

DATE: January 14, 2022
TIME: 11:23 AM

**Traffic Working Group - Middle and High School
Minutes
Public Forum & Meeting
December 16, 2021**

Attending were: Roy Epstein, Chair, Select Board Representative, Jeffrey Held, Resident, Larry Link, Resident, Ron Nayak, Resident, Martin November, Vice Chair, Resident, Alex Thurston, Resident, Mary Wybieralla, Secretary, Resident

Members absent: Patrice Garvin, TA, Jeffrey Roth, Transportation Advisory Committee, (TAC), Representative

Roy Epstein called the Public Forum to order at 7:03 pm.

Roy Epstein introduced the Parking Proposal addressing student parking for the High School. The proposal would be an eight week trial. If the Committee approves the proposal, it will go before the Select Board December 20, 2021 for approval. It will be implemented January 3, 2022. Roy Epstein shared the proposal with the public. There is no parking on campus for students now. There is a plan for 90 future on-campus parking spots west of Harris Field. This could change based on future hearings by the Planning Board. The TWG estimates 110-120 student cars parked on Concord Ave, the jughandle, and side streets. ly. About 40 park on the side streets.

The proposal would eliminate parking from 7-10 am on selected side streets, with exceptions for commercial vehicles, vehicles with permits, and vehicles on public business. The proposal identified School Street, (from Common to Stone), Oak Street, Orchard Street (below School), Orchard Circle, Stone, Goden(below School), Underwood, Trowbridge, Baker, and Concord Ave (EB from Cottage to Louise). The goal is to disperse student parking away from Oak, Orchard and Orchard Circle, not to eliminate student parking.

Roy Epstein opened the Forum up for questions and statements from the public.

Amy Orlando, School Street, corner of Myrtle. The pre-school Program at the Wellington begins at 9:00am. Closing School street to parking 7-9am will create a problem. Myrtle Street has parking restrictions.

Alena: Stated her daughter drives to school. Students need to be able to park during inclement weather. She needs to drive because she swims after school. Students cannot ride bikes in winter weather. Roy Epstein responded that we are not eliminating student parking. Cottage and Myrtle Streets remain open. Other side streets can be utilized. The jug-handle and Underwood Pool parking lot are not covered by the lottery. Martin November said people need to be able to drive to school, the lottery was done quickly, we will be discussing this with the school. It is a privilege to drive to school, sophomores and juniors need to figure out other ways. We have looked at other school districts which have lower rates of student parking on

campus. The student parking is having an impact on the neighborhood. We need to balance these issues. We have also considered placards for students with special situations.

Julie Meringer, Hurd Road: Hurd and Selwyn are a disaster with speeding and parking during Cheney drop-off and pick-up. This policy would set a precedent for other neighborhoods in town. There needs to be another solution.

Carol Miller, School Street: It would be nice to be able to get out of my driveway. There is all day parking on School Street by the Wellington. Don't know if it's Wellington staff. Sgt.

Garabedian, Belmont Police: Cars parked in both directions in front of the Wellington. Over an hour each school day, there are cars coming and going. There is also a Pre-School at Saint Joseph's which contributes to congestion on School Street. The police are trying to work with schools.

Rob Gray: It's hard to move from ample parking on campus to none. I support more parking for students. Roy Epstein responded our goal is to try to be reasonable. Allow students on side streets with more control than we have. We can institute a system rationing parking on side streets, such as 3-4 cars on a street. We can only get there if we have a permit system. Now students are gravitating to Oak/Orchard/Orchard Circle because it is closer to school. We are trying to control and have more balance with student parking.

Anne Paulsen, School Street: Myrtle Street has a chicane which works quite well. Students parking on both sides of a street is dangerous. It is a good idea to make arrangements to not have everyone on a few streets. There are many neighborhoods in town where people are parking all the time.

Anne Marie Mahoney, Goden Street: There is no Student Parking on the campus in order to accommodate Playing Fields. What is happening in the neighborhood is collateral damage. We have lost access to our property, and the ability to pull in and out of our driveways safely. The same car blocks driveway everyday. The frustration should be with the School Committee, Building Committee, and Planning Board.

