

**Traffic Working Group - Middle and High School
Minutes
October 29, 2021**

Attending were: Roy Epstein, Chair, Select Board Representative, Jeffrey Held, Resident, Larry Link, Resident, Ron Nayak, Resident, Martin November, Vice Chair, Resident, Jeffrey Roth, Transportation Advisory Committee, (TAC) Representative, Alex Thurston, Resident, Mary Wybieralla, Secretary, Resident, Jon Marshall, Asst. TA, representing Patrice Garvin

Roy Epstein called the meeting to order at 8:02am.

I. Approval of Minutes: October 15 and October 21

Roy Epstein amended the October 15 minutes to add "Meeting was called to order at 8:02 am"

Ron Nayak moved to approve the October 15 as amended and October 21 Meeting Minutes, seconded by Alex Thurston.

The Minutes were unanimously approved

II. Proposal for parking:

Roy Epstein reviewed the proposal for parking in the neighborhood that was presented at the October 21 public forum. The aim is to restore status quo on streets with minimal impact to residents.

Roy Epstein said another Site Plan Review will be required for the school campus west of Harris Field. The 90 off-street parking spaces required under the current Site Plan could be changed. There are currently 110-120 cars distributed on streets. There is a possible modification to the field layouts that could preserve the jug-handle.

Residents would receive a placard to park on their street during the 7-10am restriction. The initial proposal is not to issue placards to students, which would make the side streets a no parking zone for students.

Roy Epstein indicated the tentative target streets that would have parking restrictions:

Cottage

Myrtle

Goden (below School)

Oak St.

Orchard (below School)

Orchard Circle

Stone

Underwood

Trowbridge

Baker

Concord Ave. EB

Roy Epstein said Police Chief MacIsaac agrees with a trial of the 7-10am parking restriction for the streets below School St.

We would require another Public Forum. We would also request an endorsement from the Select Board. The School Dept. has to be informed. The trial could be implemented with temporary signs provided by the Police. We should try to implement before the snow season. We will have to assess and make adjustments.

Ron Nayak had some concerns and questioned if there are spaces on Concord specifically reserved for student parking.

Roy Epstein responded that spaces on Concord are posted for student parking only.

Ron Nayak asked where on Concord are residents going to be able to park? Why aren't students using the designated spots? Parallel parking may be an issue with new drivers. It is not clear that students will move to Concord Ave. to park when these restrictions on side streets are put in place.

Roy Epstein responded that students are parking in areas that are closer to the school.

Consistently the westbound stretch of Concord by the jug-handle is not being used.

As the winter wears on- there will be more drop-offs, newer drivers, and more violations. If prevented from parking on the streets below School Street, the student parking could move to upper Goden, Orchard and School Street. Additional neighborhoods could be impacted.

Ultimately how extensively you need to post restrictions is something that has to be assessed.

These restrictions have to be clearly communicated with the School Dept.

Perhaps raising the price of a ticket from 15 to 25-40 dollars may get people's attention.

Bulk of the student parkers are not using lottery spaces on Concord Ave.

This proposal is an attempt to balance the interests of residents and the needs of the schools.

Jeffrey Roth wanted to correct information he received from Kate Bowen, School Committee, parking passes for high school students are free.

He wanted to reiterate a valid point, not a major detractor, the close proximity of these streets to the school. He wants to discuss and think about parking permits. The burden should be on the School Dept. It should be required that sticker be on car.

Mary Wybieralla questioned where students would go? We will be following them from street to street.

Martin November asked why no restrictions on School Street.

Roy Epstein responded that Chief MacIsaac asked that School Street not be included because of Wellington School staff parking, and a business being run out of a home.

Martin November said that School St parking would be problematic. People are looking for integrated solutions. School is a problem at pick-up and drop-off. Definitely agrees to trialing this proposal. This Committee should consider doing other things as well.

Roy Epstein responded that School St. is a target. Placards could be issued to Wellington Staff.

Larry Link said he wanted to echo the comments concerning where the students would go.

Concerned that School St. is not included and questions the Chief's logic.

Students will end up parking on Louise and Emerson.

Roy Epstein responded that those streets were on the list, but were removed after consulting with Chief MacIsaac.

Martin November asked Roy Epstein if he talked to the School Dept.

Roy Epstein said he would like to talk to the School Dept., and establish that the Town controls the streets.

Larry Link said it was important to have coordination, especially if we want 30 spaces in front of the hockey rink.

Could we talk to the School Dept about remote bus pick up?

Jeffrey Roth said that having a cost for parking permits makes sense. Funds could be used to supplement the bus program.

Martin November said asking residents on these streets to pay for placards would add insult to injury. It makes sense for the town to absorb this cost given what is happening on these streets.

