

DATE: November 24, 2021
TIME: 12:12 PM

**MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2021
HIGH SCHOOL TRAFFIC WORKING GROUP
5:00 PM**

Attending: Anne Paulsen, Resident Co-Chair; Mary Wybieralla, Resident; Larry Link, Resident; Marty November, Resident; Sargent Paul Garabedian, Police Department; Bill Lovallo, Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee; Roy Epstein, Belmont Select Board; Glenn Clancy, Community Development; Jay Marcotte, Department of Public Works; Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator; Wayne Haley, Fire Department.

Vice-Chair Anne Paulsen called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

1. Reports

a. A report was developed by Bill Lovallo on the progress and activity of the Middle and High School Building Committee regarding bikes, pedestrians, traffic and parking as the opening of school draws near.

Lovallo said the action item list hasn't been published yet so he doesn't want to present to this group yet. The action list consists of 11 items that affect different committees and departments.

He reported that the high school gets temporary occupancy approval tomorrow. Traffic cones on Concord will be removed, construction fences will be pulled back to Phase 2 line and live signalization will start as of September 1st.

Drop off and student designated parking were discussed. The Select Board has been asked to approve the student parking for 100 cars on Concord Ave. New bus stops have been painted. Discussion about drop offs will be done as recommended by the School Committee and consultants.

Ann Paulsen asked when the Myrtle St. bus stop is being removed. She said there is a bike lane near there and she is worried about the bus conflicting with the bike lane. Clancy said the MBTA will remove the bus stop sign before the beginning of school.

Ann asked if residents have been alerted about removing bus stops? Clancy replied the MBTA is responsible for the community outreach about the bus stops.

b. Report by Larry Link on sign campaign

Larry said a simple sign was created saying “School is open, slow down.” He said they reached out to each PTO to put these signs on private residences from School to Concord and over to Orchard. And they hope to put several signs on the Concord median. He said volunteers would be erecting signs. He would like to see the signs also be erected in the Underwood area. Larry said he will fill out the form for permission from the Select Board by tonight. Anne said since some of the signs will go on the median strip on Concord St., approval would be needed and she hoped this could happen by next week.

Clancy believes that the Town delegated permission to the Town Administrator for decisions about the median on Concord.

c. Report by Heather Barr about working with the Chenery PTO

The goal is to bring the Chenery back into discussions about school zone safety. Heather feels that the Safe Routes to School program has been set aside. She has been talking to the Chenery PTO about getting involved again. Within two years there will be five schools in this small area. She wants to be able to support the High School Traffic Working Group and utilize Mass. DOT resources on long term planning. It was agreed that she will work with Ann Paulsen and Larry Link to put a structure in place to move this forward.

2. Discuss parking and chicane plan for Goden St. Take action?

Marty November reported on the proposal. They are looking at modeling a chicane plan similar to the one executed previously on Myrtle St. He said there are uncertain variables about this that need further analysis. In talking with many Goden St. residents, there is concern about student parking and traffic in that area.

Clancy clarified that the Myrtle St. plan was not restricted to residents. He said the benefits of a chicane plan is that it slows down traffic.

Ann Paulsen asked what steps need to be taken by residents on Goden St.? Larry Link asked how we can protect the residents from student parking? Do we wait until people report complaints or, do we do it proactively?

Bill Lovallo gave a history of the contractor parking restrictions in that area that he experienced. He recounted that the first six months were the most difficult. Sometimes residents used videos to help track down complaints. Marty November said this may not be just a Goden St. problem. Myrtle, Oak and Orchard are also

affected. There was too much traffic there before the new high school was built. Marty said he would like more feedback before the plan is developed.

Ann Paulsen said we need to identify who should have decision making capability about parking restrictions. If people don't want parking, then we need to erect signs on Goden. Clancy said the two-hour parking restriction would have to apply to everyone. He feels the two hour parking restriction, if enforced, would act as a deterrent.

Larry Link said we have a short term and long-term problem. How do we educate people about parking restrictions? Do we put temporary signs or another mechanism? And if there is a problem identified after school begins, how do we handle this? The principal sent out a memo to students, but parking restrictions right now are unenforceable. He said we will have to see if sidewalk signs restricting student parking get the message out before we may further plans.

Epstein said it's possible that the number of spaces in Fall will be sufficient. If there are an additional 100 cars in Spring, then it may be possible that spreading the parking across the 15 side streets is still manageable. Larry Link said that they plan to have volunteers watching drop off situations on the side streets as well as Concord.

Ann Paulsen summarized the immediate ideas on the Goden St. parking issues:
1) No parking – chicane route, 2) Two-hour parking 3) Don't do anything.

Marty November said he would find out if any residents from Lower Goden St. could volunteer to observe the movement of cars and people.

Sgt. Garabedian confirmed that restrictions on student parking would not be enforceable. He thinks a time limit traffic zone would be the only enforceable restriction.

(Public Comment) Ann Marie Mahoney feels that doing nothing at the beginning of school is not tenable. Students are going to park on Myrtle, Oak and Orchard. The interests of the residents have to be taken into consideration. She agrees that restricting parking with signage would be helpful. Epstein said he lives in an area with a two-hour parking restriction that is enforced and it works. He suggested putting up signs that restrict parking from 7 am to 10 am.

Clancy said that the Select Board has to approve anything enforceable. The usual procedure is to run public hearings through the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Epstein reported that the Select Board could have options ready to vote on by the end of the month, but he feels that we should still monitor the areas for a few weeks before the decision is brought forward.

Ann Paulsen said we need to move ahead with some kind of restricted parking on Goden. Marty said he would bring a plan to the Select Board by September 13th.

3. Discuss and approve observation plan for monitoring traffic patterns and crossings and pedestrian and bike activity by citizens after school opens

Marty November and Larry Link have put together proposals for monitoring parking and pedestrian action around the high school.

Marty is proposing the creation of a subcommittee from the High School Traffic Working Group and the Police Department to help further develop the plan. He said the residents have identified hotspots around the neighborhood to observe turning, student parking, bus and car drop offs. But he said we need input from the police.

Larry Link said they plan to do body and bike counts at major crossings. Sgt. Garabedian said the Traffic Department could do electronic counting. If we put a volunteer on each major corner, we can verify the information reported earlier by the High School Building Committee.

Garabedian said that he expects there will be parents that use Goden St as a drop off area. He doesn't know what the police action could take in that situation. Ann Paulsen asked if the police would be able to use the information by the volunteer observations. Sgt. Garabedian replied that he takes action on all complaints that are lodged.

Ann Paulsen observed that this issue may need to be taken up by residents with the support of the Police Department. It sounds like the police are willing to use the data to analyze the issues for future decision making.

Marty November said he was hoping that a plan could be developed and formally approved by the Select Board and Traffic Working Group. The ownership should not be totally put on the residents.

Motion was made to have the High School Traffic Working Group support an observation plan that will be developed using data about street issues compiled at the beginning of school year. Motion was approved unanimously.

Larry Link made a pitch for volunteers to help observe at the hotspots. It was agreed that the hotspot map would be shared with the Fire and Police Departments.

4. Identify motions passed by the HSTWG and sent on to the Select Board that continue to be outstanding

Motions from previous meetings that are still pending:

- 1) School St. evaluation has not been completed. Glenn Clancy said he has plans to evaluate stop signs at Goden/Orchard and Orchard/School. He will also look into other recommendations from the BSC Group.
- 2) Evaluation of access restrictions from 7 to 9 am on a number of streets off Concord Ave. was approved by the Traffic Working Group, but not moved forward.
- 3). The School Department needs to follow up on the issue of supporting primary walking routes to the high school. Bill Lovallo said he is not aware of the status of this issue at the School Committee.

Clancy said the Manual on Traffic Control Devices has a series of requirements for all four-way stop approaches. We need to justify the criteria for adding a stop sign. We never finalized other proposals made by BSC Group. We need to decide what the package is that we are moving forward with. He proposed that a public forum be held to discuss the four-way stop, and raised speed tables that have been discussed.

Clancy would like the four way stop signs for Goden/Orchard and raised tables on upper Goden to be discussed together. He thinks the Orchard/School four way stop signs and speed tables should be handled separately. Ann also suggested that they should include the Transportation Advisory Committee in any discussions.

(Public Comment) Erica Wolf asked if the no turns on streets off Concord could be added back into one of the public discussions. Clancy thinks that should be separate from the other two issues because it is more controversial, and it may impede the ability to get the stop signs and speed signs approved.

Clancy said volume data has been collected on School St and upper Goden. Community Development is already recommending speed tables at School and Goden. For lower Goden we may still need to do more speed studies.

Ann Paulsen suggested discussing all the recommendations from the BSC report at the next meeting.

Marty November asked what Sgt. Garabedian would recommend for reliable tools? He said the police data would be sent to Community Development. He would like to receive e-mails about issues. He said problems identified in the first week of school, will be addressed by the Police Department.

5. Discuss joining with the TAC in one or more public forums dealing with changes in street patterns to help with traffic calming and safety.

Public forums on the stop signs and speed tables will be scheduled soon. Public forums on right turn restrictions may need to be delayed until later on.

6. Accept minutes

[NONE.]

7. Proposals for changes to the makeup of the HSTWG

Select Board will discuss this subject tonight at their meeting.

Marty November summarized the changes sent to the Select Board:

- 1) Have HSTWG continue until one year after the middle school is completed to assess impact.
- 2) Focus should be on the entire neighborhood in the four school area.
- 3) Composition of the committee would be limited to representatives from the Police Department and Community Development because the work being discussed leverages these groups more than others.
- 4) More resident input from Goden, Hittinger and Underwood.

Motion was made to adjourn. Motion was approved by a quorum of members.

*Minutes are as approved by Vice-Chair Anne Paulsen

