

BELMONT MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE
Joint Meeting with Select Board and other groups
Final Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 17, 2021
Virtual Zoom Meeting
7:00 PM

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 4, 2021
TIME: 5:30 PM

Meeting #126

Committee Members Virtually Attending:

Chair Lovallo; Members Tom Caputo, John Phelan, Bob McLaughlin, Emma Thurston, Joel Mooney, Pat Bruschi, Ellen Schreiber, Mike McAllister, Patrice Garvin, Diane Miller, David Blazon, Chris Messer

From the Select Board: Adam Dash, Roy Epstein, Mark Paolillo

Chair Dash called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Chair Dash then left the meeting (as a result of his living on Goden Street) to watch at 7:09 PM.

From the School Committee: Chair Amy Checkoway, Andrea Prestwich, Jamal Saeh, Meg Moriarty (Superintendent Phelan)

From the Transportation Advisory Committee: [none]

From the High School Traffic Working Group: Mary Wybieralla, Larry Link, Roy Epstein, Bill Lovallo

From BSC: Samuel Offei-Addo

From Daedalus: Tom Gatzunis

From Perkins+Will: Brian Spangler, Vital Albuquerque

From Skanska: Mike Loring, Jim Craft, Tony DelGreco

From Nelson Nygaard: Alyson Fletcher

Members Absent: Jamie Shea, Kate Bowen, Joe DeStefano

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Chair Lovallo; he took attendance via roll call.

II. Discussion on Design and Construction Concerns at Concord and Goden Streets

Selectman Epstein noted that residents who reside on lower Goden Street and from that vicinity have expressed concerns about the opening of school as well as the installation of the traffic light at the Concord/Goden intersection. He explained the impetus for this meeting – which is to hear their

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concerns.

Chair Lovallo reiterated that this meeting is to hear public concerns. He noted that many resident concerns have been expressed since 2017. In 2018 the Select Board formed the HS Traffic Working Group to work outside of the HS project and help address traffic issues by making recommendations to the Select Board. He explained that updates and public forum discussions have occurred over the past several years to work through the design of the building and of the nearby site. He noted that while the neighbors have been given many opportunities to express their concerns, he acknowledged that more could have been done on the part of the Committee and town officials. Throughout the summer, the neighborhood began expressing serious concerns about the Goden/Concord intersection. He said he hopes that tonight's meeting will end with a list of action items.

He then shared and reviewed the meeting agenda before turning to Comments from Belmont residents.

III. Comments from Belmont Residents (Session 1 of 2)

Ms. Chi-Ting Huang, 5 Goden St, stated that there has been a lapse in communication. Her main concern is regarding the safety of the Concord/Goden intersection. There has been too little discussion concerning pedestrian safety. She noted that there is no protection for pedestrians in the crosswalk areas. This particular "school zone" is on a very busy street.

Ms. Erika Wolf, 18 Goden Street, reiterated the safety concerns at this intersection for pedestrians and bike riders. She expressed frustration over a lack of proposed solutions to improve safety.

Ms. Ann Marie Mahoney, Goden Street, expressed concern about the potential spill-over as a result of insufficient parking spaces. She also expressed concern with the student drop-offs. The building is too big for the parcel of land resulting in difficult choices having been made around parking and fields. Student parking and drop-off will be on Concord Ave and there is not enough space there. The side streets will likely become a parking lot for students and staff. Some solution needs to be arrived at concerning student parking and drop off.

Ms. Amy Tananbaum, 21 Goden Street, expressed safety concerns as well. She discussed the lack of integrated solutions as well as the many impacts of the decisions that have been made along the way. She said there are four schools in this area and the School St./Goden St. intersection is also very dangerous. She spoke to suggestions that have been made, e.g., temporary lights, certain drop-off locations, etc. and said that while she feels listened to, she is frustrated that no action has taken place. She summarized that she would like to see integrated solutions and action taken.

Selectman Paolillo addressed several points raised by Ms. Tananbaum. He took responsibility (on behalf of the Select Board) for not having taken enough action on these points. He read a list of proposals/recommendations put forth by the High School Traffic Advisory group and noted that none of them were moved forward. He said he hopes to do so now.

IV. Review of Ongoing Construction Logistics

Chair Lovallo summarized the concerns so far: the light signal, Goden St. parking, pedestrian/biking safety, and student drop off on Concord. He shared a slide of the high school campus and discussed design and construction of Phase 1 and 2. He noted that construction is not complete and that it is only
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at the halfway point. He noted where the construction vehicles will be parked once school begins in September.

