

DATE: August 23, 2022
TIME: 8:38 AM

**Traffic Working Group - Middle and High School
Minutes
June 24, 2022**

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, Sgt. Paul Garabedian, Belmont Police Dept.

The meeting was called to order by Roy Epstein at 8:02am.

Roy Epstein stated the goal for the meeting today was to formulate recommendations for a parking plan next year. He feels the present plan needs refinements.

I. Recap of student parking policies and discussion and possible vote on Recommendations for BHS Student Parking Policies and Restrictions for the 2022-2023 School Year:

Roy Epstein reviewed a presentation summarizing the experience last year.

The daily average of student parking was initially 110-120 cars. By late spring the average was 150-160 cars.

The school side of Concord Ave. rarely had students parking past Emerson Street.

The south side of Concord near the school was often full. Students were also parking in the areas restricted for drop-off.

The 2022-2023 school year will be different because of the Concord Ave. restriping this summer.

Roy Epstein estimated 146 spaces available for students between Concord Ave, pool, Myrtle, Cottage, Orchard.

Roy Epstein stated that the restriction hours 7-10am were thought to be appropriate to prevent all day student parking on designated streets. Surprisingly there were a number of students arriving late or moving cars during the day. This is primarily an issue for Oak, Goden and Orchard.

Created congestion during the day and contributes to a chaotic pick-up.

The Committee needs to consider if next year the restrictions stay with the same streets. What about Myrtle? Should the hours of restrictions be extended? What about the South side of Concord? Should the lottery be retained?

Roy Epstein said his inclination was to keep the same streets not including Myrtle or Cottage because of the interaction with the Wellington. Myrtle has a chicane to control parking, and Cottage parking is restricted to one side. The reason the Committee selected 10 am was to try and deter student parking and give a sufficient window for enforcement and minimize inconvenience for residents. He said he would be inclined to extend the restriction to 11 or noon. The Committee may have to revisit utilizing the south side of Concord Ave.

The parking lottery originated with the School. The lottery was only open to seniors, forcing juniors onto side streets. He suggested no lottery. If there is not enough capacity, the Committee needs to come up with a proposal to distribute student parking on side streets.

Martin November gave an on his meeting with Isaac Taylor, High School Principal. Isaac was not in favor of a lottery. The principal doesn't want to adjudicate which students should get parking permits.

Roy Epstein responded he wanted students to park on the north side of Concord Ave but would not reserve it as student parking.

Martin a November asked are you suggesting someone other than the school could use the parking? Make it public parking? No lottery? We just leave it open-that's where students park? Jeffrey Roth was in favor of keeping the lottery - using it to collect information. He wants to stimulate other ways to get to school. Hopefully restriping bike lanes will encourage bike riding. Alex Thurston said he wanted to build on Jeffrey Roth's comments on bike infrastructure. It is not going to change student behavior on parking. Parking on Concord is the ultimate goal. In the past, 2 hour parking or parking on one side on side has been mentioned as a solution. I am asking again if 2 hour or one side parking restrictions would work?

Roy Epstein responded if there was enforcement and if posted would there be a similar effect? Sgt. Garabedian responded that other towns have 4 hour restrictions. Everything needs to have clear signage. Plan to make Concord a regular route for parking control.

Alex Thurston said the streets off of Belmont have a 2 hour restriction to prevent commuter parking. Same idea could be reasonable.

Roy Epstein agreed it would be similar.

Alex Thurston said students are going to "game" it. Oak St. last week was impassible. It could benefit from one side parking. Why wouldn't we endorse it?

Larry Link said the issue Jeff raises-another factor is there is no market except raise the price of permits to help offset the cost of busing so more families will consider the bus. If we want to encourage families to use the bus - raise the cost of parking permits to defray busing costs. We could increase bus usage.

Mary Wybieralla responded that it is important to consider who and why students drive to school. It is cultural. If students have access to cars they will drive.

Roy Epstein said if the price for a permit is significant, students will move to Underwood, Baker, and Trowbridge. You would have to cast a wider net of restrictions.

Jeffrey Roth said he would like to echo Larry and support his recommendation. There are those who would support alternatives to driving. These are public streets. We spend a lot of time and energy looking at this. It is worthy to think of a fee. We live in a town where people can afford it.

