

DATE: March 9, 2022  
TIME: 9:38 AM

**Traffic Working Group - Middle and High School  
Minutes  
January 14, 2022**

**Attending were:** Roy Epstein, Chair, Select Board Representative, Jeffrey Held, Resident, Larry Link, Resident, Ron Nayak, Resident, Martin November, Vice Chair, Resident, Mary Wybieralla, Secretary, Resident, Glenn Clancy representing Patrice Garvin, TA

**Members absent:** Jeffrey Roth, Transportation Advisory Committee, (TAC), Representative, Alex Thurston, Resident

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

**I. Approve December 3, 2021 Minutes**

Martin November moved approval of the December 3, 2021 Minutes, seconded by Jeffrey Held. The December 3 minutes were unanimously approved.

**II. Approve December 16, 2021 Public Forum and Meeting Minutes**

Martin November moved approval of the December 16, 2021 Public Forum and Meeting Minutes, seconded by Jeffrey Held. The December 16 Minutes were unanimously approved.

Larry Link arrived after the vote.

**III. Review of Parking Trial**

Roy Epstein stated it is important to review the trial-how it is functioning, and the long range intent. Roy Epstein said the end date needs to be extended to have continuity and action is necessary now to correspond with future Select Board meetings.

Roy Epstein reviewed the reasons for the trial. Even though the School Dept. designed the lottery for student parking on the school side of Concord Ave., students were parking on Oak/Orchard/Orchard Circle, creating a number of problematic situations. The intent of the trial: **1.** Relieve immediate issues on Oak/Orchard/Orchard Circle. **2.** Get students to park on the school side of Concord Ave. The parking restrictions have eliminated student parking on Oak/Orchard/Orchard Circle, with the exception of residents, commercial, and business vehicles. The residents of Stone Rd. requested that Stone Rd. be exempted from the trial. With the restrictions that came into effect on January 3, students went to Stone Rd., approximately 12 cars, and Louise Rd., also approximately 12 cars. The Police have been good at enforcing the restrictions and giving warnings or tickets for parking violations on the relevant streets.

The broader issue is that there are still parking spaces available to students that are not being used - like spaces on Cottage, Myrtle, Underwood Pool parking lot, and stretches of Concord Ave. These areas could accommodate students parking on Stone and Louise. The long range goal is to move students off side streets.

There are only approximately 50 students parking on Concord Ave. The Select Board should reclaim Concord Ave. spaces near Underwood St. and adjacent to the jug-handle. These spots could be open to students who have not won the lottery.

Roy Epstein proposed that the Committee extend the restrictions to get students off Stone/Louise Roads. We also need to educate students where parking is available.

Martin November asked if we are taking back parking spots on Concord Ave. to provide for students who weren't eligible for the lottery and stated the school should issue additional parking passes. Roy Epstein said that he prefers a system with the least administrative effort. A significant number of spaces were reserved for the lottery and are unused.

Jeffrey Held said he agrees. He thinks educating students and changing behavior relies on the school. The school should be helping more. Longer term alternatives need to be promoted like buses. Can we get more engagement and help from the School? He worries that the spaces near Underwood Street, and adjacent to the jug-handle near the Mobil Station are too far away. Students will continue to try and park close to the school.

Mary Wybieralla said the spaces adjacent to the Underwood Pool on Concord, and the Pool Parking lot on Cottage, are not used because of seasonal signage restricting parking. Couldn't these signs be removed or adjusted to allow student parking? Sgt. Garabedian responded that the signs could be removed on Concord and at the parking lot.

Roy Epstein said if it turns out there is a large increase in student parkers later in the year, and designated areas really cannot accommodate students, we could move to a phase of issuing a limited number placards to students to park on particular streets. This would take care of the overflow.

Larry Link said by opening spots on Concord, you allow also track visitors to use spots. We don't know why students aren't using permit spots. We still don't know the plans for west of Harris Field. We should also be aware that students who go out for coffee may park after 10am on restricted streets. Roy Epstein said we have to accept that students will park after 10am on restricted streets.

Roy Epstein said he would propose a motion that the trial, scheduled to end on January 28, 2022, should be extended to February 18. This request can be put to the Select Board when they meet on January 24. to extend the trial through February 11, 2022 to allow the Select Board to vote on February 7, 2022, with potential modifications-can all be decided on the 7th. Roy Epstein recommended the trial be extended to 2/28 which would give us a chance to fine tune and present observations.

Roy Epstein asked for an update on the status of bus stops on Concord Ave. between Underwood St. and Goden St. Glenn Clancy reported he is working with the MBTA to remove these bus stops. This would open more parking spots on Concord Ave. Glenn said he is still waiting for the MBTA to act on this but expects the MBTA will support the removal of these bus stops.

Roy Epstein ask for resident comments.

Adriana Poole, Louise Rd.: I live on Louise Rd., not close to Concord Ave. This is an absolutely horrible arrangement. You need to keep in mind that streets near the high school already have noise, and pollution. The school is burdening us with parking. Please come on Wednesday, trash day and observe. The trash truck couldn't make it up the street. This is an old street, not meant for parking on both sides. Emergency access is a problem. This needs to be revisited. Doesn't the high school do verbal announcements in the morning? Morning announcements should communicate and educate students along with enforcement. Roy Epstein responded what you describe were the conditions on Oak/Orchard/Orchard Circle. The situation on Louise was foreseeable. This is why we originally had a wider restriction. I think we need to expand to Stone/Louise/Emerson. I think we can address this at the 1/24 Select Board Meeting.