V. Site Design Review (Nelson Nygaard)

Ms. Fletcher spoke to the work that has been done to deal with the safety issues. She reviewed data on crash locations and discussed how the bike and pedestrian data on safety issues was obtained. She noted that many alternatives and scenarios were explored. Chair Lovallo added that public input was obtained as the various options were explored. He explained aspects of Phase 1 concerning the Field House and the Pool. She noted the challenges that were present and explained why certain options were limited in several areas.

Chair Lovallo discussed factors relating to the signalization and introduced Mr. Offei-Addo from the BSC group.

VI. Intersection and Signalization Review (BSC Group)

Mr. Offei-Addo explained the thinking that went into the design of the Goden/Concord intersection and of the signalization design. Data from Nelson-Nygaard was studied and warrant analysis and standards of safety were created. He provided some information on the warrants that needed to be met in order to have a traffic light installed. An intersection light (at this location) met the warrant justifications. He explained the research that was done concerning the light signal. He provided information on the walking signals and he discussed those requirements.

Chair Lovallo added that this is consistent with other light signalization in other parts of town, Lexington/Sycamore Street, for example. Mr. Offei-Addo agreed and provided much detail on the walking signals and the timing of those signals. Chair Lovallo then touched on the number of lanes in/out of the high school and said he has been asked – why are they so wide? Mr. Offei-Addo provided some information on the width of the lanes and why that particular width was needed, e.g., the turning radius of trucks and other vehicles.

VII. Public Tree Impact Review

Chair Lovallo then touched on the impact of the trees in the area. Some trees were pruned and others had to be removed. Ms. Garvin spoke to issues concerning the removal of one such public tree. She explained why the tree was removed noting that the roots were impacting the sidewalk. She acknowledged that there was a lack of discussion concerning the tree removal. One or two trees will be planted in the near future to replace the one tree removed.

VIII. Evaluation of Construction Impacts to Neighboring Properties

Chair Lovallo noted that vibrations and construction noise have also been serious concerns for the neighborhood. Some have noted that damage has occurred on their properties. He said he met with those who have experienced damage and those who have expressed concern about noise and vibrations. He stated that a process will be needed to determine how to proceed. Residents in the area were notified concerning the process of documenting existing conditions. He added that vibration and noise thresh-holds were established and were not exceeded throughout the project.

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Mr. McLaughlin stated that, yes, a comprehensive process will be put in place to listen to and document neighbor concerns. He explained that Chair Lovallo asked him to oversee the creation of that process, which he agreed to do.

IX. Update on Travel to High School

Superintendent Phelan agreed that the neighborhood surrounding the school project is indeed busy. He noted that BHS Principal Taylor has submitted a letter to the BHS community concerning travel to and from the high school. These travel routes are not permanent and will be adjusted once the project is complete. The traffic flow work has been done along with input from both the Police and Fire Departments. He then summarized the key points from Principal Taylor's letter (e.g., drop off points along Concord Ave, cycling to school, walking to school, driving to school – including the student parking lottery, suggested walking/cycling routes to school).

Chair Lovallo added that Clay Pit Pond will have walking and biking access.

X. Comments from Belmont Residents (Session 2 of 2)

Ms. Wolf asked for clarification concerning the light intersection grading and the safety of the semi-trucks. Ms. Fletcher provided responses. Chair Lovallo noted that the trucks will be directed to off-peak times.

Ms. Aboosaber asked Mr. Offei-Addo questions about the light intersection and the timing of the light signal. Mr. Offei-Addo provided additional information on the crossing signals and the timing of them. Chair Lovallo suggested that perhaps the Police/Fire Departments could be consulted about the timing of the crossing signals. Selectman Epstein noted that there is inherent flexibility in the timing of the signals.

Ms. Huang asked a series of questions concerning the map of the site, trucks on Concord and the signalization of the intersection. She discussed the impacts of parking near her home and the narrowing of Goden Street. She said she too is concerned about the large semi-trucks in the area. She suggested that they continue to go behind the school and stay off Concord Ave. This is a congested area and is not conducive to large vehicles, she said. Superintendent Phelan provided information concerning the delivery trucks. She suggested that signage be installed to restrict U-turns from the Goden/Concord intersection. She next asked if there could be a crossing guard at this intersection; Superintendent Phelan said he will speak to the Police Chief. She noted that the removed tree was in her yard; that tree provided both shade and noise reduction. She requested sound barriers, noting that the area is noisy and echo-y. She stated that the interior foundation (walls) of her home has cracks that were not there before.

Mr. McGaw spoke to this heavily travelled area (cars from other communities use Concord to get to Cambridge and Boston) and the impact on the flow of traffic. He expressed hope that this planning works. He asked: who will take responsibility if this turns out to be a fiasco? Selectman Epstein said that the town officials will take responsibility and that if the current plan is not effective, it will be adjusted.