Martin November proposed we break this discussion into different pieces.

1. Student Parking - whether we have Concord Ave. marked for student parking.
2. Parking on side streets
3. Permit fee

Have some limitations and encourage people to consider other methods to get to school. In terms of signage-there are a variety of signs around town. I propose consider initially parking on Concord Ave.

Roy Epstein responded you only get students to park on the school side of Concord Ave. if there are restrictions on side streets.

Sgt. Garabedian responded that with restrictions on side streets, like Lexington, students park on both sides of the street. Either 4 hour or a 7-10 am restriction would probably work. Limiting parking on one side would be a problem. The MBTA bus stop is returning to Edgemoor. The police only ask that restrictions be posted clearly. Parking Enforcement will be on the streets.

Martin November asked Sgt. Garabedian if we are losing parking spots.

Sgt. Garabedian responded that with the restriping, and bump-outs at every street and driveway, could lose 20-25 spots.

Roy Epstein said plans do not indicate specific spaces, just space.

Sgt. Garabedian said don't forget the Edgemoor bus stop-will lose 6 spots.

Roy Epstein asked Sgt. Garabedian what his view was of posting a 4 hour restriction.

Sgt. Garabedian responded he thought it would work well. Clearly posted signs would be required. There is no question, enforcement is easier and cleaner, Get away from permits.

Permits are an issue in town, every school has parking issues. We try to adapt. When no sign, cannot tow a car. Easily enforceable with a sign. It is a deterrent and will keep students on Concord.

Roy Epstein asked how much time could a parking control officer walk around the area.

Sgt. Garabedian responded they would prioritize these streets with Parking Control.

Roy Epstein said it sounds like the suggestions are:

1. The school side of Concord not posted-unrestricted
2. South side of Concord -unrestricted
3. Side streets- replace with a 4 hour restriction

Sgt. Garabedian said there is never an issue with contractors. Parking Control is usually aware of activity and wouldn't ticket.

Roy Epstein asked about students moving a car on the street to get around restrictions.

Sgt. Garabedian said an example would be Belmont Center-you have to move your car to a different area. Moving your car 10ft. doesn't work. You have to move it off the street.

Jeffrey Roth asked if there was any idea of how many tickets were issued-how many? What violation?

Sgt. Garabedian responded most of the tickets were for blocking an intersection, parking in a bus stop, blocking a driveway, parking the wrong way. We were able to talk to the school to identify students and talk to them and get kids to move the car. Warnings were placed on cars.

Martin November said-in terms of the Edgemoor bus stop, the assumption is you cannot use it for dropoff.

Sgt. Garabedian responded parking is not allowed. I don't know if you can get permissions from the MBTA for this purpose.

Martin November proposed:

1. Should demarcate areas for student parking
2. Because there is no other location in town with a high school and 7 and 8 grade-uniform signs are not a reality for this area. There should be student parking on both sides of Concord.
3. We should link everything. There are signs at the Burbank School limiting parking 8-3. Restriction should be 8-3.
4. The lottery should be more broadly opened and we should consider a fee at a later date.

Larry Link asked about set backs for the protected bike lane. Is this calculated in numbers? Can we create more drop zones to impact early morning and afternoon issues? Having permits creates a registry of contact information. The school shouldn't have to be responsible for managing permits. I don't think permit program should be dropped, even if you don't charge a fee.

Alex Thurston responded he was not in favor of the permit program. What is the commuter impact with the MBTA bus stop? He agrees with Sgt. Garabedian that we need time enforceable restrictions with clear signage. This doesn't address safety issues on Oak Street. Why isn't one

side of street parking considered? The problem with permits is that these are public roads. What are the setback requirements for a driveway?

Roy Epstein responded there were no setback requirements for a driveway.

Alex Thurston said there is a setback Subcommittee on TAC to address issues with setback from driveways. How do we get enforcement on side streets? How to address people chased from Concord to side streets?

Jeffrey Roth said he thought Martin November made an excellent point. There should be parking on both sides of Concord. People also want to be able to go to Clay Pit Pond.

Martin November said lower Goden St. is a disaster. It has become a “freeway”. Chicane parking should be adopted and emergency vehicle access should be addressed. The school principal said he is fine with school driveway use for drop-off and pick-up. This is a discussion for a later date.

