

Stockade Association
32 Washington Avenue, Suite 100
Schenectady, NY 12305

February 8, 2021

Mayor Gary R. McCarthy and City Council
City Hall, 105 Jay Street
Schenectady, NY 12305

Re: Petition to Eliminate Priority Street, Two-Hour Parking and Single-Side Parking Designations For Union Street Between Erie Boulevard And Washington Avenue

To: Mayor Gary R. McCarthy and City Council Members,

On behalf of the historic Stockade Association, I am writing in response to the recent parking enforcement efforts that occurred on Feb. 4, 2021 along Union Street between Erie Boulevard and Washington Avenue in the historic Stockade neighborhood.

Despite rare parking enforcement for the better part of 20 years, if not longer, it is our understanding that this portion of Union Street is currently restricted to two-sided, daily alternate-side parking, between the hours of 1 a.m. and 6 a.m., with two-hour parking between the hours 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Assistant Chief Daryl Mallard has indicated to me that, while the two-hour parking restrictions will remain unenforced, the daily alternate-side parking regulations will now be enforced along the Union Street corridor in the Stockade.

What is most disappointing is enforcement was completed **without any notice or communication from our police department or city leaders**. That is unacceptable. We are not only a small community, but have an active and well-connected neighborhood organization -- a network utilized time and time again to convey information. Despite this model, dozens of residents were outraged to receive parking violations for no standing regulations that have gone for years unenforced. Why?

I have enclosed herewith a petition, **signed by more than 70 residents and counting in less than 48 hours**, requesting the City of Schenectady immediately remove alternate-side parking restrictions and priority street designation on Union Street between Erie Boulevard and Washington Avenue, and remove all signage from the street regarding alternate-side parking and 2-hour parking restrictions.

This request is based in the following findings:

1. **Will cause extreme burden on surrounding streets already struggling with limited parking.** The 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. alternate-side parking, if enforced, eliminates 50 percent of the parking along Union Street. As the police department has directly acknowledged, this comes as parking along this section of Union Street is already full at night on both sides. Unlike major metropolitan areas that may impose alternate-side parking, there are few nearby garages, lots or parking rentals. This will lead to increased parking congestion of the side streets of the Stockade.
2. **Will lead to Increased reckless and illegal driving.** Drivers speed through the street despite signage, ongoing complaints from neighbors and enforcement efforts. Reducing parking to one side will INCREASE this problem substantially.

3. **Daily street cleaning in Schenectady would be a complete waste of limited taxpayer dollars.** While the sudden enforcement efforts cite street cleaning as a potential benefit of single-side parking, it is unlikely that the City of Schenectady will be performing *daily* street cleaning that would necessitate daily alternate-side parking. Furthermore, the density of the City of Schenectady, and overall residential nature of Union Street in the Stockade, does not require frequent cleanings. In fact, the City of New York, which features a density 4.5 times higher than the City of Schenectady, has reduced alternate-side parking regulations to once a week in residential neighborhoods. On the rare occasion that a street cleaning were to occur, the City of Schenectady has within its disposal, adequate methods to notify residents to clear portions of the street for cleaning or snow removal.
4. **Snow removal contingencies already exist but are not used.** Snow removal remains a challenge neighborhood-wide. However, city-wide, emergency snow removal procedures already exist to provide alternate-side parking, and vehicle removal, when the mayor issues a snow emergency. Consistent enforcement of snow emergency restrictions is critical for successful snow removal. Enforcement of the outdated mandatory alternate-side parking and two-hour parking restrictions, regardless of snow conditions, is unreasonable and unnecessary for this area of Union Street.
5. **Will burden at-risk and vulnerable residents.** Many elderly or disabled residents (not to mention the record number of people who are unemployed and barely able to put food on the table) will be unable to comply with these rules if enforced literally and fined if they make a simple mistake. Furthermore, the limitation of parking creates an unnecessary social justice problem by imposing an undue burden on those without off-street parking who may not be able to afford to pay for the extremely limited vehicle storage options in the City of Schenectady.
6. **Will further burden struggling city coffers and excessive police budget.** The police department has directly acknowledged that only police officers will write tickets during the overnight shift as traffic enforcement does not operate at the times in question. During a global pandemic when the mayor has called the city's fiscal state, "the most difficult situation since I've been mayor," aren't there better things our police officers should be doing? A meaningful effort would need nightly police enforcement, administrative staff to enter and track *paper* tickets and judicial leaders and staff to support the administrative procedures when residents plead not guilty.
7. **Will impact city tax revenue.** Inadequate parking impacts real estate, negatively affecting property values and tax revenue. With higher density, fewer single-family homes and a large percentage of properties without off-street parking, there are insufficient spaces for residents to park if single-side parking is enforced. Unlike major metropolitan cities that implement alternate-side parking, Schenectady is not a walkable community and most residents have at least one, if not two, vehicles per dwelling unit.
8. **Designation goes against neighborhood character.** Union Street does not qualify as a priority street as the neighborhood is neither a commercial district nor a main thoroughfare for high volume traffic.

In closing, we demand the city take immediate action to end this sudden and excessive burden on the residents of the Stockade. These are our homes. We live here and pay taxes. What we're asking for is that you not only stop enforcing these regulations, but remove the signs so there is no confusion as to the city's expectations.

Thank you.

Suzanne S. Unger, President
Stockade Association