweet Bay Place south of Wannamaker Place. Because this section of street is 26-feet wide from curbface to curbface, Town staff support allowing parking on the west side of the street. However, because there is a significant curve in the street, Town staff will closely monitor the on-street parking to ensure that fire access is maintained.
3. Upper Portion of Sweet Bay Place. The HOA did not request on-street parking on the portion of Sweet Bay between Roberson Street and the area where parking is currently allowed. However, Town staff support allowing parking on the east side of the street. In addition, Town staff recommends that parking in this area be limited to two hours from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This area will provide additional on-street parking for downtown, as recommended by the Parking Task Force, and will also provide parking for residents and visitors of Roberson Place. A separate ordinance making this change will be brought to the Board of Aldermen for consideration in the near future.

## **DESCRIPTION OF DRAFT ORDINANCES AMENDING THE TOWN CODE**

An ordinance that amends the Town Code in accordance with staff recommendations has been prepared (Attachments A and B). The ordinance provisions are as follows:

1. The ordinance in Attachment A amends the Town Code to allow on-street parking on the west side of Sweet Bay Place between Wannamaker Place and Red Sunset Place.
2. The ordinance in Attachment B brings the Town's parking requirements near intersections in accord with the N.C. General Statutes.

## **SUMMARY OF TAB REVIEW/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) reviewed this request on February 13. The recommendation adopted by the TAB states that the TAB "supports the staff recommendations regarding the requests in the petition of the Roberson Place Homeowner's Association except that the TAB supports reducing the speed limit to 20 mph from 25 mph." In making this recommendation, the TAB cited the language in the MUTCD that says other factors may be considered in setting speed limits, including "roadside development and environment" and "parking practices and pedestrian activity." The TAB discussed that a lower speed limit is justified because of the density of development, the level of pedestrian activity, and on-street parking.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the ordinance amending the Town Code to allow additional on-street parking on Sweet Bay Place (Attachment A). The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the ordinance bringing the Town's parking requirements near intersections in accord with the N.C. General Statutes (Attachment B).