Helen & Michael Golding: The solution of extending the perimeter and making spots available on Concord makes sense. Address the parking on side streets sooner rather than later. A lot of students have intermittent access to cars. This is not going to eliminate all who want to park. Need to relieve those cars with some other solution. Roy Epstein responded that this is a process of trial and error. We are moving in the right direction. He is still optimistic students can park further away. The price would be a 5 minute walk to school instead of 2 minutes. This a marginal inconvenience.

Robert Chernack: Doing it sooner rather than later would be efficient. When students park, they are blocking walkways and driveways. Do it ASAP. Roy Epstein asked Sgt. Garabedian if there was a restriction for crowding a driveway, knows it can be ticketed if blocking a driveway. Sgt. Garabedian responded there was no restriction for crowding a driveway.

Nancy Davis, Emerson St.: When will you be discussing drop/off and pick/up? There are cars with idling engines 10-15 minutes. The residents have had a lot of burdens the last couple of years. Lot of pollution, I just want to put it out there. Roy Epstein responded this Committee has been addressing parking, we plan to take up drop/off and pick/up. There is an idling law. It is an enforcement challenge. Sgt. Garabedian said it is tough to enforce. There is signage at the elementary schools. The Police Dept. is using social media to make people aware of the idling law and idle free zones around schools.

Martin November asked is there a law? Sgt. Garabedian responded there is a regulation controlling vehicle idling on school grounds. Larry Link said Safe Routes to Schools had good experience educating drivers.

Matt Taylor, Edgemoor Rd.: I want to emphasize to the Committee that Newton North High School has the same situation. It is unfortunate it pits students against residents. There are real side effects in the neighborhood: Trash/Recycling collection is impacted. Is there a chance there could be no parking on trash days? Students who receive lottery permits, no price, no consequences. Could permits be taken back and redistributed to other students? Zone student parking further on Concord Ave. Give permits to students who will park there. Another root cause of issues is the lack of covered bike racks. There is a demand for more sheltered bike racks. Need more sheltered bike racks. Standards for width of the street, especially for emergency access, need to be communicated. Students need to understand why these standards are required. Roy Epstein responded right now if a parked car leaves less than a 12

foot wide travel lane, it can be ticketed. The need for sheltered bike racks is not the scope of this Committee. To restrict parking on trash/ recycling days creates administrative complications.

Matt Taylor, Edgemoor Rd.: I want to support the students, parents, and schools. There is ample parking available-just not the best. I appreciate the complexity. I would love to see the school involved in this discussion. Roy Epstein responded that people are aware that Belmont is a space constrained community. This is a large school on a small site which creates a situation that we have to work with. Everybody needs to work together.

Adriana Poole, Louise Rd.: students do park closer than 20ft. At the Concord Ave./Louise Rd. intersection. A sign would be helpful. I strongly recommend putting up a sign. Roy Epstein said we can do that. 20ft. restriction is on the books. Jeffrey Held recommended distributing a color coded parking map for education. We could do it with the school. Roy Epstein had mixed views distributing a map. Students are intelligent. The assumption is students can find a place to park. If we use a map, I wouldn't want residents to think we're steering students to particular locations.

Roy Epstein listed the items the Committee should make motions on to recommend to the Select Board: Extend the trial restrictions to Stone/Louise/Emerson Rd. Remove signs from the Underwood Pool parking lot, and on Concord Ave, adjacent to the pool. Martin November said we should also have 2 Committee members communicate with the School Dept. He is willing to work on this. The idling issue requires a multifaceted approach. We need to be flexible. When the Middle School opens the Hittinger neighborhood will have similar issues. The Community Path Project will have impact. We are going to need to respond to these issues. Roy Epstein asked for another volunteer . Larry Link has already volunteered. He is communicating and researching with the School Dept. on 2-3 priorities. Roy Epstein said he would leave it to them to report back.

Roy Epstein asked Sgt. Garabedian if the Police have authority to extend signage to Stone/Louise/Emerson. Sgt. Garabedian responded that to restrict parking on those streets would require the Select Board approval. The police will monitor those streets until the Select Board can approve because it is beyond the scope of the police.

Vera Trojan, Stone Rd.: concerned how many parking permits would be issued to residents-having work done at the house. Roy Epstein responded commercial vehicles are exempted. Sgt. Garabedian responded that in most cases the police will talk to them. It is not an issue. We would contact the homeowner and identify that these are commercial vehicles and make sure they don't get ticket.

Roy Epstein said the Committee would entertain a motion to request the Select Board extend restrictions approved on 12/20/2021 to Stone/Louise/Emerson. Martin November said so moved. Mary Wybieralla seconded. The Motion was approved unanimously Roy Epstein asked Glenn Clancy to work with the DPW to remove or change signage around the Underwood Pool to make clear those spaces are available for all day parking.

Larry Link said the 20ft from intersection setback signs are missing in several places. Sgt. Garabedian responded that he will look at it.

Roy Epstein asked for a motion to ask the Select Board at the 1/24 Meeting extend the trial program to 2/18. Martin November made the motion that we request the Select Board extend the Trial Program to 2/18/22. Larry Link seconded The motion was approved unanimously

Roy Epstein thanked residents for support and comments. Larry Link requested that at the next meeting the Committee examine the campus loop and try to get a clearer picture of how it will work. When the Middle School opens, how will drop offs work? Roy Epstein said the Planning Board never signed off on a traffic circulation plan for the school. This question comes back to the School Committee, Building Committee and Planning Board. Larry Link responded he wants it on record that we ask the Superintendent about the plan. Roy Epstein said Martin November and Larry Link should be helpful with their communications with the School Dept. Ron Nayak moved the meeting be adjourned, Roy Epstein seconded The motion was approved unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wybieralla