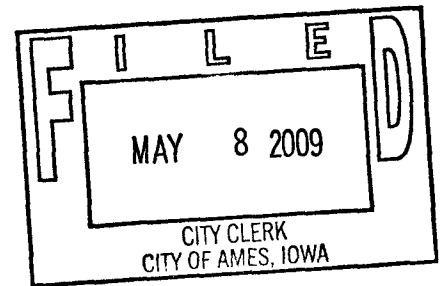


May 7, 2009



Mayor Campbell and Members of the Ames City Council:

This letter is in response to the statement of Susan Wallace, House Director of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority, at the April 14, 2009 meeting of the Ames City Council. Ms. Wallace does not like the parking regulations on Pearson Avenue and Greeley Street, and she asked the Council to review these regulations and consider changing them. I strongly believe such a review is unnecessary and that there is no need to consider any change in the existing regulations.

First of all, Ms. Wallace is relatively new to Ames and may not understand that a thorough and comprehensive review of these parking regulations was conducted exactly three years ago. This review involved residents of both high and low density residential areas, the Ames Police Dept., University representatives, and City Staff. Parking rules on nearly every street immediately south of ISU and east of Campustown were reviewed. Many, many people invested countless hours in committee meetings, independent research, and public testimony to reach conclusions that would best serve all of the affected neighborhoods. None of this work should be taken lightly, and there is no evidence to suggest that the issues should be restudied again so soon.

After this lengthy process, the Ames City Council made some changes to regulations in high density residential areas, but reaffirmed regulations in low density residential areas, including the Pearson Avenue parking regulations which, according to Ames City Code, have been in place since 1968.

The Problem of Storage Parking

The fundamental issue, then and now, is that high density and low density residential zones have different parking needs. High density areas need long-term storage parking. Low density areas need turnover parking. Low density areas such as Pearson Avenue need the ability to accommodate short-term visitors, a need which is undermined by long term storage parking. Some people may view "storage parking" simply as parking a car on the street and not moving it for multiple days. This view is much too limited. Storage parking also occurs when, at some designated time, an individual moves a car from one side of the street to the other and leaves it for another 24 hours. A high degree of storage parking means there is little turnover of available spaces, and therefore spaces are not available for low-density area residents, their guests, tradesmen, commuter students, and other people who may need short-term on-street parking.

The prohibition of parking on Pearson Avenue from 2 am to 6 am is the low density neighborhood's core defense against unlimited storage parking. This regulation is designed to insure that every car has an overnight, off-street home.

The Problem of Accidents

If cars are parked overnight on Pearson Avenue there will be a serious accident involving the smashing of a parked car and possibly the serious injury or death of the driver that speeds through the area. In the 2006 parking review, accident data was reviewed, complete with photos of downed tree incidents and the police report on a smashed street light pole.

I live at 419 Pearson Avenue and a quick look at the layout of Pearson Avenue shows there is a sharp curve starting right at 419 Pearson down to Country Club Blvd. I have lived at this address for 27 years and have witnessed or heard in the dark of night about 2 major accidents in this location every year. Vehicles come from Ash heading for Country Club Blvd. at excessive rates of speed and do not see the curve quickly enough. They hit the light pole or the trees in the parking at 425 Pearson and knock them down. Usually these accidents are hit and run, if the car or truck is still operable. Therefore, the accident is not reported by the driver and a police report is not made, perhaps due to the possibility of alcohol being involved. There are some official reports of hitting the trees by the owner of the property at 425 Pearson. The city also has a report on file of the light pole being replaced in front of 419 Pearson and the installation of a replacement curve sign on the pole. This sign has not successfully alerted drivers to the impending curve. Currently, this sign has vanished again and the city has been notified of the need for replacement.

Below is an accident scene at 425 Pearson Avenue.



425 Pearson Avenue

Following are the results of a nighttime accident which easily could have been more serious if parked cars had been involved.



425 Pearson Avenue

The owners of the property at 425 Pearson about 15 years ago placed a large boulder between the street and their newly planted tree, which was replacing the tree hit by a speeding car. The city had the

property owners remove the boulder protecting the tree because the city said it was too dangerous. If a car hit the large rock it could cause serious injury to the car and the driver. The city recognized at the time that this is a serious life threatening location.

I suggest that if cars are allowed to park overnight on this part of Pearson Avenue there will be a serious accident involving a parked car and serious injury or death may result for the driver of the speeding vehicle. Hitting a parked car is far more dangerous than hitting newly planted trees or a street light. These hit and run accidents always occur late at night and are probably alcohol related. The driver's reaction time is not quick enough to prevent the accident.

Increasing amounts of overnight and storage parking results in an impassable street.

There are some who believe that commuter patterns have changed and fewer people are using the neighborhood streets for longer-term parking. This observation fails to consider the construction – completed, ongoing and future – at Sunset and Beach, Sunset and Gray, and on Beach. Current city code for these 3 new high-rise apartments has a parking space requirement per bedroom. Almost every renter has a car. These bedrooms shared by two people will be significantly short of parking. And, that is before you consider the possibility of overnight guests and parties. This lack of parking space for the renters in these new units will cause some renters to seek storage parking on the streets near the buildings. They will gravitate around the corner to Pearson Avenue. If changes are made on Pearson Avenue and other streets in this area zoned for single family homes, these streets will become the new free vehicle storage lots for the Sunset, Gray and Beach mega apartment complexes.

Alternate side parking is the current regulation. However, on most game days this regulation is difficult to enforce. The street is narrow and cars coming in opposite directions often have to slam on their brakes to prevent a head-on crash. This picture was taken at 419 Pearson on a game day. If storage parking were allowed, it is expected Pearson Ave. would look like this much more often.



There are other streets in the general area, such as Lynn Avenue, that have far more restrictive regulations than the alternate side regulations and no 2am to 6am parking which are in effect for Pearson Avenue. For example, Lynn Avenue has 5 organized living units on it, with another at the corner of Lynn and Knapp. Each of these groups has solved their own parking problems, despite the fact that no parking is allowed on Lynn Avenue, either side, day or night, anytime. The Gamma Phi Beta parking problem is one that can be solved. Other high density residential living units in the university impacted areas have found creative solutions to exactly the same parking concerns. The changing of city regulations will not solve their problem.


RECOMMENDATION:

Do not allow overnight storage parking anywhere on Pearson Avenue. Continue to prohibit parking on both sides of Pearson Avenue from 2 AM to 6 AM. The current restrictions are not burdensome for any reasonable users. Continue the 6-hour time limits.

Parking regulations should reflect the unique contours of the land and the character of the neighborhood. No one on the low density side of Pearson is suggesting any changes, only one person in the high density zone.” On Pearson Avenue this is a major safety issue for the city, as well as a storage parking issue. History does repeat itself, and there is a long history of night time hit and run accidents at this precise location.

The existing parking regulations on Pearson Avenue have been reaffirmed by the Ames City Council as the best solution for all parties concerned. If Ms. Wallace and the Gamma Phi Beta house needs assistance from the neighborhood in solving their parking issues, neighbors are ready and willing to help them find solutions. We are willing to work together for solutions that will actually work for both the families on Pearson and the residents of Gamma Phi. We are a strong neighborhood and want to continue to be that way.

Sincerely,


Joe Rippetoe
419 Pearson Avenue
292-5490