Jeffrey Held agreed with the comments/responses to the proposal. We are struggling with trying to change behavior. The town has to partner with the School Dept. Inclement weather is going to make the situation worse. If the School Dept. will not act, this group should be making firm recommendations. It is a governance issue-can't change it. We need to make recommendations to them as well as the Select Board. Car pooling needs to be incentivized.

Roy Epstein said our main concern is time. He completely supports reaching out to get agreement on what steps to take.

Jeffrey Held said we should trial this proposal. If it doesn't work, we should tweak it.

Roy Epstein said the proposal as it stands should be submitted to the public. Make this proposal the subject of a Forum.

Larry Link reiterated that we should be reaching out to the School Dept, Building Committee, parents, and students. The problem is no parking spots for students on campus. They need to be warned that things are going to change. They are owed some notice of this change. Not suggesting the proposal be changed, just emphasizing the need for good communication.

Jeffrey Roth said Communication needs to happen with the School Dept. We need to reach out and have direct dialog with them.

Roy Epstein responded he would send the proposal to Amy Checkoway, School Committee Chair, and John Phelan, Superintendent. He would tell them it is the desire of this Committee to hold a Public Forum in two weeks to discuss this proposal.

Martin November made a motion: That we move forward with the proposal on a trial basis and have a Public Forum with due notice to the School Dept.

Larry Link seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

III. Review of Documents for On-Campus Parking:

Roy Epstein shared two documents:

Superintendent Phelan Memo, 3/2019, to the Building Committee, discussing parking plans. Identifying drop-off areas was completed 8/2021, and the idea of queuing on campus was dropped. The plans for on campus drop-off were dropped from School Dept. plans.

The other document was a campus map prepared by the School Dept to be presented to the Planning Board.

Roy Epstein said it would be appropriate to revisit this proposal with the School Dept. Traffic flow raises questions, but it can be worked out. It is worthwhile asking the best use of land to ease the drop off situation on streets.

Jeffrey Roth said there are safety questions moving cars onto the campus. Adding more parking instead of athletic fields will not make issues go away. It is a delicate balance. Putting cars on campus doesn't solve the problem. This needs to be looked at holistically.

Larry Link said pulling onto campus using the D-Loop as a parent is not appealing. There would be a large backup. There will be cars leapfrogging other cars. It will be difficult to navigate with an influx of parents on campus. How do we do better?

Roy Epstein responded that this needs a lot of discussion.

Larry Link said he understood that there was to be a separate approach to the campus for bikes and pedestrians. Bicyclists are traveling on sidewalks. It is not a great situation. We need to come up with something safe for everyone.

Roy Epstein responded that the coordination is needed with the School Dept., Police Dept., and the Select Board.

Ron Nayak said talking to, and convincing people that they need to be part of the solution.

Martin November said we should try to write up a more integrated solution. The pick-up/drop-off issue is critical. Other issues-reducing pick-up/drop-offs, increasing pedestrian and bike traffic, requires the help and support of other groups. He will outline a proposal. He agrees with the sense of urgency to move something forward.

IV. Review Vehicle/Speed Data:

Roy Epstein shared the speed/vehicle count data collected on lower Goden St. Cars seldom exceed 32 mph, which suggests speeding is not a big problem there.

Public Comment:

Anne Marie Mahoney, Goden Street: Appreciate the thought process for parking restrictions. Each resident should receive more than one placard. Whatever solution we propose, it should only be for 2 years. Do not take the pressure off the School Dept. This should not be a permanent solution. We need to go back to the Planning Board, and Zoning Board and ask what they were thinking. How did the High School get a free pass allowing all student parking on streets? The agenda for Building Committee should flag the parking/vehicle issues. Pressure has to go back on the School Dept. These parking restriction proposals are a temporary solution during construction.

Deborah Talanian, Goden Street: If the School Committee comes back and says they do not want any drop off on campus I suggest buses drop off at the spaces on Concord Ave. near the school entrance. These are currently reserved parking spaces. There are only 2-3 buses. Superintendent Phelan's objection in August was to avoid buses conflicting with drop-off.

Roy Epstein responded that he could see a driveway redesign with a jug-handle. He is not against bringing this up.

Jeffrey Roth said there is some benefit to having buses drop-off directly at the School entrance. Pushing buses to the street may detract usage.

Roy Epstein said the takeaway from discussion is to send the Parking Proposal to the School Committee, and the Superintendent. The intention is to have a Public Forum.

We need to work on a date. It could take a month to give the School Dept time to review the proposal. He will question the Police as to whether more streets should be included in the proposal.

Jeffrey Held asked if we should meet before the Public Forum to discuss the School Dept. response.

Roy Epstein responded the Committee could meet at 6:30pm before the Forum.

Martin November moved the meeting be adjourned

Motion seconded by Jeffrey Roth

Meeting adjourned at 9:27am by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Wybieralla