Nat Kuhn, Oak Street: It is really a problem that emergency vehicles cannot get up the street. Trash collection is a problem because the truck cannot get on the street with the cars parked. Concerned about access for tradespeople. The idea of a rationed number of parking spaces on the street would be supported-we can absorb and deal with it. Having 12 cars on both sides of the street is a problem. If the Myrtle Street chicane is implemented, I worry there would be no access to tradespeople. Reducing student parking below 90 spaces is not a good plan. Larry Link said it's important to acknowledge that students have been smart, and respectful. It is not about picking on students. Between the jug-handle and the pool parking lot, and Concord Ave in front of the pool, there are many spots. Many of the permitted student parking is happening on the side streets, not the designated spots on Concord Ave. This trial is designed to disperse parking. Students may have a longer walk. It is sad that so many are driving. Carpooling, shared rides and buses need to be looked at.

Maryam Aboosaber, Goden/Concord Ave.: This plan has a lot of support in the neighborhood. Parking is a safety issue. There is no good view while backing out. It is just not convenience, it safety. Walking to school should be encouraged.

Chi-Ting Huang, Goden Street: There has been a lot of discussion of issues. The intention is not to punish students. There are 100 spots Northbound on Concord Ave. These spots are rarely full. Students are parking on side streets because it's closer to school. This parking makes the area unsafe. There is more than enough parking on Concord Ave.

Deborah Talanian, Goden Street: Reiterating that if you allow 4-5 to park on a street, they will park the same place everyday. The fire hydrant by my home is blocked by parking. I spoke to Bill Lovallo who said there are 40-42 undesignated spaces on campus. Those could be assigned to students.

Karen Ingwersen, Myrtle Street: I am happy to have people park in front of my house. It is a public Street. Look at what Myrtle Street has done. Concerned about enforcement/discipline. Whatever we do, we need to enforce it. Greatest concern is the safety of emergency vehicles. Not in favor of using land for parking on campus. Would hope students walk to school.

Nick Missiti, Student: I arrive late. The spaces on Concord Ave. get taken up. Side street parking is my only choice. I have a lottery space, but spaces are full when I arrive Roy Epstein responded he has observed 40 unoccupied spaces. Larry Link said he has counted parking 8:30-9:00, and there are unoccupied lottery spots. There are more cars in the afternoon.

Erika Wolf, Goden Street: This is a great proposal. Glad it is being done as a trial. Collect data, and maybe have to tweak each street. It is great to start, collect data and make revisions.

Blanca, Myrtle Street: Belmont is walkable, or use bikes. You can designate areas. Students go to more convenient path, shortest walk. During athletic events parking on both sides of street, parking lot is empty. Who enforces the proposal? Do residents call the police?

Carolyn Bishop, Orchard Street: Does anyone know how many students parked at the school? Roy Epstein responded that just under 200 students parked at the school before construction. Carolyn Bishop said she is in favor of the 7-10am parking restriction.

Rob Gray, Parent: I am the parent of a no permit holder. I can relate to the management problem with school. They have to tell permit holders they have to park on Concord Ave. Ticket permitted cars on side street. School should manage this process. Roy Epstein responded that police cannot ticket if no posted restriction on the street. Larry Link said a student fortunate to have a permit could be asked to move to an allotted space. There are enough allotted spaces to accommodate permit holders. The school should do a better job messaging. Wherever we take cars off a street, there are a lot of legal spaces where students can park.

Julie Meringer, Hurd Road: This is not “black and white”. The school has no lockers, some students live a mile away. You need to listen to students.

Nick Missiti, Student: I go to my car for lunch because there are too many unmasked students. I don’t feel safe. If my car is parked too far down Concord Ave., I’ll be late for class.

Martin November said the parking restrictions are targeted at students with the goal of the Committee being the safety of walkers and bikers. We are looking at buses. This area has elementary schools. There are more cars passing through, parents dropping off and picking up. The Committee is looking at this as a trial. If students cannot get parking spots, we want to know. Larry Link said we should check the status of the back lot for parking on campus.