Roy Epstein said one change during the year was the school allowing driveway use. He counted over 100 cars dropping off. The restriping plan for Concord Ave. will be a significant change.

Down the road further study is needed whether there should be other limitations like a chicane.

Concord Ave. is not posted. Sections are posted for drop-off. Existing signs say “no parking until 8:30”. This is an issue for enforcement.

Martin November said pick-up/drop-off didn’t work. This needs to be revisited. On the non school side of Concord, drop off is after stop sign. Students jump out before drop-off. When students don’t get a permit, they carpool.

Jeffrey Roth said because the driveway is accessible for drop-off -should help, but Concord Ave. restriping does include drop-offs.

Martin November people jump out of cars wherever. People don’t want to pull into the High School driveway. They’re not clear on where to go.

Roy Epstein said he would like to see students park on both sides of Concord Ave., no restrictions, all day.

A drop-off designated with no parking until 8:30am. After 8:30am, students could utilize it for parking. Exactly where the drop-off is, not known. We need to see the restriping plans.

We need a consensus as to what restrictions should be on side streets. Proposing 2 hours, similar to the rest of the town. An 8am-3pm restriction is too much. He is not sure of the utility of a permit system.

We can consider as a separate project-the chicane parking. The 2 hour restriction require Select Board approval.

Sgt. Garabedian responded that alternate side parking-chicane can get messy with backups.

There is often a backup onto School Street. Start at upper Goden on the right. Switch to left at the bottom.

Roy Epstein said you’re suggesting parking allowed on east side, (from School St.). People would be allowed on the west side with substantial setback of 20-30ft-that’s a limited length.

Sgt. Garabedian responded that setbacks are in place, even at 20ft-seems minimal.

Martin November said there are significant issues with pick-ups. We should acknowledge drop-offs are available. We should change the timing of the red signal during drop-off. We should meet in two weeks after we know the restriping impact.

Jeffrey Roth said we could review the plans and look at the drop-offs.

Roy Epstein said we still need a parking plan. How many spaces? We need a plan B. An additional permit plan, additional parking on side streets.

Larry Link said Jeffrey Roth’s idea is a good one. We should look at the restriping plan. The chicane on Goden should be like Myrtle.

Martin November said another issue is right turns onto Goden. We should consider pass through traffic restrictions.

Jeffrey Roth said there is an on campus drop-off. We have an option to apply enforcement to make people use the designated drop-off. A two hour restriction is hard to enforce. Three hour restriction would not tax enforcement. Four hour restriction seems too long.

Roy Epstein responded he would recommend whatever the police say is feasible.

Sgt. Garabedian said the three hour might help residents. It is more reasonable to do.

Larry Link asked Sgt. Garabedian what was the restriction at the library? Is it important to be consistent ?

Sgt. Garabedian responded there are several different restrictions on Concord Ave.

Library-4 hour

Post Office-2 hour

All restriction signs were removed from the jug-handle

The hour restriction will not change enforcement and is easier on the residents.

Roy Epstein said he thought 2 hours would be more helpful. Two hour signs would help visitors to the High School.

Sgt. Garabedian said these restrictions would only be Monday-Friday.

Roy Epstein added "when school is in session".

Roy Epstein proposed meeting again on July 8. He would work on draft a motion that people could review. He will also Glenn Clancy for the latest Nelson Nygaard restriping plan for Concord Ave.

Larry Link asked to share the plan with TAC so they can review it and get input?

II. Public Comment:

Deborah Talanian, Goden St.: The temporary parking lot is going to be removed and replaced with landscaping. I suggest reducing the size of the lot to 25 spaces. You could still have landscaping. This may replace the spaces lost on Concord Ave. to the restriping.

Goden Street could be converted to one-way. This could eliminate 2/3 of the traffic. It would make the School/Goden intersection much safer. The bike lane on Goden would be safer. This has become a truck route. Keep open from Concord for emergency vehicles.

III. Approval of Minutes:

Martin November moved to approve the April 15 Minutes, seconded by Jeffrey Roth. The Minutes were unanimously approved.

Roy Epstein said the Committee plans to reconvene July 8.

Martin November made a motion to adjourn.

Larry Link seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55am.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Wybieralla