Ms. Kahn, 34 Goden St., noted how noisy the area has become. She said Goden St. will be and already is very problematic with the amount of traffic it experiences. She suggested that the traffic be
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dispersed more equitably across the nearby side streets.

Mr. Boroumand, 38 Goden Street, asked several questions concerning the data on the timing of the intersection, the length of the queue, and the designated drop off area on Concord Ave. Mr. Offei-Addo provided additional information on the crossing signals, the analysis concerning the length of the queue, and the timing of the signals.

Mr. November, Goden Street, noted that Goden has been untenable for many years and now it's more complex and it has become much more challenging to ensure safety. He expressed concern about Concord Ave., noting the added complexity there as well. He spoke to the flow of traffic in the entire area. He said he hopes the area is evaluated and that decisions made will be revisited. He said he would like to see the area assessed and the recommendations of the high school traffic working group be given appropriate attention. Board of Selectmen members agreed to review these recommendations.

Mr. Goldstyn, 17 Oak Street, asked about enforcement of driving regulations. He noted that there is a lot of noise on the site very early in the morning – 6:30 AM. Chair Lovallo replied that “noisy work” should not begin before 7:00 AM. The site, he said, is being monitored. Selectman Epstein spoke to the issue of enforcement, noting that he has spoken to the Police Chief about enforcement.

Ms. McCue Olmstead asked about the precise location of the student parking areas on Concord Ave.

Ms. Talanian, 30 Goden St., expressed concern about the intersection and the flow of traffic in/out of the building. She said the cement blocks are unsafe and create a tripping hazard. She made several suggestions concerning the flow of traffic (especially concerning the number of exit lanes) that she thought might be an improvement. Chair Lovallo offered some insights into the decisions that have been made thus far. Ms. Fletcher noted that the entering traffic is coming from many points.

Ms. Tananbaum, requested that more thought go into the drop off locations along Concord Ave. -- in order to ensure safety. She also requested signage on Goden St. that prohibits student parking – at least for a number of weeks. She stressed the need to incorporate the safest possible strategies – given the number of cars and people who will be in the area on a daily basis.

Chair Lovallo stated that he receives excellent documentation (including emails and videos) from neighbors and perhaps that will continue to be the case with regard to student parking.

XI. Action Items and Timeline

Chair Lovallo provided a list of action items and likely responsible groups:

1. Goden signalization modifications for off-peak hours - BMHSBC
2. How should parents drive to campus - SD
3. Reroute truck deliveries – BMHSBC and SD
4. No U-turn signs at Goden/Concord – BMHSBC and DPW
5. Add crossing guard at Goden/Concord – SD
6. Plant 2 new trees to replace cut tree – BMHSBC and DPW
7. Add sound buffers from echoing site – BMHSBC
8. Study traffic to reduce impact on Goden – HSTWG
9. Damage claims process for Belmont residents – BMHSBC

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10. Recommendations for drop off locations – SD and SB
11. [Not mentioned during meeting] Review sidewalk hazards from light pole bases - BMHSBC

Mr. November suggested that the High School Advisory committee's insights be strongly considered.

Selectman Epstein suggested that another such meeting be held later in the fall.

[The following agenda items were not covered: i.e., XII, XIII. XIV.]

XII. Next Building Committee Meetings

Friday	September 10, 2021	at 8:00 AM	Virtual	[127]
Thursday	September 23, 2021	at 8:00 AM	Virtual	[128]
Thursday	October 14, 2021	at 8:00 AM	Virtual	[129]

XIII. Building Site Tour August 25, 2021 at 4:30 PM

Chair Lovallo informed the Committee that the next Building site tour will be held on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 4:30 PM. He expressed his excitement for this tour. He informed the Committee to meet at the front turn-around of the building. He suggested hard hats and boots be worn.

XIV. New Business/Other

None.

XV. Related Meeting Documents

1. Superintendent's Presentation based on Mr. Taylor's letter re: getting to and from school
2. Concord and Goden plan overview 6-13-19
3. Concord and Goden signalization slides
4. Belmont HS traffic summary
5. Belmont HS site transition plan September 2021

XVI. Adjournment

The various groups/Boards moved to adjourn their meetings, via a roll call vote, at around 9:58 PM.

Mr. McLaughlin moved: To end the Building Committee Meeting at 9:59 PM.
The motion passed via a roll call vote of 13-0-0. (Yes: Lovallo, Garvin, Thurston, Phelan, Brusch, Caputo, Messer, McAllister, Miller, Mooney, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Blazon)

Respectfully submitted by:

Lisa Gibalerio

Approved: CRM 10/23/2021
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Chris Messer, Secretary

Date

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