Roy Epstein suggested summarizing issues for the Committee to discuss: Potential Modifications to the proposal: **1.** Exception for School Street **2.** Important to trial the proposal to see what happens-there is a lot of parking available to students without a lottery space **3.** Think about some sort of ration scheme **4.** Trial for 4 weeks instead of 8 weeks to speed up evaluation.

Nick Missiti, Student: commented there was not much representation from the High School. Questioned if the Committee communicated this proposal with the School. Roy Epstein responded that this Committee did communicate with the School Committee. Alex Thurston spoke with high school parent who said students did not know about the meeting. He wished it was publicized better. Roy Epstein responded we did communicate with the schools. Larry Link said there were cards put on windshields. Roy Epstein thanked the public and closed the Public Forum for the Committee to deliberate.

Roy asked if the Committee had any modifications to the proposal? Jeffrey Held said he was not in favor of rationing for students on side streets. We need to ask the School Committee to support carpooling, shared rides, walking, buses, bikes. It’s a good balance.

Alex Thurston, This proposal is unpopular to the community as it stands. This plan doesn’t include accommodations like Myrtle. I cannot support the proposal as is. Roy Epstein asked if he would agree there is an issue on Oak Street. Martin November said based on the conversation, 7-10 on one side only. Alex Thurston said he is failing to comprehend why Myrtle chicane cannot be done on Goden and Oak. Martin November responded that Goden is a major cut through. It is challenging to restrict on one side.

Roy Epstein said that Myrtle, Cottage are available. The pool parking lot and the jug-handle are exempted. We are trying to disperse traffic away from Oak, Orchard and Orchard Circle.

Alex Thurston said there is no granularity. Think about one side parking on these streets.

Mary Wybieralla said to remember there is an early morning turn restriction on Myrtle from Concord Ave. This impacts parking on that street.

Roy Epstein suggested: Change the restriction for School St to be from Goden to Stone Rd and shorten the trial to 4 weeks. Rationing option can be considered after we assess the trial.

Larry Link said we have to do a better job making people more aware of where these spots are. We should write a letter to the superintendent.

Martin November supported a 4 week trial to get immediate feedback. The Committee should take the initiative to get targeted feedback from students. It is important that we have a mechanism to get feedback if the sole purpose is safety.

Martin November said it is reasonable to remove School St. sympathetic to other schools. We have to be careful to avoid precedent. Sgt. Garabedian said it is better not to include School St.-Common to Goden. There will be a MA DOT project at the School/Common/Waverley intersection. Larry Link responded do we want to remove School St with staff parking and the DOT project? The changes to that intersection will impact School Street. After the 4 week trial, what will we do? When we say Concord EB to Louise, where is the starting point?

Roy Epstein that he made a correction. The intention is to have parking restriction from Cottage to Louise. With these corrections is there a motion to recommend the proposal to the Select Board? Larry Link questioned exempting School Street-Common to Goden. Mary Wybieralla said with the Preschool drop off issues it would be difficult to include this stretch of School Street. Roy Epstein said we could include this portion of School Street with a 10-11am restriction. Larry Link suggested the Committee reach out to the Wellington Principal. Mary Wybieralla said she supports excluding School-Common to Goden.

Martin November moved that the Committee shorten the trial to 4 weeks-from Monday January 3, 2022 - Friday January 28, 2022, and exclude School Street from Common to Goden. Mary Wybieralla seconded the motion. The Committee approved the motion with Alex Thurston objecting.

Roy Epstein asked Sgt. Garabedian if there were any obstacles implementing the trial. Sgt. Garabedian replied no. The Police could make laminated signs indicating the restrictions when school is in session. The police would issue warnings the first couple of days. Roy Epstein shared a draft of the sign. Larry Link said he would be happy to work on communication with students and parents. Jeffrey Held suggested the Committee create a map like the slide Roy showed the public during the Forum. The map could identify available parking. This could drive compliance. Roy said we can reuse the map, highlighting alternatives for parking.

Larry Link wanted to eliminate the parking spot at the Cottage/Concord crossing signal. Parked cars in this spot block the view of the signal. Roy Epstein asked Sgt. Garabedian what is involved to eliminate this spot. Sgt. Garabedian responded that he will look at it and consult Glenn Clancy.

Martin November moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Larry Link.
The meeting adjourned at 9:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Wybieralla