
The FEDERALIST

The Federal Street Neighborhood Association is a registered, non-profit group which serves the residents of the Federal Street Neighborhood

Vol. 14

June 2003

Neighborhood Roundup

SPECIAL EVENTS

Traffic/Speeding/Cut-throughs

Regina Flynn will be organizing an on-site meeting with Captain Callahan in the next few weeks regarding this important issue. We will study the corner by Murphy's Funeral Home and look at that intersection to be the Primary Traffic Light (red/yellow/gree/pedestrian) instead of the light in front of Jerry's and the Witch House.

Utilizing this traffic light, which is currently just flashing yellow, would make the area much more pedestrian friendly and would slow the traffic coming over the bridge. In addition to this light change, we are still reviewing proposals for a brick/cobble crosswalk at the top of Federal Street to help slow speeders as well. See related story, page 3.

Development issues coming up

Neighbors are asked to consider the development issues that are now happening. Look for meetings on the following subjects:

Courthouse/MBTA Garage
Self Storage
Bypass Road
Boston Street Initiative
69 Boston Street ZBA Hearing
Universal Steel
Franklin Street Parcel

Federal Street School - Lease is up this year, not renewed by the City of Salem

Improvements under way

As you know, the FSNA Subcommittee for Neighborhood Improvements has been patiently waiting for the scheduling of brick sidewalk restoration. Due to limited City resources and budgets, we are limited to the amount of work that will be projected, so we have decided on a "most bang for the buck" format.

The new house at 13 Lynn Street has just received a brick sidewalk as has the "empty crater" in front of 90-92 Federal. The City promises to do the best job they can to match the brick and curbing, and will supply trees that will help to beautify our streetscape. The next project proposed is to remove the asphalt sidewalk diagonally across the street from the Plant Branch, alongside Suzie and Tom's house. Suzie was on hand during the engineering meeting and was able to provide her opinion and preferences with respect to the materials, design and layout.

We are confident that this will be a dramatic improvement to this corner. We will continue to review the other areas proposed for improvement that were provided to us by Ziggy and Martha using our "bang for the buck" review and will keep you informed as we move along.

MBTA Blue Line-to-Salem review

A Review of the North Shore Transit Improvements Study will be held on **Wednesday, June 25** from 6 to 7:30 p.m at the Salem State College Enterprise Center (121 Loring Ave.) See related story below.

North River Canal Working Group

The final meeting of the North River Canal Corridor Master Plan Working Group will take place July 2. The public is invited to attend. For more information and history of the issue, log on to www.salemcitizens.org.

Come and speak your mind at the Blue Line review

A full turnout of the Federal Street Neighborhood is needed to attend a meeting chaired by the Mass. Bay Transportation Authority on Wednesday, June 25, at 6 p.m. at the Enterprise Center at Salem State College, 121 Loring Ave. The Subject is a Blue Line extension to Salem.

Both the South Salem Neighborhood Association and the FSNA are now on record as to being opposed to any plan or decision that would extend the Blue Line to Salem. We join the City Council order of March 13, 2003, which supports

1.) improving and enhancing the existing commuter rail transit service to the community by way

of more frequent service and modern passenger cars and

2.) constructing a link between the current commuter rail line and the Blue Line in Lynn or Revere. The Council does not support extension of the Blue Line into Salem.

There are many negatives which are associated with such an extension. These can be viewed at www.salemcitizens.org. But the overriding concern is that an estimated 3,000 additional cars would be entering and exiting Salem each day, strangling an already traffic-gridlocked city. As the last station on the line, Salem would draw commuters from all over the

North Shore. We would become "Wonderland North."

It is important to have a huge public outcry at this upcoming meeting to remove this atrocious transportation alternative from consideration.

One question that has been raised that needs to be asked is, "Why can't the MBTA enlarge/improve the existing tunnel with all of these resources which in turn will allow the larger double-decker train cars to come to Salem and North as well?"

If you should have ANY questions or concerns about the Blue Line extending to Salem, THIS IS THE MEETING FOR YOU TO ATTEND AND SPEAK UP.

Stress-down Fridays/Saturday night soirees proposed

For all of you who braved the soggy FSNA block party, our thanks and our commendations to your fortitude. We currently have a sizable number of hamburgers and buns in freezer storage, as well as beverages, and bags of chips leftover from the event. So we have decided to introduce "Stress-Down Fridays" for week-end wind downs and "Saturday Night Soirees" for those who haven't made plans for that night. Weather forecasts and free night availability will be the decision makers for these impromptu, casual, neighborhood-involved gatherings.

They will be held in the back yard at 106 Federal, the home of Suzie Weldon and Tom Frary (corner of Federal and Beckford). Look for a notice posted at the Federal St./Beckford St. Square or check your emails to see when these events will be taking place. Bring your choice of beverage, and while not required, anything that you may want to contribute to enhance the menu beyond burgers and chips (simple finger food, an easy side, or dessert).

We'll let it evolve on it own and become what it may and keep the party going. Who knows, this may be the start of something!

*Pam McKee, Jane Arlander,
and Suzie Weldon*

*(In the meantime,
try this chuckle for the day:)*

A curious fellow died one day and found himself waiting in the long line of judgment. As he stood there he noticed that some souls were allowed to march right through the pearly gates into Heaven. Others though, were led over to Satan who threw them into the burning pit. But every so often, instead of hurling a poor soul into the fire, Satan would toss a soul off to one side into a small pile. After watching Satan do this several times, the fellow's curiosity got the best of him.

So he strolled over and asked Satan what he was doing. "Excuse me, Prince of Darkness," he said. "I'm waiting in line for judgment, but I couldn't help wondering, why are you tossing those people aside instead of flinging them into the Fires of Hell with the others?" "Ah, THOSE . . ." Satan said with a groan. "They're all from New England. They're still too cold and wet to burn."

BLOCK PARTY A SOGGY SUCCESS!



Despite a gentle spring rain, the delicious food and friendly conversation won the day and made the first annual FSNA block party a great success.

PHOTOS BY DAVID HART

Become a member of Federal Street Neighborhood Association

Throughout 2002, FSNA has provided our monthly newsletter, *The Federalist*, to over 240 residences in the greater Federal Street area. As you've read, there are a few neighbors at the core of the operations who try to keep you informed and in touch with what is going on in our neighborhood. We know that many people have families and are

busy trying to make ends meet, so if you cannot help by volunteering your time, please join us by filling out the membership form below. Keep in mind that the annual dues help to cover the administrative costs (including the newsletter) that keep our group going. Eventually, we'd like to provide the newsletter via e-mail as well, so, if you

like that concept and have the capabilities, provide your e-mail address below. The Federal Street Neighborhood Association is also connected to a Web site where you can find up-to-date meeting schedules and citywide issues being addressed. Simply go to www.salemcityzens.org.

Name _____

Address _____ e-mail _____

Cost of a membership:

\$7 for an individual

\$10 per family

Please make your check payable to the Federal Street Neighborhood Association, and mail it to David Hart, FSNA Treasurer, 104 Federal Street, Salem, Mass. 01970.

FSNA may ask for anti-speeder surveillance

Editor's note: As most of you know, the Federal Street Neighborhood Association has been VERY interested in curbing the volume of traffic that uses our street as a cut-through speedway. Quality of Life and Public Safety are our main focus for 2003.

We've discussed and proposed numerous directional

changes, which we will begin to implement (reverse Beckford Street, reverse Carpenter Street, and close-off the Lynn/River Street "ramp") on a test basis.

In addition to the directional changes, we will meet with the City on-site at the Essex Street/North Street intersection traffic light and review

the opportunity to allow a left-hand turn off onto Essex Street, off of North Street as you are coming from Riley Plaza. This would allow those vehicles who are heading to Highland Avenue a more direct route instead of having to come down to make a left onto Federal and cut-through.

With respect to speeding, the letter below has been composed as a rough draft proposal to be sent to Congressman Tierney on our behalf. Please feel free to provide commentary, advice, and opinions to Stan Schwartz, 143 Federal St., szwartz@us.ibm.com, 978-745-1137.

Dear Congressman Tierney,

We would like to ask for your help on an issue that affects most Americans in general and Salemites and other of your constituents specifically: The dangers of speeding. Salem and the surrounding towns have severe speeding problems, and we have fewer and fewer police resources to effect enforcement, so the problem is getting worse. However, we can create legislation that improves enforcement by eliminating some of the legacy roadblocks to the state-of-the-art technology that we wish to deploy.

Speeding is very dangerous, more dangerous than most people think, and not just to motorists. In 2000, 37% of the roughly 40,000 road fatalities were due to speeding (DOT), and 44 percent of those deaths took place on streets with speed limits of less than 50mph, streets in places like Salem. Twenty-five percent of those fatalities were passengers, and 14 percent were pedestrians. These statistics are fatalities only — millions of people are injured by speeding accidents every year as well.

Drunken drivers accounted for 39 percent of fatalities in 2000, rough-

ly the same percentage as speeding. Congress has spent hundreds of millions, probably billions, of dollars on drunken-driving prevention, yet very little is done at the national level to address speeding. But, there is something very simple that Congress could do that would accomplish a lot — set a national legal precedent for the use of automated speeding cameras. These cameras are in use around the world in more advanced countries, including the UK, Australia, and parts of the US. They are very effective.

We have researched the topic carefully, met with the Salem Mayor's office, the Salem Police Chief, and the Boston Transportation Department in an effort to learn more, in the hopes that we could solve our chronic speeding problem with a proven technological solution without turning to our legislators. Unfortunately, as you might expect, bureaucracy, cronyism, and an anachronistic view of law enforcement forces us to appeal to you.

We will try to spell out for you why we think we have a good proposal, how the latest technology speeding cameras offer a compelling value, and what our oppo-

nents' arguments are the following:

- Speeding cameras catch all violators. A single policeman parked in a cruiser can but hope to catch and process only a few violators per hour, as many other speeders pass the speed trap scot-free.
- Speeding cameras are small and easy to hide. They deter speeders even where they are not deployed because they are seemingly ubiquitous. In fact, signage (warning of speeding cameras) alone causes lower average speeds. There are numerous studies that support this conclusion. If motorists do not know where the cameras are, they will obey the speed limits everywhere. In fact, some communities use a percentage of dummy cameras to keep costs down, using the same premise that perception is none-tenths of the battle.
- Speeding cameras are always on duty. They catch speeders even when traffic levels are light, like very late at night, and the odds of encountering a police-operated speed trap are low. This capability means that motorists cannot be selective about compliance.
- Speeding cameras are exceedingly cost effective as a result, and have material impact on speeding inci-

FSNA may ask for anti-speeder surveillance

dence where they are deployed. During a period when most municipalities are suffering from severe budget constraints, speeding cameras are excellent values for taxpayers — taxpayers who often see speeding enforcement reduced or eliminated due to the same budget issues. Salem has almost no money to “waste” on speeders right now, yet speeders routinely rip down our small streets at 20 miles an hour or more over the speed limit while children are out playing after school.

There are numerous other advantages, but this list should be sufficient to pique your interest. There are two groups who principally oppose this concept, and one legislative issue to consider:

- Police groups in general are opposed to this technology, because unions think that these devices are replacing humans with machines. However, our view is that:

1. The basic right to have safe streets: The average taxpayer has had his police support so drastically cut that a cost-efficient alternative should absolutely be considered. The police are no longer capable of providing the blanket of safety that citizens have a right to. In Salem, police manpower is down by 1/3, and the Chief simply does not have the people to set up speed traps, monitor resident parking, or arrest blatant noise violators. Ironically, these quality of life issues are the police functions that most citizens value most. We citizens should not have to suffer if there is an easy and cheap alternative. We should absolutely be able to implement cutting edge solutions if they

present the best cost/benefit outcome, especially since it is our tax money being spent.

2. Extra revenues fund more police jobs: Furthermore, we are of the belief that since speeding cameras are so effective, they will generate many multiples of revenue compared to a manned speed trap, and therefore, this technology will actually permit police departments to fund more officers, not fewer. Most officers would rather be on the beat than sitting in a speed trap anyway. We think that the revenue generation argument is a strong one and should assuage most police groups.

- Triple A (American Automobile Association) is also somewhat vocal on this subject. Supposedly it objects to “violation of privacy”, as motorists’ photos are taken if they are speeding.

We see this as a non-issue, as the right political answer might be: “don’t break the law, and you will not be photographed.” AAA is worried that photos from speeding cams might be used for other applications, such as in court to substantiate a location and time for a defendant. Again, we think that the needs of the average citizen to enjoy a safe roadway far outweigh these privacy considerations, but we wanted you to know as a legislator that you may hear from this group. We as citizens do not support the AAA view at all.

- The legislative challenge is one of precedent. Massachusetts does allow stop light cameras at present, but the municipalities we talked to said that there is no legal precedent in Massachusetts to punish a speed-

ing camera violator, so no towns or cities have seriously looked at the technology, although they would like to. In fact, there may be an old state law that requires a police officer to witness the violation for a motorist to be punished for speeding, which would preclude camera use without a special exception or a federal law.

There are states in the country that do permit and use these devices. We would guess that the statistics would be quite impressive, from a cost/benefit standpoint, from a revenue generation standpoint, and from a motorist compliance standpoint (e.g. lowering average speeds).

There are still holdouts like Massachusetts, though, so what we think we need is a national law that permits the use of these cameras anywhere in the US to catch speeders, e.g. a law that says that the technology works and can be used to prosecute speeders. Such a law would supercede any labor-based or other bureaucratic effort to limit their use, which is what we face in Massachusetts. Citizens clearly are in support of any measure that improves our safety.

In conclusion, we do not think that taxpayers should suffer when there is a logical, effective, and easy-to-implement solution that we all want to deploy. More importantly, this law would permit cash-strapped towns to address one of the biggest dangers to society while dedicating scarce police resources to better use. We are strongly in support of such a measure and hope that you agree that it deserves consideration.

Sincerely,

**The Federal Street
Neighborhood Association,
Salem, Massachusetts**

