



MEETING DATE: 4/4/11
ITEM NO: 7

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: MARCH 28, 2011

TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: GREG LARSON, TOWN MANAGER

SUBJECT: CHARTER OAKS DRIVE NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC ACCESS AT LARK AVENUE

- A. ACCEPT REPORT REGARDING CURRENT STATUS OF STAFF WORK IN ADDRESSING NEIGHBORHOOD REQUESTS.
- B. DIRECT STAFF TO INCLUDE THE REQUESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE UPCOMING LARK AVENUE TRAFFIC ANALYSIS.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. Accept report regarding current status of staff work in addressing neighborhood requests.
- 2. Direct staff to include the requested traffic safety improvements in the upcoming Lark Avenue Traffic Analysis.

BACKGROUND:

Charter Oaks Drive is a residential street that is located off of Lark Avenue adjacent to the Los Gatos Creek Trail. The street is a cul-de-sac which serves as the access to the Charter Oaks townhouse neighborhood and also provides access to two Town-owned parking lots that serve the Los Gatos Creek Trail. During the past year, the Town received several requests from the Charter Oaks Neighborhood Home Owner Association (HOA) for improvements on a wide range of topics related to this HOA and Charter Oaks Drive.

Based on the initial correspondence from the HOA, it was requested that staff consider and evaluate several issues in and around Charter Oaks Drive. The list included consideration of the following items: the ownership and maintenance of the two parking lots on Charter Oaks Drive; the condition of street name signs serving the area; the aesthetics and visibility regarding

PREPARED BY: TODD CAPURSO
Director of Parks and Public Works

Reviewed by: JS Assistant Town Manager AV Town Attorney _____ Clerk Administrator
SC Finance _____ Community Development

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BACKGROUND (cont'd.):

vegetation along the road; and improving traffic/driver safety at the Charter Oaks/Lark Avenue intersection.

After subsequent communications between the Town and the HOA as well as additional research, it was determined that the two parking lots next to Charter Oaks Drive, (constructed on Town property) were to be maintained by the HOA for a period of 30 years. The HOA presented information to staff that the 30 year maintenance period had, in fact, lapsed and the Town should now take on the maintenance responsibility for these two parking lots. Staff concurred with this finding and subsequently performed a resurfacing and restriping of the parking lots, bringing them back up to a serviceable condition. Additionally, new street name signs were installed and tree trimming/brush clearing was performed to improve the visibility and overall aesthetics of Charter Oaks Drive. After addressing the HOA requests regarding the parking lots, vegetation, and signage, staff has focused its efforts on the traffic issues on Charter Oaks Drive at Lark Avenue.

Representatives from the HOA also requested that the Town consider changes to the dedicated left turn lane on Lark Avenue between the Los Gatos Creek Bridge and the business park located at Lark Avenue and University Avenue (where Wagig is located). The original request from the HOA was to re-designate the dedicated left turn lane pocket as a merge lane for drivers making a left turn from Charter Oaks Drive to eastbound Lark Avenue.

DISCUSSION:

The primary concern expressed by the HOA is with regard to left turn movements in and out of Charter Oaks Drive to Lark Avenue. The section of Lark Avenue, from Winchester Boulevard to the bridge over Los Gatos Creek, primarily serves commercial properties and office buildings with Charter Oaks Drive being the only residential neighborhood that uses Lark Avenue as its access route.

Lark Avenue has two travel lanes in each direction, east and west, and has a middle lane that is striped specifically for left turn movements into properties along the south side of the street. This middle lane is also used as a transition lane for left turn movements to University Avenue and Winchester Boulevard at their intersections with Lark Avenue. The close proximity of intersections of Charter Oaks Drive, University Avenue and Winchester Boulevard at Lark Avenue creates challenges in accommodating standard and safe traffic lane configurations.

Staff has dedicated a considerable amount of resources in evaluating the traffic movements in and out of Charter Oaks Drive to and from Lark Avenue. Traffic counts and a speed survey were taken at multiple times, in addition to turning movement wait time counts and analysis. Staff had made the determination that the current lane configurations and striping are adequate and the wait time for left turning movements are within acceptable standards. Any changes to the current configurations could have unintended impacts to other intersections and commercial property driveways and are not recommended at this time.

DISCUSSION (cont.):

This recommendation was communicated (with back up data and analysis) to the HOA (Attachment 1). Representatives from the HOA did not concur with the recommendation and have indicated that the data and analysis are not representative of their everyday experiences. In response, the HOA has suggested several proposals for consideration. The proposals are as follows:

1. Install a traffic signal system or stop signs on Lark Avenue at Charter Oaks Drive. Staff does not recommend this proposal due to the potentially significant impact to the flow of traffic on Lark Avenue. This is a relatively high-cost proposal without commensurate benefit. This option becomes even less feasible if the Town moves forward with a new traffic signal at Lark and University.
2. Remove the existing left turn pocket on Lark Avenue entering the Wagic parking lot. Re-stripe this area as a dedicated merge lane for the left turn movements out of Charter Oaks Drive onto eastbound Lark. The westbound left turn movements from Lark Avenue into the Wagic parking lot would be restricted and traffic would need to be re-routed to the University Avenue intersection. Staff does not recommend this proposal as a stand-alone project. If this concept is to be implemented, the staff recommendation is to first include this element for evaluation as part of a Lark Avenue/University Avenue street traffic signalization project.
3. Remove existing left turn pocket on Lark Avenue entering the Wagic parking lot. Re-stripe this area as a median 2-way left turn lane. This scenario, although implemented in other areas of Town, creates the potential for traffic conflicts. Staff also does not recommend this as a stand-alone project. If this concept is to be implemented, the staff recommendation is to first include this element for evaluation as part of a Lark Avenue/University Avenue street traffic signalization project.

In conjunction with the construction of the new Los Gatos Creekside Sports Park on University Avenue, south of the Lark Avenue intersection, staff had previously recommended a detailed analysis by a consulting firm for the traffic operations of Lark Avenue from Winchester Boulevard to Charter Oaks Drive. As part of the FY 2010/11 mid-year budget adjustments, Town Council approved the allocation of funds from the Town's traffic mitigation fund for performing the engineering analysis and design of any improvements on this section of Lark Avenue. Staff has already issued a request for proposals and has received three proposals, all from reputable firms. Staff will be presenting a report to award the engineering design contract to Council on May 2, 2011, if required. (If the cost is below \$50,000, staff will proceed with a Manager's award.) The results of the study are expected to be available to staff in July 2011.

Staff recommends including both the second and third options above to be evaluated as an early part of the traffic operation study. In the event that the analysis provides a recommendation for either of these options, staff recommends moving forward with the improvements, which could be performed 30 to 60 days thereafter.

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DISCUSSION (cont.):

The resources required to implement options two or three are estimated at approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000. This is a relatively high cost for a short span of work, mainly due to thermoplastic markings currently in place on Lark Avenue and the relatively high mobilization costs associated with this type of work. Before a new striping scheme can be implemented, the current ones must be removed (sand blasted) and disposed of.

At this point in the fiscal year, the Town has already used all of the resources allocated for re-striping work this year. However, this new work could be performed in early FY 2011/12. If the work were to be performed independent of the study, it would most likely be performed in July/August. If the scenarios were to be included as part of the traffic study, the recommended layout could be implemented in the August/September timeframe.

CONCLUSION:

Staff proposes including the two options described above in the Lark Avenue Traffic Analysis. Should one of those options be recommended as a result of the analysis, staff will implement in the August/September timeframe and report back to Council. In the event that the analysis recommends an alternate solution, staff will return to Council with the results for consideration and further direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

None.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no fiscal impacts at this time. Should staff move forward with one of the two striping alignments being considered, the improvements will be funded through the Town's annual allocation for street re-striping. The Town's Proposed Capital Budget for 2011/12 allocates \$25,000 for this purpose.

Attachment:

1. Letter to Charter Oaks Home Owner's Association dated August 17, 2010.



Town of Los Gatos

Parks & Public Works
41 Miles Avenue
Los Gatos, CA 95030
(408) 399-5770

August 17, 2010

Joanne Bosomworth
Charter Oaks Home Owner's Association
303 Willow Hill Court
Los Gatos, CA 95032

RE: Charter Oaks Parking and Traffic Issues

Dear Ms. Bosomworth,

Thank you for your inquiry concerning parking and traffic issues on Charter Oaks Drive. Here is the outcome for each item you brought forward after review from Parks and Public Works staff.

- Status of the two parking lots along the east side of Charter Oaks Drive: These are Town-owned public parking lots as stated in the documents you provided. These two parking lots are now maintained, managed and enforced by Town. Signage and striping will be updated as appropriate. Both lots will be seal coated and restriped before the end of the year.
- Street name signs: Faded/outdated street name signs will be replaced with new signs and will be relocated to a location more visible to drivers.
- Painting of street light pole: At this time, the Town does not provide this service. Light pole repainting has been eliminated due to a lack of resources.
- Re-designating existing westbound left-turn lane on Lark Avenue at Charter Oaks intersection as a merge lane for exiting Charter Oaks Drive: Staff has observed traffic entering Lark Avenue from Charter Oaks Drive during weekday morning and evening commute hours. There were 10 vehicles turning left and 14 vehicles turning right from 7:45 to 8:30 AM. The average stopped delay was 21 seconds and 5 seconds per vehicle for the left-turn and right-turn vehicles, respectively. There were 10 vehicles turning left and 8 vehicles turning right from 5 PM to 5:30 PM. The average stopped delay was 33 seconds and 5 seconds per vehicle for the left-turn and right-turn vehicles, respectively. Based on this information, staff does not believe there is a justification for taking away the existing westbound left-turn pocket and re-designating it as a merge lane for exiting Charter Oaks Drive. The westbound left-turn vehicles waiting to turn left into the parking lot would be exposed to through traffic without the left-turn lane. It is possible traffic may be busier when schools are in session. Staff will re-visit the intersection when the summer break is over.

- Accident of August 2, 2010 at the Lark/Charter Oaks intersection that you brought to our attention: Staff has reviewed the police accident report. According to the report, the driver #1 from westbound Lark was stopped in the left turn lane waiting to turn into the parking lot. The driver #2 from Charter Oaks looked left and right on Lark Avenue and did not see the car stopped in the left turn pocket. The driver #2 then proceeded into the intersection and hit the car in the left turn lane. It appears this accident was caused by driver error. This is not justification for re-designating the left-turn lane.
- Parking enforcement: Police Department will enforce parking regulation.

Once again, thank you for bringing these issues forward. Should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss any of these items in further detail, please feel free to contact me either at 399-5770 or tcapurso@losgatosca.gov Alternatively, you can also contact Jessy Pu, Traffic Engineer, at 395-2859, if you have any questions regarding the traffic-specific issues.

Sincerely,



Todd Capurso
Director of Parks and Public Works

Cc: Kevin Rohani, Town Engineer
Steve Regan, Public Works Superintendent
Jessy Pu, Traffic Engineer
Stephen Walpole